



MARKETING YOUR 4-H or FFA LIVESTOCK PROJECT ANIMAL



A Tutorial for 4-H and FFA Members and Parents

The 4-H Experience: Learn By Doing

4-H members have a unique opportunity to gain many valuable life skills through their 4-H livestock projects. In addition to gaining such skills as communication, critical thinking, financial management, organization, responsibility, and leadership through their project involvement and 4-H club, the 4-H member also has the opportunity to receive a premium price for the animals that they market through the youth livestock auction sales at the County Fair. Many youth use the money gained from their 4-H projects to help pay for college.



Thinking like a business person is essential to being successful. From the very beginning of your project identify potential customers (buyers) to purchase the end product. Know what your expenses are, and be able to calculate your break even price for the product.

Successful completion of a market livestock animal project includes recruiting buyers to bid on your animals during the auctions at the County Fair. You should contact buyers several months prior to the fair to allow them ample ability to plan time away from work or other activities to attend the auctions and opportunity to budget for their purchase. Contacting potential buyers early also allows you the chance to build rapport with the buyer and answer any questions they have about the auction.

Potential Buyers

Exhibitors should contact enough buyers to ensure that at least 2 buyers are bidding on each animal they sell during the auctions. Keep in mind that not every buyer you contact will place a bid on your animal so it is necessary to contact several potential buyers.

Who are potential buyers? Buyers can be businesses, families, individuals, or groups of people. You should be certain to contact people that have supported you and the auction in the past as well as people that have never attended before. Contact people your family knows (friends, neighbors, relatives, etc.), people you do business with (gas station, grocery store, dentist, insurance, bank, carwash, organizations, etc.), and with the guidance of an adult, people and businesses that you don't know.



For more information about the
[Junior Livestock Market Auctions](http://ce.ingham.org/LivestockAuction.aspx)
<http://ce.ingham.org/LivestockAuction.aspx>

Ingham County MSU Extension (4-H)
(517) 676-7207
Ingham County Fair (517) 676-2428
Ron Bogart, Livestock Sale Committee
Chairperson (517) 202-8762
Phil Hutchison, Large Animal Sale
Chairperson (517) 937-6275
Hollie Dietz, Small Animal Sale
Chairperson (517) 699-3693

Approaching a Potential Buyer



When approaching a potential buyer, you are not only marketing your animal, but also yourself and your organization. Often times youth are nervous or scared about making this contact. Marketing your livestock project animal is a great opportunity to develop stronger communication skills and build self-confidence. Parents and club leaders can help you overcome your anxiety by practicing together before visiting with potential buyers.

It is best to meet with buyers in person when possible, but a hand written letter can be sent in the event that you are unable to establish a meeting time. When meeting with a potential buyer it is appropriate to introduce yourself with a handshake. If the person you are marketing to knows your parents you may also include that connection in your introduction.

Some of the important talking points to highlight during your conversation include:

- Your 4-H club
- What projects you are exhibiting
- What you have learned this year in 4-H
- What your future plans are, including how you intend to use your earnings
- The benefits of supporting 4-H and FFA members through the Livestock Auction
- Resale and processing options available to buyers
- When and where the auctions happen
- How to register to buy an animal at the auction



Always close the sale by inviting the person to attend the auction. Marketing materials including posters and buyer pamphlets are available from the Livestock Sale Committee and 4-H office.

Details Buyers Will Need to Know

Large Animal Sale Thursday, August 4, 2016 12:00 p.m.
Small Animal Sale Saturday, August 6, 2016 1:00 p.m.
Both sales held at the Ingham County Fairgrounds Main Arena
Registration for both sales begins 1-hour prior.

AUCTION

Buyers not able to attend the sale may bid on or purchase livestock by contacting the sale committee chairperson. The chairperson will explain the options and process to the buyer. All buyers are encouraged to pay at the sale for their purchases by cash, credit card or check. Checks are to be made out to Greenstone Farm Credit Services. Large animals are sold by the pound, small animals are sold per individual. Trucking after the sale is handled by the sale committee for most purchases.

Buyers have the following options for their purchases made during the auction:

- A. Have the animal processed at a processor of their choice. The buyer is responsible for paying the processing fees. If purchasing a whole animal is too much for an individual buyer, it is encouraged that the individual find other individuals to share the bidder number and split the meat.
- B. The buyer may opt to resell the animal. The buyer will be responsible for paying the purchase price minus the resale price.
- C. The buyer can keep the animal by picking it up at the close of the fair. The buyer is responsible for transporting the animal.
- D. Donations may be made to local food bank. Processing fee paid by the food bank.
- E. Donate the animal back to the sale committee's scholarship fund.