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Recommendations for Marketing Youth Animal Projects – Poultry (Chickens, Turkeys, Ducks) and Rabbits

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Overview

As an important part of raising animals, youth need to market their project. This document will serve as a guide to help youth market, establish pricing, find a processor, keep records, and evaluate transportation considerations.

Marketing

When marketing a youth animal project, make sure to use the 5 Ps of marketing:

- **Product** – Understand the benefits and unique qualities of your animal.
- **Price** – Understand your break-even point and determine how you will price your animal.
- **Place** – Know where your customer will be purchasing your animal.
- **Promotion** – Think about how you will advertise your animal.
- **People** – Develop relationships with local families, businesses, industries, and organizations. These relationships will create a demand for your animal.

For more about marketing your animal project, review the [Youth Business Guide to Success: Make the Most of Your 4-H Market Animal Project](#).

Pricing Your Animal Project

When establishing the price for your animal, you can sell it by the pound using the carcass weight, or by a flat price per animal. Negotiation between the buyer and seller may take place to arrive at an agreeable price.

- **Carcass weight** – The processor will provide a weight for you.
- **Price per animal** – This is a price that will be required to purchase your animal. This method of selling is also known as “selling by the head.”

Estimated Amount of Product

The [average dressing percentage](#) for market chickens is 71% (range 70–72%). For market turkeys, the dressing percentage is 79% (range 77–81%). Market rabbits typically have a dressing percentage of 55% (range 50–60%). When selling your animal project(s), give the buyer an estimate of the amount of poultry or meat that they should expect to receive to ensure the buyer has adequate freezer space.

Processing

Market poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks) and rabbits are often processed under custom-exempt slaughter. Custom-exempt processors do not have federal inspectors present because they process only for the owner of the live animal. The owner of the live animal accepts responsibility for having the animal harvested without federal inspection. When using custom-exempt processors, **you may not sell or donate packages to individuals and each package is marked “not for sale.”** [Poultry Processing in Michigan](#) is a good resource

To contact an expert in your area, visit extension.msu.edu/experts or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

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in determining whether the poultry can be processed under an exemption from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), or if inspection is required. Poultry and rabbit processing can also be done at a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) licensed facility. If you choose to resell or donate individual packages, you must use a MDARD–inspected or USDA–inspected processor. Contact MDARD (1-800-292-3939) for information on poultry or rabbit processors in your area. You must schedule a time for your animal to be processed. Most processors have appointments scheduled months in advance, or it may be a seasonal operation. Knowing and communicating what cuts and packaging options are available by the processor will be important in helping your buyer understand what products are available from the animal they purchase. Often, market poultry and rabbits are sold or delivered as whole processed carcasses. However, there may be other options available depending on the processor. Communicate any fees associated with processing to your buyer. If you are going to pay for the processing directly, include these costs in the pricing of your animal.

Animal Health and Handling

Your animals' health is important to providing a safe, healthy product to the buyer. Food safety and animal well-being are taught as part of the [Youth for the Quality Care of Animals](#). Several things should be considered for [poultry](#) and rabbit health. You should understand how moving and appropriately handling poultry and rabbits can affect the quality of the product. When catching or handling poultry, considerations for the weather, method of catch, and proper loading into crates immediately prior to transportation are important.

Transportation of the Animal

Each market animal should have a transportation plan. Consider that the animal must be handled in an acceptable manner, and know who will transport it. Determine delivery logistics: the number of animals allowed per cage or crate, the maximum or minimum time animals can be held at the processor before slaughter, hauling fees, and availability of appropriate unloading facilities. Be sure to account for cost of time, equipment use, and fuel associated with transportation.

Record Keeping and Budgets

Record keeping and establishing a budget are important life skills learned in your livestock project. These skills will help you make marketing and management decisions with your project. A good record-keeping program will help you make decisions both now and in the future. For more information on record keeping including templates, see the [Michigan 4-H Market Animal Project Record Book](#).

Resources

Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory>

Michigan–Based USDA–Inspected Poultry Slaughter Facilities

[Munsell's Poultry Processing](#)

[Pease Packing](#)

Michigan 4-H Market Animal Project Record Book

https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/4_h_market_animal_record_book

Youth Business Guide to Success: Make the Most of Your 4-H Market Animal Project

https://www.canr.msu.edu/youth_business_guide_to_success/

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Questions

To find out more about marketing your poultry and rabbit project, contact:

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