University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development

Adult Guide on Animal Welfare for Fairs & Exhibitions

Incidents of undercover activities, violence, and vandalism to agriculture or other animal use institutions in the name of animal rights have increased across the country in the past few years.

The following information will provide a general overview of practices to help educate Idaho 4-H and FFA members on issues in the agricultural community at fairs and exhibitions. 4-H and FFA animal exhibitors need to be advised as to how to handle animal agriculture issues and activists

Practices to Assist your 4-H and FFA Animal Exhibitors

- Review animal welfare policies for your club and/or county
- Inform and educate every club member about the proper care and handling of animals
- Enforce animal welfare policies
- Designate a spokesperson for each species in each club, if possible.
    - Inform exhibitors and committee members that all possible inquires be handled by the designated spokesperson
    - Create a positive message plan for spokespeople to follow
- Contact the 4-H Professional, barn superintendent and law enforcement officers that will be present at the fair/exhibition to inform them of potential problems by activists
- Establish a protocol to follow in the event of confrontation or direct action (i.e. letting animals loose, property destruction, verbal presentation)
    - Advise members to not handle any confrontational event alone. Find a club spokesperson, 4-H Professional, fair superintendent, or law enforcement officer.
- Advise your participants to ignore activists and any protest
    - They seek media attention and confrontation will only aid them further in their goal.
- Encourage members to stay positive and tell their story.
    - DO NOT entertain the activists' questions if they are confrontational; concentrate on your story about why you are involved in 4-H or FFA, how you take care of your animals, and how farmers in general care for their animals.
    - If the activist does not stop, find the designated spokesperson for the club, the 4-H Professional, a barn superintendent or law enforcement officer.
    - Advise older members to assist younger exhibitors if they are confronted or asked difficult questions by the general public.

Talking Points

Assist your 4-H or FFA members in practicing to tell their story of why they are involved in 4-H or FFA, why they take animal-related projects, and how they care for their animals. Make sure that members feel comfortable addressing basic questions about their animal and how they care for it. (Examples are breed, age, what they feed and basic production practices)*

See the youth guide for more specific talking points as a resource on animal welfare.

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