

Animal Care Resource Guide for 4-H and FFA Members

Facts, Values, and Myths

Lindsay M. Chichester, Extension Educator
 Bradley D. Lubben, Extension Policy Specialist
 Dennis E. Bauer, Extension Educator

Opinions are based on a person’s knowledge about a subject, and that knowledge may be based on fact, myth or values. This NebGuide provides definitions and helps youth respond to different opinions on animal care. This is No. 3 in a series of five resource guides.

Often, a person forms opinions based on their knowledge about a subject (facts and myths) and their emotional connections (values). Let’s define facts, myths, and values to better understand them.

- **Facts** — Reality, truth.
- **Myths** — An unproved or false collective belief used to justify a social position.

- **Values** — The ideals, customs, and traditions of a society on which people base decisions in their lives.

The goals of education are to establish facts, dispel myths, and respect values. At times you may disagree with the values of others, but it is important to keep in mind that every person will have a different set of values based on their own unique experiences and beliefs. We can search for shared values to help diffuse conflict. For example, a shared value might be that most people are interested in providing proper care for animals.

Below is a list of statements. In the column on the right, indicate whether you think the statement is a fact, myth, or value. The most appropriate answer and an explanation are provided on the next page.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Circle the answer you believe to be the most appropriate.</i>		
A vegetarian diet is morally superior to a meat-based diet.	Fact	Myth	Value
On average, people in the U.S. spend less than 12 percent of their disposable income on food.	Fact	Myth	Value
On average, people in the U.S. spend less on food than any other country in the world.	Fact	Myth	Value
As the percentage of a person’s disposable income spent on food declines, people are more able to demand specific attributes or qualities in their food.	Fact	Myth	Value
“Humanely raised” is currently the leading food product attribute that rural Nebraskans indicate is important.	Fact	Myth	Value
A vast majority of rural (non-metropolitan) Nebraskans believe that animal welfare includes providing the food, water, and shelter needs of food animals.	Fact	Myth	Value
A strong majority of Nebraskans believe animal welfare means more than food, water, and shelter, including the provision of adequate exercise, space, and social activities for food animals.	Fact	Myth	Value
There are more rural Nebraskans who believe current regulations are adequate to ensure food animal welfare than who think more regulations are needed.	Fact	Myth	Value
Rural Nebraskans trust livestock farmers and veterinarians regarding food animal care.	Fact	Myth	Value
Animal welfare is better protected on family farms than on large, corporate farms.	Fact	Myth	Value
The vast majority of livestock operations in Nebraska are family-owned operations.	Fact	Myth	Value
The majority of livestock in Nebraska are on non-corporate, family-owned operations.	Fact	Myth	Value
Agriculture is important to the Nebraska economy.	Fact	Myth	Value
Animal welfare regulation will not impact the cost of food.	Fact	Myth	Value
Animals should not be used for human consumption.	Fact	Myth	Value

How Did You Do?

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Most Appropriate Answer</i>	<i>Additional Information and Sources</i>
A vegetarian diet is morally superior to a meat-based diet.	Value	Arguments against the use of animals for human benefit, and arguments for vegetarian diets as being more environmentally friendly imply individual values. “Morally superior” will have different meanings for different individuals.
On average, people in the U.S. spend a smaller share of their disposable income on food than people in any other country.	Fact	In the U.S., people spend an average of 11 percent of their disposable income on food (6 percent at home, 5 percent away from home), smaller than any other country (USDA-ERS).
On average, people in the U.S. spend less on food than any other country in the world.	Myth	Persons in the U.S. spend a smaller percentage of their disposable income on food than any other country, but not less total money than any other country (USDA-ERS).
As the percentage of a person’s disposable income spent on food declines, people are more able to demand specific attributes or qualities in their food.	Fact	People who are more financially secure are able to make more specific food demands. They may no longer be eating just to satisfy hunger and energy needs, but also to satisfy personal tastes and preferences.
“Humanely raised” is currently the leading food product attribute that rural Nebraskans indicate is important.	Myth	While it may be important, the 2011 Rural Poll* indicates consumers think other attributes are more important, such as food quality, price, and nutrition. Only 54 percent of rural Nebraskans responding to the 2010 Rural Poll said “humanely raised” was an important food attribute.
A vast majority of rural (non-metropolitan) Nebraskans believe that animal welfare includes providing the food, water, and shelter needs of food animals.	Fact	The 2011 Rural Poll indicates that 95 percent of rural Nebraskans agree.
A strong majority of Nebraskans believe animal welfare means more than food, water, and shelter, including the provision of adequate exercise, space, and social activities for food animals.	Fact	While the statement implies a value judgment about what animal welfare is, the fact is that 69 percent of rural Nebraskans agree (2011 Rural Poll).
There are more rural Nebraskans who believe current regulations are adequate to ensure food animal welfare than those who think more regulations are needed.	Fact	In two different survey questions of Rural Nebraskans, 56 percent agree and 8 percent disagree that current regulations are adequate, while 36 percent disagree and 30 percent agree that more regulation is needed (2011 Rural Poll).
Rural Nebraskans trust livestock farmers and veterinarians regarding food animal care.	Fact	According to the 2011 Rural Poll, 84 percent of respondents trust livestock farmers and veterinarians regarding food animal care.
Animal welfare is better protected on family farms than on large, corporate farms.	Value	The 2011 Rural Poll indicates that 74 percent of rural Nebraskans agree with this perception. However, no actual scientific research studies have compared the welfare on large versus small farms.
The vast majority of livestock operations in Nebraska are family-owned operations.	Fact	The 2007 Census of Agriculture indicates that 95 percent beef, 93 percent dairy, 94 percent pork, and 97 percent poultry/egg operations are family owned.
The majority of livestock in Nebraska are on non-corporate, family-owned operations.	Fact	65 percent beef animals, 92 percent dairy animals, 84 percent pork animals, and 66 percent poultry/egg inventories are produced on non-corporate, family-owned operations (2007 Census of Agriculture).
Agriculture is important to the Nebraska economy.	Fact	Studies of the Nebraska economy indicate agriculture provides about one of every three jobs in the state.
Animal welfare regulation will not impact the cost of food.	Myth	Economic analysis shows constraining production methods will impact production costs and eventually food costs.
Animals should not be used for human consumption.	Value	This is a value judgment that illustrates the differences of individuals who hold different values and beliefs on the roles or use of animals for human benefit.

*2011 Rural Poll: The Rural Poll is an annual survey conducted by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to ask opinions and perceptions of Nebraskans in non-metropolitan counties of the state. The mailed survey is conducted using the Total Design Method pioneered by Dillman (1978). The 2010 survey results are based on 2,797 individual responses and the 2011 survey results are based on 2,490 individual responses, which represent a 43 percent and 39 percent response rate respectively. For both years, the survey has a confidence level of +/- 2%, meaning that survey results are expected to be within 2 percent of actual population values in the state. For more information on the Rural Poll visit: ruralpoll.unl.edu.

Was this task easy or difficult for you? Did you disagree on any of the points? Were your disagreements because you have strong moral or ethical beliefs? Did these points make you think about rural Nebraskans differently?

It may be difficult for us to distinguish between facts and values because making those distinctions require us to set aside our feelings and emotions, relying strictly on the research and science. As a youth livestock exhibitor, you will meet a variety of people whose values differ from yours. It is important to keep in mind that you should rely on the facts, science, and research to answer their questions. You should respect their values, as they may be different than your own, and try to understand why that person believes what he or she

does. Arguing or adamantly disagreeing with someone who has values different from yours will not get you anywhere. Instead, try to listen to their point of view and come and find common ground. If you cannot agree, you may have to agree to disagree.

Now that you recognize the differences between facts, myths, and values, here are some possible conversations you may encounter.

Note that these are only examples of statements you may encounter. It is by no means an extensive list. Remember to respect the person and their viewpoint, and to answer openly and honestly while sharing your own experiences (values) and knowledge (facts).

Possible Responses to Questions from the Public	
If you encounter someone sharing myths, you might reply:	<i>“Your statements are not consistent with the facts to which I have been exposed through my 4-H and school experiences. I encourage you to check your ideas against facts from more than one source.”</i>
If you encounter someone sharing their values and suggesting they are facts that everyone should accept, you might reply:	<i>“Your statement appears to be based on your values for animal care. I respect your values, but I do not completely agree. My 4-H and family experiences have led me to believe (share your value and/or facts).”</i>

Quality Assurance

Annually, Nebraska 4-H youth are required to complete Quality Assurance (QA) training. Quality Assurance (QA) is a program that educates youth about the best management practices for livestock production. In addition, it was developed to assure consumers that the food products produced from animals are wholesome and safe and that the animals which produced the products were cared for properly. In 2012, this training was made available online for 4-H/FFA members at three different age levels — Junior, (8-10); Intermediate, (11-14); and Senior (15-18). More information about the Nebraska Youth QA Program can be found at 4h.unl.edu/qualityassurance.

Resources

For more information on animal care and well-being, visit 4h.unl.edu/resourceanimalcare or contact:

Donald Beermann
 Institutional Animal Care Program
 110 Mussehl Hall
 Lincoln, NE 68583-0720
 Email: dbeermann2@unl.edu

Lindsay Chichester

Extension Educator
 1700 Stone St.
 Falls City, NE 68355
 Email: lichichester2@unl.edu

Dennis Bauer

Extension Educator
 148 West 4th
 Ainsworth, NE 69210
 Email: dbauer1@unl.edu

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