

## *Animal Care Resource Guide for 4-H and FFA Members*

# Communicating With the Public About the Care of Production Animals

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Youth livestock exhibitors have a responsibility to help educate the public about the care of production animals. This NebGuide defines key terms and Quality Assurance guidelines. This is No. 1 in a series of five resource guides.

### Learning About Animal Care

Youth livestock exhibitors should be aware that the public develops opinions about production agriculture based on what they see, hear, and perceive at livestock fairs and exhibitions. The practices used to prepare and show animals may be all the public ever sees of livestock production — so set a good example.

Livestock producers are morally and legally responsible for animals in their care. Their animals should be provided appropriate feed, water, comfort, and safety, and not be subjected to unnecessary fear, stress, or discomfort. Livestock producers are also ethically responsible for the well-being of the animals in their care. They must not tolerate animal neglect or abuse. Animal caretakers should take pride in the belief that ensuring an animal’s well-being is the right thing to do, and choose to properly care for animals.

### Animal Well-Being, Animal Care, Animal Welfare, or Animal Rights — What’s The Difference?

Often *animal care*, *animal well-being*, *animal welfare*, and *animal rights* are used interchangeably; however, these phrases mean different things, and it is important to understand the differences.

*Animal well-being* and *animal welfare* mean the same thing. Both acknowledge that humans may responsibly use animals for both human and animal benefit (e.g., livestock

nutrition, forage and grain utilization). There is a responsibility to provide animals the best treatment possible. People who believe in animal well-being and/or animal welfare agree that animals should be treated with respect, without exception.

*Animal care* is what it says — providing care for an animal. Responsible livestock producers provide the best care and treatment for their animals by ensuring the animals receive high quality feed and water, appropriate shelter, quick treatment if ill, and low-stress handling when necessary.

*Animal rights* is a philosophy that believes that many or most uses of animals for human benefit are unacceptable because animals have certain characteristics that make it wrong to use them for human purposes.

### Quality Assurance

A livestock producer realizes that he or she is responsible for making sure an animal receives the best care at all times. A healthy and productive animal is a content animal. Through sound production practices animals will flourish. Quality Assurance (QA) was developed to assure consumers that the food products produced from animals are wholesome and safe, and the animals which produced the product were cared for properly. Quality Assurance focuses on good production practices:

- Provide proper animal handling and care
- Identify and track all animals
- Establish an efficient and effective animal health management plan
- Follow appropriate feed processor procedures and feed tag recommendations

- Establish appropriate vaccination and treatment protocols
- Educate all employees and family members on proper treatment techniques
- Maintain vaccination, medication, and treatment records
- Properly store, label, and account for all animal health products and medicated feeds
- Use drug residue tests when appropriate
- Review and update your Quality Assurance program annually

Animal producers trained in Quality Assurance and ethics should understand their important role:

- Produce a wholesome, safe, and nutritious food product for the consumer
- Produce a high quality, visually appealing, and delicious product for consumers
- Understand that as animal caretakers, their responsibility is to provide optimum care, safety, and comfort for animals at all times

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#### **Resources**

For more information on good livestock management practices for youth, commonly asked questions, and many other animal care and well-being documents, please visit [4h.unl.edu/resourceanimalcare](http://4h.unl.edu/resourceanimalcare).

For more Nebraska youth Quality Assurance information, visit [4h.unl.edu/qualityassurance](http://4h.unl.edu/qualityassurance) or contact:

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