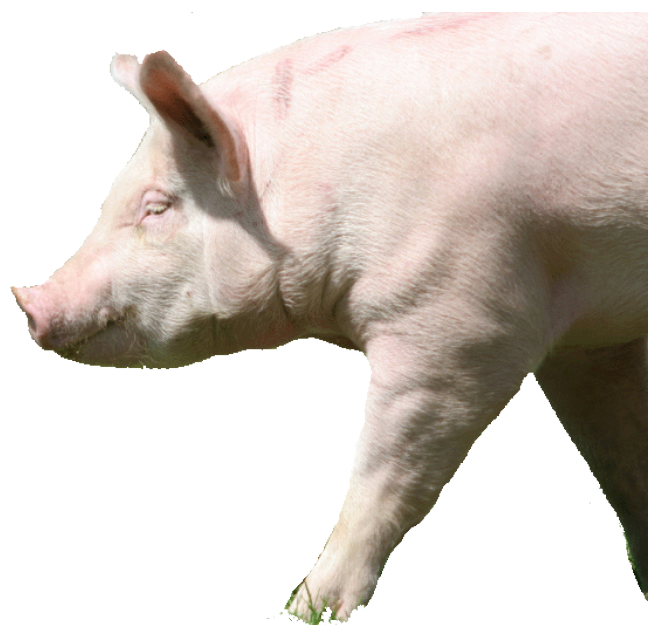


Indian River County 4-H
MARKETING YOU
and Your 4-H Steer or Swine Project

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A Helper Guide for 4-H'ers and Their Families



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Introduction

When you complete your market animal project you will become an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is someone who makes money on their own. The life skills you will learn in this project will help you someday be a small business owner, and help you learn basic economic principles that will guide you to achieve this goal. Economics in this case means supply and demand and the allocation of scarce resources.

This year the economy in Indian River County is in a recession, which means that business is poor for many businesses in our area. As a result, there will be fewer buyers at the fair livestock auction and you are going to have a lot of competition. If you want to be successful and get the best price for your animal, you must market yourself and your animal throughout the year. You need to find a buyer before the fair who is interested in your animal and you. You simply cannot show up at the fair auction and expect buyers to want your animal. You have spent a lot of time and energy raising and caring for your animal, now you need to spend a lot of time finding the right people to buy your animal. You need to market yourself and your swine or steer. The buyer's letter is an excellent way to market or sell you and your animal.

Buyer's Letter

A buyer's letter is a letter that a 4-H member sends out to potential buyers before the County Fair to tell them a little about themselves and their animal and to invite them to the fair and livestock auction. This guide will help first-time 4-H youth write a successful buyer's letter and hopefully help tenured 4-H sellers improve their letters.

The Indian River County 4-H Livestock Show & Sale requires each youth to write at least **three** letters to potential buyers. It is your responsibility to help get new and returning buyers to come to the livestock sales. Without new and returning buyers, a time may come when there are more animals than buyers. (Economics – supply and demand) If this happens, animals will be sold at market price. The prices may drop to a point where exhibitors are losing money by raising their animals. So it is your job to write a letter that will encourage potential buyers to come to the fair auction so there will be more buyers than animals for sale. It is also your job to sell yourself in the letter so the buyer wants to buy your animal.

How Do I Find a Buyer?

Before you begin writing your letters, it is important to **have a plan**. Who should I target to receive my buyers' letters? How many should I send out? The fair requires that I send out **three**, but is that enough in these tough economic times?

Suggestions for Possible Buyers

- Family Doctor
- Family Dentist
- Eye Doctor
- Orthodontist

Suggestions for Possible Buyers (Cont.)

- Insurance Agent
- Banker
- Grocery Stores – Winn Dixie, Publix
- Restaurants
- Hair Stylists
- Mechanics
- Contractors
- Engineers
- Veterinarian
- Feed Store
- Equipment Dealers
- Car Sales Dealers
- Relatives
- Neighbors
- Friends
- Parents' employers
- Your employer (if you are old enough to have a job)

Your goal is to get as many buyers as possible to the fair auction in order to have more buyers than sellers. Remember: it takes at least *two* bidders to make an auction! This will increase the price you will receive for your animal. You are going to have to work harder this year than in past years to get the buyers to the fair. Therefore, you should set a goal of sending out ***more*** than the ***required 3 letters***. You should send out at least ***10-25 letters***.

Before You Write Your Letter Read the Research

A research study was conducted at the Trinity County Fair in Tennessee regarding the buyers' letters that were sent out by 500 4-H youth to over 2,000 buyers. Before we begin writing our letters, we can learn a lot from this research study.

- Content of the letter: 80% wanted to read about the youth's **history** and the raising of the animal, what you're doing in your 4-H club, and other personal items.
- Pictures: 80% wanted a **picture** of the animal and the youth
- Handwritten or typed: 60% said it does not matter as long as it is **personal**
- Form Letters: 60% did not like form letters, they wanted a **personal letter**. A form letter is a generic letter addressed to all potential buyers, and not a personal letter to one buyer
- Length of the letter: 40% said at least **one page**, 40% said it does not matter as long as it is not too short
- Do you remember the best letter you have received?
25% liked **humor**, 25% liked the letter addressed to them by name and appreciate a letter that shows a lot of work went into the project, 25% liked little cartoons of the animal with a hand written letter, and 25% liked a full page letter that focused on the exhibitor that included a **picture**.

The Buyer's Letter

1. Know who you are writing to: Owner, business, use first & last names
2. Information about yourself: Name, age, school, 4-H Club, years in your project; When buyers get to the fair this information helps them make a connection with you.
3. Give them information about your project: Breed of your animal, name of the animal, target final weight, your feeding program, what you hope to accomplish, goals, etc.
4. The fair dates: Let the buyer know the dates and location of the fair, show, and auction. Invite them to the fair to watch you show your animal. You can also include a livestock schedule with your letter.
5. Tell them how they can participate as a buyer: This is important if they are a first time buyer. Providing potential buyers with all the necessary information this will make it easier for them to participate.
6. Inform them where they can get more information: People often have questions that you have not answered in your buyer's letter. This provides a way for them to contact you to get answers to their questions. Include a phone number and e-mail address.
7. Thank them for previous participation if they are a buyer from a previous year:
If you do this, it may motivate the buyer to come back and bid again. It lets them know you appreciate them taking the time to come to the fair.
8. Personalize the letter: This is good because most buyers like letters that are signed by a real person and not photocopied. They also like their name on the letter not "Dear Buyer." The more individualized a letter is, the more likely a person is to read it.
9. Include a picture of you and your animal: This helps people connect with you.
10. Make a copy of each buyer letter for your project book for your records:

Example

Susan James
3406 Palm Beach Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33916
Sjames11@ aol.com
(941) 533-7516

Sept. 14, 2010

Mr. Jim Phillips
President, Marketing
Phillips Tractor
4206 Gullet Court
Alva, Florida 32561

Dear Mr. Phillips,

My name is Susan James and this is my second year in the Big Clovers 4-H Club. I am 15 and attend Riverdale High School and plan to major in Agribusiness after I graduate. My hobbies include soccer, reading, and sewing.

This year I am raising a hog to show at the 2009 Lee County and Southwest Florida Fair. Her name is Bacon Bits. This is my second year raising a hog, but my first year in the Fair because my hog did not make weight last year. I learned a lot from that experience and I know more about proper feeding this year so I plan to be at the Fair with Bacon Bits.

Bacon Bits and I will be at the Fair from February 25- March 5 and I would like to invite you to see her on show night and bid for her at the swine auction. The dates of the show are Monday, February 28th at 7 p.m. and the swine auction will be Saturday afternoon, March 5th from 2-4.

I have enclosed a picture. If there are any questions you have for me, you can call me or e-mail me and I will be happy to answer your questions. Thank you for your time and attention. Bacon Bits and I look forward to seeing you at the fair.

Sincerely,

Susan James

Example

Billy Bob
51221 Bob Lane
Ft. Myers, Florida 34286
(941) 343-5121
Bbob231@aol.com

Sept. 14, 2010

Tops Super Market
Mr. Ryan, Manager
120 Main Street
Ft. Myers, FL 34286

Dear Mr. Ryan,

Last year you purchased my steer from the Lee County Fair. Thank you again for your purchase. I used the money I earned from last year's sale to buy my market steer this year.

I am going back to the Lee County Fair – February 28 - March 9. I will be showing and selling my steer, Mr. Beef. I have learned a lot with this 4-H project. Some critical lessons I have learned are responsibility and time management. This is important since I am trying to balance school work, school sports, and church youth group. I want to invite you to the Fair again this year.

After you take in all the great fair fun, I hope you attend the steer livestock auction which will be held Saturday March 8th from 2-4 p.m. I will be showing Mr. Beef, Thursday night March 6th at 7 p.m. I have enclosed a livestock schedule showing all the dates and times of the animal shows and auctions. If you have any questions, please call me at 343-5121.

Thanks once again for your support last year. You helped me be able to participate in another 4-H year with a Steer project and save money for my college education.

Sincerely,

Billy Bob

Do's and Do Not's of 4-H Buyer's Letters

Do's	Do Not's
Write a rough draft and get your parent's to proof read	Send your rough draft without your parents checking it
Get the name, position title, and proper address of the contact	Never send a letter "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Buyer"
Be personal, warm, and inviting	Use a cold short form letter
Use proper greeting Dear Mr. Jones	Never address the person by first Name – Dear Bob
Check your spelling	Forget to use spell check
Be gracious "Please" and "Thank you"	Never make demands
Use Sincerely to close	Do not use Fondly, or Regards. Keep it all business
Sign your letter and include contact information	Forget to sign your letter and include contact information

Follow-Up

It is important to keep your buyers informed of you and your project animal's progress. When the economy is slow, it is especially important to keep in touch with your buyers.

Suggestions:

- Thanksgiving Card
- Christmas Card
- Business Cards
- CD of pictures -
- Postcard – Picture of you and your animal

Thank You

It is very important to ***thank your buyer*** and other people who have helped you with your project throughout the year. It is especially important for your future years in 4-H market project to thank your buyers. You will normally receive a list of contributors in your final sale packet after fair and will need to send thank you letters to them.

Summary

4-H livestock projects are more than just raising, feeding, showing, and selling the animal for the most money you can get. The project is about learning life skills, one of which is MARKETING yourself. This means presenting yourself in the best possible light. The amount of effort and time YOU put into it will make all the difference.

If you need more help or have questions, please feel free to contact the 4-H Office at 772-770-5030.