



TIPS ON MANAGING 4-H PROGRAMS

“Extension Staff Role in Progress/Prospect Shows and Related Events”

The following guidelines are provided to help staff assess their own role in progress or prospect shows that may be held in the county/area in which they are employed. Progress shows may be a way of providing additional experience and education for 4-H'ers with livestock projects.

Historically, the intent of progress shows was to provide an additional educational experience so that exhibitors could be more prepared for and comfortable with exhibiting at the county fair.

When University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H Youth Development staff are obviously involved in the management, advertisement, or facilitation of a show, the public often directly associates that show with the UNL Extension 4-H Youth Development Program. When UNL Extension staff are involved, it is expected the event will:

- Provide positive youth development experiences
- Emphasize education and provide experiences which reflect the mission of Extension
- Use the 4-H Emblem properly, within national and state guidelines

Given these expectations, we must think carefully about our role as staff and what is represented at the shows. Some points to consider and to evaluate the situation are listed below.

- 1) What is the purpose of the show? Is it to provide youth an opportunity to practice showmanship and preparation of animals for later shows, to learn good sportsmanship and appropriate ways of improving their project? Or is it more likely to provide an experience that does not contribute to the educational goals of the project? Does the show fit within the [Essential Elements of 4-H](#)?
- 2) Consider the “rules” of the show. Are there any and are they clearly stated? Do they promote the education and experiences of the youth in gaining skills in fitting, training, showmanship, nutrition, etc. Do the rules promote the [International Association of Fairs and Exposition’s Code of Show Ring Ethics](#)? Is behavior that is appropriate for later 4-H sponsored shows being modeled by participants and facilitators? If the rules are provided from a source other than Extension, would we (Extension) support those rules?
- 3) Consider the incentives provided at the show. Emphasis should not be on incentives that detract from the educational experience. Award items related to the project area are especially appropriate (show boxes, clippers, feed troughs, etc). Large monetary jackpots may not be conducive to an educational atmosphere.
- 4) Consider the other key people involved in the show, including the judge. Are they focused on providing an educational experience for the youth?
- 5) Consider your own role as a UNL Extension staff member. If you have a major role in the event, is your role educational – either from a livestock perspective or in regard to volunteer development? If this is not a UNL Extension 4-H sponsored activity, is it clear that you are working as a volunteer, or in a minor role? Regardless of whether you are working as a volunteer or as a staff member in a minor role, is the event something that meets the goals of UNL Extension 4-H Youth Development? If working as a volunteer or in a minor role, the event should not be advertised in a way to imply that it is “sponsored” by UNL Extension 4-H Youth Development, nor should the 4-H emblem or UNL logo be used.

- 6) Events that are advertised as 4-H in print media must use the 4-H Emblem and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension graphic correctly; these events should utilize the templates provided when possible. Consider whether the event is appropriate for the use of these symbols; if not, your involvement as UNL Extension 4-H staff may not be appropriate. Events that are advertised electronically should meet similar criteria.

The points above are items to consider. Keep in mind that situations may differ and that an event may be outstanding in one regard and marginal in another, but the overall focus of the event should be positive and educational for the youth and families involved. If the overall focus is positive and educational, it appropriate for UNL Extension 4-H staff to be involved.