



Keeping Your 4H Animals Healthy

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Late spring and early summer is the time when most youth are bringing home their 4H livestock projects for the year. These animals may come from next store or from another state. Regardless where they come from, steps should be taken before, during, and after these animals are housed at your home place to help insure optimum health and performance.

It is estimated that for every day an animal is sick, they lose up to a week of growth and performance. Sickness can also cause permanent negative effects on carcass quality and carcass weight. Therefore, it is important that practical measures be taken to reduce the risk of sickness in your livestock projects.

Before a new animal arrives:

- ✓ Make sure feed storage area is clean and dry.
- ✓ Prepare an isolation pen that is more than 14 feet from the rest of the livestock.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect feed pans and water tanks.
- ✓ Take measures to minimize dust and exposure to extreme weather.

Quarantine

It is strongly recommended that new animals be monitored for sickness up to two weeks prior to introducing them to the rest of the livestock at your facility. Most illnesses will present themselves within that time frame. If an animal is a safe distance away from the others, the risk of spreading disease is greatly reduced.

Always feed and water quarantined animals **AFTER** feeding the other livestock. This will prevent potential viral/bacterial carryover in the feed, water, or clothing.

At the show

This is the most challenging time to keep your animals healthy. Most animals are housed with nose to nose contact access with other livestock. Additionally, they are under stress, which compromises their immune system. Often time's animals reduce feed and water intake, contributing to potential health issues as well. There are a few management techniques that can help reduce the chance of your animals getting sick.

Animals tend to be very sensitive to changes in water supply. Water intake is directly proportional to feed intake. Therefore, water should be the first priority. There are several methods that can help promote water intake.

Bring some water from home. Begin to blend with show facility water until water intake is normal.

Add sweetener/electrolyte drink at home for a few days before the show. Let the animals get accustomed to it, then add the same drink to the show facility water source.

Add a 2 tablespoons of loose salt to cattle feed (1 teaspoon to sheep/goat/hog feed).

Never let the bucket go dry. The goal is to maximize water intake. Because most shows and fairs take place in the heat of the summer, heat stress is a common health problem. Water and good ventilation is the only way to reduce this risk.

Mix enough feed in advance to make it through the show. Changes in diet (however slight) can also result in animals either going off feed completely or cause digestive upset.

Keep your stalls clean and try to minimize dust in their immediate area. Dampen fresh pine shavings with water. This will help minimize dust and keep animals clean and dry.

The best way to minimize stress is working with your animal often. Put them in the trailer and haul them an hour or so several times before taking to a show. This will help reduce the stress of trailering, as they will be used to it. *For cattle, this method is an old trick of the trade for halter breaking and teaching cattle to stand tied.* Confine them at home as they would be at the show several times. Recreating the show experience will help them acclimate to their new routine more quickly. The more you handle your animal through halter breaking, exercise, or showmanship practice, the calmer and less stressed they should be at the show.

When your animals return from a show

Clean and disinfect any halters, brushes, combs, feed pans and water buckets thoroughly. Bacteria and some viruses can remain viable for days or even weeks after being brought home from a show or sale auction. Thoroughly cleaning the stock trailer may be warranted as well.

Quarantine animals from any other livestock again. If they picked up a disease while at the show, physical separation from the other animals will reduce spread of disease. Again, signs of sickness may not appear until up to 14 days after exposure.

Signs of sickness - All species of livestock show similar signs of sickness

Signs of Sickness



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1. Changes in behavior
 1. Lethargic
 2. Droopy ears
 3. Reduced feed intake
 4. Isolation
2. Visual signs appear
 1. Runny nose/eyes
 2. Labored breathing
 3. Sometimes diarrhea
 4. Drawn up or gaunt

Signs of Sickness

Species	Normal Body Temp Range	Possible Sickness Body Temp Range
Cattle	101°F - 103°F	104°F +
Sheep	101°F - 103°F	104°F +
Goats	101°F - 103°F	104°F +
Swine	101°F - 103°F	104°F +

What should you do?

1. Have a plan of action in place (based on veterinary recommendations) BEFORE an animal gets sick.
2. Take temperature
3. If visually sick and/or has an elevated temperature follow veterinary recommendations for treatment.
4. Have a place the animal can be kept cool and dry. May need to be isolated.
5. For cattle, sheep, goats provide free choice long stem hay along with some of their ration.
6. Either administer or provide electrolytes in the water

After the animals leave your home place

Strip clean and disinfect the pens, wash area, feed pans, and water tanks.

As a side note...

Buying healthy animals from reputable breeders is the first defense in reducing sickness in your 4H livestock. Get to know the breeder and their health management protocols. Don't be afraid to ask if the animal has been vaccinated and for what, and also ask if he or she had been previously sick. A good breeder will be glad to provide that information.

If you buy an animal at an auction, your risk of your animal becoming sick is increased. That is because an auction sale is under the same environment of a show. Many animals, often from different farms or

ranches, are placed together in a confined space. The combination of comingling and stress always increases an animal's chance of getting sick. Quality animals can be found at club sale auctions, but can still contract something foreign to them in the short time they are at the auction location.

Whether buying local or from a distance, privately or at an auction, consistent health management and facility care at your home place can help prevent your valued 4H animals from getting sick.

COMING SOON!
New Mexico Youth Quality Assurance Training Program!

UPCOMING EVENTS

New Mexico Cattlegrowers Mid-Year Conference

June 9 – 11

Convention Center, Ruidoso, NM

New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp

June 9 - 14

CS Ranch, Cimmaron, NM

Producer Meeting w/ NMSU & Cactus Feeders

July 2

4:30 to 7:30 pm - Santa Rosa, NM

(Contact Marcy Ward for more info at 575-644-3379)

4H State Conference

July 8 – 11

NMSU Campus, Las Cruces, NM

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