

# 10 Tips for Marketing your 4-H or FFA Project

You've worked hard to raise your project animal. Up early in the morning to feed and water, working in the evening to clean, to feed and to prepare your animal for the show ring. You've attended your 4-H and FFA meetings and have been collecting information for your record books. You've done the hard work for months now and are well on your way to show ring success. But what steps have you taken for **sale ring success**? Now is the time to include a focus on marketing your project animal. Whether you have a buyer lined up or not, we wanted to share some marketing tips to increase your success in the sale ring.

## Tip #1

**Think like a business person!** You will need to know what your expenses are and how to calculate the breakeven price for your product. First of all, the sale of your animal needs to cover the cost of your project. After your expenses are covered, the higher amount you receive the more you'll have to invest in next year's project and put away for college!

## Tip #2

**Begin recruiting buyers.** Success in the sale ring includes having buyers ready to bid on your animals. You should begin to contact possible buyers now, which allows them plenty of time to plan. Buyers need to plan on freezer space, make processing appointments, secure animal transport, and may even need to find others willing to go in on the purchase of your project animal. If you begin to recruit buyers now, you will allow for plenty of time to answer their questions as they go through their planning process. Think of this time as a chance to build rapport and provide customer service. Remember you have to think like a business person. Satisfied customers are more willing to support you and your future projects and may even spread the word about their interactions with you.

## Tip #3

**Secure potential buyers.** You should plan to secure a minimum of 2 buyers that will bid on each animal during the auction. Remember, not every buyer you've contacted will come and place a bid on your animal, so it is important to have several potential buyers lined up.

## Tip #4

**Think outside the box when considering potential buyers.** Understand that potential buyers in your community may have been contacted by fellow 4-H and FFA members. You are not the only one they've heard from. It is important to think outside the box and contact people no one else has. So who are they? Consider all businesses, families, neighbors, individuals and groups in your area. Do you know someone who knows someone who may be interested? Ask to get connected with them. When contacting people you don't know, make sure to include the guidance of an adult. Rule of thumb here; contact a mix of people who are familiar with the show and sale or have bought before with people who are not familiar with the show and sale and purchasing project animals.

### **Tip #5**

**Plan out how you will approach potential buyers.** Remember, you're a business person here. Don't just wing it. Potential buyers will know right away that you did not plan. A buyer is less likely to be impressed in this situation. When you approach them, remember you are representing yourself and your organization. It is normal to feel nervous at first, this just means you care and want to do your best. The more people you approach the easier it will get and the bonus is the communication skills you're developing and confidence you're building! Make a plan, be consistent and be determined!

### **Tip #6**

**Meet buyers in person whenever possible.** You are asking potential buyers to pay good money for your project animal and they have to do some planning in order to make that happen. We understand that this is the age of technology, but you cannot go wrong with some old fashioned face to face. Set up a meeting time with your potential buyer, dress appropriately and show up on time. Introduce yourself and follow current CDC guidelines in respect of Covid-19, which may include social distancing and wearing a mask.

### **Tip #7**

**Be prepared with talking points.** You are marketing your product and yourself! Here are some highlights to be prepared with:

- Your 4-H or FFA club name or chapter
- What projects you have
- Some things you have learned that year
- What your future plans are, including what your plans are for your earnings
- The benefits of supporting 4-H or FFA by buying a project animal. See handouts below!
- The options buyers have in regards to reselling the animal or for processing
- The date, time and location of the show and sale
- Any information they need for registering to buy at the auction

### **Tip #8**

**Come with flyers and brochures!** You will want to give potential buyers printed information so they can learn more about the process. Print off our buyers' guides to buying a livestock project. These flyers help buyers to understand what they will get if they choose to buy and process your animal. This puts it into perspective for the buyer and gives them the information they need to plan and to tell others that may be going in on the purchase with them. Ask your 4-H club leader or FFA advisor if they know of additional resources.

### **Tip #9**

**Give them something to remember you by.** Provide a postcard or business card that includes your name, your contact information and especially a picture of you and your project animal.

### **Tip #10**

**Follow up!** This is not a one and done activity. Buyers may be waiting to see if you take the time to follow up and to check in to see if they have further questions. Remember, customer service! At no more than 1 week after your face to face meeting, follow up with a call or hand written letter. Just a few minutes of time following up could subsequently mean they show up and buy!

And one last item or tip that should never be underestimated is the power of the words, “Thank you”. A thank you in the form of a letter, a phone call or a drop by may be one of the most important things you do. This shows you truly care about their efforts to support you and your project. A thank you shows respect and gratitude and could secure your future relationship with that buyer. You may have heard the old saying; “never burn your bridges”. You never know if you will see or need them in the future. Thank them even if they choose not to buy. They may next year...

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