

Show Stock Health & Care Guide

Essential Information for 4-H & FFA Members

Raising a show animal is a big responsibility. Your local veterinary clinic is your partner in ensuring your project is healthy, comfortable, and competition-ready. Here are answers to the most common questions students ask.

Nutrition & Growth

Q: How do I know if I'm feeding my animal the right amount?

A: Your animal's nutritional needs change based on age, weight, and whether they are a breeding or market animal.

- **Monitor:** Weigh your animal weekly to track Average Daily Gain (ADG).
- **Adjust:** If they are gaining too fast, you may need a "holding ration" (lower energy, higher fiber). If too slow, increase energy density.
- **Vet Role:** A vet can analyze your feed tag, evaluate your animal's body condition score (BCS), and recommend specific rations to hit target weights.

Q: My animal stopped eating. What do I do?

A: Going "off feed" is a major warning sign.

- **Action:** Immediately check for fresh water, proper ventilation, and signs of stress or fever.
- **Troubleshoot:** Did you just change feed brands? Is it too hot?
- **Vet Role:** A vet can determine if this is a dietary issue (rumen acidosis), a parasite problem, or an infection.

Health & Biosecurity

Q: What vaccines do I need, and when?

A: Vaccination schedules depend on your species, location, and the requirements of your local fair.

- **Rule:** Vaccines require time to build immunity (usually 2-3 weeks). Do not vaccinate right before a show, or your animal might feel sluggish.
- **Vet Role:** Vets ensure you are using the correct core vaccines for your area and can provide health certificates for interstate travel.

Q: How do I prevent skin diseases like Ringworm?

A: Skin infections spread fast at fairs through shared brushes, halters, and pens.

- **Action:** Disinfect all grooming tools regularly. Never share equipment between animals. Keep pens dry.
 - **Vet Role:** A vet can accurately diagnose a skin issue (fungal vs. bacterial vs. lice) and prescribe the proper treatment, as some treatments take weeks to work.
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 **Show Preparation & Safety**

Q: My animal is limping. How do I fix it?

A: Lameness can be caused by structural issues, injury, or hoof problems (foot rot).

- **Action:** Check the hoof for rocks, debris, or foul odor.
- **Vet Role:** A vet can perform a lameness exam to locate the pain, trim hooves for better structural soundness, and prescribe anti-inflammatories if safe for show regulations.

Q: What is a "withdrawal time" and why does it matter?

A: A withdrawal time is the mandatory waiting period between administering a medication and when the animal can be slaughtered for food.

- **Rule: Never** administer any drug without knowing the withdrawal time. Violating this can make meat unsafe for consumption and cause disqualification.
 - **Vet Role:** Vets maintain accurate medical records and ensure all treatments are legal and safe for market animals.
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 **When to Call Your Vet Immediately**

Do not wait if you observe:

- A rectal temperature above normal (e.g., Cattle >103.5, Swine >103)
- Severe diarrhea or straining.
- Rapid, shallow breathing or heavy coughing.
- Complete refusal to drink water.