

The primary purpose of the youth livestock program is to provide an opportunity for personal growth and development of the young person. A secondary purpose is to teach young people how to feed, fit and show their animals. In the process of feeding and caring for an animal, young people have the opportunity to develop many positive character traits.

The Josephson Institute of Ethics, as a part of its nationwide CHARACTER COUNTSSM! project, has developed a curriculum called “Exercising Character.” This curriculum identifies six core values which may help to better describe the value of the 4-H livestock projects. The curriculum also presents the idea that people develop and strengthen character by practicing certain behaviors, just as muscles are built through exercise.

Therefore, the purpose of the 4-H livestock program is to provide opportunities for young people to develop character. The character traits identified and some practices (exercises) that may build character follow.



CHARACTER COUNTSSM! is a service mark of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

1 Trustworthiness

includes honesty, promise keeping and loyalty.

- feeds and waters the animals daily (promise keeping)
- adheres to possession deadlines (honesty)
- adheres to withdrawal time on drugs and dewormers
- uses only approved drugs

2 Respect

includes courtesy and proper treatment of people and things.

- handles and treats animals humanely
- cares for animals properly
- listens to and follows advice of advisors
- recognizes that animal project is dependent on 4-H'er and provides daily feed and water

3 Responsibility

includes the pursuit of excellence, accountability and perseverance.

- feeds and waters the animal daily (even on the busy, difficult days)
- goes beyond providing the daily needs of the animal in giving additional time and attention to produce a winner
- adheres to deadlines for entry form and for arrival for livestock shows
- never gives up in the show ring (perseverance)

4 Fairness

involves consistently applying rules and standards appropriate for different age groups and ability levels.

- feeds only approved livestock rations
- uses only approved drugs
- accepts winning or losing with grace
- follows recommended procedure in the show ring
- follows recommended procedures for fitting and grooming an animal

5 Caring

includes the well-being of people and things in a young person's world. It denotes action and not just feeling.

- feeds and waters animal daily
- provides clean barn/stall for animal
- treats animal humanely at all times

6 Citizenship

includes making the home, community and country a better place to live for themselves and others.

- accepting instruction
- winning and losing with grace
- helping others at stock shows
- teaching younger members
- treating animals humanely
- ensuring that meat is safe for consumption

The opportunities for exercising character listed are not intended to be complete but to express the idea that the 4-H livestock projects offer numerous ways for young people to build character. It is the responsibility of adults to ensure that all exercises that children are practicing are building positive character traits. The list is offered to help children, parents and advisors to see that **if an adult does any part of the work necessary for a successful project, the child does not have that opportunity.** While recognizing that a young child must have some help to halter break a calf or to shear a lamb, the idea is for parents and advisors to insist that the child does all he or she is capable of doing.

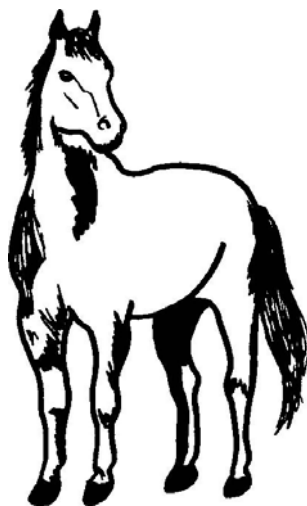
It should be pointed out that the tasks of daily feeding and watering contribute to the strengthening of at least four of the six core values. It is important also to recognize that the size of the animal does not have any effect on the value of the project for the young people to develop character. Therefore, a child may learn the same things and have the same opportunity to exercise character with a rabbit as with a steer project.

4-H is part of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition that has committed to help young people learn the six pillars of character. More than 450 cities, Congress, the U.S. Department of Education and organizations representing 35 million people have agreed that our young people need these character traits.

The Cooperative Extension Service believes that these values need to become a part of the 4-H livestock program.

For more information about 4-H or the 4-H livestock program, contact your local extension agent.

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What is the real purpose of 4-H livestock projects?

