

# Promoting Your Market Animal Project



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## Introduction

When you complete your market animal project you will be an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is someone that makes money on his or her own. The life skills you will learn in this project may help you to become a small business owner in the future. In order to be a successful entrepreneur, you must do the following: decide upon a product; acquire necessary supplies; produce the product; market the product, and sell it for a profit so that you can continue the cycle.

The economy is in a recession, which means that business is poor for many businesses in our area. As a result, there will be fewer buyers at the fair livestock auction and you are going to have a lot of competition. If you want to be successful and get the best price for your animal, you must market yourself and your animal. Find a buyer before the fair who is interested in your animal and **you**. Simply showing up at the fair auction and expecting buyers to want your animal is not realistic. You have spent a lot of time and energy raising and caring for your animal - now you need to spend a lot of time finding the right people to buy your animal!

## Buyer's Letter

A buyer's letter is written by a 4-H, FFA or Independent member and then sent out to potential buyers before the Volusia County Fair. The letter tells the potential buyer a little about the youth and the animal. It is also an invitation to the fair and livestock auction. This guide will help youth write a successful buyer's letter.

The Volusia County Fair requires each youth to write at least *three* letters to potential buyers. It is your responsibility to help get new and returning buyers to come to the livestock sales. Without new and returning buyers, a time may come when there are more animals than buyers. If this happens, animals will be sold at market price. The prices may drop to a point where exhibitors are losing money by raising their animals. So it is your job to write a letter that will encourage potential buyers to come to the fair auction so there will be more buyers than animals for sale. It is also your job to sell yourself in the letter so the buyer wants to buy your animal.

## **How Do I Find a Buyer?**

Before you begin writing your letters, it is important to *have a plan*. Who should I target to receive my buyers' letters? How many should I send out? The fair requires that I send out *three*, but is that enough in these tough economic times?

### **Suggestions**

- Advertisers listed in the Volusia County Fair Books
- Family Doctor
- Insurance Agent
- Banker
- Grocery Stores – Winn Dixie, Publix (Meat Managers)
- Restaurants
- Hair Stylists
- Mechanics
- Contractors
- Engineers
- Veterinarian
- Feed Store
- Equipment Dealers
- Car Sales Dealers
- Relatives
- Neighbors
- Friends
- Parents' employers
- Your employer (if you are old enough to have a job)

Your goal is to get as many buyers as possible to the fair auction in order to have more buyers than sellers. This will increase the price you will receive for your animal. You are going to have to work harder this year than in past years to get the buyers to the fair. Therefore, you should set a goal of sending out *more* than the *required 3 letters*. You should send out at least *10 - 25 letters*.

## **Before You Write Your Letter - Read the Research**

A research study was conducted at the Trinity County Fair in Tennessee regarding the buyers' letters that were sent out by 500 4-H youth to over 2,000 buyers. Before we begin writing our letters, we can learn a lot from this research study:

- Content of the letter: 80% wanted to read about the youth's *history* and the raising of the animal
- Pictures: 80% wanted a *picture* of the animal and the youth
- Handwritten or typed: 60% said it does not matter as long as it is *personal*

- Form Letters: 60% did not like form letters, they wanted a *personal letter*
- Length of the letter: 40% said at least *one page*, 40% said it does not matter as long as it is not too short
- Do you remember the best letter you have received?  
25% liked *humor*, 25% liked the letter addressed to them *by name* and appreciated a letter that showed a lot of work went into the project, 25% liked little cartoons of the animal with a hand written letter, and 25% liked a full page letter that focused on the exhibitor that included a *picture*.

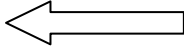
### The Buyer's Letter

1. Know your potential buyer: Title, use first and last names
2. Information about yourself: Name, age, school, 4-H Club, years in your project (When buyers get to the fair this information helps them make a connection with you.)
3. Give them information about your project: Breed of your animal, name of the animal, target final weight, your feeding program, what you hope to accomplish, goals, etc.
4. The fair dates: Let the buyer know the dates and location of the fair, show, and auction. Invite them to the fair to watch you show your animal. You can also include a livestock schedule with your letter.
5. Tell them how they can participate as a buyer: This is important if they are a first time buyer. Providing potential buyers with all the necessary information this will make it easier for them to participate.
6. Inform them where they can get more information: People often have questions that you have not answered in your buyer's letter. This provides a way for them to contact you to get answers to their questions. Include a phone number and e-mail address.
7. Thank them for previous participation if they are a buyer from a previous year:  
If you do this, it may motivate the buyer to come back and bid again. It lets them know you appreciate them taking the time to come to the fair.
8. Personalize the letter: This is good because most buyers like letters that are signed by a real person and not photocopied. They also like their name on the letter - not "Dear Buyer." The more individualized a letter is, the more likely a person is to read it.
9. Include a picture of you and your animal: This helps people connect with you.
10. Make a copy of each buyer letter for your Record Book.

Example Letter:

September 14, 2010

To: Mr. Jim Smith  
President, Marketing  
Smith Tractor  
4206 Pine Court  
DeLand, Florida 32720



- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Personalized: Title, first and last name</li><li>2. Professional Title</li></ol> |
|---|

From: Susan James  
3406 Palm Blvd.  
New Smyrna Beach, Florida 32168  
Sjames11@ aol.com  
(386) 423-7516



- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your name and address</li><li>2. Your e-mail and phone number</li></ol> |
|--|

Dear Mr. Smith:

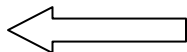
My name is Susan James and this is my second year in the Big Clovers 4-H Club. I am 15 and attend New Smyrna Beach High School and plan to major in Agribusiness after I graduate. My hobbies include soccer, reading, and sewing.

This year I am raising a hog to show at the 2010 Volusia County Fair. Her name is Bacon Bits. This is my second year raising a hog, but my first year in the Fair because my hog did not make weight last year. I learned a lot from that experience and I know more about proper feeding this year so I plan to be at the Fair with Bacon Bits.

Bacon Bits and I will be at the Fair from November 7 - 11 and I would like to invite you to see her on show night and bid for her at the auction. The show will be held on Tuesday, November 9, at 7:00 p.m. in the Townsend Livestock Pavilion and the Livestock Auction will be Thursday, November 11, at 6:00 p.m. in the Townsend Livestock Pavilion.

I have enclosed a picture. If there are any questions you have for me, you can call me or e-mail me and I will be happy to answer your questions. Thank you for your time and attention. Bacon Bits and I look forward to seeing you at the fair.

Sincerely,



Sign your letter!
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Susan James

Example

William Billings  
51221 Bobwhite Lane  
Pierson, Florida 34286  
(386) 749-5121  
[willbill231@aol.com](mailto:willbill231@aol.com)

September 14, 2008

Tops Super Market  
Mr. Ryan, Meat Manager  
120 Main Street  
Orange City, Florida 32763

Dear Mr. Ryan,

Last year you purchased my steer from the Volusia County Fair. Thank you again for your purchase. I used the money I earned from last year's sale to buy my market steer this year.

I am going back to the Volusia County Fair – November 4 -14, 2010. I will be showing and selling my steer, Mr. Beef. I have learned a lot with this 4-H project. Some critical lessons I have learned are responsibility and time management. This is important since I am trying to balance school work, school sports, and my church youth group. I want to invite you to the Fair again this year.

After you take in all the great fair fun, I hope you attend the livestock auction which will be held Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. I will be showing Mr. Beef Wednesday night, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. I have enclosed a livestock schedule showing all the dates and times of the animal shows and auctions. If you have any questions, please call me at 749-5121.

Thanks once again for your support last year. You helped me be able to participate in another 4-H year with a steer project and save money for my college education.

Sincerely,

William Billings

## Do's and Do Not's of Buyer's Letters

<b>Do's</b>	<b>Do Not's</b>
Write a rough draft and get your parents to proof read	Send your rough draft without having someone proofread it
Get the name, position title, and proper address of the contact	Never address a letter to "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Buyer"
Be personal, warm, and inviting	Use a cold short form letter
Use a proper greeting, such as: Dear Mr. Jones	Never address the person by first Name – "Dear Bob"
Check your spelling	Forget to use spell check
Be gracious: "Please" and "Thank you"	Never make demands-
Use "Sincerely" to close	Do not use Fondly, Regards, Keep it all business!
Sign your letter and include contact information	Forget to sign your letter and include contact information

## Follow-Up

It is important to keep your buyers informed of you and your project animal's progress. When the economy is slow, it is especially important to keep in touch with your buyers.

### Suggestions:

- Business Cards
- CD of pictures
- Several postcards – pictures of you and your animal – Start early!

## Thank You

It is very important to *thank your buyer* and other people who have helped you with your project throughout the year. You are required to send thank you letters to them after the fair before you receive the money for your animal.

## Summary

Livestock projects are more than just raising, feeding, showing, and selling the animal for the most money you can get at the fair. The project is about learning life skills and marketing yourself. The amount of effort and time YOU put into it will make all the difference.

Written by Cathy Suggs, Lee County 4-H, 2008  
Adapted with permission by Laura Cash, Volusia County 4-H, 2010