

## Ethics In Youth Livestock Programs

Denise Schwab  
Iowa State University

Some say ethics is just knowing and doing the right thing. Knowing the difference between right and wrong is easy, but doing the right thing is much more difficult! Building our character traits of caring, trustworthiness, respect, fairness, responsibility, and citizenship helps to make doing the right thing a little easier.

**Caring** means showing concern for others, both to people you work with and to your animals. A caring youth will:

- help new exhibitors
- say "thank you" and express your appreciation for others
- congratulate other exhibitors
- avoid gossip, negative publicity, taunting, and teasing others
- provide daily feed and water
- provide a clean barn or stall
- treat the animal humanely

Caring for animals includes placing more importance on the health and safety of the animal than the opportunity to go to the big show!

**Respect** is treating people like you would like to be treated. Respectful youth will:

- speak kindly about leaders, fair committees, and fellow 4-H'ers and listen to others
- keep animals comfortable and clean, treat them humanely
- provide daily feeding and watering
- follow proper drug use to produce a safe, high quality product for consumers

**Trustworthiness** means doing what you say you will do. A trustworthy youth will:

- provide daily care for your animals or make arrangements for help
- follow the rules for animal ownership and registration
- consult with a veterinarian and read labels before administering any medication
- follow all food safety rules and withdrawal times, and use only approved drugs

**Fairness** means listening to others, playing by the rules, and treating everyone equally. A fair youth will:

- follow ownership and registration deadlines
- know and follow show rules

- be considerate of other exhibitors
- speak well of winners and resist the temptation to gossip

**Responsibility** means doing the right thing, considering the consequences of your actions, and being accountable for your decisions. Responsible youth will:

- care for animals daily
- train animals to be exhibited safely
- read, know, and abide by all rules
- follow entry deadlines
- read and follow all drug and medication rules and regulations
- take care of the property of others

Responsibility is also demonstrated by good sportsmanship, good herdsmanship, and good showmanship at ALL times, not just when the judge is watching.

**Citizenship** means helping others and obeying the law. Youth demonstrate citizenship when they:

- help others in need
- work with less experienced exhibitors to improve their skills and knowledge
- share resources with others
- follow quality assurance methods to produce a product safe for consumers

Over the past decade, scandals have affected both 4-H and FFA shows nationwide due to the illegal use of drugs, physical alterations of animals, false ownership, and using professional fitters when the rules specified that it was not allowed. This has been damaging to the program and to consumer's confidence in the product we produce. It is time to place emphasis on learning rather than winning. Building your character traits can help accomplish this.

By exhibiting the six character traits of caring, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, and citizenship, you will help to build the positive image of 4-H and FFA.