



## Best Practices for Promoting 4-H with Animal Projects & Interactions in the Community

Local Community Events and Activities are great opportunities to promote 4-H Clubs and animal projects. Additionally, members of the community often enjoy seeing and interacting with 4-Hers and their animals. This guide is meant to provide general “Best Practices” for 4-H members program age 8-18 and their families that might be sharing their project animals with the community. It is the shared responsibility of the 4-H Member, 4-H Volunteers, and 4-H Parents/Guardians to ensure that 4-H members, their animals, and members of the community remain safe and comfortable during these events.

1. Any event where animals are present should have a corresponding [4-H Event Plan](#) submitted. This is important so the extension office is aware of any community events where animals have been shared and any potential risks have been assessed.
  - 4-H members should have express permission from the event organizer **well before** bringing an animal to an event—*please do not surprise them!*
2. Per the [Colorado 4-H](#) and [El Paso County 4-H Policies for Success](#), 4-H members who are 4-H Cloverbuds (4-H program age 5-7) should not be involved with animal handling, and this includes during community-level and 4-H promotional events.
3. 4-H members/4-H Volunteers and/or their parent or guardian should **ALWAYS** have physical control of their 4-H animal.
  - Small animals should be in a cage or penned environment (carrier, tank, kennel, enclosed baby gate, small ground pen, etc.) when not being held by the 4-H member.
  - Medium animals (like dogs, cats, sheep) must be haltered or leashed in an appropriate manner and penned if appropriate.
  - Large animals must be haltered or penned in an appropriate manner.
  - Large animals (beef, horses, llamas/alpacas, mini-horses, etc.) must also have been deemed “safe” by the 4-H Project Leader before being brought into a community event.
  - 4-H Parents and Guardians especially should use common sense when deciding to bring an animal into a community space.
4. In general, animals should not be led, picked up, or in the complete control of a community member. Community members should be encouraged to touch if appropriate, but the animal should remain in the complete control of the 4-H member or volunteer.
  - Before a community member touches your animal, it is a good idea to explain “how” they can touch them. For example, “Please touch Rowdy with one hand, flat, on his back. Thank you!”
    - If there is somewhere they **should not** touch your animal, tell them before they touch. “Hi there! You can touch Fluffy on the neck and back, but please don’t touch his head/face/eyes/tail/claws/horns/fangs/feet/etc.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE:



5. Animals can carry disease, and so this is an excellent opportunity to teach the community about biosecurity. If touching and animal interaction is expected at your event, members of the community should have close access to hand-washing stations or a bathroom, or the 4-H member/4-H volunteer should provide hand-sanitizer.
  - Remind young participants especially not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth after touching an animal.
6. Please remember that bringing any animal out into the public can be stressful for them, even if they have done it before. Practicing kenneling, leashing, loading and unloading your animals is a great way to prepare them for the “real deal” before a community event.
7. Please provide your animal with any food/water they would be missing if they were at home. Make sure you pack any necessary supplies you or your animal might need during the event.  
Make a check-list!
  - Some commonly needed items: Paper towels, wet wipes, poop bags, poop rake/shovel, treats, bucket/bowl for water, jug of water if no faucet available, halter/leash, show stick, hand sanitizer, 4-H promotional material, snacks.
8. Remember—you are representing 4-H as a whole when you are promoting 4-H in the public eye. It is important to remember that not all community members are aware of what “normal” animal handling looks like, especially in the area of large animal handling. What is well understood in the industry, and considered basic animal handling practices for some might look extreme to someone else without handling experience. It goes without saying, but please do not strike, hit, harass, or otherwise abuse your animals. Animals should always be treated with dignity and respect—members of the public are always watching!
  - Use these community events to help educate the public about animal handling. For example, a show stick might look intimidating, but explaining to the community what the tool is and what it does is a great way to educate them.

*CSU Extension or El Paso County 4-H will not be responsible for any damages, illness or injury to a 4-H project animal when it is taken into the community. The decision to take an animal into a community event is solely at the discretion of the 4-H member and their parent/guardian.*