



Working with Youth of All Abilities at a 4-H Animal Science Show

Sally W. Barney, Extension Specialist Emeritus, 4-H Youth Development

The goal of a 4-H animal science show is to provide an opportunity for youth to exhibit the results of working with their project animal over an extended period of time. The length of time spent working with the project animal is equalized for all children by having each child indicate their project animals on a 4-H Approval Form prior to an established date. All children enrolled in a 4-H animal project and wishing to exhibit their animal at a 4-H show must have a valid 4-H Approval Form signed by their county Extension staff member prior to the established date.

All youth will participate in the same classes. Youth with documented disabilities may receive an accommodation which will enable them to compete fully and fairly with the other youth in a class. It is the responsibility of the show staff to work with youth needing an accommodation to see that a reasonable accommodation is made which makes it possible for that child to safely participate.

Show Information Packets and Entry Forms

When you send out your show information, you should be sure that the show entry form provides a space for persons who require an accommodation in order to fully participate to indicate that need on their entry. Use the words "Do you require an accommodation in order to participate fully in this event?" Following the question, leave a space for the participant to indicate the accommodation they will need. Be sure that the entry, and/or the information about accommodations needed are returned at least two weeks prior to the event. You may need those two weeks to prepare for the accommodation.

Accommodations such as adaptive equipment, ring assistance, or modified testing are examples of reasonable requests. When you receive an entry form which indicates that the participant will require an accommodation, call the participant and his or her family to determine the exact accommodation requested; clear communication is the key. Often the youth's 4-H leader, parent or guardian, or riding instructor, can clearly describe the modification needed. While all reasonable effort will be made to accommodate all youth, safety procedures will not be compromised.

It is important that all show personnel respect the privacy of the individual 4-H participant. Information regarding a child's personal situation or disability is confidential. Any information you must have in order to assist the child with full participation should be used for that purpose only.

The show staff should work with the 4-H member and his or her family, the child's 4-H leader, and their county Extension staff member to see that all children are entered in the correct classes.

Modifications to equipment and/or special supports that are necessary for a child's safe and fair participation will be permitted; the accommodation must be agreed upon by the Show Superintendent prior to the show. Such modifications (accommodations) might include, but are not limited to, sidewalkers, interpreters, adapted equipment, or verbal or modified testing. Youth requiring accommodation must request this at least two weeks in advance of the show (as indicated on the entry form).

Participation in Quizzes

Often at 4-H animal shows a quiz is given to test the general project knowledge of the youth involved. Because 4-H youth are responsible for the wellbeing of their project animals, it is important that they understand animal care and management. Testing is a way we can measure information learned. Some youth may have a disability which interferes with their ability to show what they know through a written test.

Accommodation in the form of modified testing is for youth with documented disabilities, not for youth who just don't like to take tests. Children who are capable of learning and testing within the normal range for their age do not require the accommodation of modified testing. As show staff, you will be responsible for seeing that youth with the inability to test in the usual manner are provided with a modified testing procedure. You can follow these guidelines:

1. First you must determine whether there will be any youth attending your show who require an accommodation as it relates to testing. This can be determined by looking at the entry forms for persons who noted that they would need an accommodation to participate.
2. Persons indicating that they will need accommodation to participate should be contacted to see how they might best be accommodated. If the accommodation requested refers to testing, they will be youth who are unable to test in the usual fashion and who receive an accommodation in the form of modified testing through their school system.
3. The accommodation should fit the need of the individual. This requires that you communicate with the youth and their family and possibly his or her 4-H leader or county Extension staff member to determine the modification (accommodation) that would best meet the needs of the individual. It is important to remember that a test should challenge all participants equally; the child taking a modified test and a child taking the original version of the test should be equally challenged. Because each person is an individual, it is impossible to second guess how to best accommodate youth with disabilities:
 - a. Having a youth test out of his or her age range. This might be a senior 4-H member 14-18 years of age who takes a junior or novice test for 8-13 year olds.
 - b. Taking the age appropriate test but having the test questions read to them.
 - c. Taking the age appropriate test and having a scribe write the answers as given by the 4-H participant.
 - d. Using an alternative testing procedure. Asking the child to point out the parts of the horse using a picture or a real horse would be an example of an alternative testing procedure.
 - e. Providing the test in an alternative format such as large print or braille.
 - f. Allowing the use of technology. A 4-H'er might be able to test by composing their answers on a computer (they might want to bring their own lap top) or letter board.
 - g. In sending a youth who requires the accommodation of modified testing to the State 4-H Horse Show, please indicate on their entry the type of testing the 4-H member will require. Please provide at least two weeks' notice of the modification required by this participant at State Show.

Class Procedures

There are a variety of things that a show staff can do to make the show experience a positive one for the youth involved. Repeating directions is very helpful to many youth. In the horseshow, when you ask the class to walk or trot, etc., don't hesitate to repeat the command several more times.

When giving instructions to a group, don't assume every child understood what you said. You can ask the child if they have understood the directions, but most likely the child will say "yes". Most children don't like to admit to strangers in authority that they don't understand. You can be sure a child understands if you ask the child "tell me what it is you are going to do." The child will respond with what they believe their instructions to be. At this point you can determine whether the child truly understands or not. Using this procedure will mean that the judge, or ring assistant, will have to speak to each child. This sounds time consuming, but it helps to put all children on an even keel. Children with learning disabilities or who are hard of hearing will be given the chance to clearly understand the instructions and they can compete equally with those children who process information well or who can hear well.

Feedback is an important part of the 4-H show experience. Children improve by receiving honest feedback regarding those things that they are doing well and those things that they might do differently. Show personnel will want to provide feedback to youth who participate. You should be providing each child the opportunity to have (see, or hear) the correct answers to quizzes and the correct judging class placings. Likewise, youth should receive feedback regarding their efforts in fitting and showmanship and performance classes. A judge could speak briefly to each participant or comments could be written on the judges' cards which can be shared by the judge at the end of the day. Fitting and showmanship scorecards are returned to the 4-H members. Please have judges make comments as appropriate.

Often the thing a child needs most is time. Most of us do not provide youth with adequate "wait time" after asking a question or giving directions. Give children the opportunity to process directions or questions before they respond. It would be too bad if a leader/judge missed actually seeing what a child can do because he or she did not give the child enough time.

When a child in a show is participating through the use of an assistant or adaptive equipment, it is important that the judge look beyond the modification to the skills that the participant is exhibiting/using.

10/3/2013
[New logo 8/4/2015]

Visit our website: extension.unh.edu.

*UNH Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
University of New Hampshire, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and NH counties cooperating.*