

General Philosophy and Goals of County Fairs

The purposes of animal projects are to teach youth life skills. The purpose of the county fair is to provide an opportunity for young people to exhibit their project work, receive constructive feedback on the quality of their work, and to receive recognition for the work they have done through a series of contests and/or exhibits. These opportunities help lay the foundation for youth to develop life skills. Life skills are skills that youth need in order to transition into a healthy, responsible adult. Animal projects specifically target the life skills of:

- **Responsibility** (feeding and caring for an animal on a regular basis)
- **Determination** (working with the animal on a regular basis in order to show it)
- **Record keeping** (keeping a record of the animal's health and feeding)
- **Money/Resource Management** (keeping track of how much money or other resources have been invested in the project, and managing money and resources wisely)
- **Sportsmanship** (practice being a good winner and a good loser through competition with peers and with self. Dealing with constructive criticism, even when you've given your best is a very hard lesson to learn, but a very valuable one!)

If one takes time to study this statement, the goals and implications are awesome. It is not anticipated that a child would progress at the same rate for all of these goals; it is expected that given the proper motivation and encouragement provided by club leaders, parents, Extension staff, and chapter advisors, there would be an improvement in all areas.

Notice that showmanship is not on the list. Shows in and of themselves are not the objective of the Jackson County Fair, UF/IFAS Extension, or Jackson County 4-H. Shows are the competitive portion of the project and they can be very valuable experiences, but only if they are used in conjunction with the non-competitive portion (such as caring for and feeding the animal, working with the animal, and keeping records). Should simply "showing" ever become the main objective of the Jackson County Fair, then the UF/IFAS Extension Office and 4-H would have to withdraw, since our mission is positive youth development.