

# Youth Livestock Safety for the Sheep Project

## 4-H Lifeskills: Personal safety

### Making decisions

## Objectives:

Sheep project members will:  
Describe how you can be  
injured while working with  
beef show animals

Describe appropriate personal  
protection equipment and  
clothing choices for working  
with beef show animals at  
home and at shows

Prepared by: Kerri Ebert, Extension Assistant  
Farm Safety. This project is funded by  
USDA NIFA Award 2006-41521-03718 and  
produced by K-State Research and Extension.

Brand names appearing in this publication  
are for product identification purposes only.  
No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism  
implied of similar products not mentioned.  
Contents of this publication may be freely  
reproduced for educational purposes. All  
other rights reserved. In each case, credit K.  
Ebert, Youth Livestock Safety Sheep Lessons,  
Kansas State University, September 2010.  
Kansas State University Agricultural  
Experiment Station and Cooperative  
Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal  
opportunity provider and employer. Issued  
in furtherance of Cooperative Extension  
Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as  
amended. Kansas State University, County  
Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Cooperating, Gary M. Pierzynski, Interim  
Director.

## Lesson 1: Take Good Care of Yourself

### Overview

Livestock are involved in many youth injury incidents every year. Because sheep are small animals and tend to tame down easily their potential to cause injury may be deceptive. Young people who show must keep in mind that regardless of size all livestock are capable of causing injury. This lesson is designed to teach best practices for personal safety when working with sheep raised or purchased for show. It should be used with other Sheep Project materials.

### Experience

Watch the video clip entitled "Take Good Care of Yourself" and work through the discussion questions at the end of the video. If you choose not to use the video, take turns reading out loud the information below; then move to the discussion questions.

### Take Good Care of Yourself

Safe working habits include protecting yourself, your animals, and others. The most common injuries from working with and/or showing sheep are:

- Slips / Falls
- Muscle and/or back strain
- Bruises, cuts, and scrapes from being hit by a jumping sheep, kicked, or stepped on
- Blisters and burns from lead ropes or electrical appliances such as clippers

Less common injuries from working with and/or showing sheep:

- Breathing problems from inhaling dust, animal dander, or chemicals
- Serious injury – such as broken bones, amputations, puncture wounds

Practice personal safety by using personal protection equipment and developing safe working habits when working with show sheep, including:

- Closed-toe shoes or boots – sturdy, preferably leather with non-slip soles

## Try This!

Practice safe lifting and carrying to protect your back.

Here's how:

Stand close to object to be lifted

Spread your feet wide enough to straddle the object

Squat, bending your knees and hips

Keep your head up and your back straight

Hold in your stomach muscles

Lift using your leg muscles

Keep the load close to your body with a firm grip

Turn your feet, not your back, in the direction you are going

- Gloves – Different jobs require different gloves
  - Leather gloves protect hands from rope burns while leading your show sheep at home. They also protect your hands while shearing.
  - Latex or rubber gloves protect your hands and forearms while washing, grooming, or doctoring.
- Long sleeves and long pants protect your skin from being exposed:
  - To too much sunlight
  - To dirt and dander from your show sheep
- Safety glasses protect your eyes from wool clippings, dirt, and grooming products. When working in bright sunlight, try tinted safety glasses to protect your eyes from ultraviolet rays.
- Ear plugs protect your ears when using motorized equipment, such as the clippers or blower and when working in an enclosed area where noises are loud.
- Sunscreen will protect exposed skin from sun damage.
- Frequent hand washing with soap protects your skin whenever you work with livestock. Animals can easily and unknowingly spread disease to humans. Frequent contact with the animal's hide, dander, and feces – especially from feeding, washing, and grooming tasks – creates an opportunity for disease to pass from your show sheep to you. An example is sore mouth.
- Learn first aid and keep a first aid kit in your show box and in the barn or building where you house your show sheep.

## Do I Really Need Protection? – How You Can Be Hurt Working with Show Sheep

- The sheep can be frightened and run, jump, or kick.
- You slip, trip, or fall over things left laying around, on a slick walkway, in a pen, or on an uneven surface (such as in sand in the show ring or uneven surfaces in the lot).
- You get kicked, stepped on, or tripped while leading, moving, feeding, or grooming your animal.
- You get a rope burn from the lead rope.
- You can get burned by the hot motor on clippers or blowers.
- Your fingers get pinched in a gate latch; you get poked by a wire, the blades on the clippers, or the teeth on the wool card or curry comb.
- You can strain muscles in your arms, legs, or back by carrying heavy show boxes or buckets of feed.

How much is 15% of your body weight?

Use this simple formula.

Take your weight times 0.15

For example, if you weigh 100 pounds, the most you should lift is 15 pounds.

$$\begin{array}{r} 100 \text{ lbs.} \times 0.15 \\ = \\ 15 \text{ lbs.} \end{array}$$

Do the math for yourself to calculate how many pounds you can safely carry.

Your weight X 0.15 =  
The heaviest load you should carry by yourself

\_\_\_\_\_ X 0.15 = \_\_\_\_\_

The next lesson is about sheep behavior.

Frequent washing and grooming can cause muscle strains from frequently repeated movements, as in the up and down, back and forth of clipping and combing.

### Did You Know?

Ergonomists (scientists who study work and the human body) say the three worst problems for agriculture are: full body stoop (bending forward and down from the waist, as when picking up feed bags, buckets, or show boxes); lifting/moving heavy objects (greater than 15% of body weight, i.e. feed bags, show boxes, pulling on a show animal's lead rope); and repetitive handwork (as when you are washing and grooming).

### Did You Know?

You are more likely to hurt your back when:

- Lifting more than 15% of your body weight
- Carrying a load more than 10-15 yards

Use wheels to help carry loads; such as a wheeled dolly, a feed cart, a wheel barrow, or a wheeled utility cart.

### Discussion Questions

With your project group members, discuss how you stay safe working with your show sheep.

#### Share

- How did you feel the very first time you worked with your show sheep?

#### Process

- How can you be injured when working with your show sheep?
- How do you keep yourself and people helping you safe while working with your show sheep?

#### Generalize

- What other activities require you to protect yourself and how do you protect yourself?

#### Apply

- How can you use what you've learned about personal protection to help you in other activities?

# Youth Livestock Safety for the Sheep Project

**4-H Lifeskills:**  
Solving problems

Making decisions

**Objectives:**  
Sheep project members will:  
Understand how animals react  
in a variety of environments

Understand how to keep  
yourself and others safe at  
home and at public shows

**Experience**  
Watch the video clip  
"Behavior Basics" or take  
turns reading aloud the  
information below. When  
you're finished, move on to  
the discussion questions.

## Lesson 2: Behavior Basics: Getting to Know Your Show Sheep

To work safely with your show sheep, you should have a basic understanding of animal behavior in general, and the behavior patterns of sheep in particular. Sheep are generally gentle animals and are often recommended as a first project animal for 4-H and FFA members, but that doesn't mean they will tame down without a lot of work and regular contact with humans.

- Sheep (whether show sheep or commercial sheep) typically have more close interaction with humans than any other livestock species, however their behavior will still be determined by genetics and experience. Work with your show sheep regularly and you will experience positive results. Sheep that are handled gently and quietly will have smaller flight zones and be easier to handle than sheep that have been handled roughly or have little human contact.
- Sheep have a strong "flocking instinct" and prefer to be with other sheep. Many breeders will strongly suggest that you have more than one sheep even if you only intend to show one.
- Sheep are sensitive to high-pitched sounds and may "spook" easily when they hear sudden loud noises, such as a dog barking. A sheep will generally move its head and ears toward the sound that has its attention even though it may not appear to be looking in the same direction.
- Sheep have a wide field of vision, which means they can see nearly everything around them without moving their head. A sheep will pick up slight movements from a distance and may even start to run if the movement frightens it.
- Sheep have a highly-developed sense of smell. This sense is helpful for mating and predator evasion purposes, but can cause a sheep to become nervous when introduced to a pen that smells different than the one at home, such as a new pen at the fair or a show.
- Halter breaking is a good way to begin to tame your sheep to get it ready for showing.
- When working with sheep make changes slowly. Watch closely as changes are made and adjust

handling methods accordingly. Your show sheep may be calm at home in familiar surroundings, but may become agitated when taken to a different location with new, strange sights, smells, and sounds, such as the county fairgrounds.

- Do your best to make the sheep's first experience in different surroundings a positive one. For example, when moving an animal to a new pen have a full feed pan waiting and bring some water from home to help it adjust to the taste of new water at the show.
- Fear causes animals to run away from whatever scared them. Animals can develop permanent fear memories that may never be erased. This means that if your show sheep has a bad experience when loaded on a trailer for the first time, it may be difficult to load again.
- When shearing, allow your sheep to calm down after you have caught it and before you begin to shear. Work slowly and carefully so the sheep adjusts to the sound and feel of the shears on its skin, to keep it calm, and to avoid cuts to the sheep or you.
- When shearing is finished allow the sheep to go free carefully. It might be excited to be let loose and could run over you or kick you.
- Sheep move quickly and are surprisingly strong for their size. Do not underestimate their strength and be prepared to react quickly yet calmly. Learning how to lead your show sheep with a halter first will help you learn how to stay in control and help the sheep learn that you are in control. Remember, if frightened it will run from whatever scared it and if you're hanging on to the halter and not in control your sheep might just drag you along too.

When you understand how your sheep might act in different situations you can use that understanding to help make livestock shows safer for everyone – exhibitors as well as people who are watching the show. Keeping your show sheep calm is a good start. Other strategies to keep in mind at the show include:

- Be aware of where others are at the show – the general public (in the stands and walking around) and other exhibitors.
- Move slowly to and from the show ring with your sheep. When you get excited or in a hurry, your sheep will sense the change in your behavior, which might scare it. Remember that fear causes an animal to run from whatever scares it.

- Get to know your sheep's behavior patterns and help it adjust to new surroundings.
- Do the best you can to keep away from crowded areas while leading your show sheep to and from the ring. Many people do not understand how easy it is to scare a show animal, because they usually look so calm when they are being led.
- Practice, practice, practice show day activities – at home and again when you get to the show. If you show with a halter, practice haltering; leading on halter; jumping on and off the blocking stand; leading to the show ring; leading to and from the pen or stall; opening and closing gates; washing and grooming. If you don't use a halter, practice all this without the halter. Your show sheep will be much more comfortable doing activities it has practiced before and it will be less likely to be scared of the show ring if it's been in there before the show.

### Discussion Questions

With your project group members, discuss how you stay safe when working with your show sheep.

#### Share

- Whether purchased or raised, how did it act the first time you led it with a halter and without a halter?

#### Process

- How do its surroundings affect the way your show sheep behave?

#### Generalize

- Why is it important to practice showing your sheep?

#### Apply

- List some ways you can show others what you've learned about animal behavior?

The next lesson is about safe facilities and equipment for your show sheep.



# Youth Livestock Safety for the Sheep Project

## 4-H Lifeskills: Solving problems

Making decisions

## Objectives:

Sheep project members will:  
Recognize how maintaining  
equipment and buildings  
affects personal safety and  
the beef show animals

Understand how to keep  
yourself and others safe at  
home and at public shows

## Experience

Watch the video clip  
"Facilities and Equipment" and  
work through the discussion  
questions at the end of the  
video. If you choose not  
to watch the video, take  
turns reading out loud the  
information here; then move  
on to the discussion questions.

## Lesson 3: Facilities and Equipment

Keeping yourself and your show sheep safe includes making sure buildings, pens/lots, and equipment are well maintained and in proper working order. The facilities you use to house and work your sheep should be well designed and ventilated, sturdy, and safe for you and your animals.

- Keep buildings, alleys, and lots neat and tidy. Remember: Slips, trips, and falls cause many injuries when working with livestock. Make sure you have a place to put all your supplies, equipment, and feed and keep all of those items in their proper place. Clean up spills as soon as they happen. Don't allow manure or feed to accumulate in alleyways or chutes.
- Keep mechanical equipment clean and well maintained. Clean and sanitize grooming tools regularly, not only to keep them operating properly, but also to remove any organisms that can spread disease (such as ring worm). Be extra careful cleaning clipper blades because they are sharp.
- Inspect electrical cords on clippers and blowers often. Replace cords that have exposed wires.
- Make sure the clipper blades are sharp. Shearing with dull blades presents a safety hazard to you and your sheep.
- Use only electrical outlets have three-pronged receptacles; if outlets are located outdoors, make sure they are waterproof and have ground fault circuit interrupters to keep you and your show sheep from getting an electric shock.
- Maintain good lighting for indoor and outdoor areas where you will be working with your show sheep. Lighting should be bright and not create shadowy areas. Sheep can get scared going from a brightly lit area to a dark shadowy area.
- Buildings used for housing sheep should be well ventilated to help keep your sheep cool in the summer and to also minimize your exposure to dust when you enter the building.

## Suggested Activities for Project Meetings

Set up a practice show at a project meeting to practice show ring safety.

Take the Sheep Safety Assessment Quiz at [www.ylsp.bae.ksu.edu](http://www.ylsp.bae.ksu.edu)

Evaluate the safety of your livestock facilities using the Safety Audit Checklist. Make note of potential dangers and work with your parents to correct the dangers.

Visit and evaluate project members' facilities with an eye on safety preparedness.

Suggested guest speakers: veterinarian, beef producer, EMT, doctor, or nurse

- Keep fences, gates, doors, etc. repaired. Replace or repair equipment that doesn't work. Gates that are hard to open can cause muscle strains or can pinch you if you have to push hard and they open or close unexpectedly. Wire ties or nails poking out of fence boards can cause scrapes or puncture wounds – to you and your sheep.
- Choose equipment that will help make working with your show sheep easier. A blocking stand with head restraint helps hold your sheep still while you groom and allows you easy access by elevating the sheep to a better working height. Some blocking stands allow for variable table heights making it even easier to groom the sheep at a height that is optimum for the person grooming.

## Discussion Questions

### Share

- How do you care for your equipment to help you stay safe when using it to work with your show sheep?

### Process

- How does proper maintenance of equipment contribute to keeping you safe?

### Generalize

- Why are good housekeeping and proper maintenance necessary for personal safety?

### Apply

- List some of the safety practices you do each day – in your home, at work or school?



# Additional Safety Information

## For Leaders and Parents

### North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks (NAGCAT) Guidance

**Ages 12-13 years** – Youth should be constantly supervised by an adult when working with their beef project animal(s);

**Ages 14-15 years** – Nearly constant adult supervision progressing to intermittent (every few minutes) based on the individual's ability and successful demonstration that the youth understands his or her own limitations and animal behavior;

**Ages 16+ years** – Intermittent adult supervision progressing to periodic (check every 15-30 minutes) based on youth's ability to handle animal and successful demonstration of safe working habits and an understanding of animal behavior.

### Tips For Including Youth With Disabilities: Making the Best Better

Learn all you can about the child's disability. Discuss with the child's parents the nature of the disability and how best to work with the child's limitations. You may also want to talk with other professionals who work with the child.

Involve the child in project meetings and events just as you would a child without special needs. Provide the same opportunities to develop life skills to all youth enrolled in the project. Everyone grows from the experience of "mainstreaming" a child with a disability. The 4-Her with a disability develops self-reliance and self-confidence by interacting as an equal with other project members. Project members learn that youth with disabilities are not much different than themselves – each has strengths, weaknesses, and unique abilities. Adult leaders and volunteers learn life skills for working with people with limitations. Everyone learns how to be more comfortable with people who are different than themselves.

When necessary, modify project activities to match the ability of the child. Modifications should be designed to meet the child's abilities, yet challenging enough for to improve his or her knowledge and skills. Not all activities need to be adapted. Promote participation instead of elimination. Never allow modified activities to isolate the child who has a disability. The

## Sheep Safety References

National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System, Inc. Sheep Series, 2003

Safe Care and Handling of Sheep, Clover Safe Notes #22, Sheep Shearing Safety, Clover Safe Notes #33, 2007, University of California ANR and 4-H Youth Development, [http://safety.ucanr.org/4-H\\_Resources/Clover\\_Safe\\_Notes\\_by\\_Project\\_Area/](http://safety.ucanr.org/4-H_Resources/Clover_Safe_Notes_by_Project_Area/)

Understanding Livestock Behavior, Agricultural Tailgate Safety Training, The Ohio State University Extension Agricultural Safety Program, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/atts/modules.html>

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to participants and reviewers for making this project possible. We couldn't have done it without you.

Jim Adams, K-State Extension 4-H Specialist

Steve Ballou and Deb Pryor, K-State Extension Communications

Robert Ebert, Auburn University Extension Youth Livestock Specialist

Brian Faris, K-State Extension Sheep and Goat Specialist

Geary County, Kansas 4-H Sheep Show exhibitors and the Geary County 4-H and Ag Agents

Riffel Family, Marion County, Kansas

John Slocombe, K-State Extension Farm Safety Specialist

goal is meaningful inclusion.

In some cases, livestock show requirements may need to be modified. For example, a 4-Her in a wheelchair may need assistance from a fellow 4-Her to wash, groom, or feed an animal or in the show ring. Provide the opportunity for all youth to learn from experience. Pair abled 4-Hers (junior leaders or ambassadors) with the special needs 4-Her rather than adults. Promote cooperation instead of competition. Practice at project meetings so all project members will know how to be of assistance.

Help the 4-Her set realistic, attainable project goals. Always include the 4-Her in goal setting and project modifications.

Be prepared to devote extra attention, time, and flexibility to the project. Remember to value each project member as an individual with unique and special talents.

## Resources

National 4-H Curriculum Sheep Series materials, 4-HCCS BU-06367, BU-06368, BU-06369, BU-06370

Kansas 4-H Sheep Project Curriculum

Online Youth Dairy Project Safety Assessment, [www.ylsp.bae.ksu.edu](http://www.ylsp.bae.ksu.edu)

NAGCAT Reference Sheets: Lifting; Working with large animals; Leading/grooming animals; Cleaning service alley; [www.nagcat.org/nagcat/pages/default.aspx](http://www.nagcat.org/nagcat/pages/default.aspx)

National Ag Safety Database (NASD); <http://nasdonline.org>

A Perfect Fit: 4-H Involvement for Youth with Disabilities, Purdue University

Making 4-H More Accessible: Youth With Special Needs Leaders' Handbook, California 4-H Youth Development Program; [www.ca4h.org/leadership/ambassador/03-04/CASA-Book.pdf](http://www.ca4h.org/leadership/ambassador/03-04/CASA-Book.pdf)

Inclusive 4-H, University of Wyoming, <https://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/wyo4h/Inclusive/intro.pdf>

## SAFETY AUDIT CHECKLIST

This checklist will help identify potential hazards with your livestock handling equipment and facilities. Conduct the audit with your parents or project leader. Answer the questions by checking YES or NO. If the answer is YES, no further action is necessary. If the answer is NO, then a hazard may exist that should be corrected. Prioritize the level of risk represented by the hazard using the ranking terms of: Major, Serious, or Minor. Record the date the hazard is corrected and keep the checklist with your project records.

### Priority Levels for Identified Hazards:

**Major:** Potentially life-threatening or serious injury potential; requires immediate action.

**Serious:** Injury or property damage possible; requires prompt action.

**Minor:** Not likely to cause serious injury or property loss; correct the hazard during the off-season or during down time.

ANIMAL HANDLING SAFETY	Yes	No	Level of Priority	Date Corrected
Are steps and walkways roughened to prevent slips and falls?				
Are walkways and aisles kept free of debris, manure, and feed?				
Are animal drugs and barn chemicals kept in a secure area in original containers?				
Are pens, gates, and fences in good condition, without protrusions?				
Do doors and gates open smoothly?				
Are there at least two exits from buildings?				
Do you make animals aware of your approach so as not to frighten them?				
Do you leave yourself an "out" when working in close quarters with animals?				
Are animals immunized as required?				
Is the grooming chute in good repair with a non-slip mat?				
Are electrical cords in good repair, no exposed wires?				
Is there adequate lighting in work and walking areas?				
Are all electrical outlets properly grounded with ground fault circuit interrupters?				
Are portable tools unplugged when not in use?				
Are faulty wiring and electrical equipment repaired or replaced immediately?				
Are extension cords used only for temporary work?				

<b>ANIMAL HANDLING SAFETY (continued)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Level of Priority</b>	<b>Date Corrected</b>
Is personal protective equipment available? (safety glasses, leather and rubber/latex gloves, and ear plugs)				
Do you wear sturdy leather boots, long sleeves, long pants, and gloves when handling animals?				
Are appropriate fire extinguishers located strategically for easy access in case of fire?				
Are fire extinguishers inspected regularly?				
Do you know how to operate a fire extinguisher?				

<b>SAFE LIFTING AND MATERIALS HANDLING</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Level of Priority</b>	<b>Date Corrected</b>
Has everyone in the family received instruction on safe lifting techniques?				
Is the "bend your knees" rule always followed?				
Do you use assistance, such as a wheelbarrow, dolly, or wheeled cart, to move loads more than 10 yards or loads weighing more than 15% of your body weight?				
Do you check for a clear pathway before lifting and moving objects?				

<b>FIRST AID / EMERGENCY ACTION</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Level of Priority</b>	<b>Date Corrected</b>
Do you maintain first-aid kits in the following locations:				
♦ Home?				
♦ Barn?				
♦ Pick-up?				
♦ Show box?				
Are first-aid kits periodically checked and replenished?				
Has anyone in your family received first-aid training in the last 3 years?				
Has anyone in your family received training in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)?				

<b>LIST YOUR OWN SAFETY CONCERNS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Level of Priority</b>	<b>Date Corrected</b>