

Making the Best Better: Writing Better Buyer Letters



A Franklin County 4-H
Buyer Letter Guide

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2009 Buyer Invitations, Information Sheets, and Buyer Passes can be picked up at the Franklin County Fair Secretary's Office, the Franklin County Extension Office, or by contacting a sale committee member:

Chairperson - Rachael Bausch, 614-877-1477

Co-Chairperson - Megan Witteman, 614-875-3241

*This guide adapted by Beth Boomershine, OSU Extension, Franklin County from:
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Introduction

Its early summer, your animals are growing well. They look good, are healthy and you think you have a chance at getting Grand Champion. You have worked hard and spent lots of time working with your animal so you and your animal are ready for showmanship. You are almost ready for fair but now you need to write your buyers' letters. Obviously you want to get the best price possible for your animals and a big part of that is getting buyers to come to the fair and bid on your animals. Good buyers' letters help not only you but all the entrants at the fair because the buyer you invite may not bid on your animal, but they might bid on other exhibitors' animals.

A buyer's letter is a letter that a 4-H member sends out to potential buyers before their County Fair to tell them a little about themselves and their animal, and to invite them to the fair and livestock auction. This guide is for beginning sellers or even for experienced sellers in 4-H. The guide will explain the do's and don'ts about writing buyer letters and good letter-writing format. 4-H members who are selling animals for the first time can use the guide to write a successful buyer letter. Continuing members might be able to compose a better letter by using the guide.

Why should you write a buyer's letter? It is your responsibility to help get new and returning buyers to come to the livestock sale. Some people come to the fair every year and buy one or more animals but without new buyers a time may come where there aren't enough buyers to purchase all the animals. The prices may drop to a point where exhibitors are losing money by raising their animals. New buyers or returning buyers that are happy with the letters they have received are more likely to come to the fair and pay the premium prices we all enjoy receiving for our animals. Buyers pay far more than the market value of the animals we sell and it is up to the individual exhibitor to encourage as many potential buyers as possible to come to the fair and bid on their animals. Buyers like a personal letter from exhibitors, particularly youth. It lets them know that you have raised an animal, are exhibiting it at the county fair, and trying to sell it at the market sale.

You should consider sending your letters to anyone who might be willing to buy your animals. They might include your family doctor, dentist, eye doctor, orthodontist, insurance agent, and banker. It might also include places where your family does business like the grocery store, restaurants, hair stylists, mechanics, or contractors. Your family veterinarian, feed store, equipment and/or car dealers are other possible places to send letters too. Don't forget to send letters to people who have previously bought your project animals, as well as relatives, neighbors, and family friends. If you have a job, then your employer is someone you can send a letter to, as well as your parent's employer.

The first part of this guide discusses the results of a survey conducted in a community with a local county fair. The second part shares examples of good buyers' letters. The third part illustrates examples of bad buyers' letters. The fourth part explains good letter-writing format.

Buyer's Survey

The following questions were asked in a poll of potential buyers who may attend a local county fair. Some of those polled have attended a County Fair and bought animals. Some have attended a fair and seldom buy animals and some have never attended a fair or received a buyer's letter but might be willing to attend in the future if they receive the right letter.

- 1.) **What kind of content do you like to see in the buyer's letter?**
60% stated that they prefer to receive information on both the animal & the history of the child
- 2.) **Do you like pictures of the animal with the letter?**
80% said they preferred photos or drawings of the animal
- 3.) **Which kind of letter do you prefer: hand written or typed?**
20% said they preferred a typed letter
20% said they liked a hand written letter
60% said it doesn't matter as long as it's personalized.
- 4.) **Do you care how long the letter is?**
20% said the length of the letter did not matter
40% said the letters should not be more than one page
40% have no preference as long as the letters aren't really short.
- 5.) **Is there anything you would especially like to see in a buyer's letter that might motivate you or the people you buy for to decide to bid on a 4H member's animals?**
60% said there wasn't anything specific as long as it is personalized
20% said they did not have any preferences
20% like to receive a letter that comes in "flyer" format, (similar to an advertisement).
- 6.) **Is there anything that you particularly don't like to see, something that would discourage you from considering bidding?**
60% said there wasn't anything that they didn't particularly like to see
20% mentioned they didn't like form letters
20% said they didn't like to read about the specifics what you are going to use the money for.
- 7.) **Do you remember the best letter or letters you have ever received and what did you like about them?**
25% said they like humor in the letter
25% said they like the letter addressed to them by name and appreciate a letter that shows a lot of work went into them.
25% said they like little cartoons of the animal with a hand written letter
25% said they like a full page letter that focuses on the exhibitor.

8.) Can you think of any letters that did not encourage you to bid and can you tell me what about those letters did not motivate you to bid on the member's animals?

50% said letters like form letters which are a copied signature and that says Dear Buyer instead of the buyer's name

25% said a letter that just invited them to the fair didn't motivate them to go to the auction.

9.) Is personal contact with a member important? If a member delivered a buyer's letter in person and introduced him or herself, would that help you decide to bid on their animal?

80% said personal contact with a member is not really important

20% said it doesn't really matter until the day of the auction

10.) If you have received a buyer's letter from a particular member in the past, does that influence your decision to bid on their animal in the future?

75% said yes it does influence them

25% said it depends on how well the letter is written.

Things you should include in your Buyers Letter:

1.) Information about yourself

*Tell them your name, age, and introduce yourself. This helps the buyer know whose letter they are reading. When they get to the fair it will help them make a connection with you. Some buyers are more likely to bid on animals raised by people they know.

2.) Information about your project and club

*Some buyers like to hear about your animal, how you raised it, and what 4-H club you belong to. They may choose to bid on your animal based on your club affiliation if they recognize your club from your activities that they have heard about.

3.) The fair dates

*This helps the buyer because they will know when the fair is and that way they can attend the fair. If they have fun and enjoy themselves they would be more likely to come back. If they don't know the dates of the fair then they won't know when to come and look at your animals.

4.) The sale dates, times and locations

*In order for the buyer to bid on your animal they will need to know when the auction is and where it is. If you can't get them to the auction then they can't bid on your animal and you won't sell it as easily.

5.) Tell them how they can participate as a buyer

*This is important because if they are a first time buyer they can find out what they have to do. Providing potential buyers with all of the necessary information will make it easier for them to participate. The easier it is for them the more likely it will be for them to come to the fair and bid on your animal.

6.) Inform them where they can get more information

*People sometimes have questions that you haven't answered in your buyer letter. This tells them where they can go to get answers those questions.

7.) Thank them for previous participation if they are a buyer from a previous year!

*If you do this, it may motivate the buyer to come back and bid again. It lets them know you appreciate them taking the time to come to the fair.

8.) Personalize the letters

*This is good because most buyers like letters that are signed by a real person and not photocopied letter, and also they like their names on the letter not just Dear Buyer. The more individualized a letter is, the more likely a person is to read it.

9.) Consider adding a picture of you and your animal

* This can help people see what your animal looks like. Some people think that pictures of animals are cute and this may help them decide to bid on your animal instead of somebody else's or not bidding at all.

Examples of Appropriate Letters:

June 2, 2009

Dear Mr. Kind,

This is my seventh year in 4-H. I am a member of the Big Clovers 4-H Club. I would like to invite you to the Franklin County Fair and Livestock Auction.

The livestock auction will be held on Saturday, July 25. It begins at 1:00PM and begins with Goats followed by Swine, Beef, Poultry, Sheep, and Rabbits. The auction is held in the livestock arena in the Burke Building at the Franklin County Fair Grounds, 4100 Columbia Street, Hilliard, OH 43026.

I have spent a lot of hours on feeding, watering, walking, and grooming Butch, my Hampshire market hog, for show and sale at the Franklin County Fair. I hope you will be able to attend this year's sale to support 4-H project animals.

Come enjoy a day at the Fair, see all the 4-H animals and spend some time in the auction barn. Your bids will make a difference whether you buy "Butch" or some other member's 4-H animal.

I'm enclosing a livestock buyer information letter and Fair Pass good for entrance to the fair for two people. Thank you for your consideration and I hope to see you at the fair!

Sincerely,

Billy

Billy Clover

Examples of Appropriate Letters:

May 22, 2009

Hayfork Construction
900 Hayfork Road
Hayfork, OH 44444

Dear Mr. Hayfork:

My name is Chris Shovel and this is my second year in the Lucky Clover 4-H Club. I am taking a market lamb project to the fair. My lamb is a whether and his name is Duke. I have spent a lot of time with Duke this summer. I have walked him, fed him, and even given him a bath which actually resulted in me getting a bath. My mom took the picture of Duke and me getting our "bath" and I've enclosed a copy for you.

I will be showing and selling Duke at the 2009 Franklin County Fair. I would like to invite you to the Franklin County Fair Livestock Sale on Saturday, July, 25th, at 1:00 PM, in the Burke Building Showring.

I hope you will be able to come to the Fair to see all the 4-H livestock projects at the sale. I don't know what time Duke will sell in the sale, but the sale order is: Goats, Swine, Beef, Poultry, Sheep, and finally Rabbits. I encourage you to bid if you find an animal you'd like to try to buy.

I'm enclosing a livestock buyer information letter and Fair Pass good for entrance to the fair for two people. I hope you have a chance to come to the Fair and see my entire 4-H club's sheep.

Sincerely,

Chris

Chris Shovel

Examples of Appropriate Letters:

May 15, 2009

Foster Feed
2030 Gold Rock Road
Weaverville, OH 55555

Dear Mr. Foster,

I am Susie Bovine, President of the Heifer Stars 4-H Club. There are 25 of our members participating in the 2009 Franklin County Fair- July 18-25, a lot of us will be showing market beef animals and then selling them on Saturday, July 25th, in the Burke Building Livestock Show Ring.

As the club's President, I would like to invite you to the Franklin County Fair Livestock Sale, at approximately 1:00 PM. There will be approximately a lot of animals sold in the auction including goats, swine, beef, poultry, sheep, and rabbits. That is also the order they will be sold in.

If you would like more information about the Franklin County Fair, you can go to www.franklincountyfairgrounds.org and if you'd like more information about 4-H, I encourage you to go to <http://franklin.osu.edu>. You may also invite friends or join with other businesses to purchase an animal(s) together out of the Livestock Auction I'm enclosing a livestock buyer information letter and Fair Pass good for entrance to the fair for two people.

Your support of the 2009 Franklin County Fair and Auction will be greatly appreciated by all 4-H members. If you have any questions, please contact the Rachael Bausch of the Livestock Sale Committee at 614-877-1477. Thank you for your time and consideration. See you at the fair!

Sincerely,

Susie

Susie Bovine
Heifer Stars 4-H Club President

Examples of Appropriate Letters:

June 4, 2009

Tops Super Market
Mr. Ryan, Manager
120 Main Street
Clover City, OH 44444

Dear Mr. Ryan,

Last year you purchased my pen of market rabbits from the Franklin County Fair Livestock Sale. Thank you again for your purchase, I used the money I earned from last years sale to buy my market chickens and rabbits for this year.

I am going back to the Franklin County Fair July 18-25. I will be showing and selling my pens of market chickens and rabbits for this year. I have learned a lot through 4-H with my projects. Some critical lessons I have learned are responsibility and time management. This is important since I am trying to balance school work, school sports, and church youth group. I wanted to invite you to the Fair. You can bring your whole family to enjoy seeing the 4-H animals, entertainment and eating the great fair food. Don't forget to visit the Rabbits and Poultry in the Burke Building.

After you take in all the great fair fun, I hope you attend the Livestock Auction. The Rabbits and Poultry will be selling towards the end of the sale which begins at 1:00PM. I'm enclosing a livestock buyer information letter and Fair Pass good for entrance to the fair for two people. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the Livestock Sale Committee representative, Megan Witteman, at 614-875-3241.

Thanks once again for your support last year. You helped support me in participating another year in 4-H with rabbit and poultry projects.

Sincerely,

Betty

Betty Bunny
Corn Cobs and Bunny Paws 4-H Club

What you should not write in a buyer's letter:

1.) Asking the buyer to just buy your animal

*This can make you sound selfish and like you didn't put much effort into your letter. You **should** ask the prospective buyer to come to the fair, invite them to the buyer's lunch, look at your animals then consider bidding on them. Don't be too direct or short.

2.) Asking for a donation or sponsorship

*This makes you sound like you are begging for money. Selling your animal is a business transaction with the buyer rewarding you for your hard work. The buyer ends up with quality meat and you end with a financial gain for your effort.

3.) Stating in the letter to "buy my animal or we won't do business with you"

*This is a threat and is unacceptable behavior from a 4-H member. Raising your animal, the fair, and selling your animal should be a positive experience that you can learn from. It shouldn't be a case of threatening people to give a certain amount of money.

4.) Asking for a certain price or bid

*This makes you sound greedy. This is a similar mistake to being too blunt and direct or just asking the buyer to buy your animal.

5.) Statements related to your families debt, hardships, etc.

*Family financial problems should be kept to yourself and you should not tell everybody about them. Buyers may feel sorry for you and you should not *guilt* them into making this business transaction. It does not make you more attractive as somebody the buyer might want to purchase an animal from. Pity is not a positive motivating factor.

6.) Talking about what you are going to use the money for

*This can make you sound like you are forcing the buyer to buy your animal. Buyers want to hear about how good of a job you did, how you worked hard, how much fun you had and how much you learned not what you intend to spend your profits on.

7.) Don't use a form letter with Dear Buyer, and photocopied signature

* If you do this the letter isn't personal and it makes it sound like you didn't spend any time on the letter at all. Buyers want to reward your effort on the project in addition to receiving a high quality grade of meat. Part of the effort you give is the buyer letter you send them. A poorly written letter or one that shows very little effort does not motivate a buyer to purchase or bid on your animal.

Examples of Inappropriate Letters

June 27, 2009

New Age Trucking
210 Larkspur Lane
Cloverville, OH 44444

Dear Mr. York,

My name is Bob. I live on a farm in Lewiston with my parents and sister. I am going to be showing my market pig. My sister is showing a market lamb.

We will be showing are animals at the Franklin County Fair- July 18-25. We will also be selling them on Saturday, July 25th. We would like to ask you to come and buy our project animals. We need them to sell for a good price, so that we may pay for the feed and still have money for us to spend.

If you can't come to the Auction, that's okay you can send us \$50 or more. We can use this money towards purchasing our animals for the fair.

Thanks for helping me, and my sister.

Sincerely,

Billy

Billy Selfish

Examples of Inappropriate Letters

July 15, 2006

Loin Eye Feeds
154 Show Hog Lane
New Hogsville, OH 44444

Dear Mrs. Hamp,

I know that you have been buying livestock at the Franklin County Fair for a long time. I would like you to buy my prize market steer "Fee Fee" at this year's Franklin County Fair Livestock Auction, Saturday, July 25th, 1:00 PM in the Burke Building Showring.

You can buy my steer by yourself or you may ask friends and other businesses to join you to buy my steer. You can learn how to buy my steer with other people by calling the Sale Committee at 614-877-1477.

If you can't come to the Sale you can send me a donation towards my steer project. I can add your donation to my steer's price. Just send your check to Joey Jumper Jr., 444Rural Road, Rudeville, OH 44444.

Thanks for helping me out with my steer project.

Sincerely,

Joey

Joey Jumper Jr.

Examples of Inappropriate Letters

July 15, 2009

Dear B. B. Duck,

This is my last year showing at the Franklin County Fair. I have been taking 4-H and FFA projects for 10 years. The money I have gotten for my livestock projects I have used to buy a truck and put gas in the gas tank.

This year I will be showing a market lamb and a market steer. I really need to make a lots of money on these projects, since it is my last year. I need for you to come to the Livestock Sale on July 25th at 1:00 PM. You can probably come a little late because steers don't sell until after the pigs and there's a whole lot of pigs.

If you can't come to the sale, you could send a bid to one of my parents. One of them would bid for you- I was thinking maybe \$20/lb for the market lamb and \$10/lb for my market steer. My market lamb weighs 180 lbs. and my market steer weighs 1250 pounds. I thought you would want these weights so you could figure out the amount of money you would be spending on my animals.

Thanks for helping to make my last year at the Franklin County Fair a profitable and memorable one. I will be looking for you at the sales.

Sincerely,

Frankie

Frankie Fuel

Buyer Letter Format

YOUR NAME
YOUR STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE 00000

INVITEE NAME (or BUSINESS)
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE 00000

TODAY'S DATE

DEAR _____ ,

In the first paragraph talk about yourself and what you have done in 4-H
(example: My name is _____. I am in the _____ 4-H
Club and this is my _____ year in 4-H.

In the second paragraph talk about the fair you go to and talk about the kind of
animal you are raising and how many years you have raised that animal as a 4-H
project.

In the third paragraph tell them when the fair and auction are. Invite the buyer to the
fair. Encourage the buyer to go to the auction. Also, advise the buyer of the show date
and time for your species and encourage them to attend that event at the Fair.

In the fourth paragraph, tell the buyer that you hope to see them at the Fair and
hope they will consider bidding on one of your animals.

Sincerely (or Yours Truly, or any other polite closing),

Your Signature

Your Name
Your 4-H Club

FRANKLIN COUNTY JUNIOR FAIR LIVESTOCK SALE INFORMATION

HOW YOU BENEFIT:

- If you buy the animal for your own use, you'll be getting the best meat available.
- You'll have the satisfaction of knowing you have given a future leader of tomorrow a real boost.
- You'll receive proper recognition:
 - Your name will appear on the cover of next year's sale program.
 - Your name will appear on next year's website.
 - Your name will appear on the buyers recognition sign located on the fairgrounds.
 - Additionally, you will receive a picture of each animal you purchase.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

You or someone representing you or your company bids on an animal (lamb, poultry, beef, hog, rabbit or goat). You can arrange to have the animal harvested and packaged for your own consumption or you may take the animal home with you (excludes champion and reserve champion hogs, steer, dairy veal, lambs and goats) otherwise, arrangements are made to have the stockyard buy the animals (excludes poultry and rabbits).

Please note, however, that all champion and reserve champion animals (hog, lamb, dairy veal, steers and goats) **CANNOT** be taken home by the buyer or sent to the stockyard. These animals **MUST** be processed at the site determined by the committee and will be inspected by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. **It is the buyer's responsibility to find a purchaser for the meat if the buyer does not wish to keep it for their consumption.**

This auction is a premium sale. This means that the buyer's bid is dollars of premium that they will pay an exhibitor above the market value of the animal. So, rather than the bid being in dollars per pound, the bid is amount in excess of the market value (i.e. \$200, \$300, etc). **The premium bid assumes that the animal is resold to the stockyard for market value. Therefore, if the buyer wants to take the animal home or have the animal processed, the buyer will have to pay the market value in addition to the premium bid.** (Market value is the market price per pound times the weight of the animal.)

In the case of buying an animal for your own use, we will make arrangements for trucking the animals to the designated processor. A list of designated processors will be included in the sale program that will be distributed the day of the sale. The cost of the processing is the buyer's responsibility.

THE BUYER WILL ASSUME ALL RISKS OF INCORRECT INFORMATION ON THE RELEASE SLIP. ALL FIGURES ENTERED BY THE CLERK SHALL BE FINAL.

The exhibitors will not receive their checks until after the committee has been paid for the animal. For this reason, we ask that you please make payment for your purchase(s) before you leave the sale. This will enable us to pay the Junior Fair Exhibitors in a timely manner. If you cannot make payment the day of the sale, you must make arrangements for payment with the sale clerks.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact:

Megan Witteman, Committee Chairman, (614) 875-3241

Rachel Bausch, Committee Co-Chairman, (614) 877-1477

**THE FRANKLIN COUNTY FAIR LIVESTOCK SALE COMMITTEE
THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

Hopefully, the information included in this guide will encourage you to compose a buyer letter that you can be proud of as well as help you be more successful in the market class when you sell your animals. The Buyer Letter examples stated above are for information only, PLEASE CREATE YOUR OWN!

