

UNETHICAL PRACTICES OBSERVED AT YOUTH LIVESTOCK EXHIBITIONS BY OHIO SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS

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Abstract

During the past decade, there have been numerous cases of youth who have been found to have engaged in unethical practices at livestock exhibitions in Ohio. The purpose of this study was to determine the frequency of unethical practices that were observed by secondary agriculture teachers at youth livestock exhibitions. The objectives for the study were to identify the unethical practices observed at youth livestock exhibitions, to rate the unethical practices according to the frequency of their occurrence, and to compare differences in the observed unethical practices by gender, agricultural education district and years of experience with youth livestock exhibitions. Results found that issues related to adult involvement were the most frequently observed unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions.

Introduction

According to Merriam-Webster Online (2002), the term ethics is defined as the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; a set of moral principles or values. Over the past decade, youth livestock exhibitions around the country have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of unethical practices being used by youth and adults alike, in order to improve their chances of receiving recognition for their animals and winning large cash prizes.

“Some refer to 1994 as a year of wake up calls...” (Goodwin, 2001, p. 1393). During the 1994 exhibition season, seven of the top 10 steers, and the grand champion lamb at the Ohio State Fair tested positive for clenbuterol and/or vegetable oil. In 1995, vegetable oil was also discovered in the muscle tissue and lymph nodes of the reserve grand champion steer of the Clark County Fair during butchering. The purpose of vegetable oil injected under the skin is to give a fuller and smoother look for the animal. The use of vegetable oil is not detectable until the animal is butchered.

Clenbuterol is a B-agonist drug that affects lung and heart function and is banned for use on livestock in the United States (Goodwin, 2001). When clenbuterol is present in an animal's system, the weight gain becomes muscle instead of fat, hence, producing a muscular animal (Stokka, 2003).

At the Pickaway County Fair, a urine test revealed that the grand champion and reserve grand champion steers had been treated with thiazine, an oral tranquilizer (Baird & Woods, 1995). Goodwin (2001) reported that an animal science graduate student from Oklahoma State University was caught on videotape beating a lamb to cause swelling and make the lamb feel firmer for the judge. An FFA member in Texas was also caught putting a water hose down the throat of his hog to fill the animal with water so that it would make the minimum weight requirement for showing. The hog drowned and died.

The situation has not improved in recent years. At the 2002 and 2003 Ohio State Fairs, animals were disqualified for having testicular tissue in their system, having illegal growth enhancers in their urine, and

having hair glued and painted on to simulate a straighter top line (Niquette, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Marshall, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The inclination for people to cheat or perform unethical behavior is a problem that has affected academic institutions, youth sports competitions, and youth livestock exhibitions. The motivations for people to cheat on tests or competitive events are complex and varied. In his comprehensive analysis of cheating in academic institutions, Cizek (1999) reported that cheating was inversely related to achievement. The researcher reported that, "Students with lower grades are more likely both to report cheating on tests and to actually engage in the behavior, whereas students with higher achievement are less likely to do either" (p. 95). Cizek also reported that cheating reaches its peak among high school students with 84.5% having reported cheating while they were in high school. High school students are usually the same age as most youth livestock exhibitors at local fairs and livestock shows. Baird (1980)(as cited in Cizek, 1999) reported that greater participation in extracurricular activities while in college related to stronger disapproval of cheating. Steinberg (1987)(as cited in Cizek, 1999) researched the relationship between family structure and cheating by elementary school students (grades 5-9). Steinberg concluded that students from biologically intact families were less susceptible to peer pressure to cheat.

The prevalence of cheating and unethical behavior should be of major concern to agricultural education professionals and youth livestock officials. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) in their book on academic dishonesty outlined eight reasons why educators should be concerned about academic integrity. The authors identified student morale and students' future behavior as two of the eight reasons. The authors theorized that if students see other students cheat, and succeed, they will abandon their ethical behavior and come to view cheating

as the only way to keep up with everyone else. Also, successful cheating by college students may lead to cheating in their professional careers in the future. Unfortunately the same characteristics and consequences of cheating have been observed at youth livestock exhibitions by agricultural education professionals.

Nestor (2000) studied unethical practices in livestock exhibitions observed by West Virginia extension agents and high school agriculture teachers. Nestor's research revealed 58 practices that were considered to be unethical by the population of the study. The researcher reported that the top three practices identified by the study did not involve animals, but people and their actions. They included: 1) adults and youth questioning the integrity of the livestock judge because he/she chose one breed over another, etc.; 2) parents or teachers getting animals ready to show; and 3) talking about the other children and judges (Nestor, 2000, p. 19).

The next six practices that the population considered to be unethical included three that related to the mistreatment of animals and three that related to youth or adult involvement. The mistreatment practices included: the alteration of the hair, hooves or skin by the use of paint, oils, powder, hair dye coloring, etc., having animals drink a great deal of water to increase weight or withholding feed and water from animals to lower weight prior to weigh-in. The youth or adult involvement practices included youth not knowing a lot about the animal they were showing, paying extreme prices for feeder pigs or calves to improve the chances of winning, and having professionals groom animals prior to show.

The other 49 practices addressed a mixture of concerns with youth livestock exhibitions. Nestor concluded that there were unethical practices in West Virginia; however, the practices with a high rate of occurrence were the ones concerning adults and parents. The results also showed that females and extension agents observed unethical practices more frequently than males and agriculture teachers.

In research conducted at the San Antonio Livestock Exhibition by Keith (1996), the researcher stated,

The participants report that the negative effect of prestige is an increase in the will to win at any cost. Interviews revealed that the notoriety and prestige that goes with winning promotes cheating and unethical practice among stock show participants (p. 3).

One parent stated, "Its like drugs once you experience it you want more, at whatever cost, money, cheating, forgetting about the kids, whatever it takes" (p. 3).

Defining unethical practices or excessive adult involvement is a difficult task. The State Fair of Texas attempted to define this issue when it passed the Restriction of Assistance rule (Cosner, 1995) which reads:

Youth Exhibitors are expected to care for, groom, fit and show their own animal(s) while on the grounds at the State Fair of Texas. Youth Exhibitors will not be allowed to receive any assistance in the care, grooming, fitting or showing of their project animal(s) from any adult with the exception of the supervising CEA [Cooperative Extension Agent] or AST [Agricultural Science Teacher] from the chapter or club entered and/or from another bonafide Texas 4-H or FFA member...The designated adult (4-H leader/FFA parent) shall not groom, fit or show any youth project animal(s). (p. 1)

Similar rules have been added to the regulations of many livestock exhibitions throughout the country. The Houston Livestock Show's (2004) rule on ownership certification/fitting reads:

Exhibitors must own their animals at the beginning of and throughout the feeding period. Exhibitor must feed, care for and exhibit animals entered without any aid or assistance during the entire feeding period, except from CEA or AST or from other junior exhibitors and leaders within their county. (p. 113)

Nash (1996) also addressed this issue when he wrote, "A father feeding clenbuterol to his ten year old daughter's steer resulting in her being banned from the show for life and forfeiting the money is excessive adult involvement" (p. 1). He concluded that parents and youth need to work together, parents should provide more help to younger exhibitors and they must remember not to do everything.

Murphy, Norwood and Dubes (1992) completed a study in the state of Texas concerning the unethical fitting and showing practices in junior livestock shows. The population for the study consisted of the junior exhibitors of the 1990 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, agriculture teachers and extension agents. The researchers found that about 25% of the individuals surveyed had knowingly used illegal drugs in preparing market animals for show ring competition, approximately 47% had either registered crossbred animals or knew someone that did, and 37.5% were aware of falsification of data other than parentage on registration certificates (p. 99).

Research on the impact of exhibiting 4-H animal projects as perceived by selected participants, parents, and extension agents in Mississippi was completed by Baker (1991). According to Baker (1991), 66.6% of the parents and 63.3% of the 4-H members stated that they had learned "a lot" about treating animals properly. Over 35% of extension agents stated they had learned "quite a bit" while 31.1% stated that they had learned "some" about treating animals properly (Baker, 1991). The findings of the study show that 59.9% of the 4-H members, 43.9% of the parents, and 48.9% of the extension agents stated that they had learned "a lot" about the importance of rules (Baker, 1991). The next item of concern was the emphasis on winning, which 32.7% of 4-H members rated as "not at all" a problem (Baker, 1991). However, the parents, 27.3%, and the extension agents, 35.6%, rated emphasis on winning "a little" of the problem (Baker, 1991).

In 1997, Rus completed research on the ethical perceptions of FFA members. The study's population was 196 FFA members from seven secondary schools. The questionnaire utilized a case-study format

consisting of 20 case-study questions given to a treatment group and a control group. The treatment group was shown Dr. Jeff Goodwin's video, *The Line in the Sand* as an educational component. According to Rus, (1997), the treatment group had an overall mean of 3.84 on a 5-point Likert-type scale, while the control group had an overall mean of 3.44. Rus found that females had an overall mean of 3.76 while males had an overall mean of 3.55, resulting in a significant difference between males and females. Rus concluded that, "From the results, it should be understood that the education provided by agriculture instructors and Cooperative Extension is having a positive impact" (p. 20). These results, however, should be viewed with extreme caution because the instrument was not checked for validity or tested for reliability. Rus (1997, p. 13) stated, "the validity of this instrument was not determined and should be considered before further use; furthermore, reliability was not tested."

The limited number of studies related to unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions have shown that a serious problem exists throughout the livestock show circuit. Additional research was needed to determine if the situation has improved with the increased awareness on the part of youth and adults involved with livestock exhibitions.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the frequency of unethical practices that are perceived to be used during youth livestock exhibitions in Ohio. The following were the objectives of the study:

1. Identify the unethical practices perceived by secondary agricultural educators at youth livestock exhibitions.
2. Rate the unethical practices according to their perceived frequency.
3. Compare differences in the perceived seriousness of unethical practices by gender, agricultural educational districts and years of teaching

experience with youth livestock exhibitions.

Methods

The target population consisted of secondary agricultural educators in the state. Agricultural teachers were selected because they have a close working relationship with both FFA and 4-H youth livestock exhibitors and regularly participate in youth livestock exhibitions throughout the yearly show season. The secondary agricultural educators were identified through the 2002-2003 Ohio Agriculture Teacher Directory (Ohio Department of Education, 2002) that was published in October 2002. The directory was reviewed by teacher educators and state agricultural education supervisors to delete any secondary agricultural educators that had retired, or moved into different academic positions or non-agriculture positions.

The population was limited to secondary agricultural educators who had at least two years of teaching experience, taught in either the agriscience or production agriculture program areas and were employed at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. The respondents were also asked to limit their reflections to the five year period between 1998 and 2002. This time frame was selected because it was three years after significant cheating scandals were made public and after educational programs were initiated to address the unethical problems in youth livestock exhibitions.

Sampling and coverage error were controlled by conducting a census of all secondary agriculture teachers who met the qualifications. The resulting population of secondary agriculture teachers consisted of 246 individuals.

The instrument was developed by the researchers based on the Nestor (2000) questionnaire. The revised instrument included 45 practices addressing unethical practices that may have been observed by the secondary agricultural educators in the state. The instrument employed a five point Likert-type scale (1 = no opportunity to observe, 2 = never observed, 3 = rarely observed, 4 = occasionally observed, 5 = regularly observed) to collect data. The

respondents were also asked four additional questions regarding educational programs and the problem of unethical behavior as a whole.

A panel of experts, consisting of noted educators with experience in youth livestock exhibitions, examined the questionnaire for content and face validity. Twenty secondary agricultural educators and extension professionals from the state of West Virginia completed the pilot test for reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency reliability for the 45 Likert-type scale items was .95.

The data collection process was completed through the web services of Zoomerang and two traditional hard copy mailings. A list of the email addresses for the agricultural teachers in the state was obtained from the 2002-2003 Ohio Agriculture Teacher Directory (Ohio Department of Education, 2002). Nineteen secondary agricultural educators did not have a valid email address or Internet access and, therefore, received the questionnaire via traditional mailing. An email cover letter was sent to 227 agriculture teachers with email addresses in January 2003. A link to the questionnaire located at the Zoomerang website was provided in the email cover letter. Two-weeks after the first email cover letter the non-respondents received a second email cover letter with a link to the questionnaire. After four weeks, a replacement questionnaire via traditional hard copy mailing was sent to the 157 secondary agricultural educators who had not responded to either of the initial questionnaires.

Non-response error was controlled by comparing early to late respondents. "Research has shown that late respondents are often similar to non-respondents" (Miller & Smith, 1983, p. 45). The early respondents were the secondary agricultural educators who responded to the web-based survey and the first traditional hard copy mailing. The late respondents were the secondary agricultural educators who responded to the second traditional hard copy mailing. No significant difference between the two groups was found on the practices on the questionnaire. However, differences were found between the early

and late groups in age and years of experience. The early group had a mean age of 38.00, while the late group had a mean age of 44.35. The means for the years of experience was 15.60 years for the early group and 21.43 for the late group. This difference may have been due to the method of communication, computer based verses traditional mailing. Younger teachers, with less years of experience tended to respond earlier to the web-based instrument, while the more experienced teachers tended to respond later to the traditional mailing. However, the secondary agricultural educators had no differences in how they responded to the questions. Therefore, the results can be generalized to the target population.

Results

A total of 165 secondary agriculture teachers responded to the questionnaire for a 67.1% response rate. One hundred and forty-one respondents were male (87.6%) and 20 (12.4%) were female. Four respondents did not identify their sex. Respondents had a mean age of 40.7 years and 18.2 years of experience with youth livestock exhibitions.

Over 68% of the respondents regularly observed the practice of "paying extreme prices, above market value, for high quality animals to improve chances of winning grand champion honors." The second practice regularly observed by 43.4% of secondary agricultural educators was "parents or teachers preparing animals for show rather than youth." "Pulling a lamb's head in the air to the point that its feet leave the ground (for bracing purposes)," was rated third with 42.8% (71) of secondary agricultural educators observing this practice on a regular basis. The fourth most frequently observed practice, "the grooming of show animals by professionals rather than youth" was observed regularly by 32.7% of secondary agricultural educators who responded to the questionnaire. "Adults and youth questioning the integrity of the livestock judge because he/she chose one breed over another, etc." was the fifth practice regularly observed by the secondary agricultural educators (29.5%, n=49). In the top five regularly observed practices, one

dealt with the treatment of an animal while the other four involved humans and their actions.

Coffey and Goodwin (1995) indicated four major areas regarding unethical behavior. Those four areas were false ownership/identification, illegal drugs, physical alteration including physical abuse, and professional fitters. Following this outline, the 45 practices identified in the questionnaire were categorized into six subgroups: adult involvement, altering animals, animal health, animal management, ethics and fraudulent practices. The six subgroups were checked for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. One item in the altering subgroup was deleted due to low reliability.

Final reliability coefficients for the six subgroups ranged from .52 to .83. The results for the altering subgroup should be viewed with caution due to its .52 Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency reliability. The means of the six subgroups revealed that the adult involvement subgroup's items were observed more frequently than the other five subgroups. As Table 1 shows, the top two subgroups, adult involvement, and ethics are related to people and their actions and/or behaviors. The third and fourth subgroups are related more to general livestock practices. The last two subgroups related to more overt practices of altering animals or deceptive actions.

Table 1
Ratings of unethical practices by subgroups

Subgroups	<i>n</i>	μ	σ
Adult Involvement	162	3.69	.64
Ethics	164	3.31	.64
Animal Management	161	3.06	.49
Animal Health	161	2.75	.44
Altering Animals	162	2.56	.59
Fraudulent Practices	162	2.50	.57

Note: 1 = no opportunity to observe, 2 = never observed, 3 = rarely observed, 4 = occasionally observed, 5 = regularly observed

Male respondents had higher means in four of the six subgroups, animal health, animal management, adult involvement, and altering animals. Female respondents

had higher means in the ethics and fraudulent practices subgroups. Table 2 contains the data for male and female respondents.

Table 2
Rating of unethical practices subgroups by male and female respondents

Subgroup	Males			Females			Total		
	<i>n</i>	μ	σ	<i>n</i>	μ	σ	<i>n</i>	μ	σ
Adult Involvement	138	3.71	.62	20	3.66	.69	158	3.71	.63
Ethics	140	3.30	.65	20	3.43	.59	160	3.31	.65
Animal Management	137	3.10	.49	20	2.85	.42	157	3.07	.49
Animal Health	137	2.78	.45	20	2.56	.32	157	2.75	.44
Altering Animals	139	2.56	.59	19	2.43	.45	158	2.54	.58
Fraudulent Practices	138	2.50	.58	20	2.53	.52	158	2.51	.57

Note: 1 = *no opportunity to observe*, 2 = *never observed*, 3 = *rarely observed*, 4 = *occasionally observed*, 5 = *regularly observed*

Respondents from district nine had the highest mean scores in the animal management, animal health, and altering animals subgroups. District five secondary agricultural educators had the lowest mean scores in the adult involvement, ethics, animal management, animal health and fraudulent practices subgroups. The third demographic question concerned the years of experience of the respondents. The years were categorized into 10 years or less, 11-20

years, 21-30 years, and 31 years or more. Respondents with 31 years or more experience had the lowest mean scores in five of the six subgroups: adult involvement, ethics, animal management, animal health, and fraudulent practices. Respondents with 10 years or less had the highest mean scores with three of the subgroups: adult involvement, ethics, and fraudulent practices. Table 3 contains the data for years of experience comparisons.

Table 3
Rating of unethical practices groups by years of teaching experience

Subgroups	Years of Experience								Total	
	2-10 yrs		11-20 yrs.		21-30 yrs.		>31 yrs.		μ	σ
	μ	σ	μ	σ	μ	σ	μ	σ		
Adult Involvement	3.76	.69	3.75	.60	3.60	.51	3.56	.97	3.69	.64
Ethics	3.40	.65	3.30	.54	3.26	.60	3.18	.97	3.31	.64
Animal Management	3.03	.47	3.13	.49	3.08	.46	2.87	.69	3.06	.49
Animal Health	2.72	.37	2.75	.43	2.79	.48	2.65	.57	2.75	.44
Altering Animals	2.58	.63	2.50	.50	2.57	.60	2.60	.72	2.56	.59
Fraudulent Practices	2.52	.66	2.50	.48	2.50	.56	2.39	.57	2.50	.57

Note: 1 = no opportunity to observe, 2 = never observed, 3 = rarely observed, 4 = occasionally observed, 5 = regularly observed

The second section of the questionnaire contained four questions concerning educational programs. One hundred sixty-two secondary agricultural educators (98.8%) stated the youth they worked with had participated in an educational program (e.g. Quality Assurance, guest speakers, video tapes). Ninety-seven percent of the agricultural teachers who responded reported that they had participated, while five respondents had not participated in any educational program related to youth livestock exhibitions. Over 65% of the respondents perceived that educational programs had reduced the incidence of unethical practices, while 35% of the respondents perceived that educational programs had no effect on the incidences of unethical practices. A slight majority, 51.8%, of the secondary agricultural educators choose "getting better," while 34.8% of the secondary agricultural educators perceived that the unethical behavior problem was "staying the same."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Four of the top five most frequently observed practices related to adult involvement and not unethical treatment of animals. These findings support those of Nestor (2000). The following five practices were ranked in the top ten in both this study and Nestor's study (2000):

1. "Paying extreme prices, above market value, for high quality animals to improve chances of winning grand champion honors."
2. "Parents or teachers preparing animals for show rather than youth."
3. "The grooming of show animals by professionals rather than youth."
4. "Adults and youth questioning the integrity of the livestock judge because he/she chose one breed over another, etc."
5. "Withholding feed from an animal to lower weight and make animal appear trim."

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that adults and youth involved with youth livestock exhibitions seem willing to pay extremely high prices when purchasing animals to raise for showing, have professionals or experienced adults prepare the animals for the show, and question the integrity of the judge if their animal does not win.

The means of the six subgroups revealed that the adult involvement practices were observed more frequently than practices in the other five subgroups. The top two subgroups, adult involvement and ethics are related to people and their actions/behaviors. Within the top ten practices, four practices were considered adult involvement, and two practices each related to ethics, animal management and animal health areas. While participants in youth livestock shows are willing to go to extreme measures to win, it seems that they are less willing to alter animals or resort to deceptive practice. Therefore, the most prevalent problem in unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions is with adult involvement from the purchase of the animal to the preparation of the animal for the show ring. This result has been a recognized problem for several years. Goodwin (1995) identified it as a problem when he stated, "Adults are where the problems with the [junior livestock] program arise" (p. 1). This finding is also supported by the research conducted by Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) when they reported that individuals who had cheated as youth were likely to cheat in their professional careers. Adults who have successfully cheated in the past may influence youth exhibitors to do the same.

Males and female agriculture teachers seemed to observe unethical practices at different rates. Males observed more unethical practices related to animal health, animal management, adult involvement, and altering animals. Female observed more general unethical practices and overt fraudulent practices. This supports the results of Nestor's study (2000) where females rated such practices as talking about judges, illegal ownership issues and paying high prices for animals, higher than males. Male respondents may be more involved, and therefore aware, of unethical practices

related to animal health, management, and altering, while females are more sensitive to ethical issues and fraudulent practices.

Agriculture teachers from different areas of the state observed unethical practices differently. The incidence of unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions may be in direct proportion to the amount of livestock produced and exhibited in an area. The more livestock produced and the increased level of competition at youth livestock shows may result in individuals resorting to unethical practices in order to win high honors for their livestock.

Years of experience with youth livestock exhibitions affected how often agriculture teachers observed unethical practices. The experience level and knowledge of unethical practices of the secondary agricultural educators could explain the difference between the groups. Because the issue of unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions is relatively new, younger teachers who have been teaching for less than ten years may be more sensitive to these ethical dilemmas.

Educational programs have had a positive impact on the problem of unethical behavior at youth livestock exhibitions. The agriculture teachers indicated that both themselves, and their students had participated in, and benefited from, these educational programs. This supports the research conducted by Rus (1997) where he concluded, "...the education provided by agriculture instructors and Cooperative Extension is having a positive impact" (p. 20). The problem of unethical behavior at youth livestock exhibitions does seem to be getting better. Quality assurance programs, education in general, awareness of the unethical practices and rules, and penalties for unethical practices were reasons for the reduction of unethical behavior.

The secondary agricultural educators indicated that questionable practices were observed at youth livestock exhibitions between the years of 1998 and 2002. Adult involvement is the area of most concern that can be improved by educating the adults through seminars, lectures, videos, and ethics discussions. The unethical practices that have given youth livestock exhibitions a negative image in the past are the practices

that rarely occur. It was more common for agriculture teachers to have observed the practices of paying extreme prices for animals; parents, teachers, or professionals preparing the animal rather than youth; and exhibitors questioning the integrity of livestock judges. Unfortunately, these are the questionable practices that many people accept, tolerate or overlook.

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study. Educational programs should be required for parents, agricultural educators, extension agents, judges, and exhibition superintendents and not just for youth exhibitors. This recommendation was supported by a noted judge of youth livestock exhibitions (Perry, 1995) when he stated,

I believe that education is one of the key elements. I think we should have an educational program and that it should be mandatory that every exhibitor, parent and leader or advisor involved in the program go through the educational program before they are allowed to participate” (p. 3)

Regulations similar to those adopted by the Houston Livestock Show should be developed to limit the involvement of parents, agricultural educators, extension agents, and show fitters with youth livestock projects and programs. If parents were educated and prohibited from excessive involvement then many problems would be avoided. One parent that should have been better educated about ethics was quoted as saying, “I only wanted to give her an equal playing ground” (Tyson, 1995, p. 2) after his daughter’s grand champion steer at the State Fair was disqualified because it tested positive for clenbuterol. Steinberg (1987) (as cited in Cizek, 1999) reported that students from biologically intact families were less susceptible to peer pressure to cheat. If youth exhibitors were required to attend ethics workshops with their parent(s) /guardian they may learn more and be less likely to participate in unethical behavior during the livestock exhibition.

The secondary agricultural educators, extension educators/4-H youth agents,

youth livestock exhibition officials, and judges need to be able to identify unethical practices and be aware of practices occurring at youth livestock exhibitors.

Secondary agricultural educators should teach an ethics unit for agricultural students every year to ensure that the youth are aware of ethical and unethical practices. In discussing the judge’s responsibility with identifying ethical abuses Perry (1995, p. 2) stated, “Although judges cannot determine most of the unethical abuses ...I think it is important to firmly enforce the ones that we can determine because we are in the best situation of anybody involved to enforce the rules.”

The Quality Assurance program, which is currently required for youth exhibitors, should be conducted by a trained professional who would conduct it in every county in the state to ensure correct and proper material about ethics, animal management and animal health topics were taught. All youth livestock exhibitions at all levels: county, regional, state, and national, need to have the same set of rules and strict enforcement.

Similar studies should be completed in other states and on the national level with secondary agricultural educators, extension agents, parents, livestock show officials, judges and youth exhibitors. A follow-up study should be completed in five years to see if the educational programs, along with other efforts, are reducing the incidence of unethical behavior. Research should be completed on a national level to determine if the concerns about unethical practices at youth livestock exhibitions vary by state.

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