

CLARIFICATION AROUND CLOVERBUD AND ANIMAL ACTIVITIES

It is common for Extension staff, including Regional 4-H Educators and County 4-H Program Coordinators to field questions clarifying the Cloverbud policy as it relates to the interaction of Cloverbud-age youth and animals. And while the Cloverbud publication referenced below provides a full background with supporting research detailing age appropriate activities for this youthful audience, this piece is designed to serve as a quick reference for all partners including youth workers, parents and volunteers.

Cloverbuds; Policies, Guidelines and Support Materials published in August 1999 clearly indicates that safe interaction with animals can “provide companionship, develop a sense of responsibility and provide a sense of wonder.”

The Minimum Requirements for a Risk Management Plan in 4-H Cloverbud Activities, which monitors the roles of all partners in a Cloverbud show experience, indicates that a parent/responsible person will be with the Cloverbud at all times when in the presence of an animal or when using equipment that is potentially dangerous. It states that Cloverbuds will wear helmets when riding horses. And, it states that when animals and Cloverbuds are together in 4-H activities, such as fairs and shows, an adult/responsible person will be in control of the animal (control means to handle and/or lead the animal). It defines a responsible person as an adult leader, teen leader, parent or other adult who may appropriately assist with the group.

How do these policies, then, play out when horses are used as the vehicle for the Cloverbud experience at a fair or 4-H horse show? Primarily there are two types of horse show classes – riding and halter. By the policies stated above, one can assume that the Cloverbud could safely interact with a horse in either of these settings. If the horse is used in a halter setting it should be expected that the adult/responsible person will be in control of the horse, leading it at all times. The Cloverbud may walk along side the adult/responsible person, available to dialog with the evaluator/judge. If the horse is used in a riding setting, it is appropriate for the Cloverbud to sit on the back of the horse as the adult/responsible person leads the horse into and out of the ring. In these cases, it must be noted that at no time will the adult/responsible person turn the primary control of the horse over to the Cloverbud. The interaction with the evaluator/judge could happen with the Cloverbud remaining on the horses back. Helmets are required for the Cloverbuds in riding settings.

It should also be noted that county policies may be more strictly enforced with some counties not offering fair or show direct contact between Cloverbuds and animals.

It should also be noted that this policy applies to all horse show (including WSCA) sponsored by a county 4-H program.

This clarification was drafted by Brad Rugg; Minnesota 4-H Animal Science Program Coordinator, reviewed by 4-H Executive Team (Harries, Piehl, Deidrick and Orcutt) and approved by Sue Fisher; Acting Assistant Director, Center for 4-H Youth Development. Policy posted on 4-H website April, 2003.