

## **Setting the Stage for Ag Awareness**

- Be passionate, trustworthy, credible, knowledgeable and honest
- Provide meaningful experiences to people to expand their knowledge, skills and attitude about farming in a safe, realistic manner – does not have to be in one particular spot at the fair – does not have to be in a building per se – does not necessarily have to include live animals (although they can enhance the learning and are popular)
- Things like mystery boxes, corn bins with toy farm machinery, interactive computer games or even talking robots can replace the live animals with the right people manning the display passionate, credible, knowledgeable, personable
- Caution that you only have one opportunity to make a positive first impression.
- Appropriate planning is essential in order to present a positive image of agriculture.
- Ag Awareness volunteers should always work in pairs, in case activists arrive.
- 4-Her's and youth make excellent ambassadors but they should never be left alone
- Whether you're a farmer looking for resources or someone curious about how their food is produced, Farm & Food Care Ontario positions itself as the helpful expert on Ontario agriculture. Farm and Food Care and the various commodity organizations can be most helpful in providing resources and training in being agricultural ambassadors, but there is a cost.
- Important to be genuine, be able to explain the farm story in simple terms without using the farm jargon or acronyms many of us know
- Know when the person before you is as passionate about their beliefs as you are about yours. Be cognizant that many people experience an emotional struggle when it comes to animals and food

## **Things to Consider for a Live Animal Display - prepare, prevent, protect.**

1. Sourcing livestock – image you want to portray – the chicks and lambs are cute, but do they make it clear about the story of food production – are the animals clean, well-conditioned, calm
2. Livestock Biosecurity at Your Fair:
  - Animals may come from many different places, try to segregate them
  - Potential for increased animal stress at fairs – provide rest time, barriers to keep them away from crowds, pens suitable for the species in size, ventilation, water source and bedding.
  - Keep the public away from manure piles
  - Never leave animals unattended – at night insure security will watch them
  - Know the health and vaccination status of animals – rabies vaccinations if animals are to be touched - Under Regulation 567, Health of Canada Act, all dogs, cats, and ferrets three months of age or older must be vaccinated. Every horse, cow, bull, steer, calf, sheep, or other livestock for which a rabies vaccine licensed for use in Canada is available must also be immunized against rabies, unless the animal is accessible only to the person(s) who is responsible for its care and control. The owner/custodian of an animal required to be vaccinated against rabies as listed in the regulation must have either a current Certificate of Vaccination or a current Statement of Exemption issued by a veterinarian for that animal.
  - Protect fair volunteers and visitors against zoonotic diseases – consider no touching – provide sanitizer and hand washing and break time for animals should you want touching – realize the liability

- Identify a fair veterinarian to have in place before the fair and have a protocol in place for sick animals.
  - You must adhere to the tagging regulations for animals coming onto your grounds. Sheep, cattle and pigs all require tags currently
  - Transfer of care documentation is required by CFIA for any animal that leaves the owner's care at any time. Multiple documents are available from different livestock commodities or a template is available from CFIA. The care, well-being and safety of livestock is of the utmost importance for farmers, especially in cases of transportation. Anyone involved in transporting animals, directly or indirectly, has the responsibility to ensure their livestock are ready for the journey. In an effort to improve animal welfare and reduce risk to livestock during transport, amendments to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Health of Animals Regulations: Part XII: Transportation of Animals were enacted which requires new rules to be followed during animal transportation. These changes were implemented to improve the well-being of animals during the entire transportation process and are the result of many years of consultation with key industry stakeholders. Following a two-year period focused on education, awareness and compliance promotion, enforcement of the transport regulations officially came into effect on February 20, 2022. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) wants to remind members of notable changes to the regulations to ensure compliance and the welfare of livestock before, during, and after transportation. Under the new regulations, anyone transporting animals commercially or for business/financial benefit must keep records related to the movement of those animals. These records include the name and address of the producer, ID number, measurement of floor area available to the animals, date, time and place, a description of the animals, and the last time they were given food or water. A Transfer of Care (TOC) document is now required for situations where the responsibility and care of livestock is transferred from one party to another. For example, a TOC is needed when a producer loads their animals on the trailer of a commercial shipper, or when transporting animals to an auction market or abattoir. This document provides proof that a load of animals has arrived or that the care/responsibility of those animals is passed on from one person to another.
3. Who will set the display up and man it?
  4. Consider the penning, ventilation, water source
  5. Do you have an emergency preparedness plan?
  6. Do you have a designated person to handle activists?
  7. Do you have a rapport with local police should activists appear?
  8. Do you have the number of skilled people available to manage a livestock display - consider the vertical integration of the livestock industry and make use of truckers, veterinarians, animal nutritionists and others to tell the story of food

### **Using Animals at the Fair for Scheduled Demonstrations Cuts Number of Helpers Needed**

- Sheep shearing demonstrations with ongoing spinning, carding, weaving demonstrations – give people an opportunity to do drop spindle weaving – contact a local spinners guild
- Provide an egg hatching display – takes pre-planning so chicks will hatch during the fair – Egg Farmers of Ontario offer suggestions – many local farmers do it
- Provide goat/cow milking demonstrations
- Make sure the schedule of events is well publicized – arrange for microphone

### **Other Possibilities for Ag Awareness Not Necessarily Using Animals**

- Cooking demonstrations
- Musical presentations with a theme
- An environmental presentation
- Safety presentation about farm safety, electrical safety, fire safety
- Corn maze
- Corn box with toy farm machinery
- Create a “shop and learn” activity area. Use lots of signage. Have only one door in. Provide visitors with a toy shopping cart and a grocery list. Their task - to find the items on the list and do the activities required to acquire them. All the areas had simple signage and a few volunteers were present to greet, assist and expand the learning. This area included:
  - A plastic pig that visitors could vaccinate and check with a stethoscope before collecting a pork chop.
  - A mini ceramic/wooden cow they could milk before retrieving a carton of milk (empty) for their shopping cart.
  - An area where they had to dig in the soil for a carrot.
  - Another area where they dug in another type of soil for a potato
  - A plush hen sitting on a nest where they had to reach in and gather an egg (white and brown)
  - Some fake trees where they had to harvest an apple and a pear.

Once they had completed the hunt, they went to a check out area where an ambassador checked their knowledge in some manner, and provided them with a ribbon and a prize.

### **Summing Up:**

Ag awareness can happen in many forms and sizes, but no matter what you choose, be passionate, honest and approachable! Remember the image you are portraying!