

Writing a Buyer Letter

4-H and FFA youth who are intending to participate in a livestock or premium auction at the Clay County Fair are welcome to write a buyer letter if they choose. A buyer letter is a letter you send out to potential buyers before the fair to tell them about yourself and about your project(s). In this letter, you also invite them to come to the fair livestock auction.

Buyer letters are not expected or required, but many members may choose to write a buyer letter as a part of their learning experience.

Why write a buyer letter? Fair auction buyers enjoy receiving personal invitations from youth to attend the fair and see their projects. It's also a beneficial life skill to write proficiently about yourself and the work that you do on your projects. It also helps everyone involved in the sale to work together to create a large audience for the sale exhibition.

You could consider sending your buyer letter to a few select people who might be willing to bid on your project(s). This may include your family doctor or dentist, insurance agent, or banker. It may also include business people you have a relationship with such as your grocer, a restaurant owner, hair stylist, mechanic or contractor. Don't forget to send a letter to buyers of your previous projects, or send a letter to a relative, neighbor or family friend.

A survey from another state 4-H program revealed the buyers polled favored the following types of buyer letters:

- A letter that includes information on both the 4-Her or FFA member and the project.
- A letter that includes a photo of the project.
- A letter of approximately one page in length.
- There is no preference of a typed or handwritten letter.
- The letter must be personalized to them.
- Many buyers prefer not to read specifics on how you will use the funds you earn.
- All respondents said that personal delivery of the letter was not important, but many mentioned a personal greeting if they attend the auction is important.

Things you should include in your buyer letter:

1. Information about yourself

Tell them your name, age, and introduce yourself. This helps the buyer know whose letter they are reading.

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.

3. *The fair dates, show dates and auction dates, times and locations*

The buyer may want to come and see your project during show dates or come to the auction. Be sure to list both so they can choose.

4. *Tell them how they can participate as a buyer*

You may include this text in your letter: “If you decide you would like to come to the auction as a potential buyer, you may contact the Extension Office for a pre-fair buyer packet which includes information on the sales as well as admission to the fair. The contact for auction information is ISU Extension Clay County Fair Livestock Coordinator, Linda Swanson, 712-262-2264.”

5. *Thank them for previous participation if they are a buyer from a previous year!*

It lets them know you appreciate them taking the time to come to the fair.

Things you should NOT include in your buyer letter:

1. *Asking the buyer directly to buy your animal.*

You should ask the prospective buyer to come to the fair, invite them to the buyer’s breakfast, talk to you about your projects, and consider bidding on them.

2. *Calling an auction bid a donation or a sponsorship, or any insinuation about or mention of tax implications.*

You as a 4-H or FFA member are not soliciting a donation or a sponsorship. You are asking a potential buyer to bid on your item as a reward to you for your hard work in your project area. The organization also does not advise its staff, members or volunteers making statements that could be misconstrued as tax advice.

3. *Any suggestion that their attendance or participation is required or expected, or asking for a certain price or bid on your project.*

Completing your project work and participating in a fair auction should be a positive learning experience. All correspondence with potential buyers should sound professional and tactful.

4. *Statements relating to what you are going to use the money you get from the auction for. Statements relating to a debt, financial hardship, or other financial needs or situations.*

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 or reasons you need the funds you may receive from a fair auction.

A note from the office

We are so glad to have you joining us for this year’s Clay County Fair 4-H/FFA livestock shows and auctions. If you have any questions about showing your project(s) or about the sales, please consult your current fair book or feel free to call our office at 712-262-2264.