

A Guide to Writing Better Buyer's Letters



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*This guide is the Emerald Star Project of Al De Antoni
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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 buyer's 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 buyer's 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 exhibitor's animals.

This Emerald Star Project is about how to write buyer's letters. 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. My guide is for beginning sellers or even for older sellers in 4-H. The guide will explain the dos and don'ts about writing buyer letters and good letter-writing format. My hope is that 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 sales. 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 children. 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 to. 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 my guide will talk about what the buyers in Trinity County like to see in buyers letters. The second part will show examples of good buyer's letters. The third part will show examples of bad buyer's letters. The fourth part will talk about good letter-writing format.

Buyer's Survey

The following questions were asked in a poll of potential buyers who may attend the county fair. Some of those polled have attended the Trinity County Fair and bought animals. Some have attended the fair and seldom buy animals and some have never attended the 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% said they like to read something about the child's history, 60% said they prefer to receive information on both the animal and history of the child, and 40% said talk about the animal. (Some of those polled put more than one answer so that accounts for the total of more than 100%).
- 2.) **Do you like pictures of the animal with the letter?**
80% said they preferred photos or drawings of the animal and 20% said it's not necessary .
- 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, and 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, and 40% said they did not have a preference as long as the letters aren't really short.
- 5.) **Do you like the 4-H members writing about themselves and their animals?**
80% said yes, and 20% said they preferred the letter just be about the animal.
- 6.) **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, and 20% like to receive a letter that comes in "flyer" format, (similar to an advertisement).
- 7.) **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, and 20% said they didn't like to read about the specifics of the food or what you are going to use the money for.
- 8.) **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, and 25% said they like a full page letter that focuses on the exhibitor.
- 9.) **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?**
25% said there weren't any letters that stopped them from wanting to buy an animal, 50% said letters like form letters which are a copied signature and that says Dear Buyer instead of the buyer's name, and 25% said a letter that just invited them to the fair didn't motivate them to go to the auction.

- 10.) **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, and 20% said it doesn't really matter until the day of the auction.

- 11.) **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, and 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 letters to use:

July 11, 2006

Dear J. J. 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 Trinity County Fair and Livestock Auction. There is one day of sales at the Trinity County Fairgrounds.

The first sale is the sheep sale on Saturday, August 26 at 12:00 pm at the lamb showmanship arena. The steer auction is at 1:00 pm at the steer showmanship arena. The swine sale is at 2:00 pm at the swine showmanship arena. I am planning to sell my market hog at this sale. Small animals sell on Friday August 27 starting at 8:00 a.m. in the swine arena.

I have spent a lot of hours on feeding, watering, walking, and grooming Butch, my Hampshire market hog, for show and sale at the Trinity County Fair. I hope you will be able to attend one or more of 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.

If you need a buyer's packet, please contact the Trinity County Fair Livestock Auction Committee at 989-555-1111.

Sincerely,

Bill Hub

Examples of letters to use:

June 9, 2006

Hayfork Construction
900 Hayfork Road
Hayfork, CA 9409

Dear Mr. Wilson:

My name is Cory Hack and this is my second year in 4-H. 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.

I will be showing and selling Duke at the 2006 Trinity County Fair. I would like to invite you to the Trinity County Fair Market Lamb Sale on Wednesday, August 27 at 9:00 AM, at the Lamb Showmanship Arena.

I hope you will be able to come to the Fair to see all the 4-H sheep at the Auction. I don't know what time Duke will sell in the sale, however please come to the Market Lamb Auction and bid if you find a lamb you'd like to try to buy.

You can request a Buyer's Packet by calling the Livestock Sale Committee at 555-1111. I hope you have a chance to visit the Fair and see my entire 4-H club's sheep.

Sincerely,

Cory Hack

Examples of letters to use:

July 7, 2006

Foster Feed
2030 Gold Rock Road
Weaverville, CA 96093

Dear Mr. Foster,

I am David Booster, President of the Clark Star 4-H Club. There are 25 members participating in the 2006 Trinity County Fair- August 22-29, a lot of the members will be showing market steers and then selling them on Friday, August 25.

As the club's President, I would like to invite you to the Market Steer Sale that follows the Lamb Sale at the Trinity County Fairgrounds, at approximately 12:00 p.m. There will be approximately 100 steers sold at the auction.

I have enclosed a 2006 Buyer's Packet that tells you about the Trinity County Fair and Livestock auctions. You can decide what day you want to come enjoy the Fair and visit some of the Auctions. You may also invite friends or join with other businesses to purchase an animal(s) together during one of the Livestock Auction(s). The enclosed Buyer's Packet explains how multiple buyer sales will be handled and processed.

Your support of the 2006 Trinity County Fair and Auction will be greatly appreciated by all 4-H members. If you have any questions, please contact the Trinity County Livestock office at 555-1111.

Sincerely,

David Booster
Clark Star 4-H Club President

Examples of letters to use:

July 5, 2006

Tops Super Market
Mr. Ryan, Manager
120 Main Street
Weaverville, Ca 96093

Dear Mr. Ryan,

Last year you purchased my pen of market rabbits from the Trinity County Fair Small Animal Sale. Thank you again for your purchase. The money I earned from last years sale helped me purchase my market chickens and rabbits for this year.

I am going back to the Trinity County Fair – August 22-27. I will be showing and selling my pens of market chickens and rabbits 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 rabbit and poultry barns.

After you take in all the great fair fun, I hope you attend one of the Livestock Auctions. The rabbits and poultry will be selling on Saturday August 26, at 10:00 in the showmanship arena. I have enclosed a buyer's packet that outlines all of the sale times. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the Trinity County Livestock Office at 555-1111.

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

Sincerely,

Billy Bob
4-H member of Big Bunny

What you should not write in a buyers 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 people don't respond well to threats. 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 but this sort of personal information is not anyone's business. 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.) Writing group letters, or including information on more than one exhibitor in a single letter

*This is bad because the letter is supposed to be about *you* and *your animal* not everybody else and their animal.

8.) 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 (or poultry). Part of the effort you give is the buyer's letters 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 letters not to use:

June 27, 2006

New Age Trucking
210 Larkspur Lane
Redding, CA. 96001

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 our animals at the Trinity County Fair- August 25-27. We will also be selling them on Friday, August 27th. 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,

Bob Running

July 15, 2006

Loin Eye Feeds
154 Show Hog Lane
New Castle, ID. 45678

Dear Mrs. Shire,

I know that you have been buying livestock at the Trinity County Fair for a long time. I would like you to buy my prize market steer "Tri Tip" at this year's Trinity County Fair Market Steer Auction, Saturday August 26, 1:00 PM in the Showmanship arena, Trinity County Fairgrounds.

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 requesting a Buyer's Packet by calling the Sale Committee at 241-1177.

If you can't come to the Steer 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 Hamp Jr., 444 Rural Road Weaverville, 96093.

Thanks for helping me out with my steer project.

Sincerely,

Joey Hamp J

Examples of letters not to use:

July 9, 2006

Dear B. B. Duck,

This is my last year showing at the Trinity County Fair. I have been taking 4-H and FFA projects for 14 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 Market Lamb Auction on August 26 at 1:00 pm, and the Market Steer Auction on same day.

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 Trinity County Fair a profitable and memorable one. I will be looking for you at the sales.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Correct Buyer Letter Format

YOUR NAME
YOUR STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP-0000

INVITEE NAME (or BUSINESS)
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP – 0000

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 showmanship 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 Name
Your 4-H Club