



# What Can Cloverbuds Do with Animals?



Cloverbud animal activities are designed to introduce 5–7-year-olds to various kinds of animals and to develop safe basic care and handling skills. To ensure the safety of both the child and the animal, whenever 4-H Cloverbud members have direct contact with animals, the contact must take place with direct one-on-one assistance from a responsible parent, volunteer, or experienced older teen who has ultimate control of the animal. The parent, volunteer or teen must be always with the child when the child is in contact with the animal regardless of the size of the animal.

## Key Components of Cloverbud work with animals:

- The focus of Cloverbud animal activities is on learning through activities other than livestock showing. Activities should be planned within the context of the eight 4-H curriculum areas (Plants and Animals, Citizenship and Civic Education, Healthy Lifestyles, Personal Development, Science and Technology, Communications and Expressive Arts, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Environmental Education/Earth Sciences) and should offer experiences that address all of these areas.
- All Cloverbud activities should build positive self-image, cooperative and social skills, excitement about learning, and strong relationships with caring adults and older youth. Any Cloverbud animal activities should be carried out with these goals in mind.
- The animals that Cloverbuds work with should be small and young enough that the children can establish dominance and allow their skills to grow with the animal.
- Activities that involve measuring, observing, physical activity, and that stimulate immediate positive responses from the animals are appropriate for this age group.
- The animals used should be used to being around people and other animals and to distractions such as noise and sudden movement.
- Children's clothing and footwear should be selected with safety in mind. Hard shoes or boots should be used. Long sleeved shirts are important when working with smaller animals that might scratch.  
As children are introduced to grooming, direct supervision continues to be required.

## Standard safety skills that children need to master over the period of years they are in Cloverbuds include:

- The ability to approach animals from the side, not behind, without startling.
- The ability to be cautious about opening and closing gates and entering an animal's space.
- The ability to place a halter on animals.
- The ability to identify safety hazards such as broken boards, uneven ground, and animal behaviors that indicate that an animal is fearful.
- The ability to respond safely to unpredictable animal behavior

See second page for more details!



**With closely supervised contact, Cloverbud members can:**

- Learn to feed, water, and do basic grooming of calves
- Learn feeding, watering, basic grooming, and hand milking of dairy goats
- Raise and train rabbits, cavy, other small pets, poultry, a lamb, kid goat, or feeder piglet, with adult supervision.
- Learn basic care and simple obedience commands with safe, well-socialized dogs.
- For Lead-Line classes, ride horses with the assistance of an adult or older teen (14+) who is on the ground holding the halter and lead. 4-H Cloverbuds must wear ASTM approved helmets for all Cloverbud horse experiences.

Because Cloverbuds do not have project animals, they do not have to own or lease the animals they work with and do not have to fill out animal approval forms. Sharing an animal with an older” teen buddy” is a great way for Cloverbuds to learn about animal care and future projects.

### **Cloverbuds and Exhibiting**

- While Cloverbuds may not participate as competitive exhibitors in any 4-H events, they are encouraged to participate in fairs and other county events in age-appropriate ways.
- Cloverbuds are encouraged to exhibit their activities in 4-H Exhibit Halls. As exhibitors, they should receive a standard participation ribbon or other small token as designed or chosen by each county/fair.
- Although Cloverbud exhibits are not ranked or scored, it is important for the children to receive feedback on their exhibits. They may participate in a “show and tell” activity about their exhibit or receive age-appropriate written feedback that includes positive encouragement and constructive suggestions for growth.
- Each county/fair may determine how Cloverbud exhibits will be displayed, either in a separate area, within each club’s area, etc.
- Cloverbuds may not show any animals competitively in 4-H classes at Vermont fairs or other 4-H events.
- 5 – 7-year-old members may participate in a non-competitive “demonstration show” with one-on-one supervision with a rabbit, dog, poultry, kid goat or non-market, lamb, piglet, or small calf. (Volunteers should ensure that the calf is small enough to be handled safely and controlled by the adult or older youth).
- 5 through 7-year-olds may participate in a clinic, skill-a-thon or other educational activity with one-on-one adult supervision with adults or older teens with at least 3 years’ experience maintaining primary control of the animal. This activity may occur in a show ring or other public area that is small enough to allow for good control of the animals being used.

Any Vermont Fair age participation rules more restrictive than those of this policy take precedence.

Adapted from: <https://extension.umaine.edu/4h/youth/what-can-cloverbuds-do-with-animals/>

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