

Country of Origin Labeling of Market Livestock Projects

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Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) was implemented starting on September 30, 2008 by the USDA. As a result, all cuts of beef, pork, lamb, goat, and chicken must have documentation as to the origin of the animals to be marketed in the U.S. and international meat industry. This act will require effective documentation of 4-H or FFA market animal projects that will be sold for meat purposes.

What will be needed by 4-Hers and FFA member are the tools to get the proper documentation. The documentation process is not that cumbersome and can be accomplished with the simple form attached to this article. This form may be used for animals which have been purchased or have been home grown. However, home grown animals will be required to have a record system to support the affidavit that will be outlined later in this article.

When the 4-Her or FFA member purchases a project animal, the individual should receive from the original owner verification of the source of the animal or have the original owner fill out and sign the affidavit. In addition, other supporting information that the buyer of an animal should maintain in their files could include Bill of sale, health papers, or brand inspections.

For home grown animals, responsibility for the documentation of origin will lie with the producer. A good start for the records documenting the source of an animal would include ear-tags or notches, recorded birth dates, or descriptions in birth records (calving books, PigChamp, PigTale, etc.). In most cases, these records would already be maintained by the parents involved in marketing livestock. Although not specifically required, other records that can be used for documenting home grown animals would include reconcilable inventory records, purchase and sale receipts, some financial or feed records, health papers, or breed association registered pedigrees.

Current recommendations are that all records and affidavits be maintained on file by the 4-Her or FFA member for a **minimum of two years**. The goal is to provide an audit trail of the animal's origin in case verification is required by the USDA.

Compliance with these requirements should not place undue stress on the 4-H or FFA project owners. The 4-H records already required for market livestock projects will emphasize the types of information that will provide a good trail for any USDA audit. With the addition of an affidavit for any purchased animal, compliance with the latest USDA regulations should be very easily achieved.

If you have any further questions feel free to contact Brett Kirch at (970) 491-6642 or Brett.Kirch@colostate.edu.