Minnesota 4-H Livestock Presentations

Preparing Digital 4-H Livestock Presentations

Virtual livestock presentations can be an opportunity for 4-H members to share your learning and help others gain knowledge and skills in livestock projects. Successful 4-H presentations do not have to be difficult. Your idea does not have to be a new one, just one that you think you would enjoy sharing and someone else might benefit from. Many 4-H members mentor others at home, at shows and at fairs. This is an opportunity to plan out a skill that you enjoy using it to show others - helping them learn and grow.

Video vs. In-Person

Digital media has never been more relevant. While almost everyone is exposed to multiple forms of digital media every day, we may have never utilized the option for learning opportunities. One trip to YouTube and you will see countless videos teaching viewers how to paint, play guitar, garden, sew, and much more. While face-to-face livestock presentations are wonderful, they have a long list of needs; adequate room, good weather, a safe space, the right date & time, and a live audience. The convenience of recorded presentations allow you to speak and perform where you are most comfortable: right at home! Your animals, supplies, and tools are all readily available. Recording your presentation also gives you the opportunity to practice, re-record, watch yourself and make edits before sharing with the world!

Guidelines for video length

When planning your presentation, you will want to keep your video to a reasonable length. Research has shown that audiences tend to drop off significantly when videos exceed 4-5 minutes in length. Keeping your video focused and moving will greatly help to keep your audience engaged.

Choosing a topic

Creating a good 4-H livestock presentation starts with identifying a topic. The best demonstrations are focused, timely, to the point, and leave a lasting impression.

As you begin brainstorming on potential topics, take moment to ask yourself these questions:

1. Is my idea focused on one topic?
2. Will my topic teach something?
3. Will my audience be interested in the topic?
4. Am I able to find accurate and reliable information?
5. Can I provide adequate information in a short amount of time?
6. The most important consideration when choosing a topic is whether YOU are interested and excited about the idea! Your audience will be able to see your facial expressions, your hand gestures, and hear the excitement in your voice. If you are excited, your audience will be too!
Researching your topic

The best videos are filled with accurate, complete and up to date information. After you have chosen your topic you will need to become an expert on that topic. The best way to do that will be to research your topic by reading, watching, and talking with others. There are many excellent resources that can be used. A few examples could be: magazines, webpages, 4-H curriculum, library books, or interviews with experts in the field.

Finding Reliable Sources

It's very important that you use credible resources in print and online. Some excellent sources are:

- Websites with URLs that end in .gov or .edu are generally excellent places to find reliable information.
- Academic journal articles.
- Published magazine and newspaper articles.
- Text books.
- 4-H animal science curriculum.
- Local experts; veterinarians, nutritionists, producers, ag education teachers, Extension Educators.

Creating a plan

Once you have your topic and your resources it is time to make a plan! You might already be familiar with your topic and tempted to ‘wing it’ when you begin recording. However, by creating even a basic script you will feel more prepared and will ensure that your recording goes smoothly. Your presentation plan can be a video demonstration has four basic parts:

1. Introduction
2. Body or Presentation
3. Summary
4. Closing

Introductions

Introductions are important because it will be the first thing that your audience will see and hear from you. You are presenting yourself as an expert so you will want to be professional. However, this shouldn't stop you from making your presentation personal. Your introduction should:

1. Introduce yourself and your topic.
2. Give a brief explanation of what you will be talking about.
3. Build excitement around your topic.

Your introduction is your way to catch and grab attention. So, feel free to get creative! Use a favorite quote, tell a joke, or even share a personal story!
Body or Presentations

Body or Presentations are where you will share the content of your information or perhaps demonstrate a skill or task. The body of your presentation should focus on one central idea. In the body section of your demonstration you will:

1. Show and explain your topic.
2. Demonstrate any necessary steps.
3. Utilize any livestock or props that are making an appearance in your video.

This part of your presentation can be as long or as short as you need it to be. It is important to provide enough information so that your audience can understand your topic, but not so much that they feel overwhelmed. There is no magic number of minutes, but by developing a plan and writing a basic script you will be able to feel if you are in the sweet spot.

Summary

Summarizing your presentation gives your audience a chance to reflect on what they have heard and reinforce the main points that you would like them to remember. If you are demonstrating a skill or task, this is the point of your presentation when you will share what the finished product looks like.

1. Reflect on what was shared.
2. Reinforce main points.
3. Show your final product or result.
4. Recording your presentation will provide you the opportunity to showcase skills or tasks that would normally take too long to demonstrate in only a few minutes since you are now able to cut and piece footage together to show ‘before’ and ‘after’.

Closing

Closings are arguably the most impactful part of any presentation. Remember that your closing will be the last thing that your audience hears. In your closing you will:

1. Remind the audience of your name, the title of your presentation, and what your topic was.
2. Include suggestions on where they can find further information or ideas to further their learning.
3. Thank your digital audience for their time.

Using props & visual aids

Visual aids are an excellent way to enhance a presentation. Visual aids for livestock demonstrations could include: brushes, halters, feed bags, cleaners & sanitizers, cages, posters, pictures, and even your own livestock!

When you are gathering and preparing your visual aids you will want to consider the following:

- Are my items easy to read or see? Posters and lettering should be large enough or have enough contrast that they are able to be read from 15-20 ft away.
- Is the lettering large enough and dark enough to be easily read during the video? Contrast is very important when recording video. Make sure to experiment with poster and letter colors to create a combination that is creative and yet easy to read. While posters can be very impactful, sometimes posters will not be practical. Recorded videos may give you the opportunity to place text over the video footage.

- Will too many items crowd my filming space and overwhelm the picture? Having all of your items neatly organized and laid out in the order that you will need them will prevent you from searching for the right item at the time that you need it.

- Are items like posters attached or placed securely so that they do not blow in the wind.

- Is my livestock tied or housed in a way that will make them easy to showcase, but will not be distracting? We want you to be the star of your video. Having a steer pawing the ground or a pig squealing loudly in the background will be very distracting and will take away from the information that you are sharing.

**Practicing**

Performing a recorded presentation is similar to performing live in that practice will be key. When you practice going through the steps you will often notice things you hadn’t before. As you practice you might notice that your props are out of order or that you are skipping a vital step. As you practice, say the words out loud. Sometimes hearing the words that you have written can help you find different and more effective ways to say things.

Recording, all or part of your practices, can help you plan your filming location, layout of your scene, and will greatly help you in trying out different communication styles.

You will notice that communicating in a confined room versus being outside in the wide open will sound drastically different. You may notice that the camera does not show your facial expressions or nonverbal sins as clearly as when you are face to face. Knowing and watching for this can help you to practice being expressive and measure your expressions and hand gestures so that they are easily seen, but not over exaggerated.

When we think about really good videos we think of times when we were engaged, excited, and looking ahead for the next bit of information. Since recorded videos do not allow us to have live interaction and time for questions, it is important to practice building a relationship with your digital audience. Don’t be afraid to ask questions that you think would be commonly asked and then answer them yourself. Look frequently at the camera as if they were your audience and you will be amazed at how you can make viewers feel that they are right there with you.

**Tips & tricks for filming**

**Be cognizant of spacing.**

If you are using a cell phone to record your presentation you will want to film it in horizontal orientation so that you can best utilize the space provided. Yourself and your animal should fill the video frame, but should not overflow outside of the edges. This will be best achieved when you film holding your phone or camera horizontal. When filming it is important to be at eye level with your subject. This could mean that you may
need to adjust the height that your camera or phone is held as you move throughout your presentation. For example, when showing a rabbit up close on a table, try kneeling down and holding the camera level with the height of the table and the rabbit.

Be aware of your background.
Taking photos and recording videos of yourself and your animal in front of busy backgrounds can be distracting. Also remember that animals with similar hair or skin coloring as their background will also be more difficult to see. A white-faced lamb filmed against a white clouded sky and a tan ground will take away the definition of the lamb. Try to find a location that has minimal background and is in contrast with the skin and hair coat of your animal.

Test out lighting.
Explore locations with the best lighting. Videos that are underexposed will appear dark and won’t have a clear definition between the animal and the background. While footage that is overexposed is too well lit and will appear to glow bright white. The best outside lighting is typically seen in the first few hours after the sunrise and the last few hours before the sun sets. While overcast days may not be the best for hanging out outside, they can be great for filming as the light is filtered and soft.

Don’t be stagnant.
Since you will not have a live audience that you can invite to move closer or take a closer look, you can simulate this by moving your camera in for close ups or having the camera follow you as you move from place to place. Think of your recorded demonstration as your own educational movie. Experiment with zooming in and out, shooting from different angles, and from different perspectives.

Shooting successful footage will take practice and patience. It’s important to plan and give yourself time to record and review pieces of your presentation. You may find that on a breezy day you need to talk much louder to be heard clearly, or that the animal that you wanted to use is just too nervous yet to be around a clipper or blower. The best part of a recorded presentation is that we will never see the mistakes, bloopers, or forgotten lines because you are able to practice over and over again!

Questions or comments?
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