

# Animal Science Cloverbud Policy

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## Cloverbuds in All Animal Projects

### Scope

This policy applies to all children, ages 5-7, working with animals in 4-H. This is in addition to New York State 4-H Cloverbud Policies, which apply to Cloverbuds in all 4-H programs. In particular, refer to those general policies for information about recognition and competition. Each County Association must ultimately decide if they have the resources to support programs for the Cloverbud age group.

### Parent/Guardian Permission

A parent or guardian must give their child permission to participate in all 4-H Cloverbud activities and programs, including those involving animals. Document this permission using the **4-H Cloverbud Acknowledgement of Risk Form**.

Parental or guardian permission should also be documented in writing by signature and date on NYS 4-H Horse Program Riding Level Evaluation forms.

### Safety

Safety is always a concern in any program that involves youth, particularly when working with 4-H Cloverbuds. The safety of the youth is the primary concern and objective.

### Choosing Safe Animals

Safe animals are socially accustomed to being around people, other animals and distractions. Activities involving intact mature male animals are inappropriate for Cloverbuds in any setting. Activities involving animals with horns are inappropriate for Cloverbuds in any setting. The only exception to this are animals where the Breed Standard values horns, for example, Boer Goats and Jacob Sheep. In this case, it is especially important for the animal to be well-behaved and docile.

### **Safe Clothing and Equipment**

Children's clothing and footwear must be selected with safety in mind. Open toed shoes and ill-fitting clothes cannot be worn when working around cattle and other livestock, for example. Fully closed-toed shoes that fit well should be worn to protect feet in case an animal steps on them.

### **Standard Safety Skills When Working Around Animals**

- The ability to approach animals without startling
- The ability to be cautious when opening and closing gates, cages, and pens
- The ability to identify safety hazards such as broken boards, uneven ground, or animal behaviors that indicate an animal is fearful
- The ability to respond safely to unpredictable animal behavior

### Supervision

Cloverbud activities must be closely supervised. A 1:1 adult to youth ratio is required when Cloverbuds have individual and direct contact with animals, until every child has proven his or her ability to move to a less structured environment. The child's maturity level should be evaluated by the parent/guardian and leader in consultation with an Extension Educator. Cloverbuds are still learning how living things differ from toys that move and still need help learning to be gentle with all animals. **A minimum of two adults must be present at all 4-H meetings and activities.** This offers protection for youth and adults and also leaves one adult to deal with incidents that might arise.

### Animal Ownership and Care

The sole responsibility for animal ownership, training, grooming and showing of any animal is inappropriate for Cloverbuds. A Cloverbud may share the responsibility for caring for an animal. Feeding, watering, hand milking (dairy animals), and some grooming activities are appropriate for Cloverbuds because they involve measuring, physical activity, and stimulate immediate positive responses from the animal that students can enjoy and remember.

### Public Health

**Leaders and volunteers must follow New York State and local county animal and human health requirements and law when conducting any activity. All animals must meet NYS Department of Agriculture & Market and local health department requirements.**

The following is general information and recommendations should be available to all educators, leaders and parents regardless of project area.

- Animals, especially those that are young and ill, may carry microorganisms that can cause diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms in humans.

- These microorganisms are shed in an animal's feces and, sometimes saliva. After shedding, they may also survive in an animal's environment.
- Organisms of concern include Salmonella, Campylobacter, E.coli and Cryptosporidium parvum.
- Only touch or feed animals in designated areas. Always ask owners for permission to touch animals.
- Hand-to-mouth contact after touching animals and their environment is a health risk.

Follow these prevention steps:

- ALWAYS wash hands with soap and running water before eating.
- Do NOT use baby wipes in place of handwashing as they do not kill germs like E.coli O157:H7.
- Avoid hand-to-mouth activities in livestock areas, such as eating, nail biting, carrying infant toys, pacifiers etc.
- Do not drink raw milk.
- High risk individuals (children less than 5, elderly, pregnant and immune compromised people) should use heightened precautions.

If anyone has additional questions about specific symptoms, risks or infections, contact your health care professional, Public Health Agency, and/or Ag and Markets.

### Exhibition and Show Ring Settings

Any exhibition activity involving 4-H Cloverbud youth must be done in a **controlled environment**. To ensure safety, a controlled environment should include a **contained ring** away from other animals and distractions. Contained means there should be some type of safe barrier if an animal gets loose. A fenced area or indoor ring would be the ideal. Fencing should be safe for animals and children. Arenas need not be expensive, just safe. Anything that would distract the child or scare the animal should be considered when determining where to hold activities with Cloverbud youth.

The size of this designated area should be small enough so adults working with youth can assist a child quickly, but big enough that more than one animal/child and supervisor can work in a safety zone far enough away that other animal/child combinations are out of harms way of (kicking, butting, biting, scratching, jumping, bumping into, etc.).

If Cloverbud youth are to be in an "Exhibition Only" class or situation, where more than one child/animal combination will be in that arena:

- Only Cloverbuds, should be in the ring when a Cloverbud activity is taking place.
- Not more than 10 exhibitors should be in the ring at one time. Split any groups or classes that have more than 10, into groups of 10 or less.

- At least 4 knowledgeable adult spotters should be strategically placed on the corners with easy access to the youth.
- Competent helpers need to have direct control of the animals.
- Split arenas that are too large into smaller areas for the activity by using safe portable fencing. Split classes to make groups smaller to fit smaller ring sizes.
- Ring sizes should be large enough so that the animal can swing 360 degrees around without hitting anyone or anything. One way to estimate ring size is to use this formula: take the animal's estimated body length, multiply that by 60% of the class size and then multiply that by 3.

**Sample calculation for a class size of 10 Cloverbuds with their competent assistants leading/in direct control of Jr. heifer calves:**

4 ft. animal x 6 (60% of a class of 10) x 3 = 24 x 3 =  
72 ft. minimum length and width of ring  
**72 ft. x 72 ft. ring**

## Species-Specific Information

Cattle

Small Livestock: Sheep, Goats, Pigs, and Llamas

Rabbits/Cavies and Other Small Pets

Poultry

Dogs

Horses

Cattle

In addition to the safety skills above, skills when working around cattle include:

- The ability to approach animals from the side (not behind) without startling
- The ability to place a halter on an animal

Exhibition for Cloverbuds can be designed by providing safe, young calves and 1:1 assistance for all participants. Children can lead a calf in an enclosed show ring or pen with a competent adult or older, experienced junior leader having direct control of the animal. Cloverbuds are not allowed to exhibit bulls. Cloverbuds should exhibit animals in the calf classes.

Small Livestock: Sheep, Goats, Pigs, and Llamas

Cloverbuds can begin with a very young lamb, goat kid or piglet and raise and train these animals under the supervision of their parents, guardians and leaders. Since these animals are smaller than the children at the beginning, the children can establish dominance and allow their animal handling skills to grow with the animal.

In addition to the safety skills above, skills when working around small livestock include:

- The ability to approach animals from the side (not behind) without startling
- The ability to lead an animal in a desired direction

Exhibitions for Cloverbuds can be designed by providing safe, young lambs, lightweight goats, feeder pigs and socialized llamas. One to one assistance for all participants must be available. Children can lead animals in an enclosed show ring or pen with a competent adult or older, experienced junior leader within a safe distance to maintain control of each animal if necessary. Cloverbuds can also learn to follow directions and attempt to set animals in position. Driving a goat cart is not appropriate for a Cloverbud. They can be a passenger in a cart with a knowledgeable adult who is over 18 years of age.

### Rabbits/Cavies and Other Small Pets

Cloverbuds may raise and train these animals under the supervision of their parents, guardians and leaders. Since these animals are smaller than the children, the children can establish dominance and allow their animal handling skills to grow.

Exhibition for Cloverbuds can be designed by providing safe carrying cages and areas where children can handle animals without risk of escape. One-to-one assistance for all participants is required. Long sleeved shirts are recommended. Children can handle animals in an enclosed show ring or pen with a competent adult or older, experienced junior leader within a safe distance to maintain control of each animal if necessary. Cloverbuds can learn to follow directions and attempt to set animals in position.

### Poultry

Cloverbuds can begin with very young birds (bantams, broilers or layers) and raise and train these animals under the supervision of their parents, guardians and leaders. Since these animals are smaller than the children, the children can establish dominance and allow their animal handling skills to grow with the animal. Training, grooming and showing large mature breeding animals (roosters, hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, etc.) that can escape from a child's grasp are inappropriate for Cloverbuds. Activities involving larger breeds (such as Ostrich and Emu) are inappropriate for Cloverbuds in any setting.

Exhibition for Cloverbuds can be designed by providing safe, carrying cages and areas where children can handle birds without flight risks. One-to-one assistance for all participants is also required. Children can handle animals in an enclosed show ring or pen with a competent adult or older, experienced junior leader within a safe distance to maintain control of each animal. Cloverbuds can learn to follow directions and attempt to set animals in position.

## Dogs

Cloverbuds can learn to give dogs simple basic obedience commands. However, the sole responsibility for obedience training, grooming and showing of dogs are inappropriate for Cloverbuds. Although puppies are small, they are difficult to handle, even for adults. The primary responsibility for training a puppy should be reserved for youth older than Cloverbud. Even then, special care should be taken to ensure that the child is matched with an animal of appropriate size, temperament and physical ability.

Exhibition for Cloverbuds can be designed by providing safe, trained and well-socialized dogs that children can handle without risk of injury to the child or the dog. One-to-one assistance for all participants is also required. Children can handle animals in an enclosed show ring or pen with a competent adult or older, experienced junior leader within a safe distance to maintain control of each animal. Cloverbuds can learn to follow directions and attempt to set animals in position and practice giving simple commands or navigating obstacles.

## Horses

### Clothing and Equipment

The use of an approved helmet and proper equestrian footwear (with a distinguishable heel) are required at all times when mounted, when sitting in a cart, or handling a horse in a riding arena (whether on the ground, mounted or seated in a cart).

### Choosing Safe Equines

Special care should be taken to help ensure that the horse or pony is of appropriate size, disposition and level of training for the ability level of the child.

### Levels of Involvement with Equines

Cloverbuds may ride in:

- Longe line (refer to specific policy on longe line activities below)
- Leadline
- Walk/trot or walk/jog

situations, when they have adequately demonstrated the **On-the-Ground Skills** necessary to work safely with equines and show respect for the equine. On-the-Ground Skills will help minimize the potential risk to Cloverbuds involved in the horse program. Some examples of On-the-Ground Skills are safely and cautiously leading, grooming, and moving around the animal. The adult/s making the decision to allow the child to ride must use their good judgment.

**Longe Line Activities** - This level would generally be appropriate for the kindergarten and first grade child (five and six year olds or developmental equivalent).

There should never be more than one child in the designated riding area on a longe line at one time. There should be no other riders in the designated riding area while a

Cloverbud child is being taught on a longe line. It is desirable to have one adult on the longe line and also one spotter in designated riding area to help if needed.

Longe line activities should be limited to teaching only. Cloverbuds should not participate in Exhibition longe line classes. Exhibition classes for Cloverbuds should be lead line, walk/trot or walk/jog only.

**Lead Line** - This level would generally be appropriate for the kindergarten and first grade child (five and six year olds or developmental equivalent).

**Walk/Trot or Walk/Jog** – This level would generally be appropriate for the second and third grade child (seven and eight year olds or developmental equivalent).

**Ground Rail** – This level would generally be appropriate for the second and third grade child (seven and eight year olds or developmental equivalent).

Any over-fences activities would NOT be appropriate for Cloverbuds, with the exception of ground rail activities/classes. Youth should only ride ground rail activities/classes after the child has mastered equitation skills and rides in control and in a balanced position on the flat. The child must understand and be able to ride in a two-point position. Ground rail activities/classes are not cross rail activities/classes. Make sure that those working with this audience know the difference.

**Trail Class** –Only Cloverbuds riding at the walk/trot or walk/jog level may participate in simple trail classes, with simple obstacles, and not more than a total of 4 obstacles. Cloverbud riders do not back their horses. Walk/trot or walk/jog riders in trail class must have a side walker 18 years or over to assist only when necessary for the safety of the child and/or the horse.

### **Inappropriate Levels**

**The following Levels of Involvement are not appropriate for Cloverbuds:**

- **Driving** –They can be a passenger (but not drive) in a cart with a knowledgeable adult who is over 18 years of age.
- **Showmanship at Halter**
- **Cantering and Loping**
- **Drill/Parade**
- **Draft Equines**
- **Bareback**
- **Trail Riding**
- **Backing a horse while riding**

Riding Level Evaluation

**On-the-Ground Skills Evaluation**

An **NYS 4-H Horse Program On-the-Ground Skills Evaluation Form** is to be used as a guide to help evaluate the readiness of a child to ride a horse. The evaluation should be made by a qualified adult with equestrian knowledge. This may be a club leader, co-leader, riding instructor, evaluation team or other county designated individuals. A child may not be evaluated by their own parent or guardian.

The Form should be signed or initialed and dated. The Form should be filled out and kept with club records. If for some reason the skill level of the child decreases (i.e. fear) and riding privilege for this youth needs to be denied; please make record of this on the On the Grounds Skills Evaluation Form, date and sign/initial. Riding privilege may be reinstated when the child is ready. Also make record, date and sign/initial.

### **Riding Levels Evaluation**

Each County Association must use a **NYS 4-H Horse Program Riding Level Evaluation Form** for any youth, including Cloverbuds, that will be riding a horse in CCE and 4-H sponsored programs and events, such as clinics, exhibitions, or shows. The Riding Level Evaluation will not be required for club activities. Due to the fact that County programs vary, each County may need to make some changes in the form.

A three-person committee should be established to perform the Riding Level Evaluation of the youth. This committee should consist of 3 individuals with suitable horse and riding experience to perform the evaluation. It is suggested that this committee consist of a 4-H leader, a parent of a 4-H youth and an instructor when possible; other possible combinations to be determined by the county Cornell Cooperative Extension Association or Educator. A child may not be evaluated by their own parent or guardian.

The form should be dated by the evaluation committee. Evaluators' names or initials should be listed on the form. Riding Level Evaluation Forms should be handed into the CCE 4-H office, reviewed, signed and accepted by a CCE Educator and kept on file in the CCE 4-H office.

The Riding Level Evaluation process can be utilized to handle the exceptional Cloverbud (i.e. – a First Grade child that demonstrates the skills and ability to safely ride at the Walk/Trot or Walk/Jog level). Remember that Cloverbuds may only ride in Lead Line, Longe Line, or Walk/Trot or Walk/Jog situations.

## [Resources](#)

### References

Montana Cloverbuds Curriculum Task Force Volunteer Leader Manual

Minnesota 4-H Dog Project Cloverbud Policy

North Carolina Animal Science Facts

American Kennel Club



National 4-H Headquarters “Kindergarten -3<sup>rd</sup> Programs in 4-H”

[http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/res/pdfs/Cloverbuds\\_2011.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/res/pdfs/Cloverbuds_2011.pdf)

More Information

NY Ag and Markets: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/>

NYS Department of Health: <https://www.health.ny.gov/>

Griffiths, Jean T. and Ripple, Richard *Creativity and Cloverbuds, Working with the Youngest 4-H Members*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1996

National 4-H Policies: <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/4-h>

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Revised October 2015