



Meat Animal Quality Assurance Program Information Sheet for Youth and Parents

What is MAQA?

- The Wisconsin MAQA program is a curriculum consisting of a leader's guide, hands on activities and power point presentations to aid the trainers in program delivery.
- This program meets the requirements of the Youth PQA Plus program from the National Pork Board.
- Care and Management, Animal Health Products and Animal Handling are the topics of the program. One topic is taught per year on a rotational manner.
- The program is for 8-19 year olds as of January 1 of the current year.
- It is designed to be coordinated by local county certified trainers and volunteers. Certified trainers need to attend a training once every 3 years and are specifically Extension personnel, Agriculture Education Instructors and Veterinarians.
- County programs need to meet the minimum standards of the WI MAQA program. However county programs can be more strict than the WI MAQA program. Contact the counties in which youth exhibit for specific requirements. Currently the Wisconsin State Fair requires MAQA certification for exhibition in the swine project.

Benefits of Meat Animal Quality Assurance (MAQA) program

- First and foremost this program teaches educational understanding on the basics of animal husbandry and general management practices in raising a project animal. This program provides a foundation of animal management for youth of all ages. The educational value surpasses any exhibition requirements that might exist.
- Research from University of Nebraska indicates youth change their management behaviors after receiving Quality Assurance instruction and achieve higher scores on management quizzes, Skillathon contests and Premier Exhibitor type contests. Youth have a better understanding of animal agriculture.
- Youth are a producer of food, whether they raise 1 or 100 plus animals! A consumer somewhere will be buying and feeding their family with the animals raised by youth.
- Many county programs require educational credits in order to participate and sell in their county programs and meat animal sales. This program often meets that educational requirement or may also be required in some form.
- Many meat processors comment that youth producers have a bad reputation for producing unsafe or questionable products, therefore they hesitate in purchasing animals. This program tells producers/processors that we are educating our youth exhibitors to be responsible food animal producers.
- Youth producers should be expected to follow the same rules and regulations as all other food producers.
- Some processors may require producers to complete Quality Assurance programs in order to market their animals. The MAQA program extends that same requirement and education to youth producers.

How does this program benefit meat processors?

- Assures that exhibitors of the animals that come through processing plants were educated on Meat Quality, Proper Injections and Withdrawal times, thus providing a safe and wholesome product that will go into the food chain.
- Certification of exhibitors is managed by County Fair Staff, so little to no recordkeeping is required of processors.
- Other major processors require such certification to protect themselves; beneficial for smaller and medium sized processors as well.

How can youth meet the MAQA requirements?

- Attending a meeting annually will meet the requirements. Also if offered in the county, youth may take an exam to meet the requirements of the MAQA program.
- Age brackets are Beginners ages 8-11, Intermediates 12-14 and Advanced ages 15-19.
- Attending a meeting meets the requirement for one year, however taking an exam can meet the requirement for more than one year.
- Once completed, youth are entered into the WI MAQA database by the certified trainer.
- With the MAQA program youth don't receive a certificate much like in other years. A decorative certificate can be provided or youth can ask the certified trainer for a print out of their certification if desired.

How do youth attend a meeting?

- Contact the local Extension Office or Agriculture Education Instructor for meetings that are in the area.
- Go to the Extension Youth Animal Science website for a list of meetings in the area and all information related to Meat Animal Quality Assurance.
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/animalscience/youthlivestock/quality.cfm>

Questions please contact Bernie O'Rourke, Extension Youth Livestock Specialist at borourke2@ansci.wisc.edu and 608-263-4304.



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