

COOL for Youth Exhibitors

The final rule of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) came out on Jan. 16, 2009 slated to take effect March 16, 2009. This USDA rule provides consumers the knowledge and information of where their food originated. There has been much discussion on this topic since the 2002 farm bill, and it is now going into effect. This rule affects beef, lamb pork, and goats as well as other commodities like fish, nuts and ginseng.

How does this rule affect youth exhibitors? COOL does not directly regulate livestock producers, however producers have first-hand knowledge concerning the origin of their animals. Therefore, youth who purchase and or raise their animals need to know the origin of their animals, especially if sold to large-scale processors (Tyson, etc.), buying stations (Equity, etc.) or to local meat processors who sell to major retailers. Youth exhibitors may not know the final destination of their project at the time it is sold, therefore, all exhibitors should complete an affidavit of Country of Origin of their animal to be passed to the buyer of their project animal. If you purchase your project animal, it is also suggested to obtain a Country of Origin affidavit from the seller. Retain this affidavit for your own records. This provides additional evidence of the validity of the Country of Origin affidavit that the exhibitor passes to the buyer of their project animal, if it is required. There is an example form on the Extension Youth Livestock website that has all of the required information.

USDA will provide additional education and support, and this may result in changes in the program. For more information, access the USDA COOL website for these updates at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/> and click on Country of Origin Labeling (COOL), or go to the Extension Youth Livestock Website at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/animalscience/youthlivestock/index.cfm> and click on COOL.