

June 2, 2015

As you may have already heard, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) has issued a statewide ban on all poultry exhibitions. This includes all junior fair and open shows and exhibitions, and all other gatherings of birds for show or for sale, including auctions and swap meets. While exhibition at a county, independent or state fair is a highlight for many young people and their families, we also know completion of project record books, engagement in specific learning opportunities, and completion of skillathons and other activities are what make the 4-H/FFA projects a meaningful and complete educational learning experience.

We know this is a tremendous disappointment for our 4-H/FFA members taking poultry projects, their families, and our county fair partners. We also know this is a very important precautionary measure necessary to help protect Ohio's sizable poultry production industry, as well as the many backyard flocks.

Know that OSU Extension and the Hardin County fairboard stand behind this decision and are committed to helping provide resources and information for alternatives to the exhibition of live birds at fairs throughout the state.

We also understand many junior fair members have incurred expenses for their poultry projects and were relying on the livestock sale at their county fair to cover some or all of those expenses. The OSU Extension Office, Hardin County fair board members, sale committee members and others plan to work collaboratively to identify alternatives for our Hardin County poultry projects.

We are working on a solution that will allow poultry members to complete a project and have an exhibit at the fair. This plan will be released to all junior fair poultry members on Monday, June 8. This will give us adequate time to prepare a good plan for our fair versus just sending something out today that was conceived in a short time. Every fair and Extension office is receiving this information today, so each fair will react differently. The first fairs in Ohio start Monday. The good news is for Hardin County is that time is on our side to make an informed decision after there has been a good dialogue.

The two things that we know at this point is that there will be no live poultry at the fair this year and that the bulk chicken order will not be completed by the OSU Extension office. No one could have planned for or anticipated this type of announcement at the beginning of the season, so this is new territory that we are all working through together.

Sincerely,

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