

# What Does a Healthy Animal Look Like?

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## Goal (learning objective)

Youth will learn about the differences between healthy and sick animals and the causes of sickness.

## Supplies

- Paper and pen (or pencils, enough for group)
- Flip chart paper (post-it) and 8 markers (enough so that each smaller group has 2 flip chart sheets and a marker)

## Pre-lesson preparation

- Read/review the resources from the Ohio Resource Handbooks (see resources)
- Review the web resources (see resources)

## Lesson directions and outline

Share the following information with the youth:

Animal behavior is a significant factor in determining an animal's health. Normal animal behavior includes an animal who stays with the herd, eyes are bright, nose moist without discharge, no wounds, and is eating normally.

Signs of sick animals can include an animal that is irritable, listless, lame, fever, away from the group, not eating or drinking etc. Several factors can play a part in an animal's health. Some of these include; feed and feed storage, water trough, pasture condition, types of plants that animal has access too, weather conditions, etc.

It's our job to ensure our animals health and investigate a cause if our animals get sick.

## Conducting the activity (DO)

1. Have youth count off into groups.
2. Have 1 group representative get 2 sheets of flip chart paper and a marker.
3. Have the group appoint a recorder, title 1 sheet of flip chart paper "Normal" the other sheet "Abnormal".
4. Have the groups discuss (and record) what they consider normal animal behaviors and physical conditions and what they consider as abnormal behaviors and physical conditions.
5. After groups have discussed and created their lists, have them share their findings with everyone.
6. Have members remain in smaller groups, after you read each scenario to the group, have the smaller groups determine if the animal is sick or not. Have groups note their findings to share with everyone after all the scenarios have been read.
7. Read the following scenarios to the groups:
  - a. Scenario 1: Sheep are usually curious and energetic animals, however your sheep is acting depressed. Your sheep is hanging its head, with droopy eyes. He is distant and not eating or drinking like usual. Your sheep doesn't want to socialize with others and is panting very rapidly. You have given your sheep fresh water and fresh hay, but he's not interested in either.
  - b. Scenario 2: Cattle are usually curious and energetic animals, however your steer or heifer is acting depressed. The animal has its head down and when it picks it up it has droopy ears. It is distant and not eating or drinking like usual. Your steer or heifer doesn't want to socialize with others and is panting very rapidly. You have given your animal fresh water and fresh hay, but it's not interested in either.

- c. Pigs are usually curious and energetic animals, however your pig is acting depressed. Your pig is moving slowly, with sunken eyes. The animal is distant and not eating or drinking like usual. Your pig doesn't want to socialize with others and is panting very rapidly. You have given your pig fresh water and feed, but it's not interested in either.
8. Lead a discussion as a larger group. Ask the following questions:
- Which animals were sick? Why or why not?
  - Did the scenarios provide enough information to help you decide if the animal is sick or not?

#### **What did we learn? (REFLECT)**

- Ask: What other things could cause an animal to not feel well?
- Ask: What's the best way for you to recognize if your animal is sick?

#### **Why is that important? (APPLY)**

- Ask: How can you apply this to your 4-H project?
- Ask: How can you apply this to your health or the health of your family?

## **Resources**

- Green, J.W., Black, L., & Willis, P. (2013). 4-H Science Inquiry Video Series. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 51(3). Available at: <https://joe.org/joe/2013december/tt7.php>
- Jones, J. (2007). Keeping Your 4-H Market Animals Healthy (4-H 140). Oregon State University Extension Service. Available at: <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/files/project/pdf/4-h140.pdf>
- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Health Maintenance. *Beef resource handbook* (pages 5-2 through 5-6).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2008). Herd Management and Diseases. *Goat resource handbook* (pages 88-93).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Health Maintenance and Diseases. *Sheep resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (67-70).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2000). Diseases and Their Control. *Swine resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (pages 9-1 through 9-13).
- Washington State University (n.d.). Cattle, Swine, and Small Ruminants. *Animal Disease Screening Tools*. Available at: <http://vetextension.wsu.edu/4-h-fair/>