

The Black and White Ethical Compass – Ethical Scenarios

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The Black and White Ethical Compass asks these questions:

- Does the practice violate FDA law?
- Is it a fraudulent misrepresentation of the animal?
- Will the action harm the animal?
- Is the practice in opposition to real world agriculture?
- Will it harm the tradition and/or future of livestock shows?

If any of the Livestock Show Ethical Compass questions are answered yes, the practice probably falls on the unethical side of the equation.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #1

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- Unethical. Forcing water into the stomach of a heifer is unethical and very dangerous. It is clearly wrong to overfill a heifer with water. Severe dehydration should be diagnosed and treated by veterinarians only.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #2

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- Ethical. Certainly, as long as you follow label directions. Although the animal may experience some pain or discomfort for a short period of time, vaccinations improve health and prevent disease. Giving vaccinations to your cattle is almost always beneficial.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #3

- You have just bought 1,000 pounds of corn, and put it away in your storage area. Later you find out that the corn has been contaminated with weed killer that spilled into the feed storage area. You carefully remove the spilled weed killer and contaminated grain as best you can. You also plan to feed the remaining grain to your project animals.



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- **Unethical.** Unfortunately, you may not have removed all of the spilled weed killer and contaminated grain. As such, you risk the possibility of poisoning the animal, and potentially for the toxins to enter the human food chain if the animal survives, and is later harvested with a residue in its body.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #4

- You find out that an adult working with animals in your 4-H club is doing unethical fitting practices to the animal that are clearly illegal based on the information in the fair book. These practices make the animal ineligible to participate in the fair. You disclose this to the livestock superintendent and Extension Agent.



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- Ethical. While it may be difficult to turn someone in, it is the right thing to do. Everyone has a responsibility to make sure that animals are not abused with unethical and illegal fitting practices.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #5

- Your barrow is feeling a little under the weather at a show. The veterinarian writes a prescription for a health product and tells you to follow label directions. The vet adds that you may show the barrow if he responds to the medication. According to the show's rules, the treatment you are giving the barrow is okay. You give the medicine as the label says and as the vet prescribed. The barrow feels better and walks in the show ring.



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- **Ethical.** Since you have followed the guidelines laid out by the veterinarian, the medicine label, and the show, you have made an ethical decision.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #6

- Your hog and you are in the show ring. She limps slightly as she walks. The judge asks you about the way that she walks. You honestly tell him that she injured her leg in the trailer riding to the show.



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- Ethical. Being honest when a judge asks about your hog's fault and limp is ethical. Lying to the judge about your hog's blemish, if you knew it was permanent, would be unethical.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #7

- Your calf suffers from a contagious disease like ringworm or warts. The disease is in the active, contagious stage. Show rules state that diseased cattle cannot be at the show or on the grounds. You spray the ringworm or warts with paint to cover the disease.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #7

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- Unethical. Cattle with contagious diseases cannot attend a show. They risk spreading the disease to healthy animals. Bringing a diseased calf to the county fair is not only unethical but also unsportsmanlike. You should always consider the well-being of fellow exhibitors. How would you like it if your calf got ringworm from your neighbor's infected calf at a show?



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #8

- Your cow's hock was scuffed during transport to the show. You cover the scuffs that occurred during the trailer ride to town.



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- Your cow's hock was scuffed during transport to the show. You cover the scuffs that occurred during the trailer ride to town.
- Ethical. This is probably an ethical example. Just like we polish our fingernails or comb our hair every day to improve our appearance, painting the scuffs on the hocks of a cow help the cow look her best. This wouldn't compromise the health of your cow or the health of other show animals. Just make sure your grooming practices fall under what is allowed under show rules. If the show rules says you can't, then you couldn't in this example.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #9

- You notice early in the year that your project heifer gains weight easily when you feed her too much grain. You monitor her condition by feeding less grain. You make sure that she still receives adequate nutrients and roughage during her weight control program.



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- Ethical. You are making sure that the heifer is still receiving the adequate nutrients and roughage to grow and thrive. However, it would have been better to prevent your heifer from ever getting overweight in the first place. You should always monitor your feeding program. Then, you can stem off the problems of trying to make your calf lose weight. Besides restricting feed, other methods causing an animal's weight loss would be unethical and disapproved by the public.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #10

- Your cow came down with a cold a few days before the show. The vet prescribed a drug that requires the milk to be discarded. The vet says you can show your cow, but you cannot sell the milk because it contains some antibiotics. Knowing you get paid for the milk at the county fair, you ignore the vet's order to discard the milk. You assume the milk to be drug-free by fair time and take the money from your cow's milk.



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- **Unethical.** Selling milk that contains drug residues violates drug label instructions and U.S law. Residues may harm some people. By obeying drug label directions, exhibitors ensure they're making ethical decisions. Failure to dispose of milk from a cow that has been treated is unethical. Withholding periods for milk and meat should be obeyed at all times.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #11

- You bred your best project cow to calve in the first week of December. However, she calved early with a heifer on November 25th. During the upcoming show season your calf will be 86 days younger than the oldest calf in the fall calf class. A calf born on December 1 would fare much better because it would be one of the older calves in the winter calf class. You register the calf with a December birth date.



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- **Unethical.** Lying about a calf's age or any animal's age is unethical. Ethical livestock exhibitors promote honesty in the show ring, even if it means exhibiting the youngest calf in a class or having an animal that is smaller in size or weight.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #12

- An exhibitor, without consulting the family veterinarian, injects a high-strung steer with a tranquilizer to calm the animal before it enters the show ring. The animal calms down, and enters the show ring without incident.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #12

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- **Unethical.** Using tranquilizers or other medicines without a veterinarian's prescription, administration and/or approval violates FDA laws and is clearly wrong. All animal health products must be used as prescribed by the label of that product.



Ethical or Unethical – Scenario #13

- You check the feed sack label at the fair and you find that inadvertently you have been feeding a prepared feed with a feed additive to your lambs that contained a product that was supposed to be stopped being fed 30 days before the fair. You notify the livestock superintendent of your error.



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- Ethical. By notifying the superintendent you have likely prevented a drug residue from entering the food chain. The animal can likely be held after the fair until the 30 days have passed. Even if the animal couldn't be sold based on the printed rules in the fair book, you have made the right decision to prevent drug residues from entering the food chain.

