

What 4-H Participants with Market Beef, Lambs, and Swine Projects Need to Know About Country of Origin Labeling (C.O.O.L.)

*Information adapted from an article created by Shelby Filley,
OSU Extension Service, Regional Livestock and Forages Specialist*

The State 4-H Office has determined that 4-H participants of **market** steers or heifers, lambs, swine and poultry projects are required to comply with the following United States Department of Agriculture program.

Here is information about Country of Origin Labeling (C.O.O.L.)

- 1) what you need to do as a 4-H member
- 2) some background information on COOL
- 3) some resources for more information.

COMPLIANCE FOR Lane County 4-H PARTICIPANTS

1. **Lane County 4-H members will be e-mailed the COOL affidavit form. This affidavit form will also be available when you arrive at spring weigh in with your market animal.** This affidavit form states the origin of your market animal. It is the same affidavit that is accepted by the livestock industries and the United States Department of Agriculture. Lane County 4-H members will need to turn in a signed affidavit with their fair entry forms by the fair entry due date of June 1, 2009.

2. You will need to keep records to verify the statements on the affidavit you sign. This would include any affidavits you received with the animal and other records to help verify your claims should an audit take place. Lists of suggested records, many you already keep, are available from the 4-H office or off the websites listed below. They should be retained for at least one year.

**** If you purchase or are gifted your market animal, you MUST obtain from the seller an affidavit that states the country of origin of the animal.**

RECORD KEEPING SUGGESTIONS

Keep a copy of any affidavits you receive from previous owners. Other records that may be used to assist in a COOL verification audit include birth records, receiving records, purchase records, animal health papers, sales receipts, animal inventory documents, feeding records, APHIS VS forms, segregation plans, State Brand requirements, breeding stock information, and other similar documents. In addition, participation in USDA Quality System Verification Programs (QSVP), such as the USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) and the Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) Program that contain a source verification component is also considered as acceptable evidence to substantiate COOL claims. These examples are not inclusive of all documents and records that may be useful to verify compliance with COOL, but they should provide a strong basis to substantiate a claim during a supply chain audit.

BACKGROUND

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING (COOL) requires retailers to notify their customers of the country of origin of beef (including veal), lamb, pork, chicken, goat, wild and farm raised fish and shellfish, perishable agricultural commodities, peanuts, pecans, ginseng, and macadamia nuts. This mandatory program of the United States Department of Agriculture took effect September 30, 2008 and agricultural producers must be able to verify origin of their products should audit take place and retailers request verification.

A covered commodity may bear a declaration that identifies the United States as the sole country of origin at retail only if it meets the definition of United States country of origin. Under the interim final rule, beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and goat must be derived from animals exclusively born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States; from animals born and raised in Alaska or Hawaii and transported for a period of not more than 60 days through Canada to the United States and slaughtered in the United States; or from animals present in the United States on or before July 15, 2008, and once present in the

United States, remained continuously in the United States. If not exclusively of US origin, other origins must be disclosed.

Affidavits listing country of origin will be requested by buyers of livestock. Records verifying the statements on the affidavit will be requested should an audit take place. With regard to what is considered first-hand knowledge, a subsequent producer-buyer (e.g., backgrounder, feed lot) that commingles cattle from several sources is authorized to rely on previous producer affidavits as a basis for formulating their own affidavit for the origin of the new lot. Such affidavits must also identify the animals unique to the transaction. In contrast, first-hand knowledge would not include an affidavit made by someone such as a truck driver whose knowledge would be limited to where he picked up the load. The driver would not have first-hand knowledge as to whether the animals were necessarily born at that location.

The making of this rule has actually been taking place for many years. The pros and cons have been hashed and re-hashed with input from livestock producers, producer organizations, consumer groups, meat packers, wholesalers, retailers, university personnel, government agencies, and more. Hopefully the best scenario possible for all involved has surfaced. If you missed the legal process in the formation of and public comment on this ruling you can catch up on what transpired by visiting the various web sites at the end of this article.

WEBSITES WITH FURTHER INFORMATION

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service hosts the official government website on COOL (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool/>) and should be the primary source of your information. This site includes the history and the official ruling for COOL. Scroll down that page and check out the information on Frequently Asked Questions and Examples of Records for COOL Verification under the "Resources" section.

OSU Extension Service, Regional Livestock and Forages Website - <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/lf>
(See Item D. Important News and Notices)

National Cattleman's Beef Association website - <http://www.beefusa.org/>
(Click on "Government Affairs" then "Cattle Marketing" then COOL.)

Iowa Beef Center - <http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/content/COOL.htm>

American Sheep Industry Association (ASIA) website - <http://sheepusa.org/>
(Look for the orange writing on the right side of the page.)

Pork Check-Off web site - <http://www.pork.org/> or National Pork Board website - (<http://www.porkboard.org/>)

Please study these materials on your own so that you are familiar with what the mandatory program is and what you might need to do to help retailers comply. Other "Important News and Notices" related to livestock and forage production are available at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/lf/importantnn>