The State 4-H Office has determined that 4-H participants of market steers or heifers, lambs, or swine projects are required to comply with the following United States Department of Agriculture program. First, a bit of background, then more on what you need to do, and finally, some resources for more information.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING (COOL) requires retailers to notify their customers of the country of origin of beef, lamb, pork, chicken, and goat products. 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. Records must be maintained to provide verification.

**COMPLIANCE FOR 4-H PARTICIPANTS**

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

2. When you enroll your market animal for fair, you will also need to sign an affidavit that states the origin of the animal. This affidavit will be on the backside of the health form you normally submit for fair animals. It is the same affidavit that is accepted by the livestock industries and the United States Department of Agriculture. (*For Tillamook County participants you will receive this form and more information prior to possession/weigh-in/tagging deadlines.)

3. 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. Records should be retained for at least one year.

**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. 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.

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.