

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Southern district Youth Beef Field Day teaches calving best practices to youth

AT A GLANCE

The 2023 Youth Beef Field Day gave youth and adults involved in 4-H and FFA beef projects skills they'll use for years to come.

The Situation

Youth involved in 4-H and FFA livestock programs are current and future livestock professionals. Without instilling best practices of animal husbandry and management into their skillsets, our future food supply will be impacted.

Educational opportunities provided in the classroom or club meetings can spark youth interest in livestock production. However, hands-on experiences, like those provided at the southern district Youth Beef Field Day (aka Beef Field Day), really take the learning to a higher level.

Our Response

Extension educators in the southern district have hosted the Beef Field Day annually since 2006, covering many topics related to beef production. The theme for 2023 mirrored a series of successful Beef Schools held for adult producers in the area. Why not teach youth similar topics in a hands-on fashion?

The day started with an overview of the cattle industry in Idaho presented by Extension Beef Specialist Benton Glaze. Next, youth and adults visited the following stations, each with unique hands-on activities.



Dr. Lauren Christensen demonstrating anatomy during necropsy station. Photo by Madison Anderson.

- Calving Equipment and Challenges, taught by Scott Jensen (UI Extension educator for Owyhee County): Participants learned the importance of proper placement of obstetrical chains and how improper placement can cause a broken leg or severely damage the hoof, either of which could cause the calf to be euthanized. They also learned methods to clear the airway and stimulate a newborn calf to breathe.
- Neonatal Calf Care, taught by Tyanne Roland (UI Extension educator for Adams County): Youth practiced tube feeding on a deceased calf without fear of consequence of the tube accidentally going down the windpipe instead of the esophagus.

- **Calf Necropsy**, taught and demonstrated by Dr. Lauren Christensen (DVM and University of Idaho assistant professor): Dr. Christensen demonstrated basic necropsy techniques. Normal and abnormal anatomy was identified, as well as things to specifically look for or consider in neonatal calves, including: location where deceased calf was found; how to identify broken ribs or blood in the abdomen indicating the calf was stepped on; and observing a piece of lung placed in water to determine if the calf was stillborn or had taken a breath (lung from stillborn calves sinks in water, while lungs in calves that breathe will float). These skills should aid producers in answering basic, common reasons for neonatal calf death as well as the ability to obtain tissue samples to bring to their veterinarian for further diagnostic testing.
- **Stages of Parturition**, taught by Tyler O'Donnell (UI Extension educator for Washington County): Youth learned the three stages of birth, how long each stage should last and what to expect during each stage. Knowledge of cattle parturition was tested with a Jeopardy-type game.
- **Scours and CalfhooD Diseases**, taught by Rebecca Mills (UI Extension educator for Gem and Boise counties). Youth learned the different causes of scours and completed an activity where they matched the cause with a plate of "manure" meant to represent what that type of scours would look like in real life. Thankfully the "manure" samples were just different types of pudding and strawberry Jello (for blood specks) mixed together. The samples looked fairly real but smelled much better than actual scours.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Program Outcomes

Youth and adults were asked to complete a short evaluation at the conclusion of the event. Questions included basic demographic information and two learning objective questions from each presenter. A summary of the results are as follows.

Youth Surveys

- Average participant age: 12
- 88% participant response rate (60/68 returned)
- Average number of times youth had attended the event: 1.95 times.
- 83% said they'd attend again in the future.
- On average across all the classes, participants reported an increase in knowledge at an average value of 2.91 with 2 being "Increased Slightly" and three being "Increased Moderately."

Adult Surveys

- 62.8% participant response rate (27/43 returned)
- Average number of times adults had attended the event: 1.5 times.
- 96% said they'd attend again in the future.
- On average across all the classes, adults reported an increase in knowledge at an average value of 3.07 with three being "Increased Moderately" and four being "Increased a Lot."

The southern district Youth Beef Field Day offers high-quality experiential learning for area youth and adults. By increasing knowledge and awareness of best practices related to calving, youth and adults are better prepared to meet challenges they may experience in their 4-H and FFA projects or as future livestock producers.