

IMPACT

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Extension

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Urban youth learn life-skills by raising calves

The Situation

Youth living within city limits are restricted from raising livestock animals on their own properties, limiting the opportunities available to them for a hands-on agricultural experience.

A local businessman, Neil Anderson, grew up raising calves, enjoyed the opportunity and valued the life skills he learned. His experiences led him to believe that raising calves would benefit the youth of his community. Mr. Anderson recognized 4-H as a strong youth development program. He then went to the local 4-H Extension Educators to put together a program, in his words, "to benefit the children in the city."

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension Educators, Scott Nash and Missy Cummins worked with Mr. Anderson to put together a committee of community leaders to develop the "Cattle Kids" program. It was designed to give youth living in the city the chance to raise a "bucket calf" (30 day old calf) for 10 weeks at their respective county fairgrounds. Youth were introduced to the program through newspaper articles, flyers to schools and one returning participant went to the schools to recruit.

The committee identified local businesses to serve as sponsors by donating money towards the purchase of calves and feed to help youth participate in the program. Cummins applied for monies from The Fred Meyer Fund for the Bannock County program and was awarded \$20,000. The donation covered the costs associated with raising the calves.

Since all of the participants were new to raising an animal, youth and their parents completed an application process and signed an agreement to help them



A young girl and her calf get acquainted.

understand program expectations. Youth were asked to pay \$50 towards the purchase of the calf to give them a sense of ownership (those that could not pay were able to have the money deducted from the sale of the animal at the end of the project).

Through raising a calf, the youth were expected to learn responsibility by caring for an animal on a daily basis, proper management skills (such as health care, nutritional needs and environmental needs of young calves), basic record keeping and communication skills, basic cattle management skills without a large financial investment and gain an understanding of the cattle industry.

To ensure all participants had the chance to learn, the youth and their parents participated in a variety of educational activities helping them gain skills necessary to raising healthy livestock. A local veterinarian taught them proper health care, how to recognize a sick calf and how to take a calf's temperature. A local

feed dealer taught them how to provide for the calf’s nutrition needs. A local rancher provided straw and taught proper animal husbandry by keeping the animals and the stalls clean. Nash and Cummins taught youth about 4-H, how to prepare for the fair and record keeping.

Program Outcomes

The youth completed a record book and exhibited at the fair allowing them to receive ribbons and premiums for project completion. Youth and their parents completed a retrospective survey using a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high) at the conclusion of the program.

Table 1 shows the results of the retrospective survey:

| | Before Participating | After Participating |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| I know the importance of daily calf care. | 2.25 | 3.95 |
| I know how much to feed my calf each day. | 1.3 | 3.8 |
| I understand how to determine if my calf is sick. | 1.5 | 3.6 |
| I understand that I am responsible to provide clean water for my calf every day. | 2.8 | 4.0 |
| I understand how much work is involved in raising a calf. | 1.7 | 4.0 |
| I know how to take a calf’s temperature. | 1.3 | 4.0 |
| I know how to show my calf to a judge. | 1.4 | 3.8 |

Youth were asked several open-ended questions about their participation in the Cattle Kids program. Below are some responses:

- “It taught me to finish what I start and that I can do hard things.”
- “I learned that taking care of things is harder than it looks.”
- “I learned the importance of hard work and leadership.”
- “Pay attention to everything around you and you will have fun.”

The parents were also given a survey and asked to identify the most beneficial parts of this program for their child. Parents responded the value of hard work, an increased level of responsibility, and trying something new most valuable.

After the third year of the program, Nash and Anderson met with the Brigham Young University Idaho (BYUI) Animal and Food Science Department Chair to discuss the possibility of program participants receiving college scholarships

through participation in the “bucket calf” program. The department faculty determined these were the type of students needed in their department. The following guidelines were established: youth need to complete two years in the bucket calf program; youth need to apply and be admitted to BYU; take classes towards a degree in Animal or Food Sciences and maintain a 3.0 GPA each semester to receive a four year scholarship.

During the four years of the program in Bingham County and one year in Bannock County 134 youth have raised 190 calves only losing one. Twenty-eight of the youth have participated more than one year and 24 of the 30 first year participants in 2012 indicated they want to participate again.

The Future

The committee’s plan for next year includes giving youth more leadership opportunities. Returning youth will be asked to teach other youth how to take a calf’s temperature, how to keep the animal and stall clean, how to halter a calf and how to show at the fair. Youth will be asked to contact program sponsors to increase youth and adult interaction. Mr. Anderson invited another community leader to chair the committee.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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