

impact

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

Workshop teaches consumers why beef should be what's for dinner

AT A GLANCE

When consumers understand cattle production practices, along with meat production and selection, they feel confident in consuming and cooking beef.

The Situation

Today, consumers are separated from their food source more than any other time in our history. That, paired with a constant overload of information, makes it more imperative now that consumers have access to facts about food production. Social media has become a major source of information for many households. A challenge for Extension is to break through social media's influence and provide consumers with research-based education and information.

Our Response

To meet the challenge of providing accurate information about food and agriculture, a workshop focusing on consumer education about the beef industry and beef production was held. University of Idaho educators from the state level, county level and a graduate student conducted a three-hour long consumer education class to give participants a comprehensive view of the beef industry. Focus areas of the workshop were animal handling, beef quality assurance, beef feeding practices, beef palatability and selection, cutting demonstrations, nutrition of beef and beef cooking methods. Community members from the Idaho Falls area were invited to attend the free class.



Educator Sarah Baker of Custer County demonstrates how to cut a whole rib into steaks for consumers. Photo credit: A. Ruth.

Program Outcomes

All 28 participants were asked to complete an evaluation at the beginning and end of the workshop to assess their confidence level, awareness, and understanding of beef selection, production and cooking. They were also asked to indicate their sources of information about the beef industry and provide comments to the presenters. To gather impact beyond the consumers' present at the class, participants were asked with how many people they planned to share the class information.

Consumers rated their answers to the questions on the pre- and post-test on a nine-point scale that ranged from low (one) to high (nine) with moderate (five) marked as a mid-point. All questions asked had higher

scores on the post-test compared to the pre-test answers.

- When asked their personal understanding of the beef industry and meat production, participant understanding before the class was rated at a 3.7 which increased 3.5 points to a 7.2 on the post-test.
- Consumer's assurance that the beef and meat industry is working to provide safe, wholesome food increased to an 8.0 rating on the post-test from a 5.5 on the pre-test.
- The participants indicated that their awareness that appropriate cattle handling practices are important to reduce stress and improve cattle performance and beef quality improved after the class by 2.7 points to 8.3.
- The class attendees showed increased confidence in selecting cuts of beef that will yield a quality eating experience following the workshop by rating their confidence 3.1 points higher (7.8) in the post-test compared to the pre-test (4.7).

The consumers who attended the workshop were also asked to indicate what sources they use to find information about the cattle and meat production industries. Prior to the class, many consumers indicated that they relied on social media, friends and family, as well as workshops/classes. Following the workshop, the most commonly selected answers were Extension publications and workshops/classes. Additionally, friends and family, along with social media became the lowest selected choices from the participants. These data

indicate that consumers understand that materials presented by research-based sources should be the primary source of information about the cattle and meat production industries.

All participants who attended the beef consumer education workshop indicated that they planned to share the information with others who did not attend the class. The consumers indicated that in total, information could potentially reach 235 additional people.

Comments received by participants were positive and included:

- "Such a good class! I learned a lot and will use to help me and others learn about beef."
- "Excellent info, clean presentations, appreciate your passion!"
- "Great job! So informative and entertaining. Will recommend to other people to take this class if offered again."
- "Loved the hands-on parts of the class."

The Future

This team of educators will host the workshop again in the Idaho Falls area and hope to expand to other urban areas throughout Idaho.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

We would like to sincerely thank the Idaho Beef Council, Broulim's Fresh Foods and Rush's Kitchen Supply of Idaho Falls for their contributions and involvement in the success of this workshop.

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