

impact

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

North Central Idaho UI Extension brings the farm and forest to area fifth graders

AT A GLANCE

Fifth graders interact with area educators, industry representatives and volunteers at learning stations featuring key aspects of farming, forestry and everything in between.

The Situation

The Clearwater River Basin and Camas Prairie areas of North Central Idaho are teeming with agriculture and natural resources. Nearly 2,000 individuals in the region are employed in an agricultural career or one that is directly related to agriculture. Additionally, the aesthetics and abundance of natural resources within the area draw in tourism and recreation. Yet despite being surrounded by seemingly endless agriculture and natural resources, many residents, especially youth, have very little understanding of these resources and the impact they have on our region. The Farm and Forest Fair aims to provide fifth graders in Idaho, Lewis and Clearwater counties with a basic understanding of the significance that agricultural and natural resources play within their communities.

Our Response

The Farm and Forest Fair is an annual event hosted by area University of Idaho Extension educators in conjunction with several community and agency partners from across the region. Collaborators from each entity host an educational station, where youth participate in a hands-on activity that highlights an area of agriculture or natural resources. Guided by teachers and parent volunteers, youth are assigned to groups and rotate



Students were able to try their hand at milking “Molly” the dairy cow during the 2023 Farm and Forest Fair.

through each station. Groups spend a total of 10 minutes at each of the 10 stations. Station topics include: lumber milling, beekeeping, forest management, beef cattle production and products, wheat production and grinding, dairy production and products, pollination and seed planting, rangeland use, erodible land simulation, and native insect and biocontrol. Youth are given literature, prizes and/or snacks at each station. Teachers are provided with teaching materials that highlight the educational topics that were covered throughout the event.

Program Outcomes

As with many programming efforts, the pandemic had an impact on the overall participation from local schools in this event. As a result, student attendance at

the Farm and Forest Fair had been steadily decreasing. Due to this decrease, one day from the original two-day event had been eliminated. In response, University of Idaho Extension educators made a concerted effort to increase participation back to pre-pandemic levels by increasing outreach to area teachers and schools. In total, we increased attendance by 22% by bringing in 55 additional students from five different schools. We also implemented a post-event learning check to better identify students' baseline understanding of farm and forest practices, as well as gauge gaps in topic areas. Twenty eight percent of participants completed the learning check. Assuming no prior knowledge of farm and forest practices, 20% of respondents scored greater than 70%, with 7% scoring above 90% (Table 1). Based on these results, it is understood that many participants have little knowledge of farm or forest practices, much less an understanding of the impact those practices play within their day-to-day lives. Further, these data articulate the need to extend our reach to more students within the region. Given the lack of basic agricultural and natural resource understanding, it is important for students to continue to participate in events that expose them to this content.

Table 1. Scores and percentages and total number of correct responses from the post-event learning check. n=69.

Score Range	% Correct Responses
100%	4% (3 responses)
90% or above	7% (5 responses)
80% or above	10% (7 responses)
70% or above	20% (14 responses)

The Future

Moving forward, we plan to implement a value-added assessment to better measure students' growth in agricultural and natural resources knowledge and understanding. This will allow us to further determine knowledge gains from participants. We would like to utilize this information to implement more agriculture and natural resources teaching opportunities in local classrooms for students K-eighth grade.

We also intend to contact the remaining area schools that were not in attendance at the 2023 event. By extending a personal invitation, we hope they will join us for future Farm and Forest Fairs. Our goal is to increase the overall student participation to help more students engage with agriculture and natural resources education at a younger age.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

We would like to extend our gratitude to all our event cooperators and co-sponsors. Collaborators include: Idaho Forest Group, Phil Puckett and Christy Davis, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Lewis County Cattle Association, Idaho County Farm Bureau, Idaho and Lewis County Master Gardeners, Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission, Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Nez Perce Bio Control Center and the Greencreek Community Hall. A special thank you is extended to the Idaho County Board of County Commissioners for providing transportation support to area schools through funding from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Act and authorized as part of Title III.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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