

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

4-H Youth Development  
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## Building science inquiry skills for volunteers and 4-H members

### The Situation

There is a need to create programs that engage and excite young people in the advancing field of Animal Science. 4-H Livestock Programs need to focus on more than show ring aspects of showmanship and quality, and include animal production knowledge and skills. Youth need to use science inquiry skills to develop mastery in animal production. Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the demonstration of the competent use of this knowledge and skill.

### Our Response

In order to challenge Idaho 4-H'ers beyond the show ring, University of Idaho 4-H Youth Development established a statewide livestock skill-a-thon contest for those youth interested in livestock production. The goals of the skill-a-thon contest are to (1) provide youth with the opportunity to blend knowledge and skills acquired in livestock judging, demonstrations, care, and exhibition of animals into one activity, (2) encourage youth to use inquiry skills to continue expanding their knowledge and participation, and (3) recognize youth for their involvement in and comprehension of the livestock industry.

Skill-a-thon contestants participate in individual activities and team oriented exercises in three sections:

- **Quiz Questions:** Potential topics are nutrition, health, breeding, management, genetics, and showmanship.
- **Identification Stations:** Topics include identifying retail meat cuts, livestock feeds and breeds, evaluate cuts of meat and hay or wool samples, and complete a quality assurance exercise.



Junior division youth participants completing the feed identification and use station.

- **Team Exercise:** Topics include quality assurance, evaluation of livestock feeding and performance information, livestock equipment identification, and an animal breeding or marketing scenario.

### Program Outcomes

Idaho counties entered thirteen qualifying jr. and sr. teams in the first annual statewide skill-a-thon contest. The winning sr. team qualified and is planning to attend the national contest.

Adult volunteers and parents were asked to complete a survey at the end of the 2012 contest. Results are as follows:

- 100% indicated the 4-H members had an increase in livestock production knowledge because of their experience with the state livestock skill-a-thon contest.

- 91.6% stated the 4-H members who participated in the state livestock skill-a-thon had an increase in their awareness of livestock production practices.
- 66.7% indicated there was an increase in the 4-H members skills related to livestock production practices.
- 83.3% stated that preparing their 4-H members for the contest made them a better 4-H leader.
- 100% of the adults who worked with youth indicated their 4-H members benefited from participating in the contest.

Other comments from the surveys included:

“...adults had to learn the material along with the youth and then figure out how to teach it to them...therefore we became more purposeful in our teaching.”

“...not only did the youth who participated learn technical knowledge but they also gained teamwork and communication skills.”

“Yes, it (the contest) made us all better caretakers of our livestock.” and taught... “kids breeding all the way through marketing your product.” and “allows the kids to see what consumers look for in our meat products.”

As a result of the state skill-a-thon contest, youth and adults were able to use their animal science skills and knowledge they have gathered though the years involved in 4-H. Knowledge and skills benefit the next generation of scientists because they will either be producing or helping farmers grow crops and raise animals safely and efficiently. The state contest directly results in education and workforce skills being developed; which translates to higher wages, more promotional opportunities and fewer chances of becoming unemployed.

### **The Future**

A state 4-H livestock skill-a-thon contest is scheduled to take place in January 2013. A survey of participants will take place at this contest to determine the impact of the contest on the youth from their perspective.

### **Cooperators and Co-Sponsors**

The 4-H livestock skill-a-thon contest was first introduced to many 4-H professionals by Dr. John Hall, Nancy M. Cummings Center Superintendent. Dr. Carrie Stark, 4-H Youth Development Specialist and Cindy Kinder, Gooding County Extension Educator worked with Dr. Hall to put together the guidelines for this contest and to host the 1st state contest in 2012.

Sponsors of the skill-a-thon were the Idaho Friends of 4-H, who awarded the program a \$500 grant to purchase supplies for the contest. Other sponsors and cooperators were TLC Angus of Bliss, ID, Sarah Butler, Gooding County 4-H Program Coordinator, and Tina Miller, Jerome County 4-H Program Coordinator.



Reviewing the results of the Sr. Division Retail Meat Cuts Identification Station.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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