

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Fremont County  
208-624-3102, Fax: 208-624-1527  
19 West 1st North, St. Anthony, ID 83445

## Upper Snake River Beef School benefits local livestock producers

### AT A GLANCE

Extension brings a variety of topics and critical information to livestock producers in a five county area on an annual basis to address current challenges and answer clientele needs.

### The Situation

The five county region of Fremont, Madison, Jefferson, Clark and Teton counties are a major livestock production area containing over 121,700 cattle and calves. As well as providing grazing for cattle from throughout eastern Idaho, this represents a substantial sector of the local economy for the region, in the forms of general commerce, employment, regional trade, goods consumption and contribution to the economy. As with any agricultural commodity, producers face ever-changing challenges to staying competitive and profitable. Some of the major challenges have included volatile market fluctuations, unprecedented feed cost fluctuations, changes in government regulation, increased competition for grazing resources, cattle health challenges and common production issues. One example of changing challenges for producers was the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's decision to move the borders of the Designated Surveillance Area (DSA), which then impacted producers within the new boundaries. Producers who have cattle within these boundaries are under additional regulations when shipping/selling cattle that leave the DSA.

### Our Response

Since 2009, the University of Idaho Extension has offered annual beef schools throughout the Upper Valley area including St. Anthony, Rigby and Rexburg. These day long schools covered a variety of



Cattle represent a substantial portion of the eastern Idaho agricultural economy, and more importantly are the second largest portion of Idaho's agricultural overall production.

topics every year, and subject matter was selected by producer input and feedback. The topics presented during the past several years have covered cattle marketing outlook; crossbreeding as a marketing tool; heifer synchronization; Idaho Cattlemen's Association updates; genetic selection using EPD's; optimizing cow/calf nutrition with effective range land management; using non-traditional crops such as turnips, sorghum and rye for fall grazing; cow herd nutrition; risk management during volatile markets; developing a herd health plan; understanding feed sample analysis; pasture establishment and renovation; poisonous plant ID and control; improving straw's feed value; using medicated feeds properly; strategic deworming; matching cow genetics to their environment; managing costs of production; ration balancer programs; parasite control; winter feeding tips; using supplements to prevent disease; and sage grouse habitat updates. In 2016 the University of Idaho Extension partnered with the University of

Wyoming Extension to provide presenters and funding to host the beef school.

### **Program Outcomes**

Attendance at this event has averaged 25 to 30 livestock producers per year since 2009.

In 2016, 100 percent of attendees rated the quality of the beef school as either excellent or good. Participants indicated that the most relevant topics to them were cow herd nutrition and range management.

Attendees reported facing several challenges in the livestock and agribusiness industry. Young and beginning ranchers reported having difficulty finding startup capital. Overall producers were battling a downward trend in cattle prices in 2016, while trying to stay profitable and managing continually rising operating prices. They also voiced concerns regarding environmentalist group pressure for grazing and other issues with public land policy.

In 2015 attendees reported facing challenges from wolf and bear depredation, continually rising input costs, difficulty in identifying ways to expand an operation to become more cost effective, better recordkeeping methods, accurate data collection, managing calf illnesses such as coccidiosis and burdensome government regulations.

### **The Future**

The Upper Valley Beef School will continue to be held in Madison County, offering research based information to livestock producers in the surrounding counties. Based on producer request the future topics at beef schools will include diversifying a cattle operation, learning about supplement usage and affordability, weaning stress reduction, improving reproduction in the cattle herd, supplemental feed crops and the impact of endangered species regulations on cattle production management.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Lance T. Ellis**, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension, Fremont County  
19 West 1st North  
St. Anthony, ID 83445  
Phone: 208-624-3102  
Fax: 208-624-1527  
Email: ellis@uidaho.edu

**Jon M. Hogge**, Area Cereals Educator  
University of Idaho Extension, Madison County  
134 East Main Street  
Rexburg, ID 83440  
Phone: 208-356-3191  
Fax: 208-359-3286  
Email: jhogge@uidaho.edu

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