

impact

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Youth quality assurance trainings benefit 4-H and FFA members

AT A GLANCE

Boundary County 4-H and FFA youth enrolled in market animal projects attended mandatory quality assurance trainings. These trainings had many positive outcomes for both youth and their livestock.

The Situation

At the 2017 Boundary County Fair there were some concerns raised regarding some of the market animal projects that had been entered. One of the concerns was when a record book judge discovered some of the 4-H market animals had been given dewormer or other medications close to the start of fair. A veterinarian had to be consulted to make sure all of the livestock could be sold at the Boundary County Market Animal Sale at the end of fair. This also raised concerns with the livestock committee because this incident made them realize they had no written record of medicines administered to livestock in the FFA program.

There was also another issue that arose when it became apparent that a sick swine had been brought to the fair thus leading to half a dozen more swine becoming quite ill over the next few days. Luckily the veterinarian was able to diagnose and treat the sick pigs, but there was some worry that one or more of the pigs might die. In the end it all worked out, but the events of the fair led the Boundary County's University of Idaho Extension office and market animal committee to realize there was some much needed education for both 4-H and FFA livestock exhibitors in the county.



Youth showing their pigs at the Boundary County Fair.

Our Response

In the fall of 2017, Amy Robertson, the 4-H youth development Extension educator in Boundary County, approached the livestock committee with a recommendation to make quality assurance training mandatory for all 4-H and FFA members planning to exhibit market animals at the Boundary County Fair in 2018. There was unanimous agreement that this was needed and would greatly benefit those youth and their livestock.

Six quality assurance trainings were scheduled throughout the months of February, March and April of 2018. Youth were asked to preregister for the session they planned to attend in order to ensure that the maximum number would not be exceeded for any of

the sessions. All six trainings were identical, so it would not matter which session a participant attended. Robertson designed these 1 1/2 hour trainings using hands-on learning activities. These activities were adapted from different resources including: the Quality Assurance and Animal Care Youth Education Program, the Iowa 4-H Youth Food Safety and Quality Assurance Program, the Idaho Beef Quality Assurance Manual, the Youth Beef Quality Assurance Program Manual for the Pacific Northwest and PQA Plus.

Each training featured activities and lessons which covered completing treatment records, reading medicine labels, the various types of medicines given to livestock, biosecurity and the spread of infectious diseases, livestock exhibitor ethics and the role of quality assurance in the food supply chain.

In conjunction with the county-wide quality assurance trainings, a new market animal health record form was implemented. Robertson worked with Scott Nash, regional 4-H youth development Extension educator, to create this new form. This record keeping form provided a place for 4-H and FFA members to write down treatment information for their animal including what type of medicine was given, the condition being treated, the dosage amount, the treatment date, the withdrawal date, and who administered the treatment. Boundary County required that this animal health record be completed and turned in at the final weigh-in of fair. Participants were informed that if any 4-H or FFA members failed to give their form to the Extension educator, they would be unable to sell their animal at the Boundary County Market Animal Sale.

Program Outcomes

As a result of these quality assurance trainings, 141 4-H and FFA members learned about many important topics involved in keeping their animals safe and healthy. Many youth commented that they learned new information at these trainings, even if they had been participating in livestock projects for several years.

These trainings had positive outcomes as seen at the 2018 Boundary County Fair. All of the pigs made weight for the first time in several years. Also, with increased vigilance by livestock exhibitors, no animals that came to fair were carrying infectious diseases that could spread to the other animals.

The implementation of the new market animal health form allowed the Extension educator to quickly look over the forms during the final weigh-in and make sure that all animals had met any withdrawal dates. This information was valuable in demonstrating that the animals would be safe to sell and butcher later on in the week.

The Future

These quality assurance trainings proved to be a great benefit to the 4-H and FFA youth as well as their livestock. Boundary County has decided to continue with these trainings every year. The topics and activities will vary a little from year-to-year but the overall focus on animal well-being will not change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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