



Extension Education in Willacy County
Making a Difference
2011

*Improving Lives.
Improving Texas.*

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service has been dedicated to serving Texans

for nearly a century. The agency was established in 1915 under the Smith-Lever Act to deliver university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people.

Extension programs have continued ever since to address the emerging issues of the day, serving diverse rural and urban populations across the state.

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and more than 100,000 trained volunteers, Extension delivers practical research-based knowledge to Texans in all 254 counties. Our expertise and educational

outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and health, and community economic development. Among those served are the hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension for solutions. Its agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in a significant return on investment to boost the Texas economy. The agency custom-designs its programs to each region of the state, relying on residents for input and for help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension's impacts on this county and its people:

Willacy County – Summary of Educational Contact

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2011 Hidalgo/Cameron/Willacy Multi-County Crop Production:

Relevance

Sugarcane, Cotton, Grain Sorghum, Corn and Sunflowers are important Agronomic crops for the Rio Grande Valley. All of these commodities have been proven to be profitable for producers in our area of the state. By increasing yields of these commodities at harvest producers can collect greater profits.

Response

In addressing the need for the educational programs, the Agents from the three county area implemented educational programs addressing the following topics:

- Introduction to different irrigation techniques
- Introduction to different pest control techniques
- Conduct Variety trial on Cotton and Grain Sorghum – this was done to identify performance differences in the varieties in the trials.
- Soil test Campaign – This would measure the fertility needs in fields and give a recommended fertilizer application for that field.

Results

A total of 12 group methods resulted in 1373 contact hours of education. The economic impact of the RGV Nutrient Management Education Program was measured in terms of potential fertilizer savings that have resulted from increased adoption of soil testing. Using soil test recommendations and producer-planned fertilizer rates, the savings in nitrogen and phosphate were estimated at 4.6 million and 5.5 million pounds, respectively. Reduction in fertilizer application rates translated into an average cost savings of \$25.77 per acre, depending on crop and management history. Total economic benefits to producers since the program began in 2001 are estimated at \$4.67 million. This analysis does not include the value of environmental benefits. Ag producers were educated on a wide variety of topics using a number of different methods. Topics included cotton, soybean, grain sorghum, corn, sesame and sunflower production; conservation tillage; risk management; fertility management; marketing and many others. Methods included field days, research demonstrations conducted on producer farms, educational meetings and publications. These included: Cotton Pre-Plant Conference, Grain Sorghum and Corn Field Day, Cotton Field Day, EQIP Meeting, Sugarcane Field Day and Soybean Field Day. New efforts to increase producer profits included conducting a sunflower hybrid result demonstration and conducting a Sunflower Production Meeting.

Future Plans

Agent will continue to work with neighboring County Agents in offering programs for producers to increase knowledge in techniques/practices that can increase profit in crop production.

Output Programs for Willacy County

2011 Rio Grande Valley Beef Development

Relevance

Beef producers can improve their herd or the herds of their customers through more rigid sire selection. Replacement heifers will perform to higher levels when in optimum body condition. Beef producers want to increase the value of bulls by collecting feedlot performance data and carcass characteristics.

Response

Extension conducted an official 112 day bull gain test and a 126 day heifer development program. Numerous data are collected on all animals including: initial and final weights, average daily gain, body condition score, scrotal circumference, sheath score, reproductive tract score, pelvic area measurement, hip height and ultrasound measurement of backfat and ribeye area. All data is provided to consignors.

Results

A total of 6 group methods resulted in a total of 258 contact hours of education. A bull gain test and heifer development program has been conducted each year from 1998 through 2011. A total of 1037 bulls, 805 heifers and 114 steers have been entered in the 14 years the program has been conducted. Currently, 28 bulls, 74 heifers and 60 steers are entered in the program by cattlemen participating from throughout south and central Texas. A feeder pen of steers is in its second year and adds a new dimension to the program. Important collaborators are: Dr. Joe Paschal, Rio Beef Feed Yard, Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show and the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association.

Future Plans

In cooperation with the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association, plans are to continue the program and perhaps consider marketing alternatives for participants. Another future possibility will be to include an artificial insemination program for heifers.

2011 Willacy County General ANR Contacts

Willacy County Agriculture Plan provided a number of programs for the producers of Willacy County. Programs consisted of the Following:

- Private Applicator Training
- Last Chance CEU Training
- Site Visits
- Individual Consultations

2011 Willacy County General ANR Plan

This plan was conducted in order to assist landowners and home owners in the county with horticulture questions.

Relevance

Due to our geographical location, and distance from nurseries and landscaping maintenance companies, numerous questions are fielded by the County Extension Agent for the Clientele of Willacy County.

Response

The Agent assisted landowners and home owners by answering questions via telephone, office visits, and making numerous site visits in order to assist clientele with questions on trees, shrubs, lawns, and insects. Agent was able to assist individuals with numerous problems, many of which were caused by drought. Agent conducted Private applicator training, in order to assist both homeowners and producers with the need for gaining a private applicator license to assist them in purchasing the needed herbicides to maintain their desired botanicals. Agent offers opportunities for individual to attend CEU trainings Two Time a year to assist licensed individuals with their needed credits.

Future Plans

Agent will continue to offer private applicator trainings, along with CEU opportunities in the County. Site visits and phone calls will be answered in order to assist clientele with problems as they arise.

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2011 Willacy County Quality Counts

Relevance

In 2011 the Willacy County Fair and Premium Sale had 20 market steers, 72 market hogs, 35 market goats and 10 market lambs exhibited. These animals alone will produce over 28,500 lbs. of edible product that entered the red meat industry that was intended for human consumption. If just a fraction of these animal owners do not follow the withdraw period guidelines on medications, someone may become extremely ill due to residues left in the meat. With this issue as an ever looming concern we implemented the “Quality County” program. With the use of the “Quality County” program participants should make more ethical decisions while raising a livestock project.

Response

The Quality County program is designed to foster the development of good character in the youth who participate, and teach the importance of quality assurance in livestock projects. This was attempted to be accomplished by using these “Eight Core Concepts”.

- Six Pillars of Character
- Purpose of 4-H/FFA
- Purpose of livestock projects
- Making decisions/goal setting
- Impact of livestock projects on the red meat industry
- Responsibility of producing a safe product
- Medication use/Reading and following labels

Results

In comparing the pre- versus the post- test, 51 of the 53 participants (96.2%) showed an increase in their test scores, while one student (1.9%) received the same score on the post-test as on the pre-test. Another student (1.9%) had a decrease in the amount of correctly answered question when comparing pre- to post- test. The average number of questions answered correctly on the pre-test was 17.81 out of 42 which resulted in a 42% average for the group. The average number of correctly answered questions on the post test was 30.85 out of 42 which resulted in a 73% average for the group. As a result, the average participant increased their post versus pre- test scores by 13.03 questions which is a 73% increase in correctly answered questions.

Future Plans

Agent will continue to work with the Willacy County Show Board, Willacy County Schools, and Willacy County Ag. Science Teachers to educate youth on how to properly and ethically raise livestock.

Willacy County One-Day 4-H

Relevance

One day 4-H is a grass roots community service effort for 4-H youth to identify, plan, and implement a community service project that serves the needs of their particular community and/or county. One day 4-H teaches 4-H members the importance of giving back to their communities based on issues they see are affecting the lifestyles of the citizens.

One Day 4-H was selected by the 4-H members of the Willacy County 4-H Club. This year's event was a sock drive to benefit the Child Welfare Board of Willacy County. Willacy County 4-H members along with Volunteers had a booth outside of the Raymondville Walmart where 4-H members were doing face painting on children who came by the booth. Individuals who made a donation to the event were given an ice cream cup which was donated to the event by Blue Bell ice-cream.

Response

One day 4-H helps develop the core life skills of communication, responsible citizenship, contribution to group effort, teamwork, self-motivation, problem solving, service learning, planning/organizing, and social skills.

The specific objectives of one day 4-H are:

- Provide opportunities for youth to perform community service projects in their individual communities and counties based on their identified needs.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn about social and community issues and develop ways of resolving those issues.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn from other team members.
- Promote teamwork.
- Give participants opportunities to work in a strong youth-adult partnership.
- Provide leadership opportunities.
- Give 4-H members the opportunity to participate in a new, exciting event that promotes 4-H

Results

There were a total of 18 participants in the One Day 4-H event of which 11 were girls and 7 were boys, ages ranged from 12-18.

We measured the participant's level of understanding and behavior changes with a retrospective post-test.

Level of Understanding: These were measured using a 1 through 4 scale, with 1 being no understanding at all and 4 being a high level of understanding.

- On the first indicator to measure the "level of understanding of issues affecting the community/county" the participants averaged a 3.06 on the scale before the event and a 3.83 after the event. This is a 0.78 change from before to after which translates to a 25% increase in understanding on this indicator.
- The second indicator to measure the "knowledge of other resources within their community/county who can assist citizens with issues and/or in the time of need" the participants averaged a 2.94 before and a 3.72 after on the scale. This is a 0.78 change in their level of understanding which is a 26% increase.
- On the third indicator of "knowledge of how to organize and plan a community/county-wide function that involves adults as well as other community organizations" average was a 2.78 before and a 3.67 after on the scale. This is the largest level of change seen at a 0.89 which is a 32% increase.

Behavior Indicators: This was measure by asking for a yes/no/unsure response to the statements on the evaluation.

- The first statement “I have a more positive feeling about the community service project I conducted” had everyone respond with a yes.
- The second statement “I have a better appreciation of the community they live in as a result of participating” had 17 participants respond with a yes and one was unsure. These were the same number as third statement “I will be more comfortable working in a team” and the fourth statement “I will be more of an influence on their community because of their project”.
- The fifth statement only had 16 responses of which 15 were yes and 1 was a no. That statement was “I have learned something about myself as a result of participating”.

Future Plans

This Outcome plan will continue to be conducted in Willacy County, it offers youth the opportunity to work as a team on a community service project that helps people in our community.

Output Programs for Willacy County

2011 Willacy County 4-H Program Administration

Relevance

The management of the 4-H Program in tells much consideration to details, organizing volunteers, and delegating job responsibilities to individuals that can follow through with the given tasks.

Response

This year's management of the 4-H program consisted of numerous activities that included: Monthly newsletters, news articles, news releases, marketing events, checking youth's eligibility, livestock show committee meetings, project group meetings, fundraising, and most importantly interpreting events to key stake holders.

Results

Results from the management plan include the following: Newsletters were sent monthly to all youth enrolled in the Willacy County 4-H program, 4-H events were marketed through club meetings, newsletters, and local newspaper, project groups and livestock associations meet as needed in order to plan and implement programs, and fundraisers which included: Beef Syndicate dinner, Willacy County Fair Raffle. Fundraising efforts this year included \$14,000 profit form the Beef Syndicate dinner and the Willacy County Fair Raffle. Monies from these fundraisers will be added onto the sale price of the youths projects during the Willacy County Fair Auction.

Future Plans

Willacy County AgriLIFE extension will continue marketing and interpreting highlight of programs in the county. Scholarship accounts will continue to build in order to assist graduating youth with financial assistance for higher learning. Volunteer involvement will continue to grow, as our ever-changing responses to emerging issues emerge.

2011 Willacy County 4-H Curriculum and Projects

The amount of project and curriculum implemented in Willacy County is constantly growing. Youth have a wide array of different projects and activities to choose from.

Relevance

As time changes, so do youth interests. Keeping a blend of core programs and incorporating new programs can be a challenge with leaders that are set in the paradigms. Finding ways to evoke change and make it appealing to our volunteers is the key to success.

Response

Projects this year consisted of the following: photography, horse, livestock (sheep, meat goat, beef, swine, rabbit, and poultry) and livestock judging. Youth were given the opportunity throughout the year to take part in these projects, in order to further their knowledge and gain valuable like skills.

Results

As a result of the previously listed projects, youth had the opportunity to compete at the local level, district level, and some advance to state competition. Youth have also participated in the San Antonio Livestock Show,

the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, and numerous local prospect shows. Along with competition, youth have had the opportunity to attend clinics and workshops at the local level in order to help them achieve their goals.

Future Plans

Willacy County will continue to look for new programs to bring to the youth in order to find new niche markets for clientele, along with retaining core programs that have been a staple in the 4-H Program.

2011 Willacy County 4-H Leadership and Volunteer Development

Leaders and youth gained leadership skills through trainings and events that were offered at county and district level.

Relevance

In order to develop leaders of tomorrow, leadership training is key for our youth. The opportunity to empower youth to make decision, delegate responsibilities, and follow through with commitments is essential in developing these leadership skills.

Response

Willacy County AgriLIFE Extension meet with parent leaders group monthly in order to gather input on upcoming events such as awards night, club meeting, county events, fundraising opportunities. Leaders were able to voice opinions and concerns on these events. Willacy County Council meets in order to plan events such as the awards night.

Results

The Willacy County 4-H Council members have taken on more leadership roles in their clubs, and are conducting more effective club meetings due to the trainings and encouragement they have received from volunteers and extension staff.

Leadership opportunities were marketed through the Willacy County 4-H Newsletter, giving youth the opportunity to take part in such programs. As a result 3 youth 4-H members attended District 12 4-H Leadership Lab, and 2 more youth served as voting delegates at District 12 4-H Election Convention.

Future Plans

Willacy County AgriLIFE Extension would like to continue to strengthen the Willacy County 4-H Council and give them the tools to make them a productive group that thrives to make the best better.

Resource Development

Willacy County Junior Livestock Show:

The 2011 Willacy County Junior Livestock Show generated over \$186,000 for the youth of Willacy County. Youth had the opportunity to sell show projects at the conclusion of the show. Funds were generated from donors in and around Willacy County.

Willacy County Beef Syndicate Dinner:

Willacy County 4-H has traditionally held a brisket plate sale Two Weeks prior to the Willacy County Fair. This year there were over 2200 plates sold which grossed over \$16,000 and netted nearly \$9,000 in profits thanks to donors and volunteers working together.

Willacy County Fair Raffle:

The Willacy County Fair Raffle generated \$6,000 for the Willacy County Fair. More than \$1,000 in donations were received to help offset the cost of the prizes.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Willacy County

Staff

C. Omar Gonzales, M.S.
County Extension Agent
Agriculture

Contact Us

Phone: 956-689-2412
Fax: 956-689-2031
E-mail: willacy@ag.tamu.edu
Website: willacy.agrilife.org