



Extension Education in Willacy County
Making a Difference

*Improving Lives.
Improving Texas.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has been dedicated to educating Texans

for nearly a century. In 1915, the agency was established under the federal Smith-Lever Act to deliver University knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, AgriLife Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, serving diverse populations across the state.

Through a well-organized network of professional educators and some 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 significant returns 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 2012 Educational Contacts

Outcome Programs for Willacy County

2012 Hidalgo/Cameron/Willacy County Crop Production Program

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 37 group methods resulted in 2542 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 potential savings in nitrogen and phosphate are estimated to be 5.1 and 6.1 million pounds, respectively. Reduction in fertilizer application rates translates into an average cost savings of \$25.77 per acre, depending on crop and management history. Total potential economic benefit to producers since the program began in 2001 are estimated at \$5.2 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, sunflower and guar production; conservation tillage; risk management; fertility management; marketing and many others. Methods included field days, educational meetings and publications. These included: Cotton Pre-Plant Conference, Grain Sorghum, Corn and Sunflower Field Day, Cotton Defoliation Field Day, Cotton and Sesame Field Day, Sugarcane Field Day and a Fall Corn Field Day. Research demonstrations conducted on producer farms are used to collect an unbiased source of performance data that is use by growers to help determine the most profitable varieties to select for this area. New efforts to increase producer profits included conducting an irrigated sunflower hybrid result demonstration and conducting a Guar 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

2012 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

Texas A&M AgriLife 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 measurements, hip height and ultra-sound measurement of backfat thickness and ribeye area. All data is provided to consignors.

Results

A total of 5 group methods resulted in a total of 92 contact hours of education. A bull gain test and heifer development program has been conducted each year from 1998 through 2012. A total of 1099 bulls, 899 heifers and 142 steers have been entered in the 15 years the program has been conducted. Currently, 62 bulls, 93 heifers and 33 steers are entered in the program by cattlemen participating from throughout south and central Texas.

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 offer an artificial insemination program for heifers.

2012 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.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

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

2012 Willacy County Quality Counts

Relevance

In 2012 the Willacy County Fair and Premium Sale had 26 market steers, 76 market hogs, 42 market goats and 18 market lambs exhibited. These animals alone will produce over 35,500 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

- 44 of the 47 participants (93.6%) showed an increase in their test scores.
- Three students (6.3%) had a decrease in the amount of correctly answered question.
- The average number of questions answered correctly on the pre-test was 16.87 out of 42 which resulted in a 40% average.
- The average number of correctly answered questions on the post test was 31.09 out of 42 which resulted in a 74% average.
- The average participant increased their post versus pre- test scores by 14.21 questions which is an 84% 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.

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 14 participants in the One Day 4-H event of which 9 were girls and 5 were boys, ages ranged from 10-18.

- 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 3.29 on the scale before the event and a 3.86 after the event. This is a 0.57 change from before to after which translates to a 17.3% 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 3.14 before and a 3.64 after on the scale. This is a 0.5 change in their level of understanding which is a 15.9% 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 3.0 before and a 3.64 after on the scale. This is the largest level of change seen at a 0.64 which is a 21.3% 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

4-H and Youth Development

- 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 13 participants respond with a yes and one was unsure.
 - The third statement “I will be more comfortable working in a team” had 12 participants respond with a yes and two were unsure. The fourth statement “I will be more of an influence on their community because of their project” had the same number responses as the third statement.
 - The fifth statement only had 13 responses of which 11 were yes and 1 was a no. That statement was “I have learned something about myself as a result of participating”.

Future Plans

We plan to continue to do the One Day 4-H event as an annual event. The 4-H club members will decide what kind of event they would like to do next year.

Output Programs for Willacy County

2012 Willacy County Youth ANR and Livestock

4-H ANR Projects are critically important to the youth of Texas. Livestock projects, Science of Ag Programs, soil, grass, and entomology judging and ID are all important programs.

Relevance

In 2000 there were over 75,000 county livestock show entries for cattle, swine, meat goats and sheep (Coufal, 2006) one half of those entries were 4-H. There have been six major benefits identified as a result of exhibiting livestock: 1. social relations; 2) character; 3) family; 4) competition; 5) learning new cultures and environments; and 6) helping finance the youth's higher education. Parents of youth suggest that life skills are enhanced by raising a 4-H livestock project. The longer youth are engaged in the project they are more likely to develop life skills (Boleman, 2003).

Response

In support of the Youth ANR Livestock Plan the Willacy County AgriLife Extension office along with volunteers planed clinics, conducted project visits and advised 4-H Families at stock shows. The CEA also served as Willacy County State Steer Validation Chairman and as a committee member on Willacy County State Swine/Sheep/Goat Validation Committees. The CEA also served as an advisor/4-H liaison to the Willacy County Fair Board of directors. CEA also offered trainings on how to conduct Method demonstrations that were being prepared for County and District 4-H Roundup.

Future Plans

Willacy County AgriLife Extension will continue to support 4-H youth involvement in Agriculture/Natural Resources and Livestock projects. We will continue to offer clinics/trainings and keeping them informed on rules, issues and contests.

2012 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. Willacy County AgriLIFE Extension meets with Willacy County 4-H Council regularly in order to gather input on upcoming events such as awards night, club meeting, county events, fundraising opportunities. 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. The Willacy County Extension office will continue marketing and interpreting highlight of programs in the county. Volunteer involvement will continue to grow, as our ever-changing responses to emerging issues emerge.

Resource Development

Willacy County Junior Livestock Show:

The 2012 Willacy County Junior Livestock Show generated over \$140,000 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 2400 plates sold which grossed over \$18,000 and netted nearly \$9,000 in profits thanks to donors and volunteers working together.

Willacy County Fair Raffle:

The Willacy County Fair Raffle generated \$8,000 for the Willacy County Fair. More than \$1,000 in donations was received to help offset the cost of the prizes

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Willacy County

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