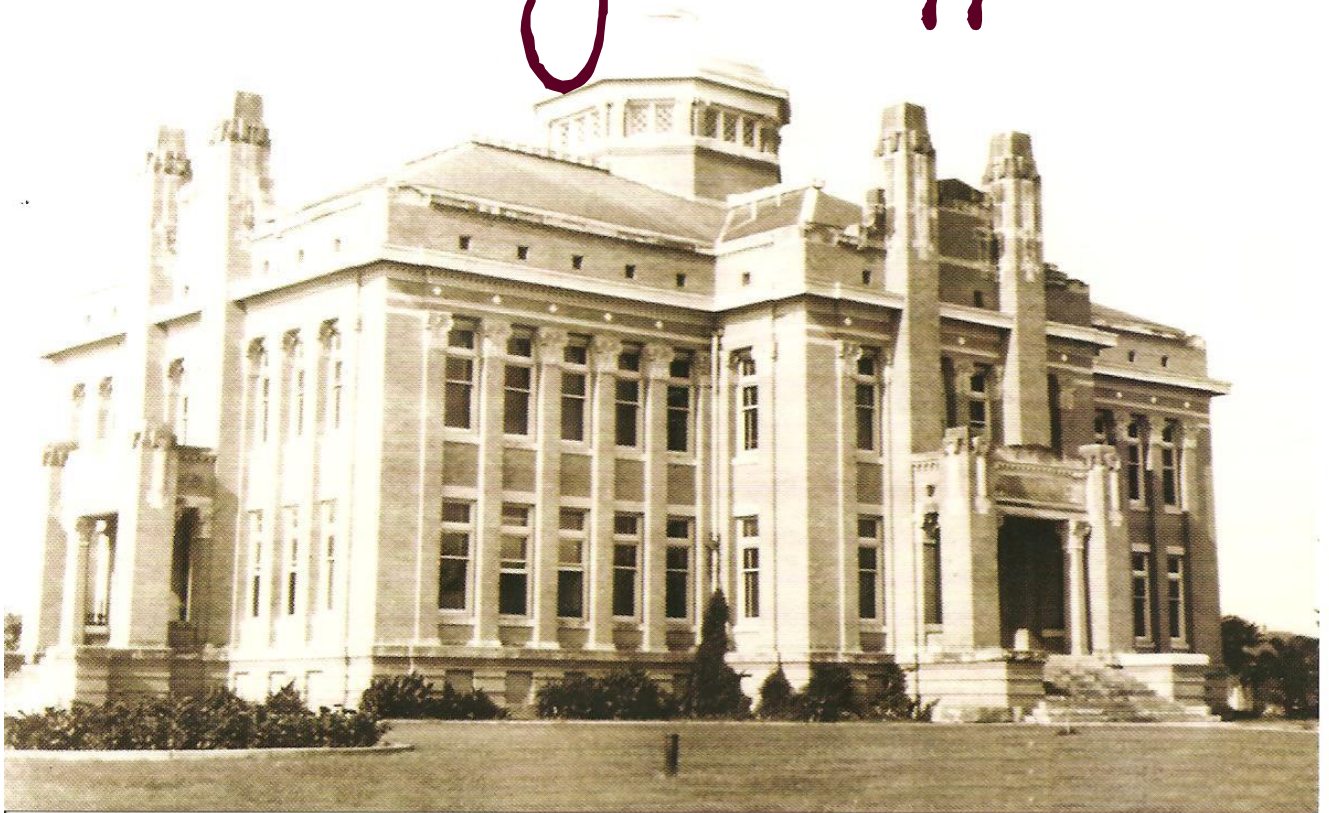




Extension Education in Jim Wells County

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:

Jim Wells County – Summary of 2013 Educational Contacts

	# of Sessions	Goal #1	Goal #2	Goal #3	Total
Contacts by Faculty					
Faculty	128	801	186	14,376	15,363
Faculty & Volunteer	44	118	13,561	1,495	15,175
Total Group Methods	172	919	13,747	15,871	30,538
Individual Methods	---	1,450	573	4,612	6,636
Materials Distributed	---	---	---	---	---
Total Contacts	172	2,370	14,320	20,483	37,174
Contacts By Volunteers					
Group Methods	54	---	93	1,958	2,052
Individual Methods	---	7	61	47	115
Materials Distributed	---	---	---	---	---
Total Contacts	54	7	154	2,005	2,167
Newsletters/Announcements					
Marketing/Promotion	---	150	---	190	340
Educational Methods	---	---	800	55	855
Total Contacts	---	150	800	245	1,195
TOTAL ALL CONTACTS	226	2,527	15,100	22,733	40,536

Jim Wells County *Drought Management*

Relevance

Jim Wells County has experienced drought conditions in four out of the last six years. Drought has impacted local, state and national agricultural production as well as urban areas and other industries as well. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Jim Wells County is home to approximately 25,000 head of beef cows and approximately 80,000 acres of row crops. In order to sustain profitability in these agricultural operations, land owners and managers must stay abreast of weather patterns, best management practices for their respective operations and seek alternative practices to implement when traditional practices are not viable.



Response

Jim Wells County Extension Beef and Row Crop Committees participated in coordinating and implementing various educational programs which incorporated program topics addressing drought management strategies. The following is a summary of the events that were held and the topics addressing drought management in each program.

- **Prescribed Burn Workshop:** Fire is an important tool used by land resource managers in controlling excess vegetation and brush populations in order to improve forage quality and reduce the risk of wild fires. Twenty four (24) people participated in Prescribed Burn Workshop on Friday, February 15, 2013. The workshop was held at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds and provided its participants with information on fire ecology, safety, laws and regulations, and other information pertinent to conducting safe and effective burns. Speakers on the program represented Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the State Burn Board and the National Weather Service. Participants received a certificate of completion which the Jim Wells County Commissioners Court will honor as an educational requirement when exemptions are implemented for agricultural burns during county burn bans.
- **Row Crops Seminar:** The Jim Wells County Extension Row Crops Committee hosted their annual Row Crops Seminar on Tuesday, June 4, 2013 at South Texas Implement Company in Alice. Twenty five (25) agricultural producers and industry representatives participated in this program. Educational topics included updates on Legislative Issues Affecting Agricultural Producers, Status of the Farm Bill and Management of Late Season Crops during Drought Conditions. Agent Rogelio Mercado also prepared and delivered a talk on Current Beef Cattle Market Trends and Long Term Weather Forecasts.
- **Ranch Bio-Security Seminar:** The Jim Wells County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted their annual Local Working Group Meeting on Wednesday, August 14, 2013 at the Jim Wells County Fairgrounds in Alice. The group met to discuss USDA NRCS program eligibility and funding and to gather information from producers about the needs of their operation. Approximately 35

4-H and Youth Development

producers and industry representatives participated in the meeting. Agent Rogelio Mercado coordinated a presentation on Emergency Preparedness for Livestock Facilities. Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, prepared and delivered a presentation on routine tasks and signs for producers to follow in order to be better prepared in case of a natural disaster or animal health emergency. Dr. Paschal also discussed the implications of drought on ranch operations and provided information on water requirements for beef cattle and proper disposal of livestock carcasses.

- **Residue Management Workshop:** While mechanical tillage practices are important in increasing the absorption of rainfall in fallow row crop fields, residue management is key in reducing runoff and wind erosion of the soil. Recent drought conditions have challenged area row crop producers in attaining a balance of proper tillage without removing crop stubble. The South Texas Implement Company Sales Team conducted a Residue Management Workshop and Equipment Demonstration on Thursday, August 15, 2013. Thirty five (35) row crop producers from the area participated in the program and witnessed various implements operating in the field. Agent Rogelio Mercado coordinated a talk on strategies for residue management in south Texas. Mercado recruited Mr. John Reilly with the South Texas Plant Materials Center in Kingsville to discuss his research related to this subject. Mr. Reilly shared information on both cultural and chemical practices that help reduce soil erosion while providing other benefits to the soil as well.
- **Ranch and Range Field Day:** The Jim Wells County Extension Beef Cattle Committee conducted their annual Ranch and Range Field Day on Saturday, September 14, 2013 at Agua Poquita Ranch West which is located 5 miles south of Benavides in Duval County. Approximately 65 people participated in the event. Program topics included Beef Cattle Market Updates by Dr. Joe Paschal, Restocking Options by Mac Young, Rangeland Management Tips During Drought by Dr. Megan Clayton, and an update on Underground Water Districts by Felix Saenz. Also, in a field tour, Dr Wayne Hanselka and Benny Martinez discussed new chemical products available for weed and brush control. Warren Kopplin discussed services available to land owners for chemical and fertilizer applications in the area. To wrap up the program, Drs Hanselka and Clayton provided a field plant identification contest. Over 20 people participated in this exercise. A pre and post test was administered to the participants of this program to evaluate knowledge gained.
- **Jim Wells County Farm Expo:** Approximately 40 agricultural producers and industry representatives participated in the Jim Wells County Farm Expo in Orange Grove on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. Various topics related to row crop and beef cattle production were presented. In the area of drought management, various seed company representatives led a discussion on drought tolerant genes in upcoming corn and grain varieties. This technology has been researched widely and should be available to producers in the near future.
- **Result Demonstration:** A Rain Water Harvesting demonstration was established on the Gamez Ranch in Duval County during the month of August of 2012. A 400 square foot car port was established and fitted with rain water catchment equipment flowing into a 1500 gallon storage tank. Thru a water trough which is filled thru gravity flow, the storage tank then provides a source of water to area wildlife. Water collection and usage devices are used then to monitor the value of this tool. Monthly data is collected and summarized yearly. The data and land owner observations are made public to interested land owners and resource managers.

4-H and Youth Development

Results

The seminars, workshops and demonstrations provided agricultural producers with timely information to help them make management decisions on their operations during drought conditions. In order to evaluate specific gain in knowledge, a pre and post-test was administered to the participants of the Ranch and Range Field Day which was held on September 14, 2013 in Bendavides. Twelve questions submitted by program speakers were used for the test. The questions asked were in relation to beef cattle inventory, exports, carcass value and replacement costs. Other topics included grazing management, brush control, prescribed burns, property tax exemptions and underground water districts.

Forty (n=40) pre-tests and thirty one (n=31) post-tests were received and analyzed. Below are the results of the individual questions and changes in the number and percentages of correct answers.

Table 1. Pre and Post Test Results, 2013 Ranch and Range Field Day, Benavides, Texas.

Q	TOPIC	PRE-TEST (N=40)		POST TEST (N=31)		PERCENT CHANGE
		N	%	N	%	%
1	Cull Cow Prices	17	42.5	10	32.3	-10.2
2	Value of Drop Credit	19	47.5	25	80.6	33.1
3	Calf Prices	26	65.0	31	100.0	35.0
4	Beef Exports	19	47.5	25	80.6	33.1
5	Replacement Options	34	85.0	29	93.5	8.5
6	Replacement Options	10	25.0	17	54.8	29.8
7	Grazing Management	8	20.0	26	83.9	63.9
8	Chemical Brush Control	7	17.5	24	77.4	59.9
9	Prescribed Burns	10	25.0	20	64.5	39.5
10	Property Tax Exemptions	2	5.0	18	58.1	53.1

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11	Underground Water Districts	4	10.0	14	45.2	35.2
12	Underground Water Districts	7	17.5	20	64.5	47.0
		163	33.96	259	69.62	35.66
		AVG=4.075		AVG=8.355		

With the exception of question #1, all of the questions increased in the percentage of correct answers in the post-test versus the pre-test. An average of 4.075 (33.96%) of the questions were answered correctly on the pre-test and an average of 8.355 (69.62%) of the questions were answered correctly on the post-test. This was an increase of 35.66%. The highest increase (63.9%) was on question #7 which dealt with grazing management.

The impact of this current drought is significant and continues to drastically affect agricultural producers in this area. A reduced cattle inventory has affected grazing income in the area and the lack of harvestable crops has also had an economic impact on farmers and area agricultural businesses. Educational efforts will continue to aid producers in making informed decisions in production practices and alternatives for their operations. Current changes in weather patterns may however, indicate a motion toward drought recovery in the near future.



Jim Wells County *Better Living for Texans – Three Easy Bites*

Relevance

In Jim Wells County, an estimated 8,138 individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty (including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current recommendations (i.e. Dietary Guidelines or MyPlate). This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Having enough food to eat is also a challenge; an estimated 1 in 6 households in Texas experience food insecurity.

Response

The Better Living for Texans (BLT) Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and prepare and store food safely. BLT also incorporates the *Walk Across Texas* program to promote physical activity.

During 2013, 62 Jim Wells County adults completed the BLT *Three Easy Bites* series. This program focuses on meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. This report reflects results of the pre, post, and 30-day follow-up surveys completed by all 63 participants.

Results

Most of the 62 participants identified themselves as female and Hispanic. More than 85% (n=52) had a high school education or less. Average household size of the participants was 1.9. Nearly 40% (n=27) of the participants received SNAP (food stamp) benefits. Almost 80% (n=50) of the 62 participants reported they received food from a food pantry within the last 30 days.

With the exception of using unit pricing, most participants were using the targeted food resource management practices either “always” or “sometimes” when they entered the BLT program. Immediately after the program ended there was a noted increase in the percentage of participants who intended to practice three of the four behaviors “always.” Thirty days later, the percentage of participants practicing all four behaviors either “always” or “sometimes” was higher than when the program began.

4-H and Youth Development

Table 2. Meal Planning and Food Resource Management – adoption of behaviors

Behavior	Current behavior (Pre) Number /%	Intent to change (Post) Number/%	Behavior 30 days later Number /%
Plan breakfast in advance			
Never	7/11.6	3/5.0	
Almost Never	46/76.6	7/11.7	
Sometimes	6/10.0	45/75.0	23/37.7
Almost Always		3/5.0	34/55.7
Always	1/1.6	2/3.3	4/6.6
Include two food groups in breakfast			
Never			
Almost Never	17/28.8	3/5.8	
Sometimes	36/61.0	40/76.9	8/12.9
Almost Always	6/10.2	6/11.5	32/51.6
Always		3/5.8	22/35.5
Use shopping list with breakfast items			
Never	1/1.7		
Almost Never	28/47.5	6/9.8	1/1.6
Sometimes	26/44.1	34/55.7	7/11.3
Almost Always	4/6.8	18/29.5	34/54.8
Always		3/4.9	20/32.3
Plan snacks ahead of time			
Never	5/8.6	4/6.5	
Almost Never	43/74.1	8/13.1	7/11.3
Sometimes	9/15.5	40/65.6	26/42.6
Almost Always	1/1.7	8/13.1	26/42.6
Always		1/1.6	2/3.3
Snack in front of television			
Never	2/3.4		
Almost Never	11/18.6	18/29.0	27/43.5
Sometimes	9/15.5	38/61.3	32/51.6
Almost Always	31/52.5	4/6.4	3/4.8
Always	6/10.2	2/3.2	
Use Nutrition Facts to determine snack amount			
Never	4/6.8	2/3.2	
Almost Never	48/81.4	14/22.6	
Sometimes	6/10.2	41/66.1	34/54.8
Almost Always	1/1.7	3/4.8	23/37.1
Always		2/3.2	5/8.1

4-H and Youth Development

Plan dinner ahead of time			
Never	1/1.7		
Almost Never	33/56.9	6/9.7	
Sometimes	23/39.7	37/59.7	10/16.1
Almost Always	1/1.7	16/25.8	33/53.2
Always		3/4.8	19/30.6
Have fruits and vegetables as half the meal			
Never	1/1.7		
Almost Never	12/20.3	6/9.7	
Sometimes	43/72.9	32/51.6	1/1.6
Almost Always	3/5.1	21/33.9	30/48.4
Always		3/4.8	31/50.0
Use shopping list with fruits and vegetables			
Never	2/3.4		
Almost Never	9/15.5	4/6.6	
Sometimes	43/72.9	34/55.7	1/1.6
Almost Always	4/6.8	19/31.1	24/39.3
Always		4/6.6	36/59.0



Jim Wells County Science of Agriculture

Relevance

As today's youth are further removed from farming and ranching operations, many do not understand the importance of agriculture and how it impacts their lives on a daily basis. Many young people believe that their source for food is the grocery store without thinking further as to where the food is actually produced. This lack of knowledge can create misconceptions about agriculture production but most importantly lessen its importance in our overall economy.

Response

To address the agriculture awareness issue, an agricultural literacy task force was formed of county Extension agents, Farm Bureau Board of Directors, members of the Soil and Water Conservation Board and a representative from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The task force began working on "Ag Fair" in February and hosted the two-day event in May.

The event targeted 4th grade students from Jim Wells and Duval counties. 900 students participated in 5 educational stations. The first session was the mobile dairy classroom which was approximately 30-45 minutes in length. Students then rotated to four 20 minutes concurrent sessions. Youth were exposed to various aspects of the agriculture industry including: field crops production; environmental and natural resources; wildlife management and safety; and livestock and poultry production. Resource materials and the Food and Fiber curriculum were provided to teachers two weeks prior to "Ag Fair" for additional learning experiences in agriculture. Other material that was provided to the teachers prior to the program included: program information and objectives, schedule of events, donors and sponsors, speakers, pre and post tests for the students, and teacher evaluations.

Jim Wells County 4-H members were recruited and trained to serve as group leaders. As group leaders, 4-H'ers met their classes as they got off the bus, directed them to their sessions, gave the classes a brief explanation of the 4-H program, and answered any questions the classes may have had. Sixteen 4-H members volunteered a total of 112 hours during this event.

Local agricultural producers and industry representatives were also recruited to assist with the event and conduct the educational presentations. Approximately 20 adult volunteers contributed 280 hours of their time toward the success of this program.



4-H and Youth Development

Results

One hundred and fifty two (n=152) students completed pre and post-test evaluations and 25 teachers submitted customer satisfaction surveys for the event. Below are the results of these evaluations.

Teacher Customer Satisfaction Surveys revealed:

- 100% of the teachers were mostly to completely satisfied with the activity.
- 52% of the teachers anticipated benefitting economically as a direct result of what they learned.
- 72% of the teachers plan to take actions or make changes based on the information from Ag Fair.

Student evaluations revealed:

- 13% of students increased their knowledge of agriculture as a whole.
- 87% of students surveyed now know that deer lose their antlers yearly.
- 95% of students surveyed now know that cotton, used to make their clothes, comes from a plant.
- 97% of students now know that many of our clothes are made of cotton.
- 93% of students now know that steaks and hamburgers come from beef cattle.

Future Plans

Jim Wells County “Ag Fair” is scheduled for May 7-8, 2014.



Jim Wells County 4-H Food Challenge

Relevance

Decreased participation in traditional 4-H Food and Nutrition Projects has reduced the exposure of young people learning about healthy food choices, safe food handling, meal preparation, cost comparison and other essential skills related to their eating habits. Involving youth in this project can help them make better choices in their meal selections, increase their skills in culinary practices, and increase their knowledge in food nutritional values.

Response

The 4-H Food Challenge is a grass-roots effort developed by County Extension Agents to address the need for a new, "highly-charged" foods experience. Modeled after such competitions as the Food Network's *"Iron Chef"*, the 4-H Food Challenge allows teams of three to five 4-H members to create a dish using a pre-determined set of ingredients. From these ingredients, 4-H members must identify, prepare and then present a prepared dish. Information related to the preparation process, nutritional value, serving size and cost of the dish is also part of their presentation. Throughout this process, 4-H members are applying the knowledge and skills gained through participation in the 4-H foods and nutrition project, demonstrating their culinary and food safety skills, and continuing to learn about making healthier food choices.

The specific objectives of the 4-H Food Challenge are:

- Provide opportunities for participants to exhibit their knowledge and skills when preparing and presenting a dish.
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn from other team members.
- Promote teamwork.
- Give participants opportunities for public speaking.
- Provide leadership roles and opportunities.
- Give 4-H members the opportunity to participate in a new and exciting competitive event.

The goal of implementing the 4-H Food Challenge was to give youth and volunteers a new opportunity for increasing knowledge related to foods and nutrition, My Plate, and being able to apply the knowledge and skills gained through project experiences. In Jim Wells County, the activity was introduced during 4-H Lock-Ins, summer camps, and a foods and nutrition workshop.

Results

As a result of participating in the 4-H Food Challenge, 17 participants completed the retrospective post survey: The data collected showed:

- ✓ 25% of the 4-H'ers increased their understanding of My Pyramid following Food Challenge.
- ✓ 21% of the 4-H'ers increased their knowledge of food nutrients and their functions following Food Challenge.
- ✓ 18% of the 4-H'ers increased their understanding of the importance of food safety.

4-H and Youth Development

- ✓ 16% of the 4-H'ers increased their understanding of kitchen safety following Food Challenge.
- ✓ 26% of the 4-H'ers increase their knowledge of the purpose of different cooking methods.
- ✓ 19% of the 4-H'ers increased their knowledge of how to plan and prepare a recipe.
- ✓ 27% of the 4-H'ers increased their knowledge of how to alter a recipe according to dietary needs.

Comments from Participants:

- "My cooking, leadership, and talking skills have greatly improved because of this competition."
- "I have applied my knowledge and experience related to teamwork."
- "How to work as a team."
- "Leading quieter 4-H'ers to speak in front of judges."

When asked about what they learned that they feel provides them with the ability to make better decisions because of their participation in Food Challenge, participants said:

- "It helped me discuss with my teammates and help be a better leader."
- "There is a lot of teamwork involved."
- "I have been given an opportunity to aid and take charge of the team."
- "You have to take the lead while also listening to everyone."
- "I speak out."
- "I am not afraid to talk in front of people/large groups."
- "I am better at talking to people."



Future Plans:

The future of the Jim Wells County 4-H Food Challenge activity is bright. There will continue to be workshops, clinics, and camps hosted to increase the 4-H'ers knowledge of preparing and presenting a dish.

Jim Wells County Family Fun Day

Relevance

Health care costs and insurance premiums are on the rise nationwide. Consequently, low income families struggle to obtain good health care due to financial constraints and must seek alternative ways to raise their children in a healthy environment. Education and preventative practices are essential for parents to follow to help them keep their children healthy. However, government organizations which offer educational services and reduced cost health care programs many times are unknown to these individuals.

Response

The Jim Wells County Family and Consumer Sciences Committee annually coordinates an event called Family Fun Day. This event was held on Saturday, June 22, 2013 on the lawn of the Jim Wells County Courthouse. With a mix goal of providing entertainment and health education to families, the committee solicited 40 organizations and agencies to participate in the event. Music, food, games and door prizes were available to the participants as well as information on health care programs, healthy food choices, and exercise programs.

Results

Over 500 people participated in the program and gained information which will help them make better food choices, increase exercise, prevent exposure to disease and hopefully obtain assistance with their health care. Members of the Jim Wells County Family and Consumer Science Committee enjoy coordinating and conducting this annual event and find it very beneficial to its participants every year.



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