

IMPACT



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Idaho Extension Goes South...To Ecuador

The Situation

The Partners of the Americas (POA), which sponsors the Farmer-to-Farmer Program (*Programa Agricultor a Agricultor*), in Guayaquil wanted to start a new project with small-scale cattle producers and requested support from the Idaho POA chapter.

The Ecuador project was an opportunity to utilize the Extension process, which is a "grassroots" approach to develop and implement a program based on input from the target audience. In Ecuador, as in N. Idaho, small-scale cattle producers have similar issues regarding animal husbandry practices, forage management, weed control, water quality, and the need for research-based information.

The project site was in the small community of Sabana Grande approximately 75 km SW of Guayaquil in the coastal, dry tropic, region of Ecuador. The community of Sabana Grande has approximately 2000 residents. There is electricity but no water in the residences. The people transport their water in containers from a community well.

Our Response

In May 2003, Valdasue Steele, UI Extension Educator in Benewah County, went to Ecuador for two weeks to plan and implement a new project with small-scale cattle producers (10-30 head).

Four producers were identified as the initial cooperators on this project. Other project partners were identified such as agriculture faculty and students from the Catholic University (CU) in Guayaquil (*Universidad Católica de Santiago de*

Guayaquil). Planning meetings were conducted to determine the objectives and scope of the project.

Steele gave a seminar about the project plan to the CU agriculture students. When the students were asked who had been raised in a rural area only 4 out of the 39 students had rural roots! The field day was conducted, with students and producers, in Sabana Grande. There were educational demonstrations on methods of castration, ear tagging, mineral block fabrication, vitamins, vaccinations and parasite control. The students also helped record data for the treated cattle.

Photo by V. Steele



Field day in Sabana Grande, Ecuador

Program Outcomes

An informal evaluation was conducted after the field day to assess the future interest and value of the project. The *ganaderos* said they enjoyed the educational experience and wanted to do more field days. They look forward to future interactions with POA volunteers and CU students. All the students indicated that they thought the field day was a valuable experience and all of them believed they

could make a difference in the community of Sabana Grande.

Due to the positive response and momentum generated by Steele, she was able to recruit and prepare another Idaho volunteer for this project who traveled to Ecuador in September 2003.

The four producers Steele started with had grown to 16 producers by the time the next volunteer arrived in September. As a result, the Municipal government in that region became interested and this group of producers became eligible for government assistance. A government veterinarian is now working with the producers to continue supporting a change in herd health practices. In addition, the critical water issue we identified has now become a government priority and plans are underway to install a 4" irrigation line into the community. The next step in that plan is to build a water treatment facility so the water can also be used for human consumption.

The Guayaquil POA coordinator, Roberto Almeida, has reported "...the actions that we are giving, I think are giving good results..." The cattle producers are interested in learning new ways and are very close to adopting those changes. If educational support continues, the cattle producers will make the changes necessary to have healthier cattle, more calves, and receive higher prices for their product.

This project reinforced the effectiveness of the extension education model. No matter where in the world you go, finding the right partners and providing practical, hands-on educational opportunities will change lives.

With the cultural experience and language skills acquired, Steele is now better equipped to serve N. Idaho's growing Hispanic and Latino population.

The Future

This project identified several critical issues that need to be addressed such as water quality and quantity, forage and pasture management, equine management, gardening, and marketing, etc. Additional funding and volunteer support will be necessary to sustain this project.

For More Information

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