



Training livestock judges benefits youth programs

The Situation

The judging of 4-H and FFA livestock at fairs is the culmination of the work and time put forth by youth on project animals. Often times youth livestock shows are a highlight for many fairgoers. Livestock judges are hired to evaluate youth livestock projects at fairs. These judges are “critical point” people for agriculture and influence countless leaders and youth.

Judges must be knowledgeable about current animal evaluation methods that support the mission of youth development. The circle of knowledgeable individuals qualified to evaluate in this manner is limited. It is often difficult to find skilled judges, which necessitates the hiring of unqualified or untrained judges, greatly limiting the educational experiences for the youth.

Our Response

Extension personnel in Idaho, Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming were experiencing similar challenges and formed a team to develop an educational program to train more judges. The Intermountain Livestock Judges’ Training was held in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Trainings were in Utah, Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. The training was developed to provide livestock enthusiasts with current meat animal industry guidelines as well as up-to-date animal evaluation methods that support the mission of youth development.

The judges’ training was intended to provide the opportunity for volunteers, livestock producers, extension educators, vocational agricultural educators and livestock enthusiasts to learn to make the show-ring experience an educational and logical event for all

stakeholders. Following were the goals for the judges’ training:

1. Participants will learn the importance of being a positive influence for youth at a livestock show.
2. Participants will increase their knowledge regarding livestock evaluation.
3. Participants will gain the skills to train other livestock enthusiasts.
4. Participants will learn how to interact with youth and parents to make the show-ring experience an educational and logical event.
5. Participants will be referenced in a list of trained judges from the geographic region.

Interest in a separate teen track was identified as a need following the 2008 training. A teen track was held as part of the 2009 training where youth members were able to work with a program instructor to learn more about oral reasons and terminology. The youth were able to judge livestock classes separately from the adults and ask questions among their peers. The adult track enabled participants to evaluate livestock classes. They then met to discuss judging and how it helps to build the community and is a tool for positive youth/adult interaction.

Program Outcomes

Training participants completed a survey at the conclusion of the 2009 training:

- 97% indicated they learned what is expected of a youth livestock show judge.
- 92% indicated they learned how to determine livestock judging priorities.

- 82% indicated they learned the importance of their role as the livestock judge to be a positive influence for youth.
- 91% indicated their expectations of the training were met.

Participants who attended the trainings in 2004, 2006, 2007 or 2008 were surveyed to determine the number of shows they had judged as well as provide information on the impact attending the training had on their judging skills. Results indicate that since 2004, attendees have judged 126 youth livestock shows in 11 states. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed the training helped them use livestock evaluation as a positive youth development tool helping them put into practice the show-ring skills learned at the training.

A database of participants who indicated their willingness to judge youth shows has been developed. The list has been distributed to participating states, shared with the western region at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents and has been added to the Idaho Judges' list posted on the Idaho 4-H webpage.

One survey respondent summarized: "It was a great clinic. As a parent who has little or no support from my own extension program, these types of opportunities are essential to the continued growth of myself as a leader, judging team coach and parent." A youth shared: "I will use the skills and knowledge I gained to help me in contests and in real situations like making a decision on which animal to choose as a project."

The Future

A judges' training has been planned for 2010 to accommodate potential judges in other geographic areas. A survey of all participants through 2009 will be conducted to determine further training impacts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Scott Nash, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Bingham County
583 West Sexton Street
Blackfoot, ID 83221
Phone: 208.785.8060
Fax: 208.785.2511
E-mail: snash@uidaho.edu
<http://extension.ag.uidaho.edu/bingham>

Steve Harrison, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Caribou County
53 East 100 South
Soda Springs, ID 83276
Phone: 208.547.3205
Fax: 208.547.4696
E-mail: stevh@uidaho.edu

Rauhn Panting, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Oneida County
30 North 1st West
Malad, ID 83252
Phone: 208.766.2243
Fax: 208.766.2244
E-mail: rpanting@uidaho.edu

Joel Packham, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Bear Lake County
P.O. Box 237
Paris, ID 83261
Phone: 208.945.2265
Fax: 208.945.2262
E-mail: packham@uidaho.edu

Other Participating Faculty:

- Scott Jensen, Owyhee County, ID
- Stephanie Etter, Canyon County, ID
- Dawn Sanchez, Uinta County, WY
- Jim Jensen, Utah County, UT
- Marc King, Sweet Grass County, MT
- Brett Kaysen, Colorado State University