Media presentation provides livestock judging opportunities

The Situation
Throughout the history of 4-H youth programming, the development of valuable life skills such as communication, problem solving and understanding one’s self have been taught through experiential learning activities (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992). Livestock judging activities have been traditional 4-H programs offered to youth as a means of becoming competent in animal evaluation. The purpose of these activities has been to encourage the critical evaluation of livestock, increase an individual’s livestock selection skills and as a method of bringing about improvement of the livestock.

Providing livestock judging experiences can sometimes be a challenge because of limited access to live animals. The factors that limit animal access are travel distances to the animals and the season of year. For example finding market lambs to judge in January in Idaho is difficult because lambs are typically born in the early spring and marketed for consumption in late fall. The extreme weather conditions and lack of facilities available in which to view animals are also limiting factors in providing an educational opportunity.

Our Response
In an attempt to overcome some of the challenges, a media presentation was developed by a University of Idaho extension educator with input from a collegiate livestock judging coach, a college animal science professor, and a 4-H volunteer. The goal of the presentation is to help youth and adults gain an understanding of livestock animal selection. It is intended to introduce the viewer to livestock evaluation or can be used to teach a workshop at a school or meeting.

Since this media presentation is a PowerPoint, it can be used when weather is cold outside or there is limited availability to live animals. The presentation introduces the viewer to making a plan, setting goals and market animal selection priorities as well as the opportunity to identify market animal traits. This presentation includes a class each of hogs, beef and lambs to evaluate and rank. Each class includes the animal placing order (rank), cuts (difficulty score) and collegiate level oral reasons that discuss the animal placing order.

Program Outcomes
The presentation has been used to introduce youth and adults to the basics of livestock selection and to train livestock judging enthusiasts and livestock judging teams. It has also been used as a workshop to teach participants about individual species and at
club meetings to provide education on evaluation priorities. Participants have indicated that the presentation helped them understand market animal selection priorities, how to recognize differences in animals and to identify important animal traits.

The PowerPoint presentation was linked to the Bingham County Extension website at http://extension.ag.uidaho.edu/bingham/4h.htm in January of 2009. In a five-month span from March 2009 through September 2009, the presentation was downloaded 293 times for an average of 41.8 downloads per month. During the same time frame in 2010, March-September, the presentation was downloaded 2,763 times for an average of 394.7 times per month. The increased use of the PowerPoint could be credited to the lack of animal availability, the ease of being able to download for use or that the media presentation has gained popularity because it has been available for a longer period of time.

The presentation was the 2009 NAE4-HA Western Region Communication Award winner for Media presentations as well as the 2009 IAE4-HA winner in the same category.