AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Jackson County continues to rank in the top 10 counties in beef production in Georgia. The Jackson County UGA Extension agent acknowledged the need for forage and nutritional programming for all of the county's beef producers. Three programs were planned to provide producers with options for addressing the nutritional needs of Jackson County herds. In the first program, staff presented local cattle producers with fall/winter forage options and feed supplements. UGA forage and grain research was presented as it related to the cattle industry and Jackson County's drought and feed supply situation. The second program showcased strategies to maximize the use of fall/winter forages. Rotational and limited grazing regimens were explained according to the nutritional needs of cattle in relation to the condition and stage of production. The third program offered ideas for hay replacement rations and how to locate potential alternative ingredients. The program also covered cost analysis according to stage of production and condition of the herd. The county agent coordinated the three programs with the assistance of beef cattle leadership from the county. Evaluations prior to these programs cited a need to be able to provide economical feed alternatives following a summer/fall drought and destruction from fall armyworms. Upon completion of the three programs, evaluations showed that cattlemen who attended all three programs were provided with grazing feed rations and the means to analyze the conditions unique to each of their farms.

EDUCATING CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY

Modern Jackson County is primarily rural, boasting an agricultural output of $838,198,864. Yet students ride by chicken houses on their bus routes every morning, never knowing where their cafeteria chicken nuggets come from. Jackson County Extension is bringing kids back to the farm. Coordinating farm days at schools and on local farms makes production agriculture available not only to local, school-aged children, but also to the Jackson County community. Jackson County Extension staff and volunteers coordinated farm days at schools and on local farms for a variety of audiences. Eight events in total, with a total attendance of 1,912 people, now have their own farm experience. Students from Maysville Elementary School, Oconee Baptist Preschool, fifth-graders enrolled in every Jackson County System school, Commerce Elementary School, 4-H campers, West Jackson Middle School special education students and an Angolan delegation were among the audiences educated. One of the tour planners said, "The event took a tremendous amount of effort to pull off, but was worth every ounce of sweat equity. When I see the smiles on the kids' faces, the gratitude from the teachers and the twinkle of prospect in the eyes of those little future farm girls, it makes it all worthwhile." Last year welcomed tremendous work in the 4-H specialty clubs. The Jackson County government enabled archery programming through a facility on acreage that will allow us to set roots for future growth. BB, shotgun and 22 rimfire shooting teams continue to be strong. The robotics clubs surpassed fundraising efforts of $20,000 to build a world-class, award-winning robot. Camping, leadership, livestock and public-speaking clubs all showed measurable growth. Working with community partners to create opportunities for the more than 1,200 students in Jackson County 4-H will solidify the progress of continued growth across the board.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Goods and services related to Georgia’s agriculture and natural resources affect each of the state’s communities every day. Agriculture is Georgia’s largest industry, with $74 billion in direct and indirect economic impact. More than 411,000 Georgia jobs are involved directly in commodity or food- and fiber-related industries.

UGA Extension faculty and staff play a key role in the success of this industry by sharing university-based research for Georgians to use on the farm and at home. Recommendations in areas including soil fertility, pest management, plant and crop varieties, water quality, and herd health and management focus on maximizing production and profits while minimizing environmental impacts.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agents also provide homeowners and communities with information on lawn care, landscaping, gardening and water conservation through a variety of workshops. Some agents also work with schools on projects like community gardens and farm-to-school programs. Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteers give thousands of hours of service to their communities by answering questions in county offices and creating educational opportunities.

4-H Youth Development

As the youth development program of UGA Extension, 4-H is also part of a national network. Georgia 4-H reaches more than 170,000 fourth- through 12th-grade students across the state and helps students develop the knowledge, life skills and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This mission is fulfilled through hands-on learning experiences in agricultural and environmental awareness, leadership, communication skills, citizenship, energy conservation, health, and food and nutrition.

Georgia 4-H’ers are well known for sharing their knowledge and volunteering throughout their communities. At the school and county levels, students participate in club meetings organized by 4-H Youth Development Extension agents. At the state level, students participate in competitions, summer camps and conferences. Some 4-H competitions and events are also offered at the regional and national levels.

Research indicates that, as a result of participating in 4-H, members are more engaged in their academic studies, less likely to be involved in risky behavior, and more likely to graduate from high school and continue their education.

Family & Consumer Sciences

Family and Consumer Sciences Extension specialists, agents and staff assist in addressing real-life issues faced by Georgians of all ages. They provide programs and the latest information on obesity, chronic disease, food and financial insecurity, family stresses, unhealthy housing, food safety and preservation, nutrition and more.

To help promote the positive development and safety of preschool, school-aged and adolescent youth, UGA Extension offers resources for parents, caregivers and others. Extension professionals in this program area lead consumer economics trainings and programs such as ServSafe®, Relationship Smarts, and PRIDE, a parent and teen driving education course.

Extension also promotes healthy lifestyles through statewide programs. Walk Georgia – a virtual, fitness-tracking resource – encourages improving physical fitness and healthy lifestyles in order to better the lives of Georgians. Other health programs managed by UGA include the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). These classes teach families how to stretch their food dollars, eat healthier meals and snacks, and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.