AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Bermudagrass stem maggots (BSM) have caused severe economic losses to Dodge County hay growers over the past several years. The first case of BSM was confirmed in Dodge County in 2012. Since that year, BSM have become a major issue for hay producers in Dodge County. Education and familiarity with this pest was a must for producers in Dodge County if they expected to be quality producers of hay in the area. There are approximately 9,000 acres of hay grown annually in Dodge County, with a dollar value of $2.7 to $3.2 million. If BSM are not scouted for and treated in a timely manner, yield losses in Dodge County could be expected of between $1.5 to $2 million annually. Education on management of BSM has been brought to Dodge County growers and results have been to bring a positive dollar value back to the county.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural literacy can be cultivated in any person, no matter their age or experience. Helping others understand the important role agriculture plays in their everyday lives became a target goal of the Dodge County 4-H Program Development Team. UGA Extension in Dodge County Extension and the Dodge County 4-H Club set out to provide an agricultural literacy experience through enrichment, citizenship and general 4-H programming. After identifying this goal, the agent and program development team immediately began brainstorming and planning an educational component that would not only be informative, but fun, stimulating and motivating as well. As a result of the educational events, 46 children and adults were provided information about agriculture from production to the end product, in a fun yet educational capacity. After this program, students were more informed about the benefits provided by our agricultural community, the community’s career options, access to the locally grown food supply and the local economy. Adults are now more cognizant of the educational need within our community. Celena McDermitt, a parent, said the following of the program, “Through the Ag Literacy Program offered by Dodge County 4-H this past summer, my daughter gained a greater appreciation and understanding of the agricultural aspects within our own county. Her desire to share information obtained during this program, with not only me and her dad but friends and other family as well, has been exciting. Growing up here, I have always known that we were a large agricultural community. However, as with life, we take many things for granted, just as I have in assuming that my child automatically knew where her food came from and what opportunities were in front of her in the agricultural industry. We are greatly appreciative of the time taken by Dodge County 4-H to put this program together and share with the youth of Dodge County how valuable sustainability is in this area.”

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Although Dodge County does not have a Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agent based in the county Extension office, we strive to assist local residents with their questions. Common questions cover food safety, food preservation, mitigating mold and mildew, healthy meal planning, nutrition, family budgeting, and much more. These issues and others are answered through a wide variety of free UGA Extension publications available at the county office and phone conferences with FACS agents from surrounding counties. Neighboring FACS agents often conduct programming that our county residents are welcome to attend.
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, and its direct and indirect economic impact totals $73.7 billion. More than 392,400 Georgia jobs are directly involved 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 is a virtual, fitness-tracking resource that encourages physical fitness and healthy lifestyles 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.