

DAIRY PIPELINE

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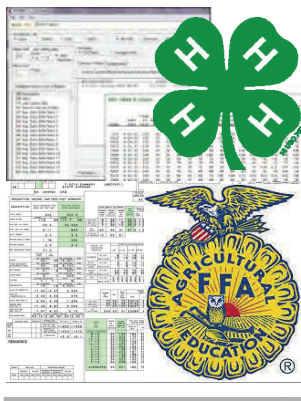
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A YOUTHFUL APPROACH TO KEEPING DAIRY RECORDS

Four-H and FFA members generally keep record books for their project animals. This practice allows youth to learn good recordkeeping practices. They gain an appreciation for the types of information needed to manage individual animals and groups of animals. Financial recordkeeping also teaches many important lessons about profitability of enterprises and sound financial decision-making.

As a teenager, I became very interested in the production records on our farm and I was fortunate that my father and uncle allowed me to become heavily involved in maintaining these records. I learned much about recordkeeping from my grandfather, father, uncle, veterinarian, and DHI technician. I maintained the breeding, drying off, calving, culling, palpation, and health data for the herd during my high school years. This experience fostered my present-day interest in dairy information systems. I believe other youth may benefit from similar responsibilities.

There are many benefits that may come from getting younger members of the family or other youth involved in keeping farm production and business records. It can certainly introduce the next generation to basic herd management. This allows the young person to gain an appreciation for the types of information needed on the farm and provides them with responsibility that creates a deeper interest in the operation. It may also provide a feeling of ownership, encouraging a continued involvement with the home farm.

With proper guidance and encouragement, the youth may be able to enhance current records to improve overall herd management. Youth attendance at seminars, workshops and conferences can also stimulate their knowledge and interest. As a youngster, I was excited to be able to

attend DHI herdbook clinics with my father and learned much in the process. I learned about key DHI parameters and reasonable goals for them.

For farms using or considering using computerized recordkeeping systems including spreadsheets, parlor management software, PCDART, and Dairy Comp 305, having a youth involved could be very beneficial given their natural gravitation toward technology. For example, a youth could be very helpful in a PCDART herd by doing basic data entry and printing reports. With more experience one could become adept in report creation and even interpretation of the information.

Whenever possible youth should be involved in financial recordkeeping. Parents may be hesitant to do so, but this involvement can foster a better understanding of the financial scope of the business and how production decisions affect profitability of the operation. Additionally, it can be an excellent way to teach them the importance of confidentiality of business matters.

Regardless of the type of recordkeeping system in place – paper or electronic – youth may be an untapped asset on the farm for assistance. For the young person to be successful, they must express an interest and willingness to learn and be committed to the task. The farm manager, whether a family member or not, needs to properly train and supervise them, especially until they become proficient. It would be wise to start with smaller tasks of basic data entry and increase responsibility as merited. In the long run, efforts could result in a win-win situation for the youth and farm management.

—Dave Winston
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Upcoming Activities

See [VTDairy](#) for details.

September 14, 2014
4-H/FFA Dairy Goat Show
Isle of Wight County Fair

September 22-24, 2014
[Southeast Quality Milk Initiative 2nd Annual Meeting](#)

Sept. 29–Oct. 4, 2014
World Dairy Expo
Madison, WI

October 8, 2014
Mid-Atlantic Secure Milk Supply Project Training,
VDACS office, Harrisonburg

October 23, 2014
Farm Succession Workshop
Staunton

November 15, 2014
VA Holstein Annual Meeting
Staunton

If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services or other accommodations for any Extension event, please discuss your accommodation needs with the Extension staff at your local Extension office at least 1 week prior to the event.

“The goal of everyone in agriculture should be to inspire youth.”

For more information on Dairy Extension or to learn about current programs, visit us at [VTDairy](#) —Home of the Dairy Extension Program at: www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu.



R.E. James,
Dairy Extension Coordinator &
Extension Dairy Scientist,
Dairy Nutrition

INSPIRING YOUTH AND FAMILIES TO A FUTURE IN AGRICULTURE



With show season in full force, Franklin County joined the excitement August 8th and 9th when youth from several counties came together in Rocky Mount for the first Franklin County Open Youth Fun Livestock Show.

Friday night kicked off with a sheep and goat show, and youth from Franklin, Pittsylvania, and Bedford counties proved how much they love showing their sheep and goats. From the youngest and tiniest goat named Black Betty to the biggest lamb who would be shown at the State show, the youth all worked together to teach the inexperienced how to work with their animals. Since sheep are shown without halters, there may have been some unexpected mutton busting.

Everyone no matter age or ability deserves the right to have fun and smiles were in no short supply this night! With 30 sheep and goats participating in the show the night ended very late, but was nonetheless enjoyed by all.

Bright and early Saturday morning the trailers rolled in for the dairy and beef show. Within an hour the small building filled with over 40 dairy and beef heifers and market steers from Franklin and Pittsylvania counties. Ninety percent of the dairy heifers shown were loaned from local farms. Franklin and Pittsylvania County farms, Hodges View, Brooks Farm, Burnt Chimney Dairy, Ole VA Holsteins, Double M Dairy, Ben Bowman Farm, Zach Rose from HN Barnhart, Grandview Holsteins and Hammocks Dairy showcased the benefits of family farms helping our youth.

Inspiring youth is the job of all extension agents and with the help of local farm owners we are able to do just that. In my experience, producers have been

more than willing to support youth by allowing use of their animals for training and showing. In fact, I have yet to have a producer say no. They understand the critical importance of fostering youth interest—these kids are the future of the industry. Recently, a producer in Franklin County approached me with the proposition that if our livestock shows continued to grow, his farm would be willing to supply heifers and work to build a network of farmers each willing to give an animal to the youth. The youth would show the heifer and in the end sell the animal, using the proceeds for school or to purchase more animals for showing.

Shows for youth are only possible when all of the pieces come together: farmers willing to donate animals, sponsor support through monetary donations and/or equipment, volunteers, and of course the parents who travel all over Virginia with kids and animals. The goal of everyone in agriculture should be to inspire youth, so someday they will take over the family farm or give back to agriculture in some way. Planning and preparation are essential for future agricultural success.

If you would like to learn more about what you might face when your kids are old enough to take over the family business, look for a farm transition program. Virginia Cooperative Extension works with professionals and specialists to provide programs to help make a smooth transition when selling or changing hands in a business. One upcoming program is the Succession Solutions for farm families in Rockingham County on October 23, 2014. Speaker Kevin Spafford will discuss the five keys to preserving the farm, and passing a successful operation to a well-prepared next generation. Contact the Rockingham County VCE office for more information.

If you would like to learn more about youth involvement in 4-H or showing livestock contact your local VCE office. Thank you to all who inspire youth!

—Cynthia Martel
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