The Ohio State University Extension

CFAES

Evaluation of an Extension Field Day to Improve Farm Profitability and Sustainability for New Returning Clientele

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Goal Statement

The leading agriculture industries in southeastern Ohio are beef cattle and forage production, and they are a primary focus of the Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Valley Extension Education and Research Area. Since 2011, Extension Educators have partnered with the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center in Jackson, Ohio, to deliver annual educational field night programs. These educators provide education and social programming related to beef and forage production to improve farm profitability and sustainability in southeastern Ohio and surrounding areas by utilizing evaluation data of new and returning clientele.

Objectives

1. To show proper construction techniques of the different variety of fencing options farmers may implement on their operations.
2. Showing the economic and environmental benefits of rotational grazing strategies compared to continuous grazing to extend the grazing season.
3. Educating participants on buying cattle based on Expected Progeny Differences to see the economic-benefit of selection based on genetic testing instead of only based on visual appraisal.
4. Introducing new farming technology that may not have historically been considered to southeastern Ohio farmers.

Clientele participating in the pasture management section of the August field day.

Program Design

The design of the program is based on the previous year's evaluations. Educators take the information from a question asked on the evaluation. The question asks what other topics would interest you for next year's program. From the 2022 evaluation, we determined what the most asked-for topics were, to implement for the 2023 program. The most asked-for topics from the 2022 program for the 2023 program were, Cattle Fencing, Cattle Grazing Management, Genetic Management, and Technology and Applications. During the program, clientele are split up into two groups, and transported to the locations on the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center by tractor and wagon to the different sessions. These sessions show real on-farm situations taught by educators and state specialists based on research done on the farm.

Clientele learning about a precision agriculture automated creep feeder.

Planning

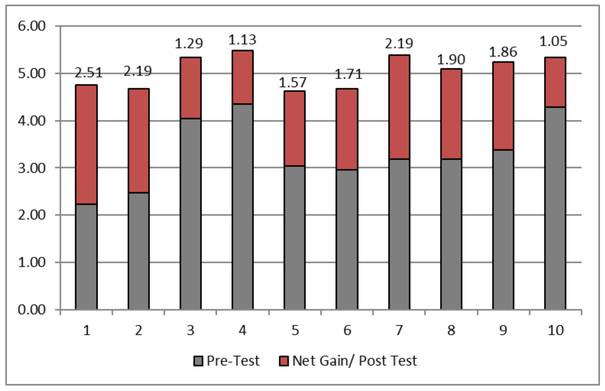
When planning an evaluation for an extension field day to improve farm profitability and sustainability for both new and existing clientele, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. This approach involves utilizing existing data to create a planned change. The extension educators' background training is used to prepare for adult-centered programs, and planning meetings are conducted to establish outcomes for the field day that develop and work towards implementing changes that benefit the clientele.

Clientele learning the proper way to set an H-brace.

Why do a Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is crucial to long-lived programs to assure that clientele, who are new and returning, are obtaining new and valuable information. A retrospective pre/post survey allows the participants to rate their understanding of a learning statement before and after the program. This allows for clientele to accurately assess if they are learning something new from the program. Learning statements are based on the previous year's evaluation and topic suggestion section. Each session topic possess two learning statements that are tailored to the session. Learning statements are developed during the planning process of the program.

Table 1: 2023 Knowledge Gain



Learning Statements

1. I understand the opportunities and challenges of using drones for pasture management.
2. I understand additional management systems that can be added when using EID tags on cattle.
3. I understand the economic benefits of implementing grazing strategies.
4. I know the environmental benefits that grazing can provide.
5. I know how to use data in a sire directory.
6. I know how to identify economically important traits specific to a herd.
7. I understand proper gate placement in my fence.
8. I understand how to select the correct size fence energizer.
9. I understand what type of staple I have and correct placement.
10. I understand the importance of proper corner post installation.

Results

Program results are shown on Table 1 as the knowledge gained on a retrospective pre/post survey. An average net gain of knowledge of 1.74. Each number on the X-axis of the bar graph corresponds to the learning statements assigned. The largest net gain came from learning statement 1 with a gain of 2.51.