

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE

Changing Lives

IN MCLEAN COUNTY

Extension provides practical education you can trust by helping individuals, families, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.



Canoeing at Western Kentucky 4-H Camp



4-H Camp, Changing Lives

4-H has a mission to help young people become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. Through programming, agents strive to achieve these goals. One of the most beneficial programs offered through 4-H in McLean County is the Camping Program. Through promotion in the school system, McLean County took 58 campers to West Kentucky 4-H Camp this year. Of those youth, 40% were first timers and 60% were returning campers. The classes offered for youth at camp were focused on science, fitness, healthy cooking/living, music, arts and team building. Of the campers attending, 95% said they tried something new with 90% saying they would use what they learned at home. 95% of campers also expressed that they felt good about what they had accomplished at camp, raising their self-esteem. Upon returning home from camp, McLean County has seen a boost in participation of other 4-H activities.

Priority Program Efforts

- A total of 32 people are now involved in addressing significant community issues
- 85 youth indicated an increase in leadership skills, knowledge or confidence through participation in Extension-related leadership programs
- 210 citizens (youth & adults) acknowledged utilizing the skills learned through Extension programming
- A total of 49 individuals reported making lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, managing stressors, healthy home practices, etc.) for the purpose of improving their health
- 32 individuals incorporated new or additional conservation practices.
- A total of 21 youth and adults demonstrated informed and effective decision-making skills

Beef Field Day Focus on Total Herd Health

When grain prices dropped drastically and beef prices began their hike, more and more farmers became increasingly reliant on their beef operation to keep them operating in the black. Due to the price of beef and its economic impact on the farm, herd health has become producer's top priority.

The McLean County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources organized a Beef Field Day focused on total herd health, hosted by a local beef producer. Over 30 were in attendance, representing approximately 2300 head of cattle.

Extension Specialists, a beef network representative and the McLean County ANR Agent gave presentations on weed management in pastures, pinkeye control, forages and grazing options, new options in parasite control, wheat for hay and using unmanned aerial systems on the farm. Upon completion of the program, field day



participants completed a survey. 75% of the surveys indicated that the information on weed management, forages and grazing, UAV's and wheat for hay was very helpful, while the other 25% stated it was fairly helpful. Of those 75%, 84% said that they would be making changes in 2016 based on the information

received. Producers were asked to place a dollar figure on the information that they received during the field day, which averaged out to be about \$300 per head. Other producer comments included: "Excellent Program" "Great job! A lot of Information" and "Best Beef Field Day I can remember!"

Due to the positive response of this program and input of beef producers, a beef field day is already being planned for next summer and will cover topics such as corral management, genetics, reproduction and application equipment.



Kentucky Grilled Chicken



Poultry is considered the number one agriculture commodity in Kentucky, with McLean County being second in the state for poultry production. From these statistics we can assume that youth are frequently exposed to poultry and poultry products. In an attempt to build upon existing knowledge of poultry, three 4-H agents in McLean, Daviess and Hancock Counties held a Poultry Day Camp. The goals of the camp were to educate youth on safe handling and cooking practices for chicken. Thirteen youth from the three counties spent the day preparing their own BBQ sauce and learning from one of the state poultry specialists who showed them how to safely grill a half chicken. Upon completion of the program, a survey was administered. Agents found that all thirteen youth had never grilled a chicken before, however they could now identify the proper internal temperature for safe consumption, as well as list four food safety rules that they learned that day. Youth in McLean County are now showing interest in competing at the state poultry contest.

Grain Sorghum: An Alternative to Traditional Corn/Soybean Rotation?

Over the past 18 months grain producers have seen a 20% price drop in soybeans and a 40% drop in corn prices, causing a decrease of almost \$500 an acre gross income. Due to varying economic and environmental pressures, producers have been faced with management and profitability challenges. Because of these challenges, producers have begun to search for alternative crops, including grain sorghum due to its productivity on marginal soil types and its higher return on investments.

The Tri-County Grain Improvement Series was developed to determine the most effective use of fungicide and most efficient rate of nitrogen application in grain sorghum production, through two different studies replicated on farms in McLean, Hopkins and Webster Counties.

KY Grain Sorghum



The test site in Webster County served as host of the Tri-County Grain Sorghum Field Day. Speakers addressed insect issues (esp. sugarcane aphid), storage, weed management, fertility, agronomic data, corn vs grain sorghum and use of UAV's in farming. At the conclusion of the program 56 surveys were completed, representing 552,596 acres of production agriculture. Of those 56, 61% indicated interested in insect control related to grain sorghum. 60% of survey respondents were very interested in weed control and resistant weeds, and 52% of those noted that changes would be made in the 2016 growing season for weed control. 50% of producers said they plan to make changes in their fertility plans and 55% plan to make changes in their insect control for the 2016 growing season. Some producer comments included: "Very Useful", "Well-Organized", "Energetic" and "You made money being here today!"

In working on this program, the McLean County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources was responsible for writing our research protocol, developing the grant proposal, working with the McLean County grain sorghum producer, creating the field day promotional flyer and producer survey and spoke at the field day about the agronomics of grain sorghum and gave an economical comparison of grain sorghum vs corn.

Due to the success of this program, plans are already being made for research plots for the 2016 growing season, which does include plans for expansion.

Farmers' Market Increasing Its Value in McLean County

More than ever, Kentuckians want to buy local, affordable food for their families, and they appreciate the experience of buying it directly from the people who produced it. Because of this, the McLean County Cooperative Extension Agent organized the McLean County Farmers' Market in 2014, starting with 4 vendors, 3 days week, at two locations. During the 2015 season, the number of vendors increased to 11 and a fourth market day was added at a third location.

Direct marketing of farm products through Farmers' Markets has become an increasingly important sales outlet for agricultural producers. Vendors this year reported a total of \$12,117 gross sales, an increase of about \$7,500 sales from last year. Local families are jumping on the opportunity to buy local produce, with average attendance at the Farmers' Market being about 50 per market day, an increase over last year's customer base. Meaning that more McLean County citizens are buying local, fresh, affordable foods.

This year's market increased its value by allowing the sales of homemade goods by vendors that completed the Homebased Microprocessor Workshop. The McLean County Cooperative Extension Agent also organized an Opening Day event partnering with Independence Bank who gave away market totes and purchased produce for the first 5 customers. Opening Day events also included samples of Plate It Up recipes using produce sold at the market that week and other give-a-ways. Other special market events included Kids Day at the Market, which included free samples for kids, give-a-ways and games for kids, and Customer Appreciation Week. A Facebook page was also created this year which helped to increase advertising and public awareness of the market.

Plans are already underway for the 2016 Farmers' Market and there are high hopes for even more expansion and improvements in the future.



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