

UI Extension in Fort Hall develops thriving 4-H/youth livestock program

AT A GLANCE

Fort Hall's tribal 4-H director Nola Cates and University of Idaho Extension educator Danielle Gunn recruited tribal youth to raise livestock and learn invaluable life skills.

The Situation

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes located on the Fort Hall Reservation, have a rich history in production agriculture. Production agriculture is vital to the reservation, and it plays a significant role in our economy. The reservation consists of over 544,000 acres. Over half of this acreage is used for livestock and crop production. Historically, many tribal families operated small agricultural operations on this land. The family operations typically involved youth. Many of these youth were also involved in 4-H livestock projects to enhance the knowledge and skills they learned on family operations. However, as agricultural practices changed and small family agricultural operations decreased, a loss of interest in 4-H livestock projects ensued. The Fort Hall Tribal 4-H Director Nola Cates and UI Extension Educator Danielle Gunn observed the apparent decrease in youth interest in production agriculture.

An additional complication was that some remaining tribal livestock producers had retired or decreased their herd sizes because their children were not interested in managing their operations. These changes led to a generation of youth with little to no knowledge of livestock production and animal handling skills. To compound the problem, youth that had little to no



4-H tribal youth begin 2023 4-H livestock projects at an official county weigh-in.

experience raising livestock did not understand how their food was produced.

Because of these issues and additional changes in the structure of our agricultural society, today's youth have not had many opportunities to learn about livestock production. Tribal parents and grandparents became concerned about the younger generation's loss of interest and knowledge about agriculture. Our stakeholders identified a definite need to provide livestock 4-H programming to tribal youth. They approached Nola and Danielle about initiating a 4-H livestock program tailored for tribal youth to revive tribal livestock production knowledge and skills. Further, the tribe needs youth that are ready and willing to be involved in production agriculture to provide an abundant, safe and

nutritious food supply for our community. There are extensive tribal land and educational resources available for youth to become involved in production agriculture. Also, through UI Extension, several educational programs and materials are available to educate tribal youth in a variety of agricultural subjects. These resources paired with parental collaboration are being used to solve the problem of youth lacking interest and knowledge about agriculture. Combining these resources led to the development of a new tribal youth 4-H livestock program that provides youth with the knowledge and skills to produce their own food.

Our Response

We combined the resources of the Shoshone-Bannock 4-H Tribal program and the UI Extension, Fort Hall Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) to begin the new tribal 4-H/youth livestock program. We envisioned a program that met the specific needs of tribal youth by providing them with basic livestock knowledge and skills. We hold regular 4-H livestock meetings that include educational classes. We conduct home livestock visits with hands-on teaching opportunities and hold showmanship and livestock handling play days throughout June and July. Additionally, we host fundraising events to support the youth and offset their livestock production costs for feed and equipment. In 2022, the UI Extension, Fort Hall FRTEP was able to secure funding for laptops. The laptops enable youth to maintain livestock records and access online educational materials for researching livestock issues and learning more about production agriculture. We also partnered with UI Extension, Bingham County as a means to give our youth the opportunity to participate in a county fair and livestock show and sale. Our program started small in 2016 with three participants. Once the three youth conquered their first fair experience showing lambs, they were hooked on raising livestock and showing off their skills every year. Other tribal youth watched our three young

livestock entrepreneurs and chose to become involved as well.

Program Outcomes

Our program outcomes have been exceptional. The outcomes have led to an increased interest in agriculture and the development of confident, hardworking youth. Prior to the program, enrolled participants did not know how to raise and care for livestock. All of our participants now have the knowledge and skill to produce quality animals. We have grown from three to fourteen youth. Our program has also expanded from raising lambs only to raising goats, breeding beef, poultry and rabbits. Each youth completes an annual demonstration and record book prior to showing their livestock at the county fair. Our youth have learned speaking skills, work ethics, animal health principles, animal handling procedures, proper nutrition and animal feeding techniques, basic vaccination procedures and recordkeeping. Program evaluations show that youth learn at least two new skills each year in our program.

The Future

Parental and youth interest continue to increase in our 4-H livestock program. We will continue the program with plans for expansion. We welcome all new families that are interested in 4-H livestock projects to participate. The program is an excellent way to teach youth invaluable life skills that will improve the lives of our participants and the viability of our community infinitely.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Shoshone-Bannock tribal parents and grandparents
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribal 4-H Department
- Federally Recognized Tribes' Extension Program
- University of Idaho Extension, Bingham County

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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