

DELTA RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

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COUNTY EXTENSION EFFORTS

DELTA EXTENSION REGION ANNUAL REPORT

Curt Lacy

"DELTA REGION EXTENSION AGENTS DEMONSTRATED TO FARMERS HOW TO REDUCE WATER USAGE AND INCREASE PROFITS, CONDUCTED THE REGION'S FIRST BEEF CATTLE CONFERENCE, AND EDUCATED CONSUMERS ON BETTER FOOD CHOICES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES. AGENTS ALSO CONTINUED TEACHING LIFE-SKILLS THROUGH THE 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM USING A VARIETY OF CLUBS, WORKSHOPS, CONTESTS, CLUB CONGRESS, AND PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT DAY."

Curt Lacy

The Delta Research and Extension Center also serves as the regional headquarters for the Delta Extension Region. There are 19 counties and offices in the Delta Extension Region that runs from Yazoo to DeSoto Counties and extends from the Mississippi River to Interstate 55. Extension Agents in the Delta Extension Region provide educational programs and information in the program areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), 4-H Youth Development (4-H), and Community Resource Development (CRD). In addition to Extension Agents, 4-H Program Assistants and Nutrition Educators with the Office of Nutrition Education assist Deltans daily with information to help them better their lives.

Following are just a few examples of the different educational programs offered by the more than 80 MSU Delta Region Extension Agents, Program Assistants, and Nutrition Educators in 2016.

North Mississippi Beef Expo

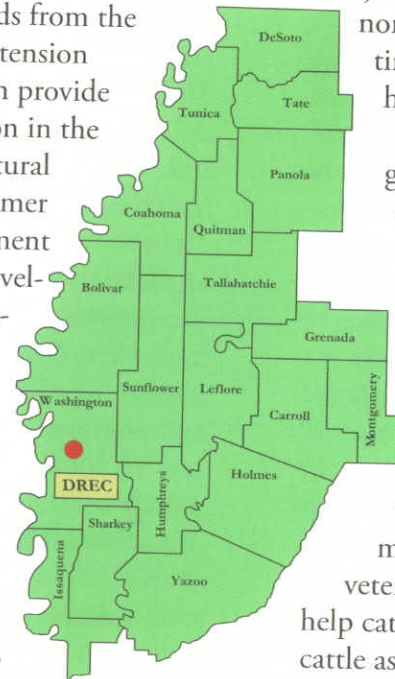
Beef cattle production is not something many peo-

ple think about when speaking of the Delta. However, for over half of the counties in our 19 county region, cow-calf, stocker, and forage production are major agricultural enterprises. Even with an economic driver like beef cattle, it had been a long time since a major beef cattle educational event had been held in the area.

On October 28, 2016 Delta Extension Region ANR Agents helped organize and conduct the first North Mississippi Beef Expo. The inaugural event was at the Batesville Civic Center.

With an emphasis on marketing, attendees heard from MSU specialists as well as speakers from Oklahoma State University, the Noble Foundation, and USDA Agricultural Marketing Service about different ways to increase cattle values. Following the morning sessions, hands-on cattle grading and veterinary practices sessions were conducted to help cattlemen understand the true value of their cattle as well as the correct methods to perform cattle value-increasing practices such as vaccination, castration, and dehorning.

Over 170 cattle producers, allied industry, and MSU personnel were present. A program evaluation indicated over 92% of respondents found the program



useful and interesting. Over 79% said their knowledge was significantly or greatly improved, and almost 70% said they had increased confidence in using the skills they learned in this workshop.

Agriculture and Natural Resources: Irrigation Management

The need to improve water management both globally and in the Mississippi Delta is well-documented. In 2016, Dr. Curt Lacy (Regional Extension

Coordinator) and Dr. Jason Krutz (Plant and Soil Sciences) received funding from Southern SARE to provide equipment and additional training for MSU Delta Extension Region ANR Agents related to irrigation management. Agents working in 11 counties were provided laser-levels, flow-meters, and training on the latest version of PipePlanner.

Eight agents also received travel funds to attend the National Irrigation Show to receive additional training in preparation for becoming Certified Agricultural Irrigation Specialists (CAIS).

In a very short period, four agents reported directly impacting almost 15,000 acres on 20 farms. At an average savings of five-acre inches per farm, that is a savings of over 2 billion gallons just in 2016. In 2017 and beyond, agents will work with more producers



in all counties to help them adopt the water saving technologies being developed at DREC.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Extension Agents with responsibilities in Family and Consumer Sciences work with families and consumers on a wide variety of issues ranging from food preservation to family financial planning. During 2016 Extension Agents educated clientele on several specific programs including the Diabetes Prevention

Program, Healthy Homes, ServSafe, and Walk-a-Weigh just to name a few. In addition to these multi-week programs, Extension Agents also provide information on food safety and preservation (canning and processing), family financial literacy, sewing, and nutrition including making healthy food choices.

One example of the type of hands-on education agents provide is in Quitman County where Extension Agent Mari Alyce Earnest and Nutrition Educator Angie Crawford work with a local food pantry on a bi-monthly basis to not only provide food for over 800 families totaling more than 2,000 individuals, but to also provide them useful information related to nutrition and ways to prepare healthy meals.

Ms. Earnest and Ms. Crawford show individuals



Mari Alyce Earnest of the Mississippi State University Extension Service office for Quitman County delivers a nutrition education program at the community center in Lambert, Mississippi.

how to take food items from the pantry and utilize them in preparing healthy and nutritious meals. In the words of one of the participants, "I've never thought about making a salad with just plain white beans like what was done today. I love fruits and vegetables because the fruits are the only sweet things I get a chance to eat. I feel like this has helped my eating habits."

4-H Youth Development

When most folks hear about 4-H, they think of livestock shows. While livestock shows certainly are an integral part of 4-H Youth Development in Mississippi, there is much more to the program. The purpose of Mississippi 4-H Youth Development is to provide youth the skills and opportunities to be mature, capable adults and productive members of society. This objective is accomplished through involvement in community and project clubs, participation in projects, and competitions at the local, state,

and national levels. By participating in these various activities, youth develop important life-skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, determination, and communication.

To showcase their skills and to demonstrate what they have learned through their clubs and projects, 4-H youth participate in a variety of contests throughout the year including Project Achievement Day, 4-H Club Congress, Dixie National Livestock Show, Mississippi State Fair, and State Shooting Sports Invitational.

In 2016, Delta Extension Region conducted its annual Project Achievement Day (PAD) for 4-H'ers ages 8-13. PAD was conducted on June 16 at Mississippi Delta Community College in Moorhead. Over 90 youth competed in a wide array of contests that included among other things: visual presentations, robotics, consumer judging, insect collecting, and forestry judging.

At this year's contest youth and their parents were surveyed about the usefulness of PAD. Participating youth reported their PAD experience as "great" at 88% with the remainder listing it as "okay." As a result of the skills learned in preparing for Project Achievement Day, "Youth reported a 71% increase in feeling comfortable talking to new people, a 47% increase in competing in a contest, and a 27% increase in making decisions."

When parents were surveyed about their attitudes toward PAD, 94% of adults rated their experience as "great." Regarding benefits, 93% of adults thought

that PAD was very important to their child's learning experience, stating the two biggest benefits as meeting new people and preparing for a 4-H contest.

Project Achievement Day is just one of the many venues where 4-H'ers can demonstrate how much they have learned. To learn more about 4-H or to become a 4-H volunteer, interested readers can visit the Mississippi 4-H website at <http://extension.msstate.edu/4-H>.

Community Resource Development

Delta Region Extension Agents also improve their communities by providing assistance in Community and Resource Development (CRD). A variety of programs are offered including disaster preparedness (MyPI) focusing on citizen education and community awareness (Keys to the Community), as well as assistance with community events and development efforts.

One notable example is the annual Rice Luncheon held in Cleveland. Each year, MSU Extension partners with Delta Rice Promotions, Inc. in September to celebrate National Rice Month by sponsoring the Annual Rice Tasting Luncheon.

Bolivar County Extension Agent Laura Jane Giaccaglia helps organize this event that brings together about 1,000 people from all over the country, including local rice farmers and industries. The festivities include over 300 different rice dishes and numerous exhibits that highlight the importance of one of the Delta's signature crops. MSU Extension agents play many critical roles in this very important event.



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