Dairy Profitability Education Series in Scott-Le Sueur Counties

University of Minnesota Extension
Driven to Discover℠

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Introduction

The past two years' milk price slump has required dairy farmers to find ways to reduce production costs. Extension's response to local dairy struggles has been to identify specific production practices which, when implemented, can help cut day-to-day expenses.

Scott, Le Sueur, Carver, and Rice Counties were chosen as audiences for the local dairy series because of the existence of a pocket of dairies in the area (Figure 1) and the presence of local Extension agriculture staff and programs in those counties.

Minnesota Ag Statistics 2009

County	Dairy Farms	Dairy Cows	Ave Milk Produced Per Cow
Carver	120	9,300	19,200
Le Sueur	29	4,000	19,000
Rice	84	6,400	18,400
Scott	54	4,900	18,800

Figure 1.

Methods

Local family dairy farms encounter similar struggles, so host farms were selected to provide neighbors a chance to visit different operations and learn which management practices could reduce production costs.

Production practices were identified which could be highlighted at the sessions. University of Minnesota researchers, Extension specialists, and Educators provided current information to undergird the production discussions on the farms.

Topics addressed by Dairy Series 2009

- Metabolic issues – June 11
- Milk quality – June 25
- Forage quality and storage – July 9

Subjects highlighted at Summer 2010 Dairy Series

- Efficient heifer development – June 3
- Cow comfort – June 17
- Expansion of the family farm – July 8

Results

Dairy producers from the targeted area attended the series variously, depending upon the host location and the topic (Figure 2). Scott and Le Sueur Counties were the location of five of six of the host sites. Producers from outside the target counties also attended.

Two Year Dairy Series Attendance

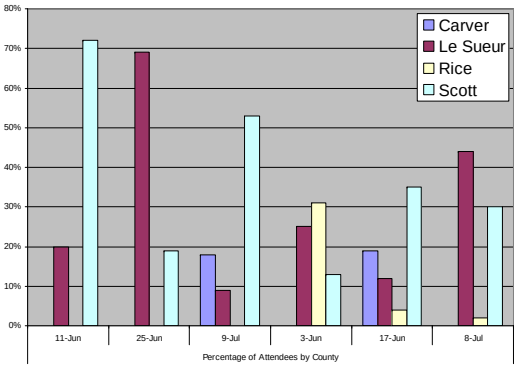

Figure 2.

RichView Dairy of Belle Plaine hosted the first 2009 program which detailed how to minimize metabolic issues. Approximately 25 dairy producers attended (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Attendance data illustrates that the dairy series influenced more than 12,000 cows in the four-county area where the average farm size is 85 cows milked. (Figure 4).

Date	Cows Represented
June 11	1335
June 25	1427
July 9	4198
June 3	1515
June 17	1664
July 8	2094

Figure 4.

Hoefs Dairy of New Prague hosted 71 attendees at the third 2010 program which highlighted expansion of the family farm to include grown children in the operation (figure 5).

Figure 5.

Discussion

The local Dairy Series was developed to assist producers with cost containment issues and to get neighbors together for education and support. It fulfilled those goals, and enthusiastic attendance indicated producers' needs for timely information offered locally.

Producers had positive comments about the series:

- "Thank you for putting on this program"
- "I think I could do something like that on my dairy."
- "Sorry I couldn't get to the previous session… I wanted to make it to at least one of these"
- "You do a nice job with these"
- "It's nice to get out and see what neighbors are doing"
- "I really like your having these close to home"

Funding

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