

Southeast Dairy Producer's Check-Off Program Research Summary

Georgia Dairy Youth Program

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Funding Year: 2022

Amount Awarded: \$14,300

Implications

The diverse programmatic offerings in Georgia allow for the purposeful and meaningful engagement of a large number of youth. The ability to engage youth on many levels leads to very tangible outcomes for the dairy industry in terms of product support, industry service, and informed adults. Finally, the impact on individual life paths and the steps in each is evident in the number of dairy youth that become active in collegiate dairy programs and then the number of active collegiate, dairy students which then pursue a path directly in or associated with the dairy industry.



Methods

The goals of the program are to 1) develop leadership, enhance decision-making skills, develop citizenship, instill a sense of responsibility and build self-confidence in young people 2) expose young people to a variety of dairy operations, husbandry practices, regional differences, and career opportunities within the industry and 3) establish networking foundations at a young age within the agricultural industries and build experiences that allow these young people to interact with peers and professionals within the dairy industry.

To meet these goals, this program offered for 4-H and FFA youth:

- Two statewide, team based competitions: State 4-H Dairy Judging and State 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl. From these state competitions, the winning teams go on to compete nationally.
- One regional educational and networking event: Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat
- One national education and networking event: National 4-H Dairy Conference
- One animal and youth development project: the Commercial Dairy Heifer Project and State Livestock Show

To meet these goals, this program offered for collegiate students:

- One regional and national educational, networking, and competitive event: American Dairy Science Association (ADSA)
- One regional competitive team event: Regional Dairy Challenge
- One collegiate scholarship: Southeast Dairy Farmer's Scholarship

Results

In 2022, the youth of the state of Georgia were rebounding to in person events and eager to get together face to face with each other and cattle. The State Livestock Show in February in Perry, GA marked the 25th anniversary of the unique Commercial Dairy Heifer Project. The show boasted 201 young people showing 237 heifers, a monumental growth from the 73 exhibitors and 82 heifers shown in its first year. The State 4-H Dairy Judging Contest was held at the UGA Teaching Dairy with a true “pay it forward” moment provided by the UGA Dairy Science club, which halter broke animals for the competition. The winning team from Burke County went on to compete at World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI. At the national contest, one Georgia team member placed top 10 in two breeds. The State 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl Contest was held in May in Athens, GA with Burke county again winning this competition and a chance to compete nationally in Louisville, KY.

In July, Georgia sent seven young people and two chaperones to the Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat in Clemson SC. With a schedule full of fun, educational events, farm tours, and opportunities to get to know peers from different states, this was a tremendous opportunity for Georgia youth. Later in the year, during World Dairy Expo, Georgia sent three young people and one chaperone to the National 4-H Dairy Conference. Delegates are selected for this opportunity by dairy and youth leaders in the state based on their application and letter of interest.

The collegiate program has continued to excel at the regional and national level. In February, the regional ADSA events were held in Blacksburg, VA. With six UGA delegates attending, they were awarded the following: 1st place website, 2nd place Quiz Bowl Team, 3rd place Scrapbook, 1st place Production Presentation, and 2nd place foods presentation. In Kansas City, MO during June a delegation of eight undergraduates represented UGA at the national ADSA meetings. Top awards at this meeting include: Renee Hutton received 2nd place in the national Dairy Foods presentation category with her talk “The legalization of raw milk sales: a method to aid in the safety of unpasteurized dairy products”, Will Strickland received 3rd place in the national Dairy Production presentation category with his talk “Improving cow cooling with methodologies used in other animal industries”, 1st place website, Miralee Shaffer was elected as 2nd VP to the incoming, national board, and Dr. Bohlen was awarded with the National ADSA Outstanding Advisor of the Year award.

In November, three students from UGA traveled to North Carolina and competed in the Southern Region Dairy Challenge Event. Both Nick Hendrix and Mackenzie Jones received 1st place while Sara Beth Sledge received 2nd. In addition, Georgia accepted an invitation to host the 2023 regional contest.

Finally, Ansley Roper received the Southeast Dairy Farmer’s Scholarship as a graduating senior. Ansley demonstrated academic aptitude with a distinct interest in serving the dairy industry. Today, Ansley is a graduate student working on a Masters program at UGA with a focus in dairy calf health.



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