

4-H, FFA attend food safety workshop

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Local 4-H and FFA members attended a highly interactive, hand-on workshop in Holyoke on April 2. There, youth discovered a wealth of scientific information through multiple activities, including identifying livestock by retinal scan, ear notching and tagging a facsimile of their livestock.

Other activities bolster understanding of medicine labels and proper storage, feed safety and feeding, injection sites and record keeping.

It's often what's for dinner. Ultimately all 4-H livestock projects end up on a consumer's plate as food. Producing a safe and wholesome product is a primary goal of the Colorado 4-H Meat Quality Assurance (MQA) program.

4-H youth development agents, agricultural educators and county fair personnel have determined it is critical that all youth know and understand industry standards and safe practices in the production of livestock for food so they can comply with those regulations.

The MQA program was designed to make members aware of the issues involved in livestock production, including animal welfare, food safety, consumer protection and the environment. Many fairs require this for all youth livestock members as well.

"We know from research that youth learn and retain more knowledge when they are actively engaged in activities," said livestock and 4-H youth development Extension agent Mick Livingston. "Over the past three years we have been developing activities that present the materials in a manner that youth 8-18 enjoy and in which they can become involved."

Small models show the right and wrong way to handle and care for livestock. Realistic animal models allow for teaching injection techniques and procedures. Electronic picture frames give audio and visual presentations developed to help with the standardization of materials in each participating county.

Additional programs have been held or are scheduled for all Northeastern Colorado Counties in the near future.

"The youth Meat Quality Assurance Training in Akron was 4-H at its best," said Gisele Jefferson, Golden Plains Area family and consumer science and 4-H Extension agent, following the Washington County workshop. "People lingered and visited and enjoyed the evening."

Funding for the program was provided by a CSU Extension Innovation Grant, CHS, the parent company of M&M Cooperative, Colorado Beef Board and Colglazier Livestock.

"It's great to see the excitement as the youth go through the various stations from feed to medications and ethics," Livingston adds. "One of the great side benefits is to see the parents moving through the program with their family and learning along with the kids."