



# Dairy Heifer Camp

## Situation

The dairy industry in New Mexico is a top contributor to national milk production, with Doña Ana County being the third largest milk producing county in the state. Agricultural education in Doña Ana County is not complete without a strong dairy education program. In 2014, funding shortfalls made the statewide facilitation of dairy educational events impractical. The 4-H Livestock Agent in Doña Ana County, through collaboration with local FFA Advisors and dairymen, developed a regional dairy education program in the form of Dairy Heifer Camp.

## Extension's Response

In order to emphasize all aspects of dairy heifer production, the agent provided a three day hands-on training for 4-H and FFA members who are raising a replacement dairy heifer for exhibition. This allows them to not only prepare for the show season, but to prepare for careers in the dairy industry.

Participants spent time learning and practicing their showmanship skills and well receiving instruction on overall care of their heifer, selection, quality assurance, grooming and show preparation.

In addition, a local veterinarian brought in the internal track of a deceased pregnant heifer. The students witnessed the vet dissect and explain the parts of the rumen, heart, kidneys and reproductive track. In addition, they observed the dissection of the heifer's placenta that had a 6-week old calf developing inside.

The youth also had the opportunity to tour a local dairy to learn what happens every day at the dairy as well as the F & A Dairy Product Inc and learned about the cheese making process. They learned that 90% of the milk produced in the Las Cruces valley goes into cheese production. Learning different aspects of the dairy industry and what happens to the milk once it leaves the dairy is an important component of dairy education.

The objectives of the program were:

- ⇒ to educate youth about beef quality assurance and how it relates to them and the animals they raise,
- ⇒ to educate youth on proper selection, showmanship, feeding and nutrition and show preparation,
- ⇒ to educate youth about other aspects of the dairy industry and career opportunities.

## Results

95% of youth strongly agreed that they felt more comfortable with their dairy heifer; 88% strong agreed they have a better understanding of the NM Dairy Industry, 85% strongly agreed that because of the BQA training, they learned the proper locations to give a shot; 90% strongly agreed that they have more knowledge on feeding their dairy heifer. When participants were asked to share how they plan to use this information, some responses were: *"Clip my own heifer for show this year."*; *"Enter the Southern NM State Fair Dairy heifer clipping contest."*; *"Put my dairy heifer on a diet."*

*"Dissecting the heifer and seeing the baby calf."* is what one student liked best about camp.

