



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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## **Fact Sheet 02-01**

### **An Assessment of the Educational Program Needs of Livestock Producers in Northeastern Nevada**

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#### **Introduction**

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension periodically requires its extension area specialists to systematically and formally assess the educational needs in their geographic area of responsibility. To accomplish this, extension area specialists may incorporate input from producers, other users, local organizations and groups, extension state specialists, colleagues, public agencies, political bodies, and published information. National, regional and state priorities for educating livestock producers must also be considered. Area specialists are expected to carefully analyze the information collected and define educational program priorities, separating basic needs, such as risk management or reproductive management, from current problems, such as Hoof and Mouth or Mad Cow disease.

Area specialists must also evaluate the identified needs as they relate to Extension's missions and make a realistic evaluation of the potential for problem resolution. It is expected that they will assign priorities to the identified needs, and therefore to their time and other resources.

The last needs assessment survey of Northeastern Nevada Livestock producers was conducted in 1996. The main purpose of the 2001 survey was to determine if current programming reflects local needs, to identify new issues or programming areas that Cooperative Extension should address in the areas of livestock production and marketing. A secondary objective was to measure impact and adaptation rates of past livestock Extension education efforts and to determine the desired presentation format for future programs (i.e. classroom setting versus alternative methods, such as compressed video or e-mail).

In May of 2001, a survey was designed and implemented in northeastern Nevada. The results of the survey will be combined with other information to develop, implement, and evaluate future educational programming efforts in livestock production and marketing.

## Methodology

A two-sided 8 1/2 by 11 inch questionnaire was developed which asked 12 questions specific to the livestock production and marketing in Nevada. Respondents could answer “yes,” “no” or “unsure”. Respondents were given the opportunity to write their comments or suggestions at the end of the questionnaire.

The area livestock specialist maintains a statewide mailing list of 1,000 Nevada livestock producers. The list is updated annually by comparison of the current list to the Nevada Cattlemen's Association membership and Cattleman's Update registrants. Additionally, one issue of the *Livestock News* contains a mail back request for address updates and changes. Cooperative Extension makes every effort to maintain a current list of all Nevada livestock producers.

Producers were randomly selected from mailing lists to receive the survey. The questionnaire along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and brief letter of explanation was sent to every other mail label in the 1,000 Nevada livestock producer database.

## Survey Results

Of the 500 surveys mailed, 137 were completed and returned resulting in a 27 percent response rate.

Table 1 illustrates the prioritized responses for educational subject matter from highest to lowest priority.

**Table 1. Prioritization of Subject Matter**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Disease treatment and prevention	93%	0	7%
Reproductive management and second conception	90%	3%	7%
Beef Quality Assurance programs	85%	3%	12%
Traditional 4-H livestock programs	80%	5%	15%
Marketing, risk management and retained ownership	77%	7%	16%
New technology in DNA	48%	3%	49%

Table 2 displays response percentages for the preferred educational format for future programs. The responses are listed from areas of highest to lowest preferred method of teaching.

**Table 2. Preferred Educational Presentation Format**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Livestock newsletter	86%	2%	12%
On-ranch demonstrations	77%	1%	22%
Fact sheets and publications	76%	0%	24%
Compressed video format	59%	11%	30%
Video tapes	56%	3%	41%
Web-based program materials	50%	10%	40%
Formal classroom setting	50%	2%	48%
Software programs	49%	8%	43%
E-mail communications	44%	10%	46%

Table 3 displays response percentages relative to adoption and use of past livestock Extension educational information.

**Table 3. Extension Information**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Adopted or used information from past Extension programs	92%	1%	7%
Information learned saved/made money or life easier	84%	2%	14%
Area livestock specialist's time, energy, resources are well spent	96%	0%	4%

Following are some of the written comments returned by the respondents.

- ✓ Keep producers informed on issues as they arise for example accurate information on Mad Cow Disease and Hoof and Mouth. This will allow producers to in turn relay-informed information to others.
- ✓ More basic research, less molecular research at the college level.
- ✓ Class teaching artificial insemination, synchronization and heat detection.
- ✓ Animal identification systems that are simple.
- ✓ Dealing with drought
- ✓ More Extension personnel working with the traditional 4-H program. Traditional 4-H should be a high priority at the state and county levels.
- ✓ Alternative income sources for ranches.
- ✓ Quickbooks class
- ✓ I believe you need to keep on keeping-on, just the direction you have taken.
- ✓ Determining breakeven cost, cow cost on a one-on-one basis.
- ✓ Information on heterosis and breeding programs
- ✓ Keep providing the red book calendar and pocketbook
- ✓ Nutritional management of beef cow information

### **Discussion and Summary**

It is important to note that the highest identified need was disease treatment and prevention. The area specialist will assist the State Extension Veterinarian in this area of need to provide producers with the best and latest information available.

Meshing the 2001 livestock production and marketing needs assessment results with past needs assessment surveys, Cattleman's Update survey responses, professional knowledge of the industry, allied industry input, and regional/national priorities, the following program areas will be given high priority in Extension programming by the Northeast Area livestock Extension specialist.

- ✓ Reproductive management and second conception
- ✓ Beef Quality Assurance education
- ✓ Traditional 4-H livestock programs
- ✓ Marketing, risk management and retained ownership

On-ranch demonstrations, fact sheets and *Livestock News* will continue to be the leading and preferred method of educational presentation format. Extension Coffee Shop e-mail, compressed video presentations and formal classroom programs, such as Cattleman's Update, will continue to be used based on past participation, past successes and for the best use of available resources.

With regards to past programs offered, 96% percent of respondents indicated the area livestock specialist's time, energy, and resources have been well spent in the past. Ninety-two percent of the respondents have used information learned in past livestock Extension programs in their own operations. Eighty-four percent of the respondents felt the information learned and applied saved/made them money or made life easier and more enjoyable.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension has limited resources allocated to livestock production and marketing. It is for this reason that more regional and multi-state efforts will be pursued to accomplish the identified needs of Nevada livestock producers

## References

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