

The Iowa Dairy Story-From Grass to Glass

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Summary and Implications

On April 27th, 2010, the 10,000th student attended the Iowa Dairy Story presented at the Dairy Center on the Northeast Iowa Community College Campus, Calmar, Iowa. Targeting third, fourth, and fifth graders, up to eight lessons plus tours of the 250-cow operating dairy, and interactive nutritional information educates them on how milk is created and its' importance in human growth and development. Popular with teachers and students, an average of 1,000+ students each year learn the origin of milk and proper dairy care and handling. A total of 38 schools have participated in the program.

Introduction

The Iowa's Dairy Story program was established and coordinated by a three way partnership between Iowa State University Extension and its county Extension Councils, Northeast Iowa Community College, and the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation. The Northeast Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation, a grassroots organization that includes dairy farm families and industry professionals, partners with Iowa State University Extension to educate youth of Northeast Iowa about the importance of dairying and dairy products through a program called Iowa's Dairy Story. The curriculum and field trip to Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation helps students, primarily 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, learn and appreciate that milk is not just purchased in the store. It comes from cows, on family based dairy farms and that the industry supports the economy with a variety of jobs. Since the program started 10 years ago, averages of 1,000 students a year have learned about the dairy industry.



Much of the Iowa Dairy Story program was developed by the late Jim Hosch of Iowa State University Extension in Clayton County. Fran Passmore and later Barb Sauser of Iowa State Extension coordinated the program with area schools for many years. This past year Dan Lane of Iowa State Extension Region 4 Program Specialist took the lead of the program.

The program not only includes interactive nutritional information on the value of dairy products in a healthy diet, but it also takes students on the journey of how green grass becomes milk in their glass with the help of true economic engines-dairy cows. The students not only tour the 250-cow dairy at The Dairy Center, they learn the history of dairying, how the ruminant digestive system functions, the leading state and national milk-producing regions, the seven breeds of dairy cows, and the health impacts of consuming dairy foods. They see how cows are cared for from the calf barn to the milking parlor. Each group makes homemade ice cream in a can and spins a Milk Cart Quiz to re-enforce their learning.

There have been a total of 38 schools participating in the program, plus after-school and summer programs. Many schools receive funding for the bus costs from Farm Bureau Agricultural grants. Area schools attending Dairy Story include Decorah, St. Patrick's, Waterville Elementary, West Central, North Fayette, CFS, New Hampton, Valley, Postville, St Joseph's, Waukon Elementary, Central, Howard-Winneshiek and Nashua-Plainfield.

The program rates high with teachers and students, of which over 10,000 have visited for the Iowa Dairy Story. The program is guided by Iowa State University Extension personnel, volunteers, and Dairy Center staff who lend first-hand experience to bring the Iowa Dairy Story to life.

The website is www.iowadairycenter.com. Individuals seeking free self-guided tours of the Dairy Center are welcome weekdays 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Dairy Center is located at 1527 Highway 150, Calmar, Iowa.

