

Social Media: A Means of Educating and Advocating for the Dairy Industry

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Summary and Implications

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dairy Team uses social media platforms to share producer and consumer educational materials, industry news, fun and interesting facts focused on dairy, as well as promoting educational opportunities available to those wanting to gain a higher knowledge in dairy. Through the use of social media hubs the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team has the ability to promote and reach out further not only to dairy producers but to consumers in educating and advocating for the dairy industry.

Introduction

There are many means of social media available in today's age of advanced technology, faster information gathering and instantaneous distribution. Social media platforms are a common means of communication, news, advertisement, program promotion, education and much more. As a member of an educational institution the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team sees the benefit of social media platforms as an education tool to inform and educate those on the progress and importance of the dairy industry. The ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team utilizes three of the most commonly used social media platforms today to reach out to people interested in dairy livestock, dairy products, dairy education and dairy industry advancements that promote a healthy and sustainable way of life for all. This links anyone to more information from dairy specialist and experts working towards common goals – to provide information that will assist in the production of

safe, higher quality foods to feed our nation and nations beyond our borders, so that we as a growing population can be sustained by the efforts of those who produce food for the world.

Materials and Methods

ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team is currently utilizing and is active on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to distribute and share informative and educational materials and opportunities about Iowa's growing dairy industry as well as the nation's dairy industry. Connecting to individuals searching for the educationally backed information in order to make smarter more productive decisions involving dairy is our initiative. This information is both producer and consumer driven.

The first social media platform the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team established was *ISUExtensionDairy* YouTube channel created in February 2012. *ISU Dairy Team* Twitter account was established in June 2014. The final social media platform that the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team created is their Facebook account *Dairy Extension Team – Iowa State University* in June of this year, 2015.

Results and Discussion

ISUExtensionDairy YouTube channel was established to make resources available for farm management and planning to help improve business management for dairy farms through educational videos. As of December 2015, there are presently 36 *ISUExtensionDairy* YouTube channel subscribers and the videos posted here have over 15,500 views.

As of December 2015, *ISU Dairy Team* Twitter account has 151 followers and is following 26 others on Twitter. Over these past two years the account can receive up to



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1,500 tweet impressions monthly as well as have an average of 10-12 tweets a month put out by the dairy team account managers.

The *Dairy Extension Team – Iowa State University* Facebook page has been the most widely visited platform thus far. In the past seven months this Facebook page has 215 followers with post reaches over 1,500. Traffic that directs individuals to this Facebook page (external referrers) come from: extension.iastate.edu, outlook.office365.com, mail.aol.com, mail.google.com, and many others. The majority of our Facebook fans are women at 62%, men 38% and the greatest numbers of both groups fall in the 18-24 years old category, all age categories are represented from 13 to 65+ years. The majority of our reach is seen coming from the United States of America with a monthly average of 640. For some posts on our Facebook page we are able to

reach individuals from over 40 different countries. This has been a huge asset for our information sharing and distribution.

These social media platforms gives the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team the ability to use another way of information distribution, informing producers, consumers and dairy industry supporters alike. It also gives us the opportunities to share information from other educational sources with our common interest to reach an even wider audience. With these social media tools we are to analyze our outreach and hope to improve these analysis tools in the future for the benefit for all those interested in the information that we distribute. Social media has and will continue to be a way of educational outreach for the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team. The educational benefits of these social media tools are inevitable.