

## Dairy Farm Safety Project

### A.S. Leaflet R2515

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#### Summary

Through a multi-state university Extension effort in the I-29 corridor region, a bilingual farm safety training program was delivered to dairy farm employees and owners on 40 farms between March –August 2009. Forty farms in the region including NW Iowa, eastern South Dakota, western Minnesota, and eastern Nebraska participated in the project. The project was made possible through a grant from North Central Risk Management Education Center, supplemented with funds from the Midwest Dairy Consortium.

#### Project Goals

The RME-Farm Safety Project – “A Farm Safety Training Program on Human Risk Management for Dairy Producers and Hispanic Employees” was designed to accomplish these 2 general goals:

1. Increase dairy owners’ and dairy employees’ knowledge and awareness about safety risks, safe work practices, and resources for farm safety and worker well-being.
2. Inform and encourage dairy owners to create a “culture of safety” on their dairy farms as part of daily dairy farm operations.

#### Summary of Work Accomplished

- North Central Risk Management Grant funds were used to hire a bilingual educator to develop and deliver farm safety education to dairy owners and employees in the I-29 region
- 556 employees at 40 farms in a 4-state region participated in On- Farm Safety Workshops for Hispanic Employees at their worksite in the time period between March – August 2009
- 20 people attended a Dairy Farm Safety break-out session at the Central Plains Dairy Expo in March 2009
- 23 dairy owners and head herdsman attended a Dairy Farm Safety Workshop for Owners, Managers, and Key Herdsmen (“Developing a ‘culture of safety’ on Your Farm”) in May 2009
- 20 dairy owners and supervisors attended a Farm Safety presentation held at University of Nebraska Dairy meeting in August 2009.

#### Results and Discussion

- Farm owners reported **increased awareness and knowledge about common dairy farm safety risks** by

means of interview comments post-workshop, or by means of awareness self-assessment form.

- Many farm owners ***took action to make specific changes to improve safety risk management on their farms.*** This list summarizes the specific safety risk management actions that owners implemented as a result of things they learned from the On-Farm Safety Workshops and/or from the Dairy Farm Safety Workshop for Owners and Key Herdsmen:

- Several owners stated a need for bilingual signage; 40 farms received bilingual signs to post about chemical handling safety; several farm owners identified other signage needs.
- One farm eliminated use of formaldehyde, and 2 switched to automatic foot bath systems
- Another farm modified footbath location and eliminated the need for employees to mix chemicals by installing an automatic chemical mixing system
- Several farms purchased and installed First Aid kits on farm for employee use
- A farm purchased and distributed raincoats and rain suits for workers to wear while doing outside calf chores
- A farm installed fire extinguishers and smoke alarms
- One owner assigned his head Hispanic herdsman to work with project educator to create a customized Bilingual Dairy Farm Safety Manual that the owner and herdsman could use as training tool for new employees, and as a resource for refresher course safety meetings on their farm. This also served as a model during the owners’ workshop.
- Another farm initiated the process to create a bilingual safety manual based on seeing the sample at the owners’ workshop
- A farm manager posted emergency contact information, and posted physical address information for the farm to help employees describe farm location to emergency responders.
- A farm owner modified a section of his holding area to make it easier and safer for employees to bring cows into the parlor

- Many dairy owners stated that **communication channels between management and employees improved due to the presence and actions of the project’s bilingual educator.** Dr. Francesa established a good rapport and trust with the Hispanic employees. In the discussions on-farm immediately following or during the workshop, employees used his bilingual abilities to bridge communication gaps between them

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and their employer. This facilitated the transfer and discussion of concerns and safety suggestions between employees and employers, resulting in improved clarity and understanding. Extension workers observed owners and employees talking together to problem-solve and create improvements.

Extension educators collaborating on this project gained understanding about effective on-farm employee training sessions, and about the value of having a bilingual educator involved in the planning and delivery. Additionally, this project came to the attention of the High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, who invited the project leaders to attend a special workshop on dairy farm safety topics in Fall 2009. As a consequence of increased knowledge about resources, coupled with awareness of needs to offer employee and employer training, plans are now underway to prepare another dairy farm safety project to build on accomplishments of this project. Target start time of the next set of dairy farm safety workshops is summer 2010.