

New Jersey 4-H Goat Extravaganza: Efficiently Meeting the Educational Needs of 4-H Goat Project Members, Volunteers, and Parents

Abstract

The 4-H Goat Extravaganza maximizes limited resources to help youth and adults develop knowledge and skills in goat care and management. It capitalizes on the talents and interests of volunteers to efficiently combine a goat-themed art show, team presentation contest, quiz bowl, skillathon, and adult workshop into 1 day. This article outlines the Extravaganza and includes the results of a survey of participants from the program's first 9 years. While the Extravaganza has been effective in meeting most short-term objectives, organizers are exploring ways to increase youth awareness and understanding of career opportunities and current issues in the animal industry.

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Introduction

When Shurson and Lattner surveyed 112 4-H swine project members (1991), they found that 68% of the members indicated they had learned "some" or "much" about swine production management. However, they were discouraged to discover "that relative knowledge gained was less for activities involving record keeping, management practices, health, reproduction, and nutrition than for fitting, showing, and selecting the ideal animal" (p. 1).

Similarly, in 2005, the New Jersey 4-H Goat Project Advisory Council, a group of volunteers, recognized the need for expanded educational programming beyond the annual state show. The volunteers wanted to add events that would help youth and adults develop the knowledge and skills necessary to properly care for and manage their goats in areas such as breeding, nutrition, diseases, and parasites.

Studies have reported the positive impacts of state 4-H animal project events (workshops, quiz bowls, skillathons, etc.) on the development of animal science knowledge and management skills (Anderson & Karr-Lilienthal, 2011; Rusk & Machtmes, 2002). The goat project volunteers were aware of the quiz bowls, skillathons, public speaking contests, and other events conducted for members in the horse

project, New Jersey's largest animal project. However, without state-level animal project staff, the group knew they had to balance their interests in developing these additional events with the existing limited resources. Therefore, to meet the group's educational objectives as efficiently as possible, the advisory council chose to combine several events into 1 day, creating the annual 4-H Goat Extravaganza in 2006.

Objectives

The Extravaganza is a 1-day event including an art show, team poster-presentation contest, quiz bowl, eight-station skillathon, and adult workshop. The Extravaganza provides youth and adults an opportunity to learn about goats, meet others in the project, and gain recognition for their creativity, teamwork, presentation skills, and content knowledge and skill proficiency. It addresses seven of the New Jersey 4-H Animal Science objectives (Table 1).

Table 1.
4-H Goat Extravaganza Objectives

Youth will:	Animal Care and Management Knowledge and Skills	Awareness of Current Issues and Career Opportunities	Life Skills
1. gain knowledge of animal care and management practices,	X		
2. gain the skills necessary to safely care for and manage their animal project,	X		
3. increase awareness and understanding of current issues in the animal industry,		X	
4. gain a better appreciation for the breadth of career opportunities available in the animal industry,		X	
5. improve leadership skills,			X
6. improve teamwork skills, and			X
7. improve communication skills.			X

Program Design and Implementation

Goat-Themed Art Show

Youth enter goat-themed art exhibits in three categories: two-dimensional art, three-dimensional art, and photography. The projects are judged in the morning and then remain on display throughout the day.

Mixed-County Team Poster Presentation Contest

Prior to the event, participants are assigned to four-person, mixed-county teams based on age and experience. This allows youth to meet others outside their club and county, and provides opportunities for more experienced members to mentor less experienced members.

Each team is provided poster board, markers, construction paper, scissors, glue, and instructions. Teams are given an hour to brainstorm ideas for the given topic (see Table 2) and complete their poster.

Table 2.
Topics for Team Poster Presentation Contest

Topic	Year
Goats Produce Too! (exploring goat products and uses)	2006, 2014
From Home to the Ring: Preparing for the Show	2007
What to Look for When Buying a Goat	2008
You've got to be Kidding! It's kidding season — what do you do?	2009
Goats in Your Backyard — What does it take to have a goat?	2010
_____ - The Breed of Choice	2011
Things that can Kill or Injure Your Goat	2012
How to Keep Your Goats Healthy	2013

Following the preparation time, each team has up to 5 minutes to present their poster to all participants and the judges. Criteria for scoring the presentations include: creativity, organization, completeness, knowledge, and participation.

Quiz Bowl

During the first 7 years of the event, members participated in a goat trivia game while waiting for their turn in the skillathon. In 2013, a formal quiz bowl replaced the trivia game. The new tournament format includes teams of youth competing to answer 32 questions per round in both junior and senior

divisions. To prepare for the quiz bowl, teams study the national 4-H dairy and meat goat curricula.

Eight-Station Individual Skillathon

Skillathons have been used to encourage skill development in a variety of 4-H project areas. Lesson 8 of *4-H 101: The Basics of Starting a 4-H Club* (4-H National Headquarters) provides guidelines for setting-up a skillathon.

Each station of the Extravaganza's skillathon tests each member's knowledge or skill in a specific area. Eight stations are set-up, and participants rotate through them. Members carry a scorecard from station to station. Volunteers facilitate the stations and assign each member a score.

After each participant is scored, the volunteer reviews the material— teaching the content or correctly demonstrating the skill. At the end of the event, answer guides are distributed. Stations have included: breeding, breeds, diseases, feeds, fiber, hoof trimming, injections, judging, kidding, meat cuts, medicine, milking, parasites, ruminant digestion, showmanship, tattooing, and toxic plants.

Parent and Volunteer Workshop

After reviewing feedback from the first 4-H Goat Extravaganza, it became evident that the adults wanted a structured learning activity for themselves. Since 2007, a morning workshop has been provided during the preparation phase of the team poster presentation contest. Topics have included: hay quality pasture management, meat goats, parasites, reproductive behavior, fiber arts, and an introduction to the animal sciences major and career opportunities in the animal industry.

Program Evaluation

Each year, participating 4-H members complete a survey (items from the short-term outcomes of the New Jersey 4-H Animal Science Program Development Model) with a 1-5 Likert-type scale (Table 3). Based on 322 surveys from the past 9 years, youth self-report that they are gaining knowledge and skills of goat care and management practices, but also teamwork, communication, and leadership skills (Table 3). The 322 surveys collected included youth who repeated the program for multiple years. The number of respondents for any given year ranged from 29 to 42. Thirty-four percent of respondents were male, and 66% were female. The majority of respondents (61%) had been in the goat project 3 or fewer years, possibly indicating beginners had greater need for this kind of educational experience. While Cloverbuds are allowed to participate, most of the respondents were in grades 4-9 (76%).

Table 3.
Youth Participants' Perception of Program Impact, 2006-2014 (n=322)

I have:	Percent Agree (4) or Strongly Agree (5) *
1. Gained knowledge of goat care and management practices.	87%

2. Gained the skills necessary to safely care for my goat(s).	86%
3. Increased my understanding of current issues in the animal industry.	59%
4. Become more aware of career opportunities available in the animal industry.	57%
5. Improved my leadership skills.	77%
6. Improved my teamwork skills.	88%
7. Improved my communication skills.	82%
*Scale of 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree.	

Conclusion

In a state without any state-level 4-H animal science staff, the 4-H Goat Extravaganza provides an efficient way to deliver a variety of state-level educational events all on the same day. The Extravaganza has appealed to a variety of 4-H members with a wide range of knowledge, experience, and interests. Participants gained knowledge and skills, and while the majority believed they have increased their awareness of career opportunities and current issues in the animal industry, there is clearly an opportunity to strengthen these two objectives. In planning for future events, the goat advisory council will explore ways to incorporate these two objectives into the program's poster presentation contest, quiz bowl, and skillathon.

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