

Inaugural Benewah County 5th grade farm to table

AT A GLANCE

Everyone knows where they purchase their food, but rarely do people know where it comes from. This event showcases how food gets from our farms to our tables to our local youth.

The Situation

As a small, rural community, Benewah County benefits from many local farms. However, there's a noticeable gap in accessible programming and education that teaches residents, particularly youth, about the journey their food takes from farm to table. Benewah County faces a poverty level nearing 15%, with 17% of its youth experiencing food insecurity. Often the food insecure families are not eating healthy foods and resort to unhealthy, not locally sourced alternatives for convenience purposes.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension, Benewah County hosted the first annual Benewah County 5th Grade Farm to Table field day. The purpose of this event was to teach our local youth about where their food comes from. Experts from multiple agricultural facets led presentations and interactive stations, sharing their specialized knowledge and facilitating hands-on experiences for our local 5th-grade participants. The different stations included beef cattle husbandry, a calving simulator, sheep rearing for wool production, meat science, caring for dairy goats, potato processing and cultivation, hay and grain production, poultry management and equine operations and stewardship.



Teen leader assists local 5th grader in pulling the calf from the calving simulator.

Local teen 4-H and FFA members served as our group leaders ensuring each group got to their designated station for each rotation. The high school volunteers were vital due to their agricultural knowledge gained through 4-H and FFA, and their familiarity with the fairground's layout, crucial for guiding groups to various stations.

In addition to the day's educational programming, the students were provided with beef burgers, complemented by an array of fresh vegetables. This meal served as a demonstration of how nutritious locally sourced ingredients can create a tasty farm-to-table meal reinforcing the themes explored throughout the event.

Program Outcomes

Students were able to participate in a variety of activities including planting potatoes and making potato play dough, spinning their own yarn from fresh sheep wool, pulling a calf out of a calving simulator, learning about different types of meat and what part of an animal it comes from, identifying and learning the importance of different types of local crops including grass hay, wheat and lentils, getting hands on experience with equines and dairy goats as well as learning about raising beef.

There are five local schools in the area that were invited to attend our event, three of the five were able to attend and we had roughly one-hundred youth go through our field day. We hope to have all five schools attend next year.

Students, teachers and school administrators were all extremely happy with the event and are looking forward to future years. Some of the feedback we received from teachers and school administrators included:

- “The station helpers were patient and knowledgeable. There was immense amount of new knowledge and understanding.”
- “The kids loved farm to table. This was the best field trip; the kids are raving about it as well as all of my support staff. It was outstanding and I hope this becomes a yearly offering.”

- “Thank you for inviting us to participate in the Farm to Table Field Trip, a highly successful learning experience that garnered positive feedback from students, staff and volunteers.”

The Future

University of Idaho Extension, Benewah County plans to continue this event in future years making it an annual event that all local 5th graders look forward to attending every spring. Our goal is to continually create and implement new initiatives to foster agricultural and natural resource education within our community. Maintaining integrated programs with the local school districts is a valuable partnership we aim to continue, as it offers mutual benefits to students and the broader community.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

We would like to thank everyone that was involved in making this event a success: University of Idaho Extension, Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, St. Maries School District, Kootenai Joint School District, St. Maries Kiwanis, Benewah County Fairgrounds and our local community members who volunteered their time to teach our local youth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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