

Blackfoot agriculture safety days educates youth about farm safety

AT A GLANCE

Fifth graders in Bingham County learn about agriculture safety and resources that are important for Idaho agriculture.

The Situation

Agriculture is a 26-billion-dollar industry for Idaho. According to the Idaho Department of Agriculture, agribusiness is the largest contributor to Idaho's economy, comprising 20% of Idaho's gross state product. As the population increasingly shifts from rural to suburban centers, Idahoans have become further removed from farming and agricultural practices. Because agriculture plays an important part in Idaho's economy, it is important that Idaho youth are educated in the farming techniques used in agricultural production to ensure safe farming practices to prevent farm injuries and deaths. Based on recent USDA data, 476 farmers and farm workers across the nation died from work-related injuries, which resulted in a fatality rate of 26.1 deaths per 100,000 workers. The Idaho Department of Labor reported that farming deaths accounted for 23% of all deaths in 2023. It is imperative that both adults and youth are aware of the effort of Idaho's agricultural industry to prevent farm injuries and deaths.

Our Response

Working with Progressive Agriculture, the University of Idaho Extension in Bingham County hosts the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day program, which gives over 200 fifth graders presentations and hands-on



Bingham County youth participate in Progressive Agriculture Safety Day.

experiences to educate youth about farm safety. Progressive Agriculture Safety Day has been an annual event since its inception in 2022. Fifth grade students from the county participate in a one-day event with educational stations and topics that include first aid, ATV safety, proper farm equipment usage and power equipment safety. Participants also learn about dominant crops in Bingham County, such as potatoes and sugar beets, and the safety techniques used in planting and harvesting these crops.

Program Outcomes

University of Idaho Extension Educator Carmen Willmore and 4-H Program Coordinator Heather Strupp organizes the event each year, securing the county fairgrounds, lining up presenters for the event and taking

care of logistics for the participants. Matt Fisher, 4-H area Extension educator in agriculture and STEM has taught at the event and provided topics in dairy and sugar beets. This year, Fisher taught youth about the safety techniques used in the process of turning sugar beets into sugar, including cutting and processing sugar beets at the factory. For the past three years, Progressive Agriculture Safety Day has reached over 750 youth and adults.

To evaluate the impact on participants of Farm to Table, a Likert exit survey determined that:

- 97% of participants could explain how farm safety is important in agriculture.
- 90% of participants understood the importance of hand washing.
- 95% of participants stated that they better understood what agriculture was.

Some comments about what youth learned and liked best about Progressive Agriculture Safety Day were:

- “I never knew how many accidents can happen on a farm if you’re not careful.”
- “I learned that you need to wash your hands and your vegetables.”

Based on the results of the survey, after participating in Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, fifth grade

students understood that farm safety is important, regardless of whether young people live on a farm or not. Youth also learned that there are many aspects to farm safety: not only farm equipment, but using safety equipment when using chemicals, and the importance of a first aid kit if there is a farm accident. The survey also asked youth if they learned more than, the same amount, or less than a regular school day, with 96% reporting that they learned as much as or more at Progressive Agriculture Safety Day than they did on a regular school day.

The Future

University of Idaho Extension plans to continue and expand Progressive Agriculture Safety Day within Bingham County, focusing on including more rural schools in the event. University of Idaho Extension will continue to educate youth in Bingham County about how to be safe in a farming community.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Progressive Agriculture Safety Day continues to provide educational opportunities for youth through the generous support of University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development, iRoam, Idaho Power, Rocky Mountain Power, Bingham County Search and Rescue, AmeriCorps, U.S. Forest Service and Idaho Ag Credit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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