

# **Florida Dairy Youth Programs**

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## **Introduction**

The Florida Dairy Youth Program is currently undergoing a slight overhaul in both the direction and goals of the curriculum. Many of the old programs are going through a slight overhaul and are being updated to more appropriately fill the needs of our dairy youth. This is needed to both improve the participation in the program and ensure that they are developing skills and knowledge that will benefit them in their future endeavors.

I think most of you will agree that the youth are the future of our industry and livelihood. It is because of this that we must adapt our programs to further encourage youth to become involved in the dairy industry. It is the goal of the program to develop the skills of our youth so that they are prepared to enter the job field upon graduation. Many of the new programs as well as a review of the current ones will be discussed during the presentation.

## **Current Programs**

Two of the main programs that have been a staple of the Florida Youth Dairy Program for decades are the Dairy Judging and Dairy Quiz Bowl Competitions. Some of the other programs that are important to the development of our youth are the Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat and National 4-H Dairy Conference. The other important aspect of the dairy program is the development of our volunteers through Volunteer Leader Training.

In 2010 the Florida Dairy Judging teams attended three (3) contests beyond the state of Florida. The team that traveled to World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin did very well and finished seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) overall and sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) in oral reasons. We also had two of the three members that earned All-American status by placing ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) and twenty-fourth (24<sup>th</sup>) overall, and the third was twenty-ninth (29<sup>th</sup>). In reasons, they were twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>), twenty-third (23<sup>rd</sup>), and twenty-ninth (29<sup>th</sup>). The Team that attended the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Kentucky also did exceptionally well. The team ended up ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) overall and sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) in oral reasons. Individually we placed twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) and twenty-first (21<sup>st</sup>) overall and eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) and twenty-third (23<sup>rd</sup>) in reasons. The other two members were in the top forty (40) in both categories. The third contest that we attended was the Alabama State Fair in Montgomery, Alabama. The team consisted of three members and had a great day. The team was first (1<sup>st</sup>) overall and in oral reasons, and individually we took first (1<sup>st</sup>) and second (2<sup>nd</sup>) in both reasons and overall.

In 2010 the Florida Dairy Quiz Bowl teams attended three (3) contests beyond the state of Florida. Two teams traveled to national breed conventions and represented Florida well. Additionally, we traveled to the National 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl contest at the NAILE in Kentucky for the first time in almost ten (10) years. We only had a three member team, and were at a decided disadvantage but still did exceptional. Florida placed fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) out of thirty two (32) teams and was the highest that a three (3) man team had ever placed. One of the members was third (3<sup>rd</sup>) on the written portion of the contest.

We had an exceptional group of individuals that attended the Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat in 2010 and it looks like a much larger group will be attending in 2011. The Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat is an annual event where youth from around the southeast get together and learn about the dairy industry and the many practices that are employed throughout the southeast. There are workshops about many different aspects of the industry from animal husbandry and anatomy to nutrition and dairy cattle judging. In 2011 the retreat will be held in North Carolina and then Florida in 2012, where it will be held in the Gainesville area.

The Volunteer Leader Training is an annual event that allows for the training of the many great volunteers from around the state to learn different techniques and access resources for further development and improvement of the program. In 2010 there were over thirty (30) volunteers who attended the training and we had some exceptional workshops that ranged from dairy nutrition and proper feeding techniques to preparing animals for show. This is a very important program that serves as the backbone of the youth dairy program. Our dairy volunteers are the best volunteers in the country, across all aspects of agriculture. Without the dedication and countless hours of time that they devote, the program would not be the strong program that it is today.

### **New Programs**

There are many new programs that have been started, and many that will begin in the near future to further develop the skills of our youth, and promote the dairy industry in doing so. Among the many new programs are the Florida Youth Dairy Ambassador, Jackpot Shows, and Florida Junior All Breeds Convention. There are many other new programs in the works for this year, from a Dairy Field Day to an expansion of the Jackpot Shows.

One of the programs that will likely become the marquee program and one to be copied by other states around the country is the Florida Youth Dairy Ambassador. This program is designed to select one or two elite dairy youth from Florida to represent the dairy industry and the Florida Dairymen, as well as promoting dairy product consumption. We selected our first ever Youth Dairy Ambassador at the Junior All Breeds Convention back in January. The selection process included a written application, interview process, power-point presentation, and they had to answer two extemporaneous questions on stage in front of the convention attendees. Upon being selected, the new ambassador was sent to meet with a group from Florida Dairy Farmers to go through media training on how to address a crowd, educate the public, and the top talking points to use in dairy promotion. The ambassador/s receives a \$500 scholarship and \$500 in travel money to attend at least three (3) dairy promotion events

throughout the state. Congratulations to Pamela Mayo from Riverview on being selected as the 2011 Ambassador.

Jackpot Shows and Workshops have been used in the beef and livestock industry for many years and allow producers to exhibit their livestock at many more events throughout the year. We have put a slightly different spin on our program and have made it to allow for building knowledge as well as cattle exhibition. The Jackpot Show is a two day event that allows for cattle to enter one day and leave the next. Included with the show we also conduct workshops that help to develop the skills of our youth. In November of 2010 we conducted our first show in Bartow and had over thirty (30) participants and twenty-two (22) animals. For our first show we focused on improving showmanship and fitting and grooming techniques through two different clinics. Not only did we have the clinics, but the event also worked to recruit new members to join the dairy project. The comments from the participants were very positive and there was a strong desire to continue the program.

The Florida Junior All Breeds Convention was established for many different reasons, including the promotion of many of the programs that we are currently conducting. It is also to be used as a preparation for the events of the upcoming year and a breeding ground for new program development. During the convention that was held in January of 2011 in Ocala the Florida Junior Holstein Association was re-established and the Florida Junior Guernsey Association was formed. Another highlight was the selection of our teams to attend the national conventions this summer. There were many great workshops and we also had the selection of our first ever Florida Youth Dairy Ambassador. There were over 70 people that attended and the event was a huge success with much interest to continue it.

One of the new programs in the works for the coming year is to expand the scope of the jackpot show and workshop and create more throughout different regions of the state. There have been many requests throughout the past year for animals that are registered and not Holstein. As part of the expansion of the jackpot shows, we will bring in a sale that will only be open to the youth of Florida that will consist of registered Brown Swiss, Guernseys, Jerseys, and probably Holsteins and Ayrshires. There are also plans to expand into an additional one of two locations around the state to encourage more participation from the youth of Florida.

The other new program that is in the works is a Dairy Field Day at the University of Florida (UF) Dairy Unit. There are many dairy youth throughout the state that have never been to the Dairy Unit and unfortunately many more who do not even know that we have a UF dairy farm. The event will serve to promote the University of Florida, educate of the many resources that we have, and most importantly educate about the Florida dairy industry. There will be many clinics as well as a tour of the farm.

### **Summary**

There have been some significant changes in the program over the past year and we have seen a renewed enthusiasm for the program and many of the events both old and new. There has also been an increase of involvement from some of the youth that have not been active other than showing cows and attending fairs. The Florida dairy program will become more visible to the

dairymen and the public as well as becoming a more educated and positive voice for the dairy industry. It is the goal of the youth dairy program to make the youth of Florida the most marketable and sought after people in the country to fill dairy positions throughout the United States and globally.

## NOTES

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