



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – January 2014

Calculating the costs associated with raising dairy calves and heifers is an essential part of dairy business management.

- [ICPA-Cost of Raising Dairy Replacements](#)
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ICPA-Cost of Raising Dairy Replacements

The cost of raising dairy replacements represents 20 to 25 percent of the total costs of milk production. It is a major component in making a dairy operation profitable, yet sometimes is neglected as a profit center for the farm since no direct income is generated by the replacement herd. In 1998, UW-Extension Dairy Team surveyed Wisconsin operations to determine the costs associated with raising calves and heifers, and to benchmark labor efficiencies. Due to inflation and the changing economic dynamics in the dairy industry, county-based Extension educators conducted a similar field survey in 2007 and again in 2013.

Dairy and Livestock Agent Tina Kohlman served as one of the co-investigators for the **2013 Intuitive Cost of Production in Raising Dairy Replacements** to determine current values for raising dairy replacements. Thirty-four herds were surveyed for the 2013 report representing the broad scope of Wisconsin's calf and dairy industry. Three of the 34 herds were located in Fond du Lac County.

The field survey indicated the cost to raise a calf from birth to the time she moved to group housing (average 68.6 days) was \$376, or \$5.34 per day. For heifers [time moved to group housing to freshening (or returned to producer)], the cost was \$3.04 per heifer per day.

The field survey serves as a guide or benchmark for heifer growers and producers in Wisconsin as they determine their cost of production or look for areas to refine costs. As a result of the project a heifer grower shared *"...I had a meeting this morning with (the producer) and their nutritionist. They didn't dispute any numbers or have any other recommendations to lower costs per day. We agreed upon \$2.75 per head per day but instead of raising all their heifers, they will be cutting back to only the number they need. I will be better off raising only 200 heifers at \$2.75 than I would have been at 270 heifers at \$2.05. The meeting went well and all agreed that the costs were high but all justified. I wanted to thank you again for all your time and help with this matter."*

For more information regarding the 2013 ICPA Project, please visit <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/heifermgmt/>.

Going Solo Workshop

Since August 2013, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Miguel Gonzales has collaborated with CNRED Educator Diana Hammer Tscheschlok to deliver a series of 5 workshops for aspiring entrepreneurs in Fond du Lac County called *Going Solo*. Each of the weekly workshops in the course effectively offers both practical and abstract learning opportunities, and also provides opportunities to connect with local economic development resources. The first ever offering of *Going Solo* drew a diverse group of participants, with 18 registering for the course out of an available 20 seats. Gonzales co-created Spanish language materials for the course, and also assisted Spanish speaking participants during weekly workshops.

Through Going Solo, the UW-Extension Office of Fond du Lac County has worked concertedly with Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corporation (FCEDC), ADVOCAP, UW-Oshkosh Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC). This collaboration has increased the number of entrepreneurial education opportunities available to County residents, and has strong potential to help spur economic growth in the region in the near future. Gonzales and Tscheschlok are currently planning the next offering of Going Solo, and hope to offer an expanded and improved version of the course on the strength of a \$4,500 grant from UW-Extension (award notification still pending).

Affordable Care Act

Easily the most discussed topic in the nation during 2013, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has become an educational focus for Family Living colleagues, Amanda Miller and Shelley Tidemann. According to ACA terminology, both Miller and Tidemann have assumed the role of “Mobilizers” for Fond du Lac County. “Mobilizers”, by definition, are influential and connected organizations and people known in their communities for sharing accurate and timely information, and who are willing to provide consumers with unbiased and appropriate referrals to organizations and people that can help them enroll and purchase health insurance in the marketplace. Mobilizers do not provide application or enrollment assistance, but education and awareness.

The Family Living Educators have been successful in reaching the following goals:

- *To facilitate communication among Fond du Lac County agencies and organizations about the implementation of the Health Insurance Marketplace.* On October 9th, Miller and Tidemann hosted the first networking meeting for professionals working with the ACA in Fond du Lac County. Caroline Gomez, Healthcare Outreach Specialist for the State UW-Extension and Covering Kids and Families, presented basic ACA information to the group. There is now a current Fond du Lac County group that has been formed and receives updated information from individuals working with the ACA at the regional and state level.
- *To build awareness and provide education to Fond du Lac County agencies, organizations and residents about the Affordable Care Act and Health Insurance Marketplace.* Presentations on the ACA are planned for the general public in January. The presentations will focus on the basics of the ACA, impact on private/employer health insurance, changes in Badger Care, types of insurance plans in the marketplace and where to go to find enrollment assistance in Fond du Lac County. Sessions were held on January 8 at the Fond du Lac Public Library and January 15 at the Ripon Public Library. Another session is scheduled for January 29 at the Oakfield Public Library. Those that attended the January 8th session stated that it was “very helpful information” and “a good basic presentation of information.”

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