

## **Education for Hispanic Dairy Workers: From the Perspective of a Dairy Specialist**

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In cooperation with county agriculture agents in Cache and Millard Counties, my colleague Allen Young and I have conducted workshops in Spanish for Hispanic dairy farm employees to increase their knowledge and skills in the areas of dairy calf feeding and management and proper milking procedures.



We initially got started with the first of three workshops in Cache County at the suggestion of Clark Israelsen when he realized just how many Hispanics were working on the dairies in Cache County. He made arrangements for a place to hold the workshop and sent letters to the dairy owners (both in Spanish and English) telling them of the upcoming program in Spanish to increase the skills and expertise of their Hispanic employees. I gave the presentation on dairy calf feeding and management and then translated for Allen as he presented the proper milking procedures.

I have had experience doing this sort of thing when I worked for Utah State University on a dairy improvement project in Ecuador in the late 1980's. I initially learned Spanish as a young man while living in Mexico for a little more than two years. I learned about the Hispanic culture and this helped to "break the ice" and make the participants feel that we really cared about them and wanted to convey some information to them to help them do a better job on the dairies. They were extremely attentive and polite they quickly felt comfortable asking questions. We gave them handouts in Spanish covering the information used in the workshop. They particularly appreciated it when we gave them a certificate for attending the workshop with their name written correctly. Many said that this was the first certificate they have ever received. We served them an authentic Mexican lunch and they went away with a good taste in their mouth. A number of the participants came back for the second and third workshops.

In Millard County, Greg Poulson arranged for a meeting place and encouraged dairy producers to send their Hispanic workers to the workshops. These dairy owners paid their workers \$25 to attend the workshop. We held a session in the morning and one in the afternoon so that more workers could attend because the large dairies in Millard County milk around the clock. We also gave out certificates and provided food for the attendees.

This was a particularly rewarding experience for me and Allen Young also really enjoyed this endeavor. The participants were pleased that two "Gringo University Types" would take time to teach them how to be more productive dairy employees. Not only were we educating the Hispanic dairy workers, there was also a benefit to the dairy

owners whose employees were more qualified to do their jobs. I (we) would welcome the opportunity to work with county agents in other counties to conduct similar workshops.

To make this program work there needs to be a desire on the part of the county agents to host the program. There also needs to be cooperation from the county agents in getting the information out to producers in both English and Spanish. It was also essential that the producers be willing to send their employees. Other things that seemed to make the program successful was having an authentic Mexican meal and providing a certificate to participants when they completed the program. It also helps to have program staff that can speak Spanish and has an understanding of the Hispanic culture.

If anyone would like to bring this program to their county, get in touch with me and let me know when you want us to come and help you educate your Hispanic dairy workers. We have other topics besides those mention above. We would be pleased to develop special dairy topics that your producers might identify.