

Latino Milking and Calf Care Schools

*By Clark Israelsen
Agricultural Extension Agent, Cache County*

I, along with the assistance of Dr. Ron Boman and Dr. Allen Young, have organized quarterly Latino Milking and Calf Care Schools. All classes have been held at the USU Caine Dairy Center in Wellsville. Teaching materials have been translated into Spanish, with English versions being made available to employers. A timely video, that was created with the assistance of Dr. Clell Bagley, is used to show proper milking procedures. An additional segment dealing with proper handling of dairy cows has been added as the series has evolved. The classes have been held quarterly. Seven Latino workers and two employers were involved in the first quarterly class. Four employers sent eight Latino workers to second quarter classes. Eight employers sent nineteen Latino workers to the third quarter class.



The local Herald Journal newspaper did a story on the second quarter classes and did a feature on one of the participants. Gustavo Pena, grew up on a farm in Mexico and milked cows in Oregon for more than two years before coming to Utah. Pena reported that he had never learned the proper way to milk cows and care for dairy calves until he came to school at the USU Caine Dairy. “It’s a very interesting class.” Pena said. “I learned a lot.” “This class is very beneficial to dairy owners. Now they have workers who are trained and can be more productive and get better quality milk.” Dr. Young is monitoring Somatic Cell Counts on dairy farms where employees have received the training. There is initial evidence of improvement in SCC scores, but we want to monitor them for a longer period of time before we take credit.

Another impact has to do with our recent involvement with the English Language Center. All participants received a Certificate of Participation at the end of the classes. This certificate entitles them to free English classes at the English Language Center. We are also encouraging class members to participate in the CALFNES program.

Since our Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Utah, representing approximately 10 percent of our total population, we are delighted to work with members of this population. They are gracious, courteous, polite and appreciative. I admire their allegiance to family and devotion to employers. I have been especially touched by their excitement at receiving their “Certificate of Participation.” It is my understanding that in many cases this is the first certificate or diploma many of them have ever received.

Having a translator was essential to make this program work. In September 2003, after an extensive search with 82 applicants, we were able to hire Giselle Fernandez to be

our translator for this program. As a native Puerto Rican, Giselle was already well acquainted with many member of the Latino community. She was able to immediately begin translating many of our handouts and fact sheets for upcoming finance and dairy classes that we offered to the Latino community in 2004.

In November, 2003, Giselle helped us to successfully form a Latino Advisory Council to assist us in identifying specific needs of the Latino community. The lessons we have learned from this group about the culture and the needs of the Cache County Latino community have been very instrumental in the success of this program. We were able to adapt our current programs that are very “Anglo-oriented”, and make them much more “Latino-friendly.”

We also received funding for a laptop computer. Because of space limits in our office, and the birth of Giselle’s first child, this laptop became an invaluable resource. We were able to email documents to be translated to Giselle at home and she would return them via email. Much of Giselle’s correspondence about upcoming programming for the Latino community was handled via email technology. Unfortunately, Giselle recently moved to Florida for her husband to attend flight school. The laptop computer will be passed on to the next translator that we hire.

An important factor in the success of our Milking Schools has been the fact that Dr. Ronald L. Boman, Extension Dairy Specialist, is fluent in Spanish. He has an ability to related well with the Latino/Hispanic workers who attend our classes.

Advice to others who plan to do something like this include:

- Obtain adequate funding to make the efforts a success.
- Find a suitable place and time to meet.
- Develop the trust of employers and employees.
- Respect the fact that we are dealing with very busy people. Do not meet too long.
- Providing a nice meal at the end of the instruction is appreciated and essential, since most leave the class and immediately report back to work.
- Having materials written and presented in Spanish and/or English is very useful.
- Use a variety of methods. Lectures alone are not effective.
- Use the feedback from a qualified Advisory Committee to adapt “Anglo” programs to the audience being served.
- Finally, anticipate a slow start. Your program will grow over time as confidence is built.