



Assessing the Effectiveness of Ag Education Day through a Youth Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of Ag Education Day is to provide a meaningful hands-on agricultural learning experience for youth in Carroll County. Our goal is to educate youth about the importance of agriculture to their everyday lives, while showcasing facets of agriculture that are a critical piece of our county's economy.

This is achieved as students rotate through educational stations that are run by volunteers. Ag Education Day stations include: Dairy, Equine, Barnyard, Equipment Safety, Beef, Sheep, Horticulture, Beef Cuts, Natural Resources, Fair Exhibits, and Storytelling. The overall theme of Ag Education Day this year was Beef. After participating in Ag Education Day second and third grade students should be able to answer the following questions: 1. What is agriculture? 2. What do farms provide? 3. Which is a beef cow?

Though feedback has been gathered in the form of teacher surveys in past years, youth voice has never been represented. While teachers provide valuable feedback regarding daily operations we wanted to measure the direct impact of Ag Education Day participation from a youth perspective. This year we were able to directly receive feedback from approximately 200 youth second and third graders through visuals and art. Youth were asked to choose their favorite Ag Education Day station, distinguish between a beef and dairy cow, and draw or write three things they might see on a farm. From this data we learned that Beekeeping, Natural Resources and Sheep were the top 3 favorite stations. Additionally, 90.5% of students could properly identify a beef cow. This youth data is useful when paired with teacher feedback as we strive to continuously make improvements to Ag Education Day for years to come.

INTRODUCTION

In Carroll County, roughly 900 farms occupy 118,986 acres in the county, with farm product sales totaling \$44.5 million. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, almost 38% of farmers in Carroll County are age 65 or older. The number of young people pursuing agriculture related careers does not match the current population of elderly and aging farmers. To address this, Carroll County VCE, along with its partners, conducted a week-long Ag Education Day program for all second and third grade students in Carroll County Public Schools.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students should be able to answer the following:

1. What is agriculture?
2. What do farms provide?
3. Which is a beef cow?

METHODOLOGY

The Ag Education Day Committee chose 12 stations based on agriculture and Appalachian traditions important to our region. The stations brought the farm to the students, allowing students to stimulate all five senses while exploring products and animals found on a farm. To introduce beef breeds, a skit titled "Proud to be Beef Cattle" was performed. Students participated in a "cattle beauty pageant", where they explored the differences between beef and dairy cattle.

YOUTH VOICE

590 youth participated in Ag Education Day. 200 youth (34%) completed an evaluation that verified educational objectives were met. Youth surveys were designed to allow assessment of knowledge at an appropriate age level. The survey is provided below:

Ag Education Day at the Carroll County Fair

Circle Your Favorite Station

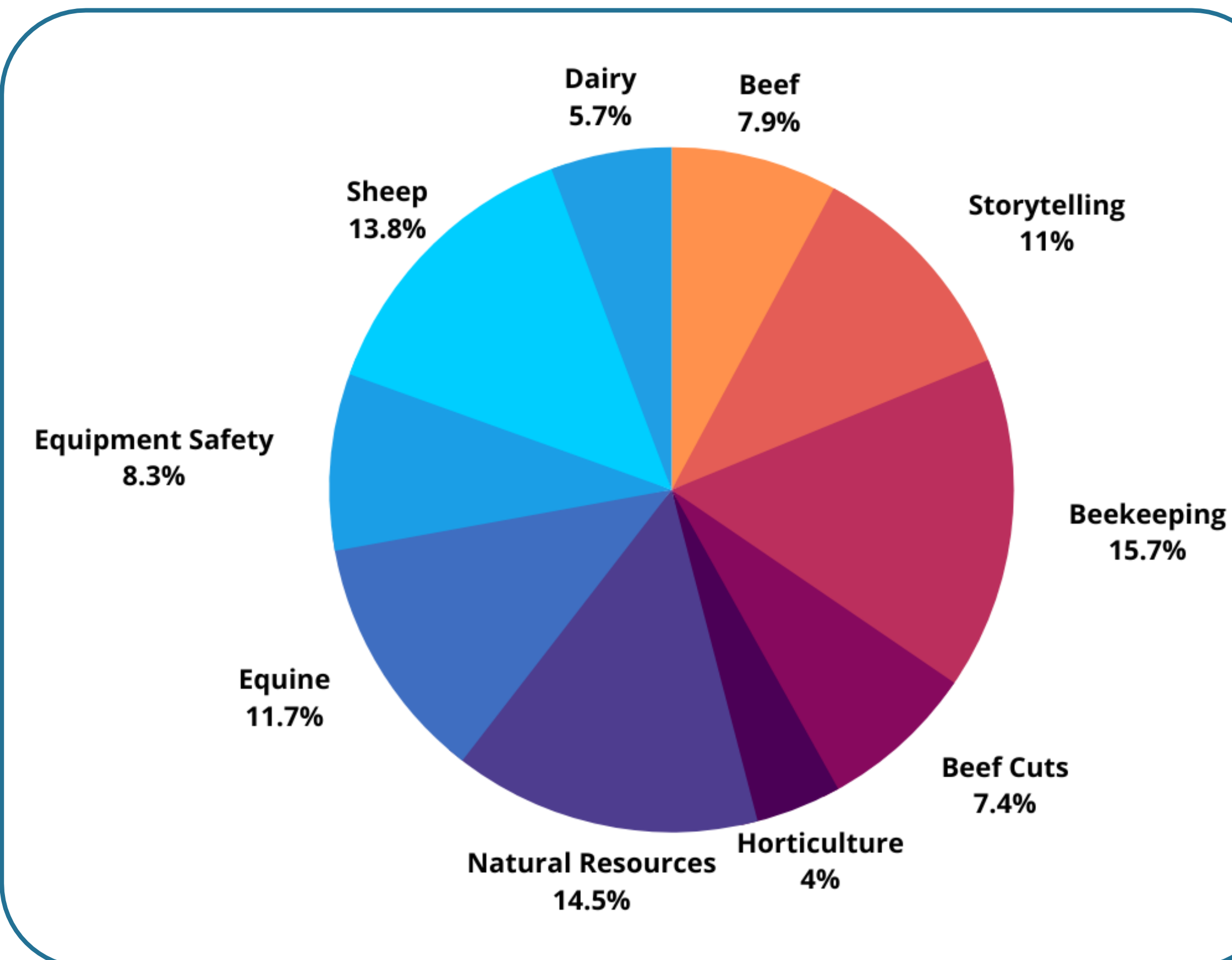
Circle the Beef Cow

Draw 3 things you can find on a farm.

Although teacher feedback has been recorded in the past, Ag Education Day is designed for youth. Assessing knowledge gained and youth perception is essential as event organizers strive to make the event better. Surveys are used to report impact and implement new practices based on youth feedback.

RESULTS

Selected Favorite Stations



90.5% of students surveyed could properly identify a beef cow.



Top Three Stations



#1: Beekeeping



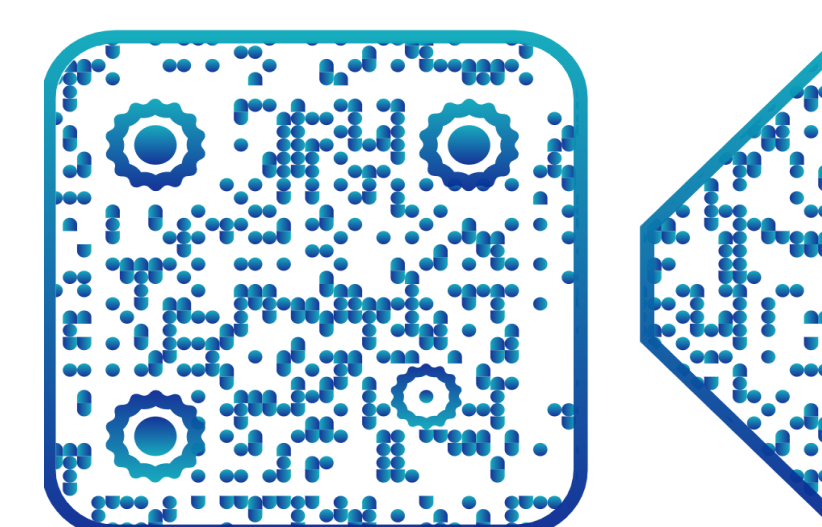
#2: Natural Resources



#3: Sheep

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Carroll County Agricultural Fair Committee, Carroll County Farm Bureau Women's Committee, Virginia Cooperative Extension employees, and 30 station volunteers who helped to make this event possible.



Scan the QR code to watch a highlight video!