

2014-2017 Northeast SARE State Program Project Plan for the Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island Joint State Program Plan

Project Title: Health Care Practices for Our Food Animals

PROJECT TOPIC AND JUSTIFICATION OF TRAINING NEED

This 2011-2014 NESARE PDP program "Grass-fed All Year Long" addressed processing capacity shortages by promoting year round breeding of beef cattle that would result in year round slaughter and processing. This proposed 2014-2017 program is responding to issues raised during the prior three years. The goal of this tri-state SARE PDP plan is to create a sustainable meat production system in Southern New England. 2013- 2014 training focused on soil, forage and animal health issues. Training programs about teaching animals to eat weeds led to increased questions about soil health and appropriate forage for beef animals. At the same time there has been greater national discussion about uses of drugs, including antibiotics in food animal production systems.

The project developed an assessment questionnaire that surveyed 110 agricultural service providers, veterinarians, and university educators on the topic of *Drug Use in Food Animal Production-- Judicious and alternative uses of drugs in livestock health*. (Assessment is attached) Of the 44 respondents, 37 (84%) stated that agricultural service providers and farmers need education about the use of drugs/antibiotics in food animal production. 32 respondents also indicated they are receiving questions in their work about this topic from consumers, farmers, educators and service providers, and 33 (75%) said that they would likely attend workshops. In meetings with NRCS personnel, they also have committed to involving their staff in training programs. Analysis of responses about specific topics showed that the respondents considered the following educational topics essential:

- Insuring adequate drug protocols to treat sick animals
- Possible alternatives to current practices of drug use such as to; reduce stress, increase exercise, change diet, different management systems
- Government regulations proposed for uses of drugs/antibiotics/hormones

The intent of the 2014-2017 project is to offer specific trainings for agricultural service providers on these topics so that they are able to educate farmers on how they can prevent disease and treat sick animals.

5. BENEFICIARY AUDIENCE DESCRIPTION and RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

We will use a two tiered approach to recruit agricultural service providers to participate in this project. A core group of 6 to 8 persons will be invited in commit to participating in all of the nine training workshops over the three year period. The 110 persons who received the assessment tool were identified as key potential providers. Many of them have already contributed ideas to the development of this project. They include Extension educators, State Departments of Agriculture personnel, Veterinarians, NRCS staff; FSA staff, university educators. Seventy-five percent (75%) of assessment respondents said that they would likely attend workshops. The secondary group of beneficiaries will be drawn from our contact list and from service provider organizations and will be invited to participate in any of the workshops. We anticipate an additional 48 unduplicated beneficiaries from all workshops.

Recruitment Efforts

- We will issue direct invitations and follow-up for the core group.
- We have direct contact with various service provider organizations who are interested in this topic. We maintain a master list of participants in previous project workshops.
- We will design training workshops in partnership with service provider organizations that represent the target beneficiaries to ensure we best meet their needs and maintain their interest in participating.

All service providers who received our assessment survey will be included in email save-the-date and invitations to programs.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Agricultural service providers will first need to increase their own knowledge about the uses of drugs including antibiotics in food animal production systems. In order to educate farmers they need the most up-to-date understanding of regulations and best practices for livestock health. Curricula for workshops will be developed with information and assistance from veterinary, university, and regulatory professionals.

Following training agricultural service providers will be prepared to:

- Educate farmers about current use of antibiotics and drugs and practices in food animal production.
- Refer farmers to answers to specific questions on regulation
- Educate farmers about prophylactic drugs that are included in feeds
- Educate farmers in assessing their use of drugs with their animals
- Educate farmers in learning about management actions that decrease need for use of drugs
- Educate farmers on soil health and nutritional and medicinal qualities of forage.
- Provide examples to farmers of systems that address issues raised by changes in drug protocols.
- Teach farmers how to document uses of drugs and antibiotics from all sources.
- Document and record actions taken by farmers as a result of their work with them.

4. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES PLANNED

Three workshops will be conducted each year on topics that the assessment demonstrated as essential, one in each state, for a total of nine over the three year period. Workshops will be carried out in partnership with service provider groups. Presenters will include university faculty, NRCS, veterinarians, livestock producer organizations, regulatory officials. If appropriate, workshops will be held on-farm to demonstrate specific protocols.

Workshop Topics:

Year 1 -- Current antibiotic/drug use in food animal production; labeling; availability of drugs over the counter, mail order, internet
Year 2 -- Maintaining and enhancing protocols to treat sick food animals; analyzing production practices
Year 3 -- Case studies and educational tools for agricultural service providers to use with farmers that may reduce uses of drugs and antibiotics,, and enhance food animal environment

Registration of workshops will be provided on line and at our website, www.meatsystems.uconn.edu with references and materials provided on-line. Workshop materials and other information will be posted on the website. Service providers will be able to contact project staff through the website to present questions or information following each workshop.

SEE ATTACHED MILESTONES FOR YEARS 1, 2 AND 3

VERIFICATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Topic-focused pre/post surveys will be completed at workshops. These surveys will also assess additional learning needs and interests
- As part of the verification of performance target workshop participants will be surveyed at 12 months after the workshop to submit information on their work with farmers.

2a. AG SERVICE PROVIDER ACTIONS PROJECT PERFORMANCE TARGET

8 agricultural service providers will deliver educational programs about: protocols to keep animals healthy; production systems to reduce drug use in livestock; and new regulations on the use of drugs in food animals to 100 CT, MA and RI farmers with 1,500 animals. An additional 48 agricultural service providers will deliver information to farmers about current drug use in food animals, proposed regulation changes, and production systems that may not require drugs and antibiotics.

2b. INDICATORS OF AG SERVICE PROVIDER ACTIONS

- Number and type of agricultural service providers who provide educational programs and services to farmers on these topics
- The number and type of programs or services they deliver (including content or topics)
- The number of farmers they reach/teach
- The size of the farms, in number of animals

VERIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE TARGET

- Participants will receive a template for recording information about their educational efforts with farmers, and sample questionnaires for use at workshops or other events to collect farmer contact and demographic information and to verify learning. The benefits to participants as well as the project of collecting and maintaining this data will be emphasized.
- Participants will respond to follow-up surveys conducted 9-12 months after last workshop each year.

1a. FARMER ACTIONS DESIRED

- Use appropriate drug protocols to treat sick animals
- Use drugs appropriately in food animal health care
- Access information and/or technical assistance about the use of drugs
- Make informed decisions about purchase of feeds that may contain drugs
- Adopt alternative farming production practices that can reduce use of drugs
- Comply with government regulations for use of drugs

1b. INDICATORS OF FARMER ACTIONS

Reports from agricultural service providers will document their information about farmer actions

- Farmers adopt appropriate protocols to treat sick animals
- Farmers begin to adopt alternative production systems
- Farmers understand and comply with new regulations

VERIFICATION OF FARMER ACTIONS (optional)

The project will not be reaching farmers directly and will not verify farmer actions from farmers.

The agricultural service providers will be asked to keep track of the farmers they reach, obtain contact information whenever possible, and record any information they learn about farmer follow-up actions.

To facilitate uniform record keeping, they will receive a form for use in recording information about farmer actions.