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## Building horse sense in Huron County

Recently, local equine owners had the opportunity to gain a little horse sense by learning about nutrient management and other information regarding feeding and caring for their horses. MSU Extension teamed up with the Huron Conservation District and hosted a workshop called "Horse Sense".

Betsy Dierberger, Natural Resources Conservation Service grassland and forage specialist, discussed pasture management and toxic plant identification. The Deckerville Vet Clinic provided information on managing diseases and parasites through the use of vaccinations and dewormers. Matt Shane, MSU Extension educator based in Lenawee County, covered information related to nutrition, hay management, and nutrient management. Kristin Linderman with the Michigan Right-to-Farm Program explained what horse owners need to know to comply and receive nuisance complaint protection through this state mandated act. Jeannine Schweihofer, MSU Extension District educator based in Huron County, spoke about alternative outlets for horse manure.

Participants could also earn Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Phase I credit for attending this workshop. MAEAP is an innovative, proactive voluntary program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks.

The workshop was sponsored by the Pigeon River Watershed, Pinnebog River Watershed, Cargill, NRCS, the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the Huron County Board of Commissioners, Deckerville Vet Clinic, Huron Conservation District, and MSU Extension.

The impacts of this workshop could be endless. Horse owners who put the information they learned into practice could save money on the cost of their feed through pasture or hay management. Additional dollars

can be saved through the management of how much feed their horses require compared to what is actually being fed. Often, horses are over-fed for their level of activity, and this can be costly at current feed prices. Properly managing the manure, including storage and spreading, may have huge environmental impacts. If participants use what they learned at this program, it can mean less discharges of manure into surface waters, including through local watersheds. Understanding the Michigan Right-to-Farm Act and how compliance with its Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices may also impact nutrient management in a positive manner.

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## Huron County youth learn and grow at 4-H Camp

2009 Summer 4-H Camp involved implementing new strategies that provided meaningful activities for youngsters from five thumb counties including Huron. For decades, the camp has offered social skills with a chance to build and the confidence to navigate in a new environment or with new people- - as well as opportunities to experience new activities out of doors, learn more about nature, express their creativity through crafting, and building positive relationships with adults who role model.

This summer campers participated in fun and very meaningful team-building exercises. They also built their confidence and physical skills by a zip line and being challenged by a rock-climbing wall.

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### **4-H Camp continued**

This year a grant from Wal-Mart Corp. funded several activities that focused on healthy living behaviors. Kids were exposed to new, healthy foods during “Food Fear Factor”, used pedometers they got for attending to count their steps and try to win the “Cabin with The Most Steps” contest, learned about the proper way to wash hands, and had lots of fun with even more fitness and health activities.

Camp also offered 4-H teen leader counselors the chance to take part in exclusive time for fellowship and the chance to take part in teambuilding and personal development.

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### **New classes at fair broaden youth development opportunities**

Two great additions to the 2009 Huron Community Fair are remarkable not only for the skills and knowledge 4-Her’s acquired by participating, but also because both were jumpstarted by a Huron County teen leader.

The first of the two divisions is Communication Arts, supported by superintendent & 4-H leader, Janet Lipskey. Darcy Lipskey, 14 of Minden City spearheaded this new class. It was open to all young people between the ages of five and 19 and included categories for disabled 4-Her’s.

Each of these groups had opportunities to demonstrate skills, build confidence and share ideas in public speaking, individual and team demonstrations, illustrated talk/educational exhibits and dramatic reading.

These contests not only developed current 4-Her’s skills, but also led to the enrollment of additional members.

A beef breeding stock division was also added. Darcy Lipskey again led the way instituting the new beef class by attending a Fair Board meeting to ask for the class and handling all the questions the board had about it. It was led by superintendents Melissa Cantrell and Cheryl Hieber.

Classes in this division included:

- \* Heifer Calf, under 3 months and over 1 month
- \* Heifer Calf, under 1 year and over 3 months
- \* Yearling Heifer, over 1 year and under 2 years
- \* Cow, 2 years and older
- \* Grand Champion and Reserve Champion

\* Cow-Calf pair

Showmanship classes are available for Senior, Intermediate, Junior & Novice as well as Grand Champion and Reserve Champion.

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### **Support local producers**

Under the 2008 U.S. Farm Bill, participating farmers had the option of taking part in a new program called the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) to replace the existing Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) put in place under the 2001 Farm Bill.

Huron County MSU Extension worked with area producers to help them determine which option was best for their operations. Eight workshops were offered between December 2008 and July 2009 in Huron County to present the options under the new bill. August 14th was the deadline for producers to sign up for the ACRE program.

Huron County MSU Extension also offered one-on-one assistance using a spreadsheet to determine the best option. In total, 36 producers stopped by the office to take advantage of the one-on-one assistance being offered. Field crops educator Bob Battel also consulted with 10 individuals over the phone to explain the program. In all, 20,258 FSA base acres were evaluated through the Huron County MSU Extension office relative to the benefit ACRE could offer.

According to the Huron County Farm Service Agency (FSA), 55 FSA farm units were enrolled in ACRE in Huron County. A majority of those who enrolled got assistance from the MSU Extension office either through our workshops or one-on-one assistance.

Payment made to producers from either the ACRE or the DCP programs represent federal dollars making their way to have an impact on local economics.

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