



Ionia County

2015–2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

MSU Extension serves individuals, businesses and families throughout Michigan. District 8 spans seven counties, with eight different Extension offices. MSU Extension also has a close partnership with MSU AgBio Research, and District 8 is home to two of their research centers; the Clarksville Research station and Montcalm Research center. The two organizations work together to keep farmers and the general public current on the newest technology and management practices.

MSU Extension programs create innovative opportunities for Michigan residents. These programs offer youth and adults access to educational opportunities as varied as dairy herd management, bullying prevention, diabetes prevention, youth college experiences, gardening, human nutrition and animal nutrition. Extension also provides an opportunity for new commissioners to attend New County Commissioner Training which includes workshops on county budgets, policy making, and statutory obligations.

It is a pleasure to work with the over fifty MSU and County staff members housed in these eight District offices. Please contact me with any questions you may have about this report or any MSU Extension programs.

Don Lehman
District Coordinator, District 8



CONTACT US

Ionia County MSU Extension
50 East Sprague Road
Ionia, MI 48846-7408

Phone (616) 527-5357
Fax (616) 522-1449

msue.ionia@county.msu.edu

<https://msue.anr.msu.edu/county/info/ionia>

MEASURING IMPACT

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

Snap-Ed Participants.....	503
4-H Program	694
4-H Clubs	536
4-H Special Interest Participants	106
4-H School Enrichment Participants	142
4-H Volunteers	80
Gardening Hotline.....	39
Foreclosure Prevention.....	24
TOTAL IMPACT.....	1,260

DISTRICT 8 DIGITAL REACH

From July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, over 6,000 visitors from Ionia County viewed more than 14,416 pages of rich, science-based content on the MSU Extension website (msue.msu.edu). Search Engine rankings make msue.msu.edu one of the most visited Cooperative Extension Systems educational sites in the country.

MSU EXTENSION'S EXPANDED DIGITAL REACH

Through combined face-to-face trainings, online webinars, social media, website interaction and electronic newsletters, MSU Extension has made more than 8.8 million connections. More than 149,000 adults* and 203,000 youth† participated in MSU Extension programming in the 2015-16 programming year.

More than 3.7 million people viewed more than 7.2 million pages on the MSU Extension website.‡ Of those, more than 760,000 were Michigan residents. MSU Extension remains one of the most visited Cooperative Extension System education websites in the country.

MSU Extension also distributes a series of electronic newsletters that cater to residents' unique interests. Last year, nearly 1.3 million newsletters covering 90 topic areas were distributed to about 16,900 email addresses.‡ You can sign up for these informative newsletters by visiting msue.msu.edu and clicking on "Newsletter Sign Up" or by texting MSUE to 22828.

MSU Extension uses social media channels to reach people with educational content. Currently, Extension reaches more than 3,500 Facebook followers and more than 2,800 Twitter followers.‡ In addition, Michigan 4-H families and volunteers stay informed about activities through social media channels, including on Michigan 4-H Facebook with more than 4,000 likes and on Twitter with more than 1,300 followers.

*From ES237 Federal Report – Oct. 1, 2014, to Sept. 30, 2015

†From Michigan Extension Planning and Reporting System – Jan. 1, 2015, to Dec. 31, 2015

‡From July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016

Developing Youth and Communities



When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

When you support MSU Extension 4-H programs, youth participants learn life skills that prepare them for the workforce – especially for highly sought after jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Extension programs help children develop early literacy skills that support school readiness. They learn leadership and decision-making skills in 4-H that increase their likelihood of becoming civically active. 4-H'ers also demonstrate reduced high-risk behaviors such as drug use, and learn to complete tasks, solve problems and seek any help they might need from peers and adults. 4-H involvement also helps participants avoid or reduce involvement with the court system. This helps ensure more young people succeed in school, attend college and contribute to their communities. More successful young people in communities results in greater tax revenues and consumer spending and increases the likelihood that young people will stay in, or return to, their communities.

Growing true leaders

With innovative ideas, exuberant energy and the ability to look beyond preconceived obstacles, youth have the capacity to change the world. However, many lack the skills and confidence to empower these assets into motion. They need experiences and training that help them to feel ready and capable to lead.

Michigan 4-H helps to prepare current and future leaders by offering numerous opportunities for leadership development. From the club experience to statewide youth councils, all youth have the chance to serve in a leadership role. Those experiences and various leadership trainings provide youth with skills to last a lifetime and empower them to stand up today as true leaders in their families, schools and communities.

In the past year:

- 25 youth formed the Michigan 4-H State Youth Leadership Council, becoming statewide champions for 4-H.
- 32 youth were trained as teen leaders in the 4-H Ag Innovators Experience. These youth cultivated important leadership skills as they delivered programming to 1,200 of their peers.
- 40 youth learned how to become advocates for themselves and 4-H through the 4-H Teen Spokesperson training; 86% of those surveyed indicated they feel confident in standing up for issues that are important to them.
- 15 Ionia county youth participated in the first year of the Ionia 4-H Teen Advisory Council in order to have a voice in local decisions.



Twenty-one youth attended the first ever day long Ionia Montcalm Leadership Academy workshop event.

Ionia Montcalm Leadership Academy

The 4-H program in Ionia County worked diligently over the past year to provide the youth with experiences that would provide a lasting positive impression. One such program was the first ever Leadership Academy. This workshop style day-long event, was a combined effort between the Ionia County and Montcalm County 4-H Program Coordinators. The focus of this workshop was helping youth prepare for their future and build their leadership skills. Twenty-one youth ranging from grades 6th to college were in attendance. Evaluations and feedback from the youth was extremely positive and all said they would come to another such event. As a result of this feedback, another workshop is being planned for 2017 in Clarksville and will expand on the sessions that were held last year.

Sessions were based on grade level and included:

- Service learning
- Resumes and interviews
- Team building
- Applying to and paying for college
- Confidence and leader building
- Anti-bullying
- College knowledge: Finding the right fit for YOU

4-H International Dinner

The Ionia County 4-H International Dinner has become an annual event that the youth and adults of the 4-H program, as well as community members, look forward to. This cultural event works to teach youth and adults about countries from around the world through food and educational displays.

In preparation of this night, 4-H clubs must choose an international theme for the evening. They then work together to research, select their specific entrees and dishes and to prepare a visual educational display. Each club then prepares and serves the meal to those in attendance and gives a presentation on their chosen country or region.

The evening ends with the youth following through with kitchen clean-up and writing hand written thank you notes to volunteers, local restaurants and other businesses who were involved in either donating food items or helping in other ways to make the event successful.

The event is open to the public and the cost of the meal is donation only, with proceeds going to the IM Kids and international non-profits focused on hunger.

Building communication skills for a lifetime

Whether it is written, spoken or visually represented, the way we express ourselves makes a big impact on our daily lives at home, work and play.

Communication is an essential element of every aspect of life – personal and professional. Whether it is written, spoken or visually represented, the way we express ourselves makes a big impact on our daily lives at home, work and play. Youth who practice and enhance their communication skills in adolescence will find these skills to their advantage in future employment and adulthood.

To help young people develop this important life skill, MSU Extension’s Michigan 4-H has made communication an aspect of nearly every area of its programming. Youth are required to record their progress on projects, verbally report their activities and illustrate their understanding in a number of ways. Some Michigan 4-H programs make communication a major focus, further allowing youth to cultivate and enhance these critical skills.

The Ionia 4-H program recognizes the importance of learning strong communication skills, and uses different opportunities to encourage the youth to enhance and display their skills including public speaking and written communication. The Ionia 4-H teens are asked to speak or emcee at many events throughout the year including, the dairy banquet, the 4-H celebration banquet, and many promotional events. The teens speak in front of as many as 200 people at any given event. Ionia 4-H members also have the opportunity to fill out applications every year for various awards and scholarships including county awards, state awards and the Ionia County 4-H Advisory Council Scholarship.



Ensuring Safe and Secure Food



MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

When you support MSU Extension's efforts to enhance residents' access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food, program participants will focus on food safety measures in the field and at harvest, learn proper food preparation and food preservation techniques, and bring community partners together to strengthen access to healthy food supplies. This leads to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

Reducing foodborne illness through education of individuals and small businesses

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every year, 48 million people in the United States become ill and 3,000 die from pathogens in food. Causes range from outdated home food preservation practices to unsafe sanitizing practices at public events and small businesses. Since 2013, MSU Extension food safety and preservation programs have taught almost 10,500 Michigan residents safe food handling, food preservation and methods to reduce foodborne illness.

Participants include youth, nonprofit organizations that prepare food for the public and food preservers who want to create safe products for their small businesses.

Through face-to-face and online learning, Michigan communities receive high-quality, research-based education using U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for safe food preservation.

Food preservation and pressure canning class

Ionia County MSU Extension was host to a Food Preservation and Pressure Canning Class held on October 4th. Participants learned how to successfully and safely use a pressure canner for low acid foods and a water bath canner for acid foods. Due to the local growing food movement, a renewed consumer interest in safe food preservation techniques has increased. Therefore, it is important to learn the safe methods for freezing, boiling water bath canning, pressure canning and dehydrating to prevent botulism and food poisoning. All participants were provided with resources and references for their future food preservation.

MSU Extension offers a number of workshops, classes and online webinars to those interested in learning more about safe and healthy food preparation or preservation.

Ensuring Strong Communities



MSU Extension efforts in ensuring safe and secure food lead to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

When you support MSU Extension, participants learn how to implement best practices in good governance that keeps communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills that help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase their savings, manage their spending, avoid predatory lending and reduce mortgage defaults. All of these outcomes help lower the cost of governmental services and lead to personal and community stability, strong neighborhoods and safe communities.

Improving the fiscal health of Michigan communities

Only with healthy, vibrant communities can Michigan residents be expected to thrive. To help Michigan prosper in a sensible, sustainable fiscally responsible way, MSU Extension launched the Center for Local Government Finance and Policy in late 2015.

The center is led by MSU Extension economist Eric Scorsone, who has assisted multiple cities during fiscal crises including Detroit, Flint and Lansing. The center will advise cities during fiscal hardships so communities can find a sustainable path forward. It will also develop fiscal tools and offer outreach to help communities improve their fiscal health. In addition, the center is committed to connecting legislators with experts in public policy and forging partnerships in the public and private sector.

The center's efforts include:

- Assisting in the development of performance metrics for government budgets, strategic plans and public accountability reporting.
- Providing an overall assessment of long-term and short-term trends in revenues, expenditures, debt, general fiscal health and recommendations regarding adoption of financial policies.
- Publishing an annual local government fiscal health report for communities wishing to improve fiscal health.
- Publishing an annual legislative mandate report that identifies the costs imposed on local governments and their impact on fiscal and operational health.

The Ionia County MSU Extension Housing Program, assisted six households in becoming current on their property taxes. This resulted in the county receiving \$20,840.92 in back owed taxes.

Your Money, Your Goals

One program working to make our community stronger, is the Your Money, Your Goals program. This is a Train-the-Trainer event and works with social and case workers to become more aware of information and tools to financially empower their current clients. MSU Extension educational staff from the Financial and Homeownership team provided resources that the workers can use to assist their clients plus information about locally available resources they may need to create in order to better meet the needs of those they help. Nine Ionia county case workers participated in this training.

Foreclosure prevention

In 2016, the Ionia MSU Extension Housing program provided counseling services to twenty-four Ionia County homeowners concerned about keeping their homes due to delinquent mortgages or property taxes. Foreclosure education is delivered through one-on-one office appointments with household members. The Housing counselors are HUD-approved and MSHDA-certified to provide such services. Follow up with clients is done until the outcome is known. Counselors also respond to phone and email inquiries.

Through working with the Michigan Hardest Hit Fund Homeowner Program, the Ionia Housing program was able to secure funds to assist six Ionia county households to become current on their property taxes and brought in \$20,840.92 to the county in back owed taxes.

Homeownership Education

Homebuyers make decisions that require them to determine their own financial situations and what financial products are available on the market. Research suggests individuals may not accurately estimate their own financial status, including information about debt and creditworthiness, which leads to less desirable financial decisions. MSU Extension Homeownership Education courses educate homebuyers on advantages of homeownership and steps in the home-buying process, understanding costs of homeownership and how to maintain the investment, mortgage, loan basics, why good credit is important, and how to determine how much house can be afforded. Five households earned completion certificates by completing this program. These certificates are a requirement for Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) down payment assistance programs.



Keeping Businesses Strong



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods.

MSU Extension and the MSU Product Center help Michigan entrepreneurs develop and commercialize high-value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the food, agriculture, natural resources and bioeconomy sectors. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants understand the economic, environmental and social benefits of purchasing local and regional foods. You also help young people develop business skills that will help them succeed as adults and help communities capitalize on their ecological, social and cultural assets. This fuels the economy by creating and retaining jobs, and helps ensure a healthy tax base.

Building entrepreneurial spirit and skills

As the backbone of the economy, small business owners play a critical role in the prosperity of the nation. But to be a successful entrepreneur, one must have not only the ambition and moxie to take a risk, but also the business sense and skill to make a profit. To ensure the business owners of tomorrow – today's youth – are triumphant in their future endeavors, they need to learn the entrepreneurial concepts that pave the way for success.

MSU Extension is helping to meet this need by providing youth and the adults that support them with the skills and resources necessary to turn ideas into business ventures. Through simulations and workshops, youth learn how to develop business plans and operate their own companies, as well as how to be more entrepreneurial in their everyday 4-H experiences. In 2015, these programs were delivered to nearly 1,200 people in 59 Michigan counties.

As a result:

- 92% said they learned how entrepreneurial skills could be used in any career, and 60% reported planning to start their own businesses.

151 participants attended the Optimizing Dairy Farm Profit workshops, benefiting over 300 Michigan farms.

Optimizing Dairy Farm Profit

Michigan dairy farmers entered 2016 with \$4 less per hundred weight of milk than they had received just one year earlier. This represented a 25% decrease in income. This much of a drop in market price meant farmers would need to take a close look at their operation to survive.

In March 2016, the MSU Extension Dairy Team and specialist from Michigan State University offered “Optimizing Dairy Farm Profit”, a workshop designed to highlight information relevant to dairy farms staying profitable with today’s low milk prices. Presentations focused on a variety of topics that can impact a farm’s bottom line. Dr. Chris Wolf, MSU dairy economist, provided a dairy market outlook. MSUE dairy educators and MSU Extension farm management educators also presented timely information including:

- How to identify bottleneck in management
- Financial indicators
- Financial comparisons between high and low profit farms
- Labor cost and productivity
- Economic analysis of custom forage harvesting
- Impact of stocking density
- Heifer enterprise considerations
- Easy-to-use Dairy Farm Cash Flow projection tool

Over 300 farms across Michigan were served by this program. Of the 151 participants, producers attended from Barry, Clinton, Gratiot, Ingham and Ionia Counties. Over 65% of those responding to the survey said they would be making management changes on their farm as a result of the meeting.



Keeping People Healthy



Encouraging healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn safe food handling practices, increase their physical activity and improve the quality of their diets. Extension programming also helps decrease incidents of violence and bullying. Encouraging these healthy behaviors helps reduce food and health care costs by helping prevent chronic health conditions and providing safe environments throughout a person's life span.

Improving nutrition and increasing physical activities in Michigan communities

Limited income and poor nutrition affect quality of life and can increase healthcare costs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 30 percent of Michigan adults are considered obese, and one out of every three deaths in Michigan is caused by cardiovascular disease, influencing the quality of life and adding billions of dollars each year in economic burden.

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help residents in urban and rural communities stay healthy throughout their lifespans. Programs teach participants how to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods and increase physical activity. In 2015 alone, these programs reached more than 112,000 adults and youth across the state in over 1,600 different locations.

- 79% of youth participants improved their abilities or gained knowledge about how to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Guidelines.
- 79% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one nutrition practice, such as preparing foods without adding salt, or using the Nutrition Facts labels to make food choices.
- 73% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one food resource management practice, such as planning meals in advance or comparing prices when shopping.

Cooking matters for child care professionals

A six week Cooking Matters for child care professional's course was held at the Ionia County MSU Extension office from mid-May to mid-August. The purpose of this class was to work with these individuals on how to deliver nutritious meals and how to teach healthy eating habits to the children in their care. The participants also earned 10 hours of education credits that are required for their ongoing education requirements for their state licensing. Included in this course were hands on cooking, food safety and food budgeting lessons.

Making the Most of Our Natural Assets



Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

When you support MSU Extension's natural resources education programs, participants learn about income-generating opportunities, ecological principles, natural resource issues and the role of natural resource professionals. They also explore public policy issues related to environmental stewardship. Our programs can lead to increased income for families that retain their natural resource assets, help landowners become better stewards of their land, and protect land management opportunities for future generations. Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

Raising awareness of the benefits of cover crops

Cover crops are a hot topic in agricultural circles, thanks to an MSU Extension specialist's message that's resonating with the right crowd. Dean Baas, a senior research associate, conducts cover crop and organic agriculture research and education.

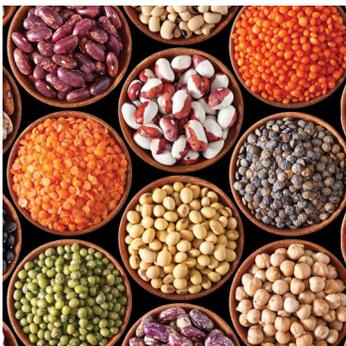
Cover crops are plants seeded into agricultural fields, either within or outside of the regular growing season, with the primary purpose of improving or maintaining ecosystem quality. Environmental benefits include enhanced biodiversity, increased soil infiltration and attraction of honeybees and beneficial insects.

Researchers are focusing on ways cover crops can be used by farmers to bring diversity to the crop system, reduce reliance on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, and to determine the impact of cover crops on overall operation economics.

Initial studies have shown that:

- Farming benefits include reduced erosion, improved soil quality through increased porosity, soil organic matter and water-holding capacity, as well as the addition of beneficial microbes.
- Cover crops help retain nutrients that otherwise would be lost.
- Cover crops add nitrogen through fixation while combatting weeds and breaking disease cycles.

Supporting Food and Agriculture



When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices.

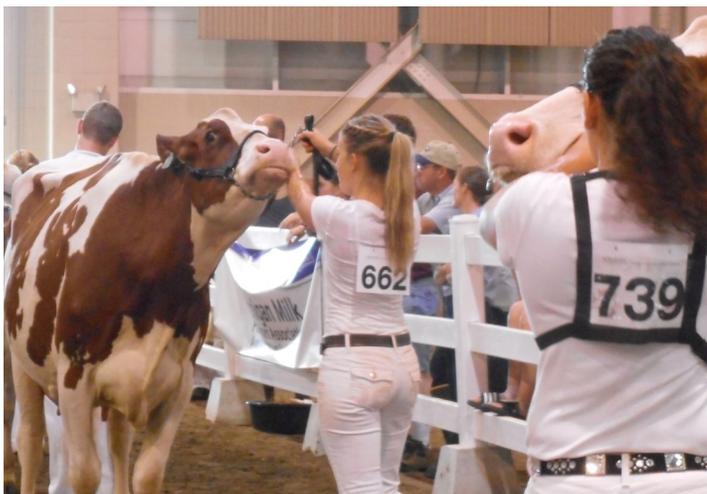
Michigan agriculture continues to be a growing segment of the state's economy. The production of commercial food and nonfood agricultural operations is growing rapidly. The number of households raising a portion of their own food and raising livestock or gardening for pleasure or relaxation continues to increase. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices. Participants also learn how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and how to conserve and protect water resources. This education leads to better use of time, money and human capital, and helps retain and create agricultural jobs. These measures strengthen Michigan's economy while connecting farmers to local food opportunities and global markets. In this way you help MSU Extension encourage growth in a sustainable and prosperous Michigan food and agriculture system.

Preparing youth for future careers in agriculture

As a pillar of Michigan's economy, agriculture must continue to grow and thrive. One way to ensure this success is to prepare an informed and skilled workforce ready for careers in this essential sector.

To meet this need, MSU Extension offers youth a continuum of learning opportunities in the agriculture industry. These opportunities range from interactive experiences such as 4-H Renewable Energy Camp and World Food Prize Michigan Youth Institute, to educational resources such as the Youth Business Guide to Success, animal marketing curriculum, and zoonotic disease prevention tools. Through these experiences and resources, as well as county 4-H projects, youth are educated about agriculture and prepared for careers in this important industry. In the last program year:

- More than 24,000 4-H youth participated in animal, biological and plant science projects in 78 counties.
- More than 850 youth took part in Michigan 4-H pre-college programs with an agricultural focus. These programs, which include 4-H Exploration Days and 4-H Animal and Veterinary Science Camp, among others, are designed to help youth explore potential careers or academic areas.



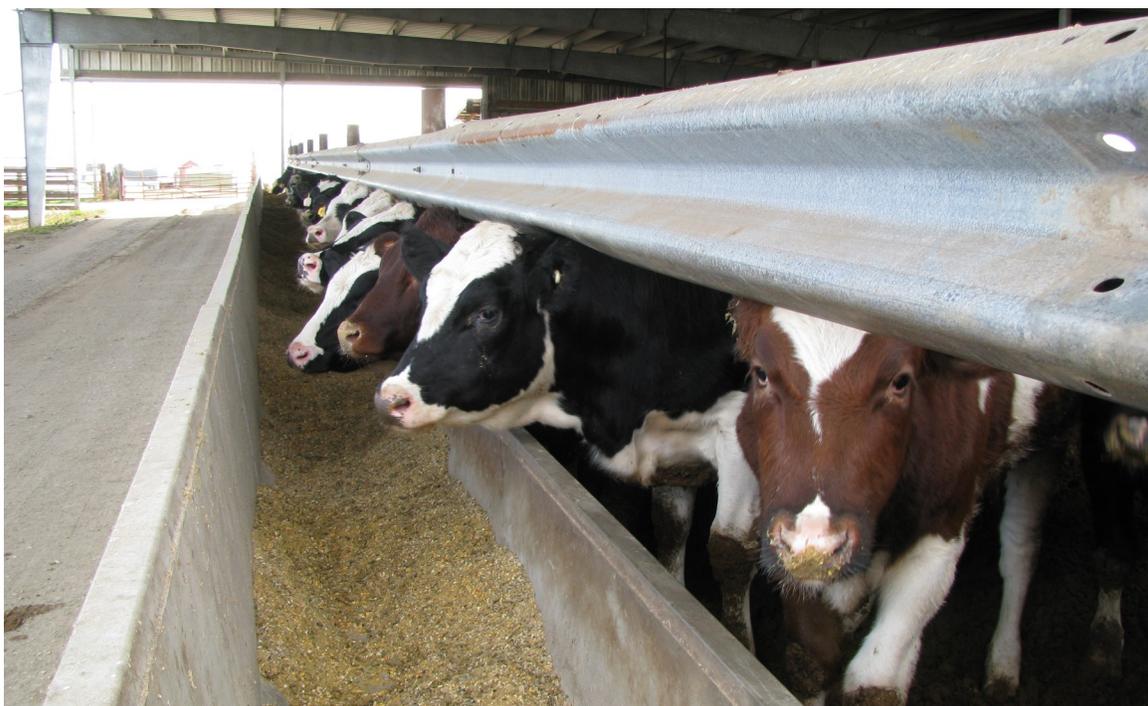
Veterinary Feed Directive

MSU Extension programs help farmers and producers stay on top of changing policies, regulations and directives.

MSU Extension makes every attempt to be proactive in response to changing policies, regulations and directives. One example of this was a workshop that was held at the Ionia Extension office on November 10th in response to the new Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD). This workshop, led by Educator Faith Cullens, was held to inform producers about the change that took place on January 1st, 2017. The meeting included a short presentation followed by a panel discussion led by representatives from two local veterinarians, nutritionists and feed mills. The new directive by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, changes how feed grade antibiotics are prescribed, purchased and sold by producers. The focus of the workshop was how a farm can comply with the VFD and how the directive alters the veterinary-client-patient relationship. 4-H youth with an interest in livestock also attended this workshop.

Agenda for the workshop included:

- What is the VFD
- How the VFD will affect feed-delivered antibiotics commonly used in agriculture
- How your farm can comply with the VFD
- What is a veterinary-client-patient relationship
- What you need to do to obtain feed-based antibiotics
- Discussion on implementation of VFD with veterinarians and nutritionists



Extension Educators Serving Ionia County

Staff Located in Ionia County Office:

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Jim Buxton	Home Ownership Instructor	616-527-5357	buxtonji@anr.msu.edu
Kevin Gould	Livestock Educator	616-527-5357	gouldk@anr.msu.edu
Brenda Long	Housing Senior Educator	616-527-5357	longbr@anr.msu.edu
Haley McLean	4-H Program Coordinator	616-527-5357	mcleanha@anr.msu.edu
Vicki Newcomb	County Support	616-527-5357	vnewcomb@ioniacounty.org
Janice Ransom	Office Manager	616-527-5357	ransomja@anr.msu.edu
Tammy Fletcher	SNAP-ED Nutrition Instructor	616-527-5357	fletchta@anr.msu.edu
Liz Dorman	SNAP-ED Program Instructor	616-527-5357	bakerel7@anr.msu.edu

Extension Educators Serving Ionia County, Continued

Additional MSU Extension Staff Serving Ionia County

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Laura Anderson	Disease Prevention Educator	269-945-1388	ander359@anr.msu.edu
Roger Betz	Farm Management Educator	269-781-0784	betz@anr.msu.edu
Diane Brown-Rytlewski	Horticulture Educator	517-676-7292	rytlewsl@anr.msu.edu
Kittie Butcher	Early Childhood Educator	989-224-5228	Butche36@anr.msu.edu
Faith Cullens	Dairy Educator	989-224-5249	cullensf@anr.msu.edu
Rebecca Finneran	Horticulture Educator	616-632-7886	Finneran@anr.msu.edu
Charles Gould	Bioenergy & Agriculture Conservation	616-994-4547	gouldm@anr.msu.edu
Tom Guthrie	Swine & Equine Educator	517-788-4292	guthrie19@anr.msu.edu
Becky Henne	Community Food Systems Educator	517-543-4468	henner@anr.msu.edu
Adam Kantrovich	Farm Management Educator	616-994-4570	akantrov@anr.msu.edu
Joyce McGarry	Food Safety & Preservation Educator	517-887-4587	mcgarry@anr.msu.edu
George Silva	Field Crops Senior Educator	517-543-4467	silvag@anr.msu.edu
Annette Sokolnicki	HNI Supervising Educator	517-887-4534	sokolni2@anr.msu.edu
Fred Springborn	Field Crops Educator	989-831-7509	springb2@anr.msu.edu
Marilyn Thelen	Crop & Livestock Senior Educator	989-227-6454	thelen22@anr.msu.edu
Wendy Walker	Government & Public Policy Educator	269-445-4438	walkerdy@anr.msu.edu

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