

Youth Cattle Working Contest

State Cattle Working Extension Team

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North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service

Objective

The availability of hands-on livestock related FFA and Youth Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training opportunities are limited for youth in North Carolina. The NC Cooperative Extension team worked to create a hands-on contest designed to teach students the proper methods of beef cattle handling and production. Incorporation of the North Carolina Beef Quality Assurance curriculum is key in teaching the next generation of beef producers to handle those animals correctly, thus directly affecting the safety and quality of the American beef supply. Beef Quality Assurance covers several topics including: low stress animal handling, animal health, facilities structure and management, hauling, and many more. Our contest adds an additional layer to that knowledge by asking participants to learn more about beef cattle breeds, feedstuffs, and equipment by participating in a skillathon component.



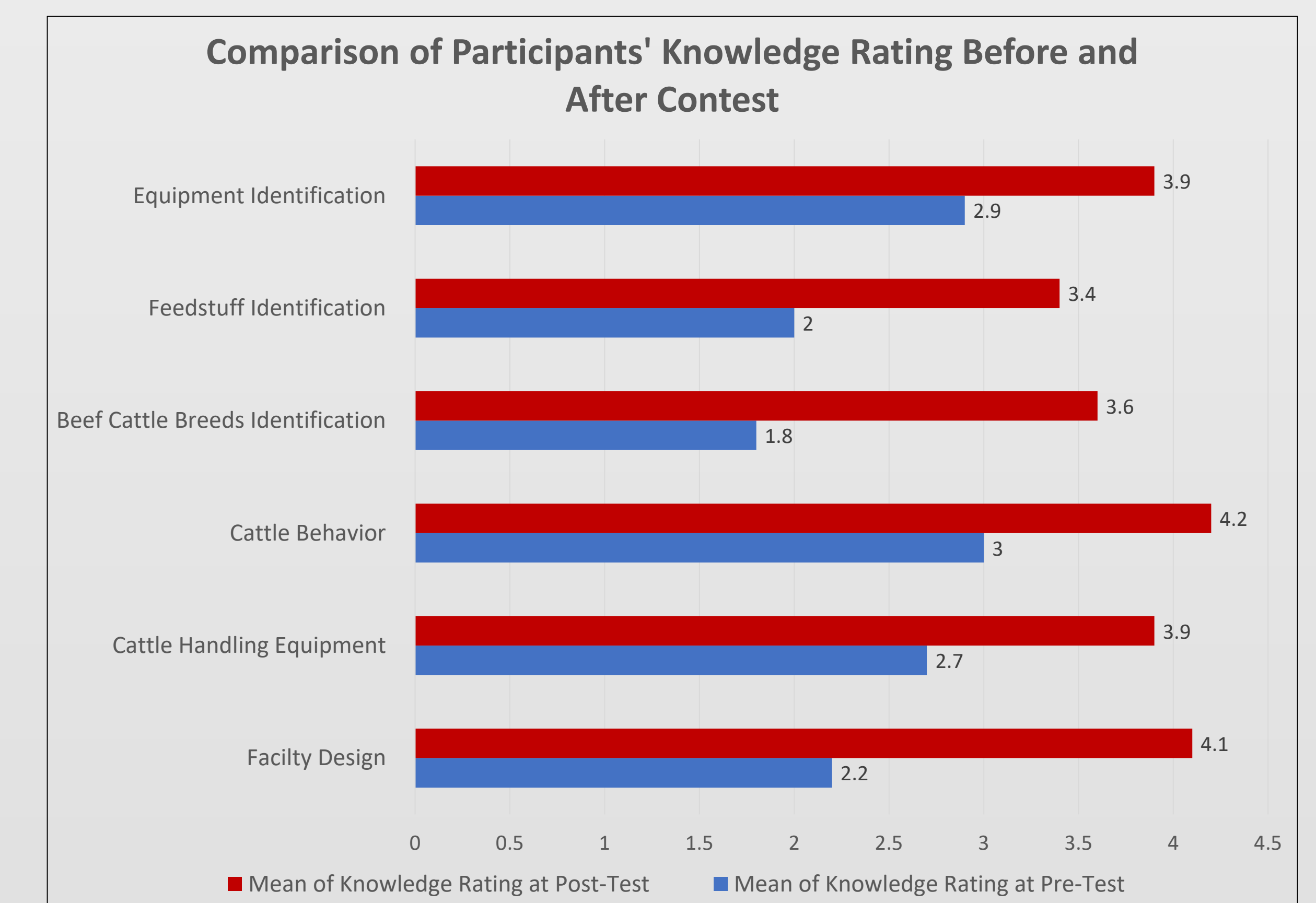
Educational Methods

The NC Cooperative Extension team partnered with Zoetis Inc., local volunteer farmers, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture (NCDA) Research Stations to create three regional contests followed by a final state contest. The top three teams from each regional contest qualify to go on to compete at the State Cattle Working Contest. The competition consists of three individual parts. First, a Skillathon contest designed to test the students knowledge of beef cattle production, feed identification, breed identification, and equipment identification. Second, the students take a written exam testing the mastery of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines. The final part of the competition involves hands-on practical application of the BQA program. Students are required to safely sort, restrain, and administer vaccinations to live cattle. Students are judged on how accurately they read, record, and follow product label directions regarding dosages, expiration dates, and withdrawal times. Students are also judged on their ability to handle animals in a safe and humane manner. The winning team is determined by additive scores of each team member's skillathon tests and BQA exams as well as the team's final score on the hands-on cattle working portion.



Results

Over the four year history of the Cattle Working Contest, the contest has grown to include four regional contests as well as the final state contest. Student participation has increased annually, and the team scores has shown improvement from year to year. The increase in student and team scores demonstrates a mastery of the curriculum and implementation of BQA approved handling practices.



Impacts

Over the past four years we have had 339 students from 15 different counties participate in the series of Cattle Working Contests. The education and evaluation of youth working directly with livestock is taking a proactive approach to ensuring a healthy and safe beef product. Keeping animals safe, healthy & comfortable is the ultimate goal of BQA. Participants now have the opportunity to receive premium prices for cattle marketed from a Beef Quality Assured Farm. In addition, partnerships between students and local cattlemen's Associations have been formed thus encouraging future youth participation in the associations.

