

HOW TO BECOME A WSU EXTENSION LIVESTOCK ADVISOR

What is the WSU Livestock Advisor Program?

WSU Livestock Advisors are trained and certified members of a volunteer program that is sponsored by Washington State University Cooperative Extension. The program assists Cooperative Extension in providing information to livestock producers on raising, breeding, and housing livestock using the best farm management practices. The demand for such information has grown rapidly in recent years and the methods of delivery have diversified.

Who can become a Livestock Advisor?

Anyone with an interest in livestock and the desire and enthusiasm to learn, and then share their knowledge with the community, can apply to become a certified WSU Extension Livestock Advisor. The only limitation is the time available to the applicant and space in the class. The first time commitment is the 80 hours of animal science training. The second requirement is the 80 hours of volunteer time the new Livestock Advisor contributes to the program during the first year.

Commitments to continue as a certified Livestock Advisor after the first year are reduced to 35 hours per year (25 hours of community service and 20 hours of continuing education). Many Livestock Advisors considerably exceed the minimum. The time commitment makes the program more suitable to retirees, part-time workers, homemakers and others with job flexibility. Past experience has shown that, while full-time workers are welcome to apply to the program, they often have problems with scheduling sufficient time to this program.

Who started the Livestock Advisor Program?

In 1983, because of overwhelming need for information on basic farm and livestock management in Snohomish County, Mike Hackett, WSU Cooperative Extension Area Livestock Agent and now Department Head/Chair of the Skagit County Cooperative Extension Office, developed the training. It was designed to produce competent volunteers needed by the farming community. It is now being offered throughout western Washington.

What training is given the Livestock Advisors?

The training sessions cover a variety of subjects such as poultry, sheep, beef, swine, horse, rabbits, goats, vertebrate pest management, nutrition, water quality, and mud management. Other areas also taught are pasture management and organic farming.

The trainees receive a course outline and free extension publications as well. A take-home quiz is given on each major subject matter area to verify that the new Livestock Advisors are ready to serve as resource people in the community.

The 1999 training session for the new WSU Extension Livestock Advisors will be held in mid-to-late January and will continue through mid-to late March. Training is held one day per week from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Class size will be limited to 45 persons from Skagit, San Juan, Island, and Snohomish counties. Training is held annually.

Who decides what each Livestock Advisor will do?

Each Livestock Advisor Volunteer must complete a total of 80 hours of volunteer service in the first year. Each new Livestock Advisor spends a minimum of 8 hours helping at the Marysville Livestock Sale Yard extension field office answering livestock questions. Advisors will also spend 12 hours at the Evergreen State Fair in Monroe staffing the Livestock Advisor Foundation Petting Farm.

The remaining activity hours during the first year, and in subsequent years, are fairly flexible, as long as they are an accepted part of the WSU Extension Livestock Education Program. Activities for volunteers include writing and editing articles for our web page, giving talks and demonstrations to groups in the community, and staffing booths at fairs and civic events, making presentations at Small Farm Workshops, returning phone queries on livestock issues and making farm visits.

What is in the Livestock Advisor Program for me?

Serving the public through this program is very satisfying to most volunteer Livestock Advisors. Many of them stay with the program year after year providing depth and continuity to the program as well as keeping themselves up-to-date on the latest research and gardening information.

As a WSU Extension Livestock Advisor you will meet many other people who share a mutual interest in livestock, increase your public relations skills, and acquire information and develop abilities that will prove useful to you in a variety of situations. You will develop and increase confidence in your capacity as a livestock raiser and problem-solver. You will learn, and help others learn, practices that are safer for the environment. You will have access to all the latest research-based information pertaining to livestock management, too.

How do I apply?

For more information or an application, contact your local WSU Cooperative Extension office. In Skagit County our office is located at 306 South First Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. Our telephone number is 360/428-4270 or you can reach our livestock advisors program via e-mail at joanrd@co.skagit.wa.us. Space is limited, so please apply soon. Application deadline is December 31 each year.