

2014 County Highlights

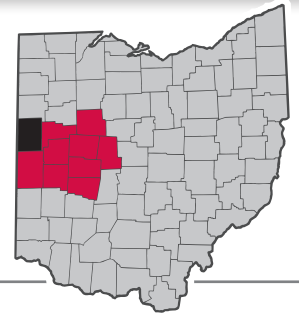


MERCER County

TOP OF OHIO EXTENSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

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ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- A 15-member **Agriculture and Natural Resources Advisory Committee** was organized. The mission of Extension's and members' roles were explained. Following the advice of the committee, continuing efforts will be made to cooperate with other county service agencies and business professionals to meet the educational needs of county farmers.
- Nutrient management is a top concern in the county. The county's Agriculture and Natural Resources educator attended and assisted with three **Cover Crops and Manure Application Field Day** programs, which were attended by 150 participants. Concentrated efforts were made in working individually with six farmers on making cover crop selections and plantings. In addition, work continues with the on-farm manure side-dress application with corn research plots being conducted in cooperation with a county farmer and the state Extension manure specialist.
- **Home gardening** is a common practice of many county residents. Fifty-eight telephone or office visit inquiries were made concerning garden problems or issues. Extension fact sheets and bulletins were used to educate on the specific concern.
- Three program presentations have been made thus far on the **Farm Bill Dairy Margin Protection Program**, with 128 attendees to the programs. Scheduling for Pesticide Applicator Recertification and Fertilizer Certification is in progress along with ARC/PLC Farm Bill education for the 1,310 farmers in the county.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- The incidence of diabetes has continued to increase in Ohio with nearly 1 in 10 having been diagnosed with the disease, which can increase the risk for other serious health problems. To address this issue, OSU Extension collaborated with the Mercer Health Community Hospital and Grand Lake District Memorial Hospital to provide the **Dining with Diabetes** series. The participants reported making positive changes to manage their diabetes.
- Vision disorders are the leading handicapping condition among preschool-aged children throughout the U.S. Over 200 preschoolers received **vision screenings** to determine potential vision issues that could affect their development and influence their education.
- Adjudicated youth from the Mercer County juvenile court learned to make **healthy food choices** and prepare healthy meals and snacks; they also learned the value of physical activity through classes in an afterschool program. The students developed positive interpersonal relationships, leadership skills, behaviors and life skills to become productive citizens.
- There is an increased concern about the safety of our food supply. To assure safe food, the **ServSafe Food Handler Program** was completed by 72 food service managers, supervisors and staff representing schools, health care, food pantries and restaurants. Participants reported increased knowledge in handling food to prevent foodborne illnesses. County sanitarians reported improvements in the safe handling of food in local establishments. Numerous consumer questions regarding food safety and home food



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preservation were answered by the Family and Consumer Sciences Extension educator.

Another 158 livestock members had already completed their Quality Assurance Training requirement for 2014. The remaining 403 livestock exhibitors were involved in a series of experiential activities focusing upon livestock drug administration and recordkeeping, animal care and an overview of all good production practices.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- The culminating event for the 4-H year is the annual **Junior Fair** at which 4-H members may display their 4-H projects. Six hundred seventy-one members took one or more livestock projects, with an astounding completion rate of 98.81 percent. Another 648 members completed 831 special interest (nonlivestock) projects, for an overall completion rate of 95.74 percent. One hundred eighteen special interest projects were selected for state fair competition. One hundred twenty-two Cloverbud members (grades K–2) also participated in the show-and-tell activity held at the fair.
- The **Real Money, Real World** financial literacy program was expanded to include a high school audience. Fifty-seven students were introduced to the reality of living on a monthly budget as they stretched their income to pay for their wants and needs through the program's spending simulation. Evaluation comments included, "Children cost much more than I thought!" and "I am definitely looking at going to college to get a good paying job!"
- The overnight **4-H Camp** was enjoyed by 207 9- to 12-year-old Mercer County 4-H members. The camp was directed by 47 trained teenage 4-H Camp Counselors. Campers took part in traditional camp programs such as crafts, nature, campfire and evening activities in addition to enrolling in an intensive morning workshop in which they could learn science, life skills or leisure-time activities.
- Ninety-one adult and teen volunteers assisted in conducting **livestock Skillathon activities** for those youth involved in showing a livestock project. The participants were quizzed about biosecurity, animal care, medication withdrawal times and food safety.
- Members of the countywide **Food, Fashion and Design Board** sewed 134 toiletry bags, which members filled with personal care products and donated to the Dayton Veterans' Hospital.
- Nineteen senior **4-H Camp Counselors** landscaped the county-owned 4-H campgrounds with funding from a mini grant secured from the Ohio 4-H Foundation.
- A new event was added to the Junior Fair line up in 2014. Six 4-H members exhibited alpacas at the annual fair. The **alpaca show** created much attention and interest, and all indications are that the project area will grow in 2015.
- Eighty-three of the 127 age-eligible livestock project exhibitors selected to take a written test and "test out" of the annual livestock **Quality Assurance Training** requirement.