

# Alternative livestock systems needs assessment

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## Introduction

- In Minnesota, there is a growing number of alternative livestock operations, including pasture-based, organic, and small scale.
- To better serve these operations, the UMN Extension livestock team hired an alternative livestock educator to develop programming for this specific audience.
- A needs assessment was conducted to help guide program development and maximize new livestock practice implementation.

## Methods

- A 15-question survey was created in Qualtrics and distributed electronically via listservs, newsletters, educator contacts, social media, and QR code flyers (Figure 1).
- A survey results report was written and shared within the Extension team (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Needs assessment survey

| University of Minnesota Extension<br>Alternative Livestock Systems Needs Assessment 2024<br>Full Report   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>  |  |
| About the needs assessment  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed using expertise of the Extension evaluation specialist Kristina Cibuzar. Revised and edited by the Livestock Team.</li> <li>Created online using the Qualtrics program with a total of 15 questions.</li> <li>Distributed electronically via listservs, newsletters, extension educator contacts, social media and flyers containing QR codes.</li> <li>166 total responses with varying proportions of questions completed.</li> <li>The needs assessment will be utilized to guide the development of future programming for Alternative Livestock Systems.</li> </ul> |  |

Figure 2. Needs assessment report

## Results

- Pasture and forage (38%), and business management (32%) were the topics of interest for most respondents (Figure 3).
- Webinars (69%) and online courses (48%) were the preferred learning format for most respondents (Figure 4).

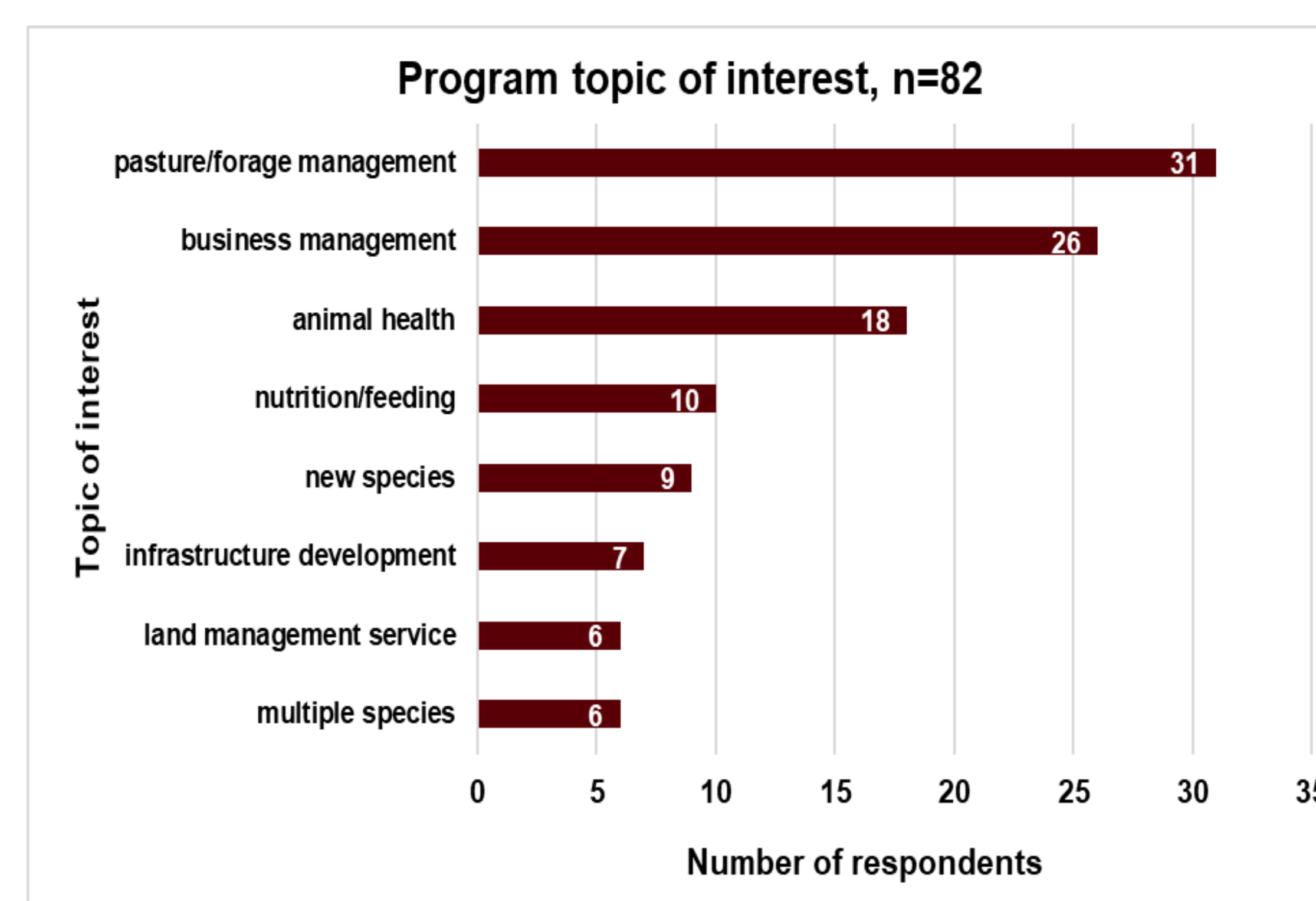


Figure 3. Program topic of interest

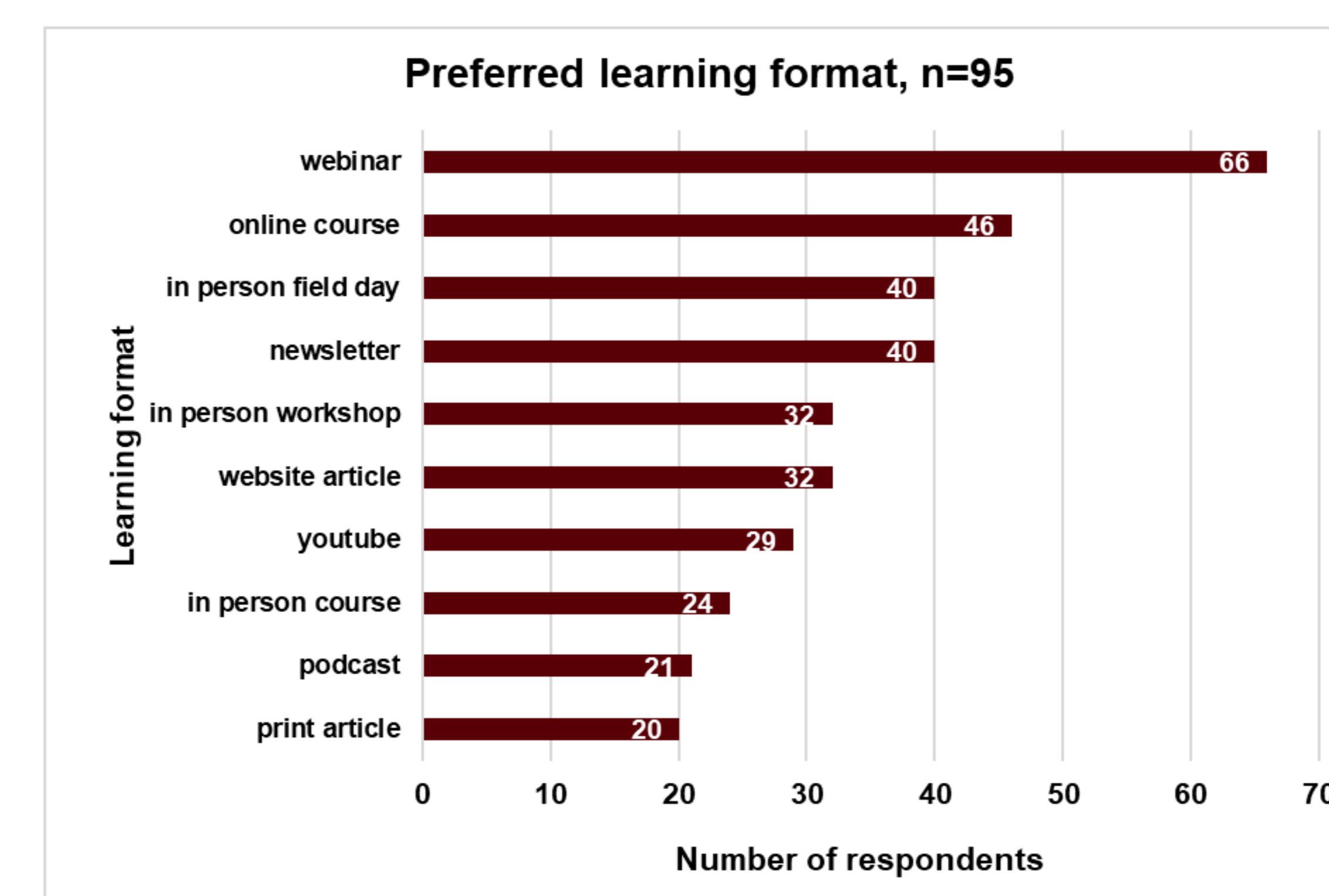


Figure 4. Preferred learning format

## Impact

- Programs developed in response to the needs assessment:
  - Beginning livestock production online course (Figure 5).
  - Livestock safe-handling video series (Figure 6).

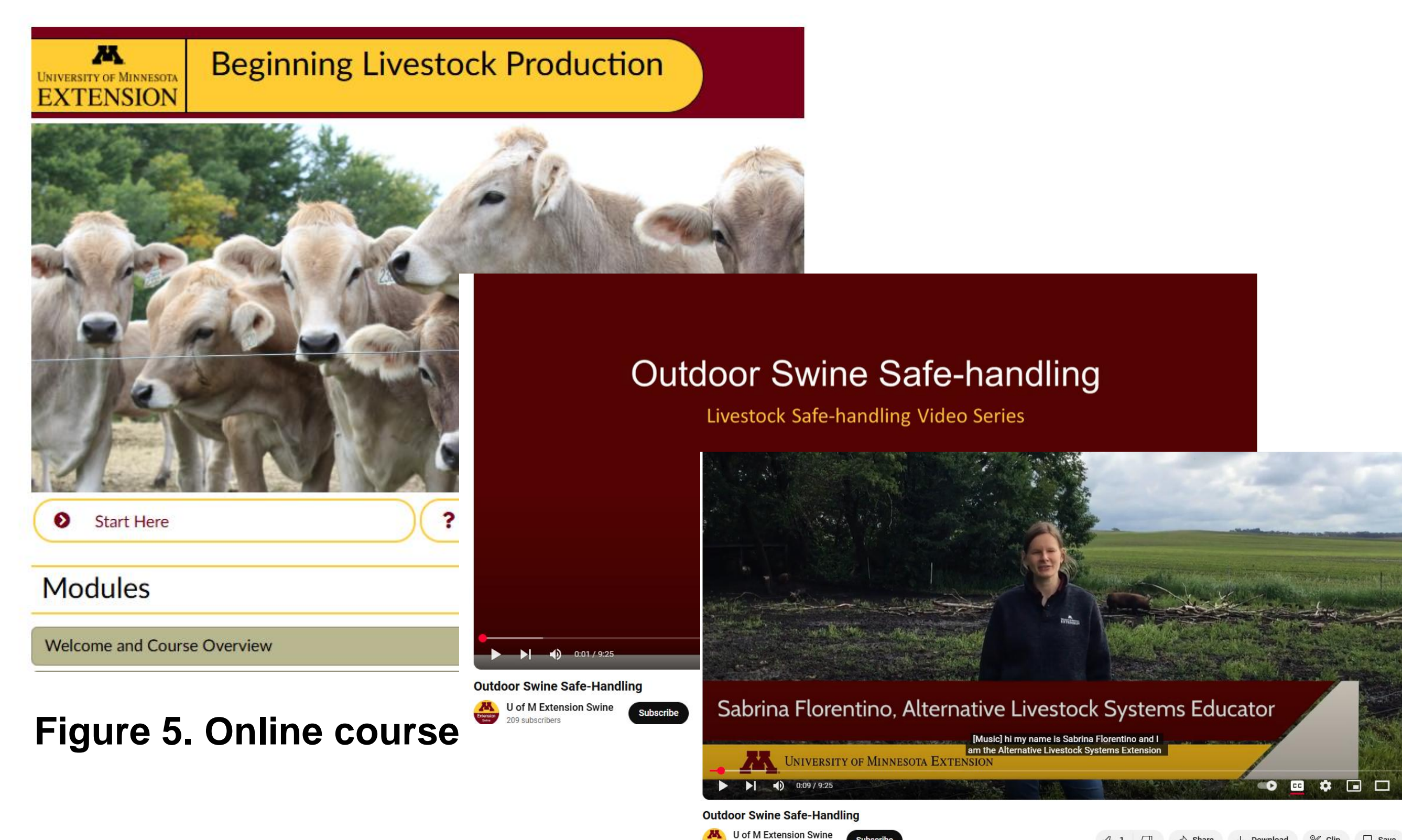


Figure 5. Online course



Table 4. Question: "As a result of this field day, how likely are you to implement a new crop and livestock integration practice?". Values indicate the number of individuals that selected that response.

| Likelihood of implementing a new integration practice | # of attendees |
|---|----------------|
| Very likely   | 3              |
| Likely  | 15             |
| Not likely  | 1              |
| Very unlikely   | -              |

Figure 7. Crop and livestock integration field day

Figure 6. Instructional video series

- Program collaboration: Crop and livestock integration partnership between the Water, Crops, and Livestock Teams.
  - 95% of respondents were likely to implement a new crop and livestock integration practice (Figure 7).

**Conclusion: A needs assessment of a diverse discipline drives program collaboration and impact.**