

# Backyard Livestock 101: Creating a foundation of animal husbandry for prospective small-scale producers



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## Introduction

Northeast Georgia has seen a rapid growth in population within the last decade, with rural land being divided into small-acreage residential lots. Yet the interest in farming has not decreased alongside the average lot size. Even on small acreage (<10 acres), homeowners are looking to grow their own food and become self-sufficient, including raising livestock. However, most are first-time landowners with little or no experience in animal husbandry or pasture management.

Oconee County Extension has implemented a Backyard Livestock 101 that addresses the need for education in livestock management, host hands-on demonstrations, and helps attendees implement better practices from an economic, environmental, and animal husbandry perspective.

## Objectives

Develop participants' animal husbandry knowledge so that they can:

- Evaluate and improve their operation in relation to animal health and pasture management
- Recognize biosecurity or health risks and react in a timely manner
- Develop sustainable animal husbandry practices

## Program Content

The series offered programs on different animal species used in backyard/small-scale livestock production: poultry, cattle, and small ruminants. Each topic program involved 2 days of lectures paired with demonstrations and hands-on practice of animal handling and husbandry.

Lecture topics:

- Biosecurity
- Nutrition
- Breed Selection

- Predator management
- Housing requirements
- Parasite management

Demonstration topics:

- Sheep shearing
- Hoof trimming
- Poultry handling
- Poultry health checks
- Dairy cow milking equipment
- Cattle body scoring



(Above & below) Poultry handling demonstration led by UGA Extension Agent Carsen Dean



(Above) Backyard Poultry 101 participants with their "graduation" gift- a gravity feeder filled with Extension resources



(Above & below) UGA Specialist Dr. Jillian Bohlen discussing proper dairy cattle husbandry



(Above) Backyard Cattle 101 participants with their "graduation" gift- a feed scoop filled with Extension resources



(Above & below) Shearing & hoof trimming demonstration led by UGA Extension agents Shanna Reynolds & Monte Stephens



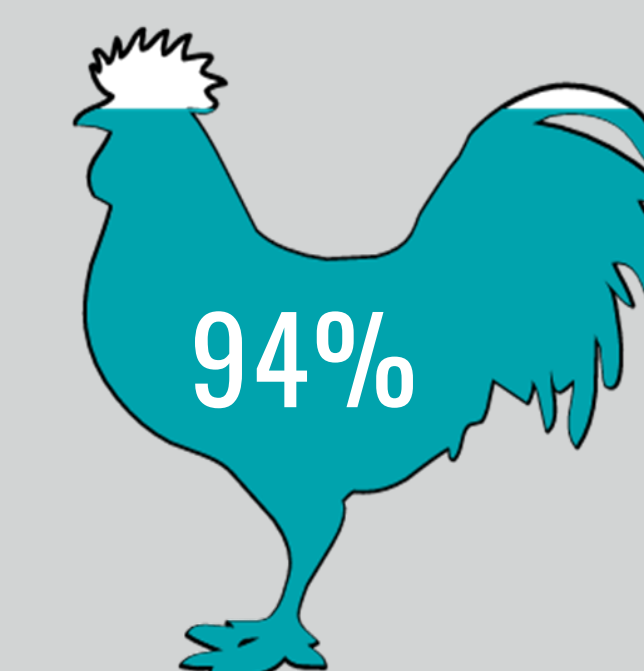
(Above) Backyard Small Ruminants 101 participants with their "graduation" gift- a rope lead with Extension resources

## Results & Impact

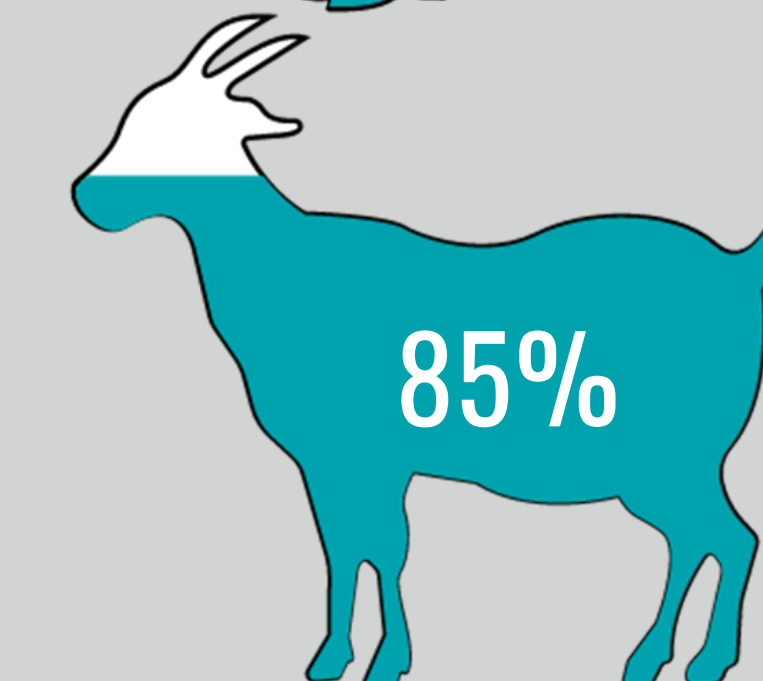
- 41 total participants were engaged in 12 hours of programming across six days
- Participants ranged from small-scale farmers looking for a refresher course to new backyard/personal producers from 12 different counties



97% of participants reported an increase in knowledge at the program's completion



94% of participants reported they were likely or very likely to apply what they learned to their animal husbandry practices



85% of participants reported they were very likely to recommend this program to others

## Conclusions

- These programs increased participants' knowledge about and hands-on practice in animal husbandry skills
- Implementing the skills learned in these programs can increase the long-term production capacity of participants' operations by promoting healthy livestock and proper pasture management

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the collaborators and sponsors who made this program possible: Oconee County Farm Bureau, Clarke-Oconee Cattlemen's Association.