

# Female Producers Increase Skills and Education Through Cattle WISE (Women Increasing Skills and Education)

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## Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture reported a 115% increase in farms operated principally by women between 2012 and 2017. Women make up 36% of all operators and 56% of farms have at least one female producer associated with the operation. Female producers are the backbone of many farm families where men are the principal operators. Cattle are ranked second in total sales of Virginia farms. Recognizing the impact that female producers have in the cattle industry (both dairy and beef), our group set-out to provide a female friendly environment to foster learning and to improve and build upon basic skills that may be overlooked in typical programming. This was accomplished by providing a daylong program stacked with cattle related topics taught through hands-on lessons by female instructors. Funds were secured from the Virginia Beef Industry Council to support this program

## Objectives

- To deliver a unique, hands-on program for women involved in/or interested in agriculture.
- To provide basic skills and help increase knowledge in areas that are vital to a successful cattle operation.
- **To foster an environment for women to learn, be more confident in their role on their farm operations, and become proficient in cattle production to potentially improve net income, improve time efficiency, and reduce farm family stress conditions.**
- To provide Beef Quality Assurance certification.
- To build a network of female cattle producers and industry professionals.

## Acknowledgements



Cattle WISE was made possible through the support of The Virginia Cattle Industry Board, Virginia State Dairy Association, Department of Corrections, and the Virginia Beef Council. Special thanks to the Southern Women in Ag Team for their inspiration and support!

## Programmatic Efforts

A one-day hands-on training was held October 29, 2021 at the Buckingham Agriculture Resources Network (BARN). The day consisted of three 90-minute breakout sessions allowing participants to get hands-on experience within three main topic areas, reproduction, equipment, and low-stress cattle handling/chute-side/BQA. The sessions were taught by eight female Agriculture and Natural Resources Agents, a female veterinarian from Virginia/Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Executive Director of the Virginia Beef Council, and a female sales team lead from ABS Global.

Workshops included:

- Bovine Reproduction – basic calving problems, including dystocia, abnormal birthing positions, treating a calf at birth, tube feeding a calf, and warming a cold calf. Also, basics of bovine reproductive anatomy including A.I. techniques utilizing harvested repro-tracts.
- Cattle Handling/BQA Chute-side - participants were able to give vaccines, tag ears of feeder cattle, and administer implants to harvested ears. The principles of cattle behavior and low-stress handling were demonstrated.
- Truck and Trailer Driving – pre-trip considerations, tire safety, must-haves for traveling, and how to drive a truck with both a bumper-pull and gooseneck.
- Tractor Driving – basic maintenance, tractor safety, and safe operation.
- Ag in the media – how best to tell our farming stories to all audiences.



## Results

- **Attendees completed a post-program survey**
- **47 women from 26 counties participated**
- **18 participants earned Beef Quality Assurance Certification**



91 % plan to use skills learned for tractor driving and 82% of the total group stated their confidence in operating a tractor had increased. 77% of those surveyed stated they planned on using the skills learned for driving a truck with a trailer.

**Based on these results/impacts and informal feedback from participants, we plan to conduct a two-day program with Cattle WISE on day one and Equipment WISE as day two in 2022. Plans are under way to expand to other commodity specific WISE programs in the future.**



## Impact

- 95% of respondents stated that the quality of the presenters and information provided was "Excellent."
- 97% of participants stated that their expectations had been met or exceeded. This showed the planning team that advertising efforts had been effective and our goals had been communicated effectively.
- 84% of respondents said they plan to use the information gained within the next year

### Personal Quotes:

**"I was blown away by the level of expertise and engagement."**

**"Changes will be made at our farm."**

**"Much needed educational opportunity."**

**"I'm so glad I came! This was so empowering, it was so nice to be in a welcoming environment of capable and supportive women!"**

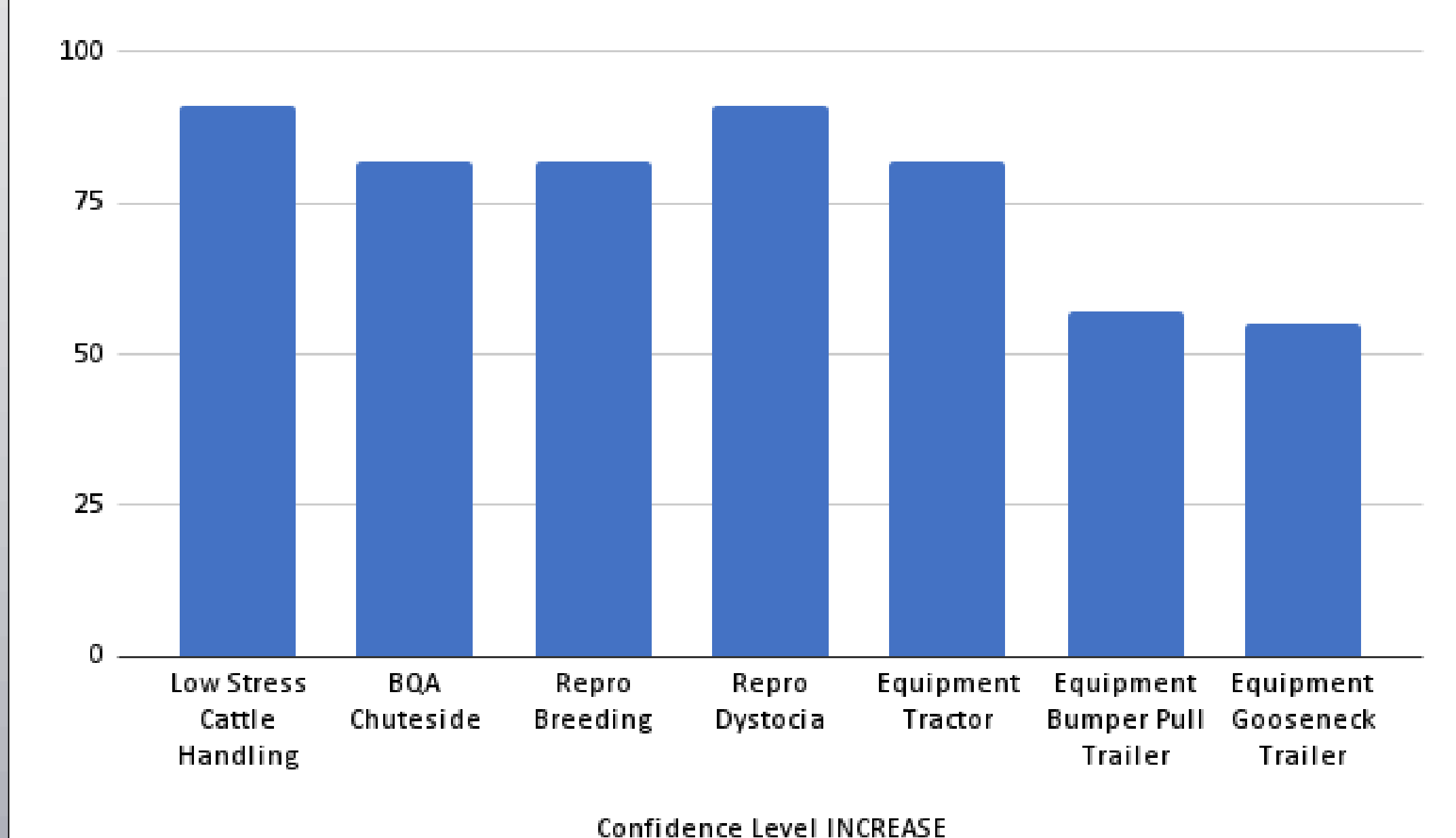


Figure 1 shows the percentage of participants with increased confidence in the respective topic areas. We acknowledge that 100% confidence cannot be obtained in a 45-minute session (especially with equipment) but will come from them applying the skills in their home operation and lots of practice!



When asked specifically about the chute-side training, 97% stated that the training and information met their expectations and 80% stated that they would implement information or techniques they learned. 18 of the participants achieved BQA certification with chute side training.