

Beef Quality Assurance Trainings for Minority Producers

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INTRODUCTION

African-American farmers are the third largest minority group in the country. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 48,697 African American farmers in the country, and 2,870 of those farmers are in Georgia. Georgia has the fifth highest number of African-American farmers in the country. This group is traditionally under-served and underrepresented in Georgia Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) numbers. The Georgia BQA Program is a nationally coordinated, state implemented training and certification program that provides systematic information to beef producers on how common sense husbandry techniques can be coupled with accepted scientific knowledge to raise cattle under optimum management and environmental conditions to ensure safe and wholesome beef and beef products.

The AgriUnity Cooperative is an African-American member driven group. Its purpose is to establish an agricultural cooperative where farmers and members can pool their resources together to reduce costs, allow for market expansion and create demands for their products yielding greater profits. Their goals are to enhance members' skill sets and knowledge through workshops and seminars to create a value chain by implementing processes and procedures to deliver superior products. The mission of the AgriUnity Cooperative is to build sustainable economic empowerment among historically marginalized farmers so that they may leave legacies for their families, communities and culture.

Collaborating with the AgriUnity Cooperative and Fort Valley State University (FVSU) allowed the Georgia BQA team to reach an under-served community that traditionally does not participate in UGA Extension or Georgia Cattlemen's Association functions or educational events. Historical data and studies have shown that African-American farmers' relationship with public agencies that provide agricultural assistance is marred by a legacy of racial inequities, which makes it difficult for well-meaning projects to establish legitimacy in this community.

OBJECTIVES

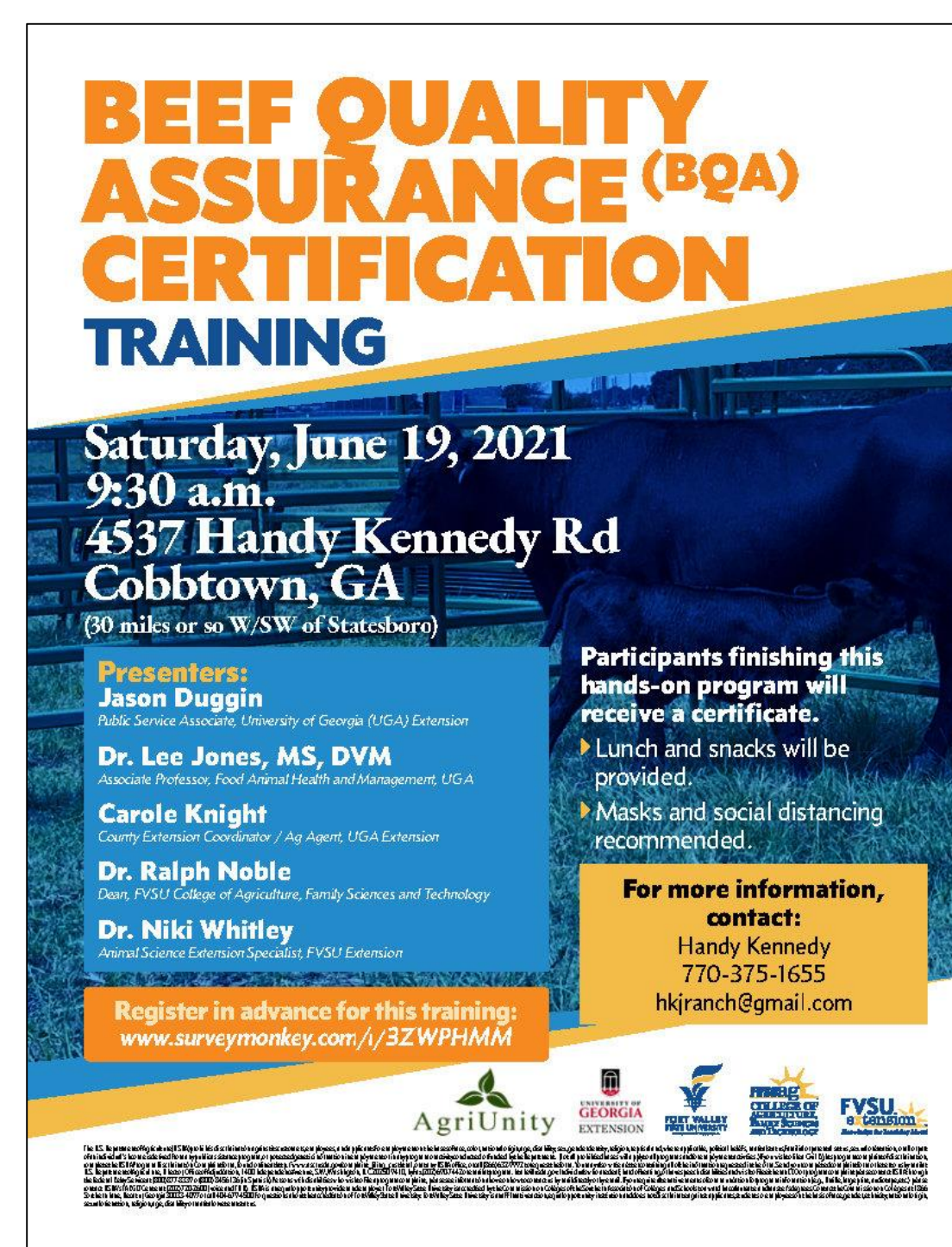
1. To provide an opportunity for minority beef cattle producers involved in farming to receive an advanced training through a hands-on experiential learning workshop
2. Conduct a train the trainer opportunity for FVSU faculty
3. Award participants a certification in Beef Quality Assurance.

PROGRAMMATIC METHODS

- Georgia BQA coordinators applied for and received a \$2,700 State Project Grant from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association to fund these minority specific trainings.

- Two full-day BQA certification trainings and live demonstrations were held in 2021. Locations: Fort Valley State University and Handy Kennedy Farm in Cobbtown, GA. A third training is scheduled for Green Oak Farm in Albany, GA.

- BQA principles taught:
 - Behavior and Handling
 - Biosecurity
 - Herd Health
 - Transportation
 - Record Keeping
 - Nutrition
 - Environmental Quality Control Points
 - Worker Safety
 - Emergency Action Plan



- A train-the-trainer session was conducted for Fort Valley State University Extension faculty to assist with the programs and conduct future BQA certification.

- Participants each received a soft-sided cooler and a sampling of syringes and needles for vaccine administration.



RESULTS

- Each participant earned a Beef Quality Assurance Certification that is valid for 3 years.
- Participants received a BQA Field Guide.
- A pre and post-test was administered.

Paired Sample Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Before	5.96	1.334	.272
After	8.69	1.999	.408

Paired Samples Test					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before - After	-2.729	1.674	.342	-7.985	.000

IMPACT

- To measure program impact and engagement, a pre and post-test was completed by participants. Based on the paired sample t-tests, the average mean of correct answers improved by 2.73 points. The significant improvement ($P < 0.01$) in participant test score demonstrates improved understanding and retention.
- Notable quotes: *"What an educational program! The hands-on demonstrations were very valuable and helpful. Thank you for providing this opportunity."*

2021 Program Participation Impact	
Parameter	Program Impact
Number of Program Participants	53 (representing 3 states)
Number of Cattle Impacted	approx. 2,875 head
Potential premium gained by BQA Certification *	\$48,300 (\$16.80/hd)

* Based on 2019 study by Colorado State University. Results of the study revealed a premium of \$16.80/head for cattle that had BQA listed in the lot description compared to no mention and holding other factors constant.