

RUSSELL COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE REPORT TO THE PEOPLE



2023-2024

Did you know? The largest natural bridge east of the Rockies, with a span of 104 feet, is located in the Creelsboro area of Russell County. It is known locally as The Rock House.



Photo courtesy of Sherri A. Coffey, 4-H / FCS Extension Program Assistant

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4-H Youth Development



4-H Shooting Sports

Russell County 4-H began its shooting sports program in the late -1970s and was one of the first programs in the state of Kentucky. The program fosters mastery by learning firearm safety and marksmanship, belonging by taking part in club and community activities, independence by demonstrating responsible firearm use, and generosity by participating in community service projects. All of the core competencies of the 4-H shooting sports program are developed under the support of caring adult volunteers.

In 2023, Russell County 4-H had one youth, Zach Walters, selected for the Kentucky 4-H Nationals team to compete in black powder at the National 4-H Shooting Sports competition in Grand Island, NE. Additionally, one of our muzzle loader coaches, Jared Foley, became Level II certified to coach the national's team.

After many months of practice, the 2023 team competed in the national competition against 21 teams from across the nation. The Kentucky muzzle loader team finished 10th in the first round of awards and 12th place overall.



Pictured left is the Kentucky 4-H Shooting Sports National Team. Russell County 4-H Shooting Sports Black Powder Team member, Zach Walters, and Team coach, Jared Foley, were a part of the KY National Team.

Photo courtesy of 4-H Shooting Sports

At right, Zach Walters shoots during the National 4-H Shooting Sports competition. Zach was on the Kentucky 4-H Shooting Sports Black Powder National Team.

Photo courtesy of Lora Walters



Russell County Youth Speak Up!

The 4-H communication program has been a benchmark of the Russell County 4-H program for over thirty years. The Russell County 4-H communications program consists of youth participating in both written and oral communication. Strong writing, reading, and presentation skills present youth with the dexterity of being good communicators as well as allowing them to form receptive relationships with peers and adults.

Approximately 75 youth participated in a competition at the school level with 15 youth presenting at the county 4-H competition. Nine Russell County 4-H youth competed at the East 1 & 2 4-H Communications Day and six at the Kentucky 4-H Communications Day. All Russell Co. 4-H youth received blue ribbons for their presentation with one youth receiving champion honors and two youth receiving reserve champion honors.

Russell County 4-H Speech and Demonstrations competitors

Photo courtesy of 4-H Youth Development Agent Christy A. Martin



In a post-program evaluation, the following results were indicated:

- 100% of the youth felt they were good listeners and had gained more confidence to speak to others
- 93% of the youth gained confidence each time they practiced their presentation
- 87% of the youth had improved their communication and public speaking skills
- 67% of the youth improved their language arts grade in school and read out loud more in class

Family and Consumer Sciences

Dehydrating Your Garden: Food Preservation

The Lake Cumberland area has seen a growing population wanting to utilize their property to grow gardens and process the produce for personal consumption. Dehydration is one of the oldest methods of preserving food, pulling out the moisture content of a product, making it safe to store for long periods of time. The Russell County FCS agent instructed clients from surrounding counties on proper methods of dehydrating, utilizing proven food preservation procedures.

Russell County's Agent taught workshops in each county's extension office on herb, fruit, and vegetable dehydration. The workshop offered lecture-based learning, and a sampling of dehydrated products to participants. Additionally, the participants were instructed on how to rehydrate the products to make cooked items.

A total of 54 clients learned about different methods of dehydrating garden products, including vine drying, solar drying, oven drying, and electric dehydrator. Of these, 100% indicated they felt more comfortable purchasing a dehydrator and gained knowledge about proper food safety practices while dehydrating. Seven clients indicated they intend to purchase a dehydrator.



A display of foods that have been dehydrated.

Photo by Russell County FCS Agent Megan Gullett

Kickstarting the Holidays: Budgeting for Holiday Meals and Other Expenses

In a successful holiday preparation event, 55 participants joined county extension agents from the Lake Cumberland Area for "Kickstart the Holidays," a day-long holiday prep event. "Kickstart the Holidays" covered a range of holiday-related topics. Holiday preparation classes are crucial for various reasons, enabling individuals and families to manage their finances during the holiday season better, helping them avoid overspending and financial stress. These classes promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural and family traditions. Participants attended four classes: container gardens, family finances during the holidays, maintaining holiday traditions, and creating holiday flower arrangements. A post-event survey revealed impressive results, with 100% of attendees feeling better prepared to manage their finances during the holidays. 77% reported an increased understanding of family traditions, and 68% strongly agreed that they had acquired new strategies for creating holiday arrangements. The event culminated with a traditional holiday recipe, Burgoo, which was enjoyed by all. Furthermore, 97% felt they left with a fresh and healthy holiday recipe to enjoy with their families this holiday season, leaving everyone well-prepared and inspired.



FCS Agent Megan Gullett prepares fruit for canning

Photo courtesy of FCS Agent Megan Gullett

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Sheep Confinement Field Day

Land in Russell County is becoming harder to purchase. Many people have small acreages and don't have the ability to handle larger livestock. Other problems producers may experience are trying to control predators and dealing with parasites and diseases.

A field day was held at a local producer's farm where specialists and knowledgeable producers could share best practices and solutions. The target audience was beginning, part-time, and aging farmers, and small acreage owners.

Jonathan Oakes, Cooperative Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources partnered with specialists and producer organizations to plan and conduct the field day. These included, the Kentucky State Veterinarian, Kentucky State University, Russell County Sheep and Goat Producers Association, and Southeast Kentucky Sheep and Goat Producers Association.

Eighty-five producers from 3 states attended the field day. Those attending received membership in Russell County Sheep and goat Association and in Southeast KY Sheep and Goat Producers Association. Producers in Kentucky were also able to use their attendance as a County Agriculture Investment Program educational credit.



*Photos courtesy of
Stablerock Katahdins Farm*

Russell County Farm Safety Day



Russell County Third Grade students attending Farm Safety Day

*Photo courtesy of ANR Agent
Jonathan Oakes*

Russell County's landscape has a variety of terrains, farmland, woodlands, streams, rivers, and a large lake. Russell County Extension Office held its annual Progressive Farm Safety Day in conjunction with the Progressive Ag Foundation and hosted approximately 250, 3rd grade students from the county. Farm Safety Day was also attended by approximately 40 teachers, and community volunteers to help make the day a success.

This year, representatives from multiple local first-respondents, local businesses, and state-wide agencies attended. Since the majority of our youth participants will encounter different situations while living on or visiting a farm, we tried to bring in a variety of educational stations.

Booths for this year included: Gun Safety, ATV Safety, Lawn Mower Safety, Sun Safety, Basic First Aid, Wild Animal Safety, Chemical Safety, and Fire Safety.

FCS Agent Megan Gullett
Teaches about sun safety
at Farm Safety Day

Photo Courtesy of Megan Gullett



Once safety day was complete 90% of students responded that they had learned a new skill, that they thought would help them be safer while on the farm, or at home. All presenters wish to teach again.

How Russell County Cooperative Extension Served You!

300 Third grade students and teachers in the Russell County School system increased knowledge of farm health and safety practices at the annual Farm Safety Day

80 Clients increased agriculture awareness due to Extension Programming

300 Producers and homeowners in Russell County used Extension recommendations to improve soil fertility

84 Participants reported improved knowledge regarding life span behavior and decisions that affect health and well-being

79 Individuals gained knowledge related to financial management

124 Participants demonstrated safe handling and preparation and/or preservation of food

360 Russell County youth and adults participated in a community-based service project where 1,025 service hours were contributed

295 Youth in Russell County learned about the role of agriculture in the production of food, fiber, and wood products

63 Young Russell Countians ages 9-18 attended overnight 4-H summer camp one week in June 2023

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

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