Evaluation of a Livestock Ethics Curriculum for High School Youth.

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PURPOSE
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a livestock ethics curriculum developed for high school students in Agricultural Education classes.

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a livestock ethics curriculum developed for high school students in Agricultural Education classes. The specific objectives of this study were to determine if participants were more aware of the principles involved in making ethical choices when faced with decisions in youth livestock programs; if students better understand the consequences of unethical choices when faced with decisions in youth livestock programs; and if participants will make ethical choices when faced with decisions in youth livestock programs as demonstrated by real life case study analysis.

The livestock ethics curriculum was expanded from a program developed by Dr. Clint Rusk in the spring of 2002. Other ethics programs were also reviewed. The researcher taught the curriculum to 305 students enrolled in eight Indiana High School Agriculture programs. Data was collected using a pre-test/post-test experimental design. The researcher administered both tests to ensure consistent and detailed instructions were given to students. Data from this study were entered and analyzed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.5 for Windows, 2000). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. The McNemar test in SPSS was used to evaluate pre-test/post-test responses.

Overall results from the study were positive. The study found participants increased their awareness and knowledge of the overall principles involved in making ethical choices when faced with decisions in youth livestock programs. The results also indicate that students improved their understanding of the consequences associated with making unethical choices when faced with decisions in the youth livestock program. Participants who are taught the livestock ethics curriculum are better informed and thus more likely to make an ethical choice when faced with a decision in the youth livestock program as a result of the case study analysis. The results do not imply that students will make the right decision in a real life setting.

It was concluded that a livestock ethics curriculum is beneficial for students in high school Agriculture Education classes. Additional research should be done to ensure the curriculum is complete and covers the essential components of a livestock ethics program. Additional research should also be done to determine if students will make an ethical choice when faced with a decision in a real life situation.