

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Beef Counts serves as a catalyst to get beef on plates in North Central Idaho region

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension in North Central Idaho area partners with Beef Counts, regional foodbank and local beef producers to help put beef protein on plates across the region.

The Situation

Food insecurity affects nearly 221,000 Idahoans (11.4%) — equivalent to one in nine residents — resulting in widespread food shortages across the state. In North Central Idaho, the situation is even more critical, with one in five residents experiencing food insecurity. The North Central Idaho Foodbank provides vital support by feeding approximately 30,000 people annually. However, protein accounts for only 16% of their food offerings, with beef comprising less than 3%.

To help address the shortage of beef in local foodbank supplies, the Idaho beef industry launched the Beef Counts program, which plays a pivotal role in increasing the availability of beef for Idaho foodbank participants.

Our Response

UI Extension educators from Clearwater, Latah and Idaho counties collaborated with Beef Counts to organize a special labeling event at the Idaho foodbank in Lewiston. AgriBeef donated a pallet of two-pound ground beef chubs to the foodbank. Together with area beef producers, students from the Student Idaho Cattle Association (SICA) at the University of Idaho and



Representatives from UI Extension, Idaho foodbank, local cattle association and student association (SICA) labeled beef chubs.

foodbank personnel, our team labeled the beef chubs, preparing them for regional distribution.

According to the foodbank, the ground beef was distributed to local families within a week of arrival. Building on this success, our team sought to deepen community engagement to increase the supply of beef for local families. We partnered with the University of Idaho's Beef 101 Beginning Rancher grant program, which donated beef from two carcass fabrication classes. Local ranchers attending the program learned to fabricate the carcasses and connected with foodbank representatives to understand how these donations would impact their community.

In addition, we collaborated with a local restaurant and foodbank to launch a fundraising initiative. For every dollar raised, the foodbank committed to using the funds to procure beef protein for its regional distribution center.

Program Outcomes

The generosity of donors and partners has resulted in significant contributions to address local food insecurity. The foodbank can provide up to three meals for every donated dollar, and just two pounds of ground beef can supply a family of four with protein for a week. Through our collaborative efforts, the UI Extension team contributed:

- 2,000 pounds of ground beef procured and labeled through the Beef Counts program
- 987 pounds of ground beef from Beef 101 classes
- \$560 in fundraising to support further beef procurement

These contributions enabled the North Central Idaho Foodbank to provide:

- 1,494 families with a beef-based meal for one week through our direct donations of ground beef
- 1,680 additional meals featuring beef protein, thanks to our fundraising efforts

Beyond these tangible outcomes, our work also raised awareness about the importance of including protein—particularly beef—in foodbank offerings. A local news station, KLEW, interviewed our team during the labeling event and featured the story on their primetime broadcast. This exposure promoted the importance of beef protein in food security efforts and encouraged

community members to volunteer and contribute to the cause.

Our efforts have also strengthened connections between local cattle producers and foodbanks, fostering new partnerships and creating future opportunities to expand this initiative.

The Future

The future of this partnership is bright. Building on the relationships we've established, our team and the North Central Idaho Foodbank plan to continue fundraising and donation efforts. We also aim to bring in new collaborators to expand the program's reach. In the coming months, we will meet with local cattle associations to discuss our progress and encourage their involvement in future initiatives.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

We are grateful to our community and corporate partners for their dedication and support, which made this program possible. Special thanks to:

- North Central Idaho Foodbank
- Idaho Beef Council
- AgriBeef
- University of Idaho's Animal, Veterinary and Food Sciences Department
- University of Idaho's Beef 101 grant team
- Student Idaho Cattle Association
- North Central Idaho and Eastern Washington cattle producers

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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