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4-H AGRICULTURAL CLUBS INFLUENCE THE FARMERS  
IN THE USE OF GOOD FARM PRACTICES

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A radio talk by Donald C. Gaylord, County Club Agent, Litchfield County, Connecticut, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program, September 7, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 57 associate NBC radio stations.

4-H clubs choose a program for a particular enterprise, then they work out the practices in a small way on the home farm to prove to themselves that the method is reliable. Later we see the boy or girl enlarging the business. The father often works gradually into the new way of doing things.

By means of tours 4-H club members make contacts with new practices. On these trips they meet progressive men who carry on a sound business. Club members become personally acquainted with people who are following the recommendations of the Extension Service, State College and Experiment Stations.

In Litchfield County at the present time there are many of the older boys who decided to study farm management and they are working with their fathers in keeping a set of farm accounts. Meetings are held in the winter with the farm management specialist with father and son in attendance. In working the first year with the farm accounts it is more or less experimental, for there are no figures to work with. Therefore it is recommended that the farm be operated as in the past. In this way a clear picture is made of present farm operations in regard to income, expenses and utilization of land and labor. Through the farm management groups many of the older boys have found that the farm business is too small to furnish a living for both father and son. Yet, with very little additional expenses the volume of business can be stepped up to provide both with a full time job.

The 4-H club member is a better business man than the average farmer. Perhaps you will challenge this statement. I will admit there are many shrewd farmers, among them the traditional Yankee farmer. But remember, every 4-H club member is obliged to keep a record of expenses and receipts for his enterprise. Every 4-H club member knows whether he has a profit or a loss. How many farmers do you know who are keeping records of their farm accounts? A few years ago poultrymen complained that they couldn't afford to keep hens and must try something else. Not one could tell the feed costs of a dozen eggs. All they could say was that all the money went for feed. At that very time I had 4-H egg reports on my desk which showed feed costs from 10 to 13 cents for a dozen eggs depending upon flock production. Eggs were selling for 25 cents wholesale. Maybe the profit wasn't large enough to increase the business but certainly it was maintaining itself. Accredited chicks cost from 10 to 12 cents more than common stock. It has been found in the 4-H Home Egg Laying Reports that hens raised from accredited chicks lay on the average of 20 eggs apiece more than common stock.

During the past two years it has been particularly hard to interest new groups in dairy club work. Those enrolled in 4-H club work were not particularly interested or anxious to buy purebred animals. There are five members at the present time who have been trying to procure purebred heifers

for the past two months. Why? Because cows today are bringing better prices and dairy conditions look better than they have for some time in the past. You will find that interest in projects runs in cycles with boys and girls as it does with commodities.

In marketing of products we have stressed quality and promptness. Members who have developed their own markets have increased their business over one hundred fold. Poultry members have had to procure more birds for meat and eggs than they can raise for themselves under their present set-up. These 4-H club members have developed their business entirely upon quality and prompt service.

Fathers of 4-H dairy club members have watched 4-H dairy calves fed. They have had the opportunity to see how animals fed on grain and skim milk compare to those which are fed more expensively. Several fathers have decided to keep their young stock home the first year and give them a little grain daily rather than turning them out for the entire grazing season in some remote pasture. Dairy club members who own cows generally market their milk with that of the farm. A concise record book is the only means of showing profit or loss.

4-H garden members have learned to spray as a preventive rather than to wait for an infestation. Good fall management of the garden plot has cut down the trouble of insects and disease and increase the fertility of the soil. There are many good farm practices that are being put into the daily use on farms that are a result of 4-H club work.

Probably the greatest influence of 4-H work is the making of better future farmers. 4-H club members know where they can procure help and information. They have established contacts that they can depend upon.

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