How can a county health department successfully sponsor a one day short course for dairymen? This was a problem faced by public health workers in the Gaston County Health Department, Gastonia, North Carolina. The course could be planned, held, and later reviewed as to possible results; but the one ingredient that was absolutely essential to a successful course was the voluntary attendance of the dairymen of the county. How could this best be obtained?

Farmers, in general, and dairy farmers, in particular are independent people. Neither the local health department, nor any other group or agency, can order them to attend a meeting. In order to obtain maximum attendance, it was necessary to plan a course to meet their interests (and ours). To plan such a course, it was decided to request the assistance of all resource groups in the area having dealings with the dairy farmer. These groups consisted of representatives of: (a) the local health department; (b) the North Carolina State Board of Health's Sanitary Engineering Division; (c) the local Farm Agent's office; (d) the local County Dairy Council; (e) the local pasteurizing plants and distributors; (f) equipment manufacturers; and (g) sanitizer and cleanser sales representatives.

Perhaps it might be advisable to clarify the responsibilities of local North Carolina Health Departments in regard to milk control. In this state the legal control of milk and milk products is, by state legislative action, a function of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. In actual practice the public health control work - routine inspections, testing of equipment, etc. - is a function of the local health department (assisted by the North Carolina State Board of Health). The local department adopts a county-wide milk ordinance, patterned after the United States Public Health Service Ordinance, and enforces the Ordinance using local sanitarians. As a result of this heterogeneous mixture of authority, it is usually the responsibility of the local department to provide the available educational opportunities to the dairymen of the individual county.

In the planning meeting the present day problems of the dairymen were discussed. Since the group felt it would be necessary to point the meeting to the interests of the farmer and not necessarily to the health department, it was proposed that topics such as the following be included:

1. Taste and odors in milk.
2. The incentive pay plan.
3. Increasing yield through proper feeding.
4. Proper methods of cleaning of equipment.
5. Discussion of the United States Public Health Service Milk Ordinance.

While no definite program had yet been established, the group turned their attention to ways of boosting attendance. The following suggestions were made and later adopted:

1. Provide for a “free” barbeque lunch. This would attract the farmer and tend to keep him there until completion of the program.
2. Invite all workers - not just owner - the wives,
the hired help - all were asked to attend. This enabled us to reach the persons who, in many cases, were actually doing the work.

3. Mail out letters of invitation and a tentative program two weeks in advance.

4. Include with the tentative program a “return” postcard. This would provide the department with information as to who was coming and how many would come from the same farm.

5. Program and announcement - mail to farmers one to two days prior to meeting. This would serve as a final reminder.

6. Have appropriate news releases.

7. Make announcements of the meeting at other farm meetings. Two other regularly scheduled farm meetings were covered by the county farm agent and people were asked to indicate their intentions of attending the meeting.

8. Provide for audience participation through discussion and “open” time allowed for each part of the program.

9. Provide for door prizes - an incentive to attend; the prizes to be furnished by sales representatives.

10. Secure top-notch speakers-preferably men the dairy farmers knew by reputation.

These were the general plans for our one-day dairymen’s short course. The final program as adopted consisted of the following:

9 - 10 a.m.
“Simplified Bacteriology,” presented by Mr. Tim Enright, representative of Klenzade Products, Inc. Mr. Enright presented an elementary, “down-to-earth” discussion with the aid of a planned series of color slides.

10 - 11 a.m.
“Cleaning of Equipment,” by Dr. George Hopson of DeLaval Seperator Co., Inc. Dr. Hopson used very effective demonstrations, such as taking apart and reassembling a milking machine while talking to the group.

11 - 12 noon
“Flavors in Milk,” presented by Dr. R. B. Redfern, Professor and Dairy Specialist at North Carolina State College. Dr. Redfern presented a subject of great interest to the farmer. The problem of off-flavors is one that directly affects the pocketbook.

Noon
A full plate barbeque lunch was served to all persons present. The distributors in the county area financed the meal.

1 - 2 p.m.
“United States Public Health Service Milk Ordinance” presented by Mr. Mason Caldwell, District Milk Sanitarian of the North Carolina State Board of Health. Mr. Caldwell handled this difficult subject by utilizing an audience participation approach supplemented by his own elaboration on points of particular interest to the dairymen.

2 -3 p.m.
“Panel Discussion - Any Producer’s Problem,” by Mr. Algie Wilson, local milk specialist. Dr. Redfern, and Mr. Caldwell were prepared to assist in answering any questions from the floor.

As in all panel discussions, a preconceived effort was made to keep the action moving. When the questions lagged, two courses of action were taken: (a) the farm agent or one of his assistants would request assistance on a dairy problem he was acquainted with - using no names; or (b) the panel would elaborate on problems related to some previously asked and discussed.

The success of the one day meeting will not be known until some time in the future. Tangible results such as more efficient cleaning of equipment, or adherence to the milk ordinance by county dairy farmers, may or may not be obtained. There were, however, these results:

1. The farmers who attended enjoyed the meeting and so expressed themselves.

2. The planning groups (state and local health authorities, county farm agent, distributors, and sales representatives) worked together in harmony. The planning sessions resulted in closer working relations between all groups concerned.

3. The farmers came to the meeting. This made those concerned realize that proper planning is not just a trite expression, but essential.

Gaston County, North Carolina, has seven retail raw dairies, 113 plant producer dairies, and seven pasteurizing plants located in the county or selling milk in the county. It is perhaps of interest to note that: (a) 11 pasteurizing plants were represented including 100 per cent of those from Gaston County; (b) 98 or 86.6 per cent of the plant producers were represented; and (c) 4 or 50 per cent of the retail raw milk dairies were represented.

In addition to the above the following related fields were represented: (a) four dairy field representatives; (b) seven dairy equipment representatives; (c) ten health department representatives, four of which were from out-of-county departments; (d) three farm agents; and (e) one college representative.

It is sincerely hoped that this brief discussion of a local county health department’s effort to successfully sponsor a one-day short course, the problems encountered, and the results of a cooperative planning effort will be of benefit to other organizations with similar problems.