Education, Culture, Geography, and History Components of the Draft Horse Industry: A role model for future rural economic development?

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Introduction and Purpose
The purpose of this poster is to describe how agricultural and extension educators can develop and deliver an alternative program on ancillary draft horse businesses to facility rural sustainability and entrepreneurialship. Due to changes in farming technology over the past 70 years, the role of the draft horse in the production of food and fiber products has diminished. Recent efforts to revitalize the industry world-wide have focused on a renewed interest in mixed power agriculture, ecological alternatives for farming, and perseverance of the genetic base of draft horses.

Major Points to be Shared
This poster addresses the variables that influenced the revival of the ancillary businesses in the draft horse industry. This work is important because it will identify the components for the successful revival of a heretofore-defunct industry. Lessons learned, or ideas presented, may be usable as a blueprint or map by those seeking to start new rural enterprises. For residents of rural communities with limited employment opportunities, self-employment becomes an alternative to seeking an income-producing environment away from the immediate region. Self-sustaining enterprises with low start-up costs and ready markets that are also personally satisfying to the owner/operator are touted goals of many self-employed individuals. Furthermore, lessons learned from this study will have value to educators in rural communities, because they will be able to use the ideas presented as a means to help people in rural communities acquire the knowledge and skills important for revitalizing and/or growing their economies.

Conclusions
The revival of the draft horse industry provides an example of how an industry can reinvent itself. Rindos (1980) reported that a positive selection for instability has characterized agriculture from the beginning. The components of the resurgence, such as knowledge, business expertise, and risk taking, are applicable to many other businesses. This study will examine how knowledge and skills were acquired to successfully participate in this economic re-awakening.

Educational Importance
Clarifying how this group, who are the subjects of this study, acquired their knowledge and skills will contribute to the agricultural research base by providing confirmation of the efficacy of using andragogy or self-directed learning as methods to effectively train or retrain the rural workforce. Alternatively, the importance of other variables, such as geography and history, as integral parts and platforms of the learning process, may be shown as determining factors in the reacquisition of knowledge and skills. Another possible way to explain the draft horse revival would be to examine the social construction of the participants. In other words, examine how the participant’s beliefs and values enabled the draft horse industry to re-emerge. Did their social structure/ culture tied to an education process feed a creative moment to expand their culture with a new construct? World-wide sustainable agriculture practices have a place for an animal component. The resurgence of the draft horse industry may be important factor in the production of food and fiber, rural sustainability, and entrepreneurialship.

References