

## Feature Story

### Extension education is paramount to improve cattle productivity in Mali, West Africa

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I was asked by the Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteer Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA) to provide technical assistance to a cattle cooperative in August of 2013. The cooperative is located in the village of Siekourani, 270 miles from Bamako, the capital of



Raising *Bos indicus Fulani* breed of cattle contributes to the livelihood of many villagers.

Mali. On my arrival at the project site, I was told that the village did not have electricity. I decided not to use any PowerPoint presentation, but rather to speak from what I know about cattle production from experience. The project coordinator did the interpreting during the discussions and training. It worked well for both myself and the cattle farmers. I would like to provide some background on the agricultural production before talking about cattle.

The ancient Malians made their living in agriculture, just as they do today, by herding of cattle, goats, sheep, and some camels. The wetter South is more suitable for the production of crops such as millet, sorghum, corn, rice, cassava, yams, cotton, rice, peanut and tobacco. A few larger farms produce crops for sale (cash crops), mainly cotton and peanuts. The vast majority of the population (80 percent) are mostly subsistence farmers, growing just enough for their own needs, with small surpluses sold in the local markets. Most agricultural commodities produced in Mali today fetch low prices. Most of the labor is done by animal or human power. Since my volunteer assignment involved working with cattle farmers, I would like to talk about the main issues with cattle production.

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### August – October 2014

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Participating Malian cattle farmers learn how to evaluate their animals by using body condition scoring (L). Volunteer (Basil Bactawar) teaches participants how to do body condition scoring on cattle. This practice will help farmers determine how much feed is required to meet nutritional needs (R).

Raising cattle contributes to the livelihood of many villagers. In Mali, there is a short rainy season from June to September followed by a dry season from October to May, and cows may lose up to 66 pounds during the dry season. Crop residues are the main source of feed for cattle during the dry season, and residue availability determines how many cattle are fed. These residues do not have enough energy and crude protein to meet the nutrient requirements of cattle. Additionally, the native forages are low in protein during the dry season. A lack of the quantity and quality of crop residues and forages has a negative

impact on all phases of cattle production, and consequently on the life time production of a cow. The age of first calving heifers of *Bos indicus* Fulani breed was reported as 50 months. An earlier study reported that the age of first calving was reduced to 31 months when heifers received adequate nutrition. The mean calving interval was reported as 22 months. Earlier research support the notion that a calving interval of 17 months may be achieved with *Bos indicus* Fulani cattle when their nutritional requirements are met. Based on what I saw, the provision of supplemental feeding is the main solution to improving the

efficiency of cattle production. However, the profitability of supplementation depends largely on the prices of cottonseed cake and cowpea haulms that are available locally. So why was I asked to go to Mali?

The objective of this assignment was to identify the main constraints to cattle production in the cooperative via a needs assessment session. In addition, 32 cattle producers increased their knowledge in improved methods of production by 80 percent through teaching and demonstrations. After the teaching sessions, 80

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This cattle farmer is teaching his peers what he has learned during the training program (L). Malian cattle farmers participated in an 8-day training program to learn how to increase the lifetime production of their breeding cows. Agent Basil Bactawar stands to the right (R).

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percent of the producers were expected to implement the new production practices on their farms.

In addition to an online literature review, a listening session was held with cattle farmers from the cooperative in order to identify and understand the main problems with cattle production. These constraints were prioritized and summarized. A training program was developed to address their needs. The training consisted of eight days of teaching animal nutrition related to heifer growth and calving interval, balancing rations, the importance of feeding minerals and a regular supply of drinking water for cattle. Yes, the supply of drinking water is a problem. Producers have to dig wells or move their cattle over long distances to find a source of water for their cattle. Classroom sessions were complemented with two farm visits to demonstrate to

producers how to do body condition scoring on cattle. This is an important practice to determine how much feed a cow needs to meet its nutritional requirements.

At the end of the training, producers were asked what changes they would make on their farms based on the new knowledge they had gained during the training. They recognized that adequate nutrition is a limiting factor in producing cattle, and they planned to use supplements through balanced rations for their cattle. They planned to provide water and feed minerals at all times. The producers learned how to body condition score cattle, and they planned to use this technique to provide additional feeding to cows and heifers.

The potential to increase cattle production in Mali through the adoption of improved methods of feeding their

cattle is possible. The combination of age of calving and long calving interval reduces the lifetime production of most breeding cows in the village. Reducing the age of first calving to 31 months and calving interval to 17 months provide potential for the average cow to produce 33 percent more calves in its lifetime. This conclusion was based on preliminary calculations. There are about 8.8 million head of cattle in Mali. The impact of proper feeding has the potential to increase the current cattle population to approximately 12 million. This can be achieved with the implementation of supplemental feeding and the provision of good quality feed and forage throughout the year. In addition, continued training of producers in all aspects of the cattle business is important. It underscores the need for a vibrant Extension program, not only in the project area, but throughout Mali.

## From the District Director



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### Quotes from the 2014 "So you want to be a county/city manager" workshop: Application to Extension

- "Values are the guiding principles that define what is right from what is wrong". What are your values as an Extension Agent?
- For the workshop attendance, the top 6 personal values are: Integrity, honesty, dependability, loyalty, respect and charisma. Are these your values?

- For the workshop attendance, the top 6 organizational values (for county and city managers) are: people focused, good stewards, service oriented, reliability, adaptability, and transparency. Which ones of these apply to Extension today?
- The official values of the Florida City and County Managers Association are honesty, transparency, integrity, political neutrality, and accept no favors. Do these look familiar?
- A good county/city manager....
  - ....learns what others value
  - ....lets others know what he/she values
  - ...does not forget his/her own values
  - ...is not more important than his/her position. Does this apply to Extension Agents?

#### Additional words of wisdom:

- Service is for others: "We [County and City Managers] made a difference by serving others"
- Your moral compass: "Determine what you value as an individual and as a professional and live by these values"
- Think before you speak: "Nothing is off the record"
- Age does not matter: "It is not because you are young that you cannot be a mentor to other people"
- Quality matters: "Twenty years of experience is better than the experience of 1 year repeated twenty times"
- Your Plan? "If you don't know where you are going, you might not get there"

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Quotes from the 2014 “So you want to be a county/city manager” workshop: Application to Extension...continued from previous page

- Anatomy: “Listen; your ears will never get you into trouble”
- Generational differences: “In the modern workplace, people work with you, not for you”
- Oh Oh: “Don’t burn your bridges. You never know on what side you will end up”
- Drive: “Never lose the passion for what you have chosen to do”
- Lead: “Be hungry, be humble”
- It is all about information: “It’s not what you know, it is who you know”; “No. It is not who you know, it is what you should know”
- Huh? “Always think without the box”
- Take risks: “A ship is safe in a harbor, but that’s not what ships are for”
- Personal development: “Don’t wait to be sick to be better”
- They are out there: “Work with the CAVE people: Citizens Virtually Against Everything”
- Tough choices (I): “As a manager and leader, you need to decide if you want to be respected or if you want to be loved”
- Tough choices (II): “You deal with tough decisions by knowing you are doing the right thing”

## How Does the University of Florida Work?



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### What does my appraisal rating mean?

In the Florida System, County Faculty ratings are “Exemplary”, “Commendable”, “Standard Professional Performance”, “Needs Improvement”, and “Unacceptable”. Agents hired after November get a “Not Rated” rating for that year (yes, sounds like a contradiction in terms). Overall, the County Faculty in the Northeast District has an impressive performance record –in 2013 as in previous years (See Fig. 1).

A series of comments and concerns from several agents made after receiving their 2013 Appraisal forms calls for a clarification on what these ratings mean, how to interpret them, and how to improve them.

First, these five ratings mean exactly what their names indicate. Even if “Standard Professional Performance”

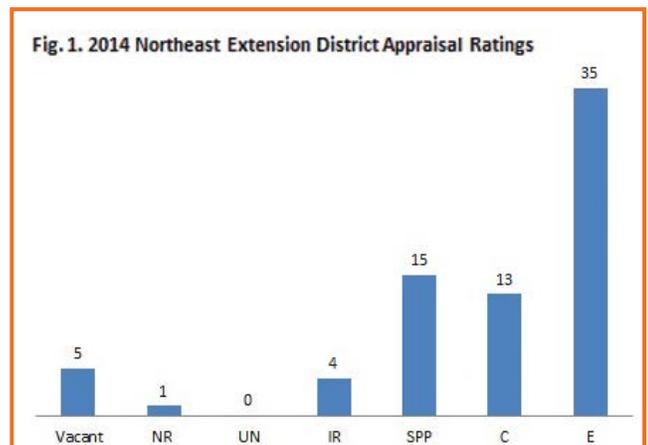
is in the middle, it does not mean that such a rating reflects a median or an average performance. In the eyes of UF, a “Standard Professional Performance” is a good performance.

Second, ratings are assigned for the work reported in the Report of Accomplishments for the previous year. It is not a life-long rating. It is not based on reputation. It is based on the information reported in the ROA – supplemented with the knowledge of the CED and DED. Hence, it is important for agents to develop and submit ROAs that are well written and representative of the work that was done the previous year. In other words, the ROA is a chance to educate your CED, DED and Extension Administration about what you do and to showcase your program.

Third, performance standards for ratings are consistent at the county, district and state level. Expectations and ratings are the same at all levels and are approved by the Dean’s Office before being released.

So what should I think when I get my appraisal? In short, go from big to small. The overall rating is just that – an overall rating. Ratings for individual categories are performance ratings for that category. It should be noted that within a category with multiple components, multiple ratings may be assigned to reflect different performance in each of the components. These “smaller” ratings should be used as a starting point to develop, enhance and/or expand the work for the following year.

In short, appraisal ratings are a mirror of performance.



Vacant = positions unfilled for most of 2013; NR = Not Rated; UN = Unacceptable; IR = Improvement Required; SPP = Standard Professional Performance; C = Commendable; E = Exemplary; (n=35+13+15+4+0+1+5 = 73 positions in the NE Extension district in 2013)

## Success Stories

### 'Yards to Parks' Program – Changing Behaviors

By **Amanda Burnett**  
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Every person in Florida lives within 100 miles of a state park. These parks are threatened by invasive exotic plants which have been introduced from private landscapes. Invasive plants alter the native landscape of the parks, changing the flora and fauna habitats to the detriment of the whole community. New partnerships between the Nassau County Extension Service, the Florida Park Service, National Park Service, cities and homeowners have been forged to combat the spread of invasive exotic plants into North Florida's natural areas. As a result of these collaborations, a new program, Yards to Parks (Y2P), has been established by Amanda Burnett, the Nassau County Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent.

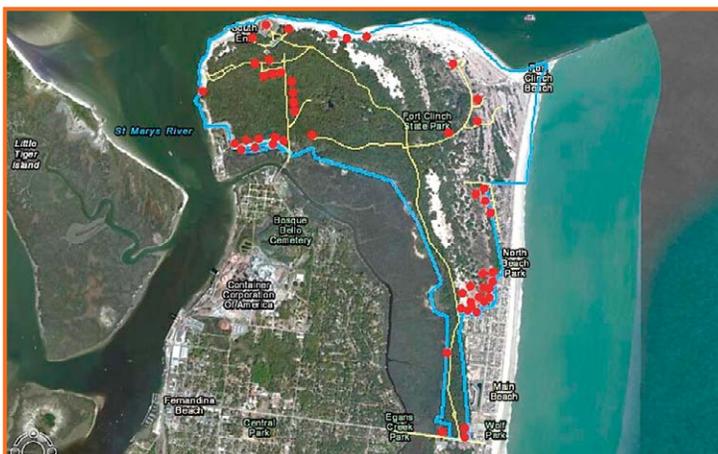
"Invasive Exotic Plants Know No Boundaries" is the slogan for the new 'Yards to Parks' program. Homeowners

living around particular parks are targeted through direct mailing and advertisements in the community. The program delivery includes three hours of lecture on the problems associated with invasive exotic plants, how to identify some of the worst offending plants, and how to safely and effectively remove the plants by using chemical and mechanical methods. A guided nature hike to build awareness and sense of ownership toward the park follows the lecture. After the program, participants are given a yard sign and are encouraged to talk to their neighbors about invasive exotic plants. This approach fosters a community-based effort to protect parks and natural areas from the spread of invasive plants.

Fort Clinch State Park, covering 216 acres in Nassau County, contains many invasive exotic plants, all of which are growing adjacent to roads or to park boundaries with shared fences of homes and condominiums. Six months after participating in the first Yards to Parks (Y2P) program, nine homeowners living in and around Fernandina Beach (in the vicinity of the park) have identified and

treated at least one invasive exotic plant in their yard. Most of those invasive exotic plants, including air potato vine, asparagus fern, lantana and mimosa tree are listed as a Category 1 invasive species. In all, the Yards to Parks participants from the November 2013 workshop treated 38 different populations of invasive exotic plants through herbicides and mechanical methods. This included the removal of one Brazilian pepper tree that was dropping berries over the fence into the sensitive back-dune ecosystems of Fort Clinch State Park.

Data from this six month survey is still being collected, but the removal of invasive species and the planting of native plants in their place in Fernandina Beach are already evident. Not only are Y2P participants tackling invasive exotic plants, 85% of the survey respondents said they have shared the importance of managing invasive exotic plants with a neighbor, family member or peer since participating in the program. As one respondent commented in an open ended question, "Excellent program and it changed our environmental behaviors!"



This is a 2013 map of Fort Clinch State Park in Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, FL. The blue line is the park boundary and the yellow lines are roads. The red dots indicate invasive exotic plant populations. Do you notice a pattern in which these invasive exotic plant populations are found? (L). Some participants from the November 2013 Yards to Parks (Y2P) program at Fort Clinch State Park displaying their native muhly grass plants and yard signs that read, "Invasive exotic plants know no boundaries. We remove invasive exotic plants from our yard to protect Florida's Parks." (R).

## Information Technologies

### Using the Cloud to Your Advantage

By **Michael A. Davis, Ph.D.**  
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Use of cloud computing and servers has increased dramatically over the past few years with many services available for people to use. These cloud and server services can be used to back up information, but they can also be used for portability of information and for sharing. Personally, I use cloud services to make backups of files that I may need while I'm away from my office computer. These files can then be accessed from my laptop or mobile device, depending on the type of service that I use. I'm sure that all of you have forgotten to put a presentation or other file on a USB drive or had a file corrupted. Using these services can help alleviate stress when these things occur.

As a UF/IFAS Extension employee, you have access to a couple of options that the general public does not. These are SharePoint and File-Express. We have all used SharePoint when completing our yearly ROAs, but this service can also be used to back up or share files. File-Express, however, should be used only for sharing. SharePoint can be found online at <http://my.ifas.ufl.edu/>, while File-Express can be found at <https://file-express.ufl.edu/>.

In addition to these services offered by UF, there are free/commercial services which are listed below. Compatibility and amount of free storage are listed, but paid additional storage is available from most services. It is important to remember that sensitive or restricted information should not be placed on free/commercial services. While these services have login restrictions and encryption, they should not be used for this

type of information. The definition for restricted data can be found at <http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/information-security/mobile-computing-storage-devices/definition-of-terms/>.

Service	Compatibility	Space Available (Free)
iCloud	iOS (Apple Devices)	5GB
Box	Most Devices	10GB
Dropbox	Most Devices	2GB
OneDrive	Most Devices	7GB
SugarSync	Most Devices	5GB
Amazon CloudDrive	Browser, Amazon Cloud Player	5GB
Google Drive	Most Devices	15GB

## Teaching Tips

### 19 Words That Will Make People Like You More

By **Jim DeValerio**  
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Why should I care if more people like me? Well, let me explain.

Recently, I've been mulling over community based social marketing strategies: why they work and why they don't. My opinion is that the keys to success of social marketing are defining and reaching the target community, and then developing relationships with its individuals. We offer lots of technology, but it means

little if we don't personally connect to people who trust us.

I was surfing the net one night and I ran across the following article by Bill Murphy. It provides some practical points that should be cornerstones whenever we are developing our strategies for social marketing. We all learned many of these things in kindergarten, but they are still so important in forming relationships. Because of this article, I will stop saying "oh, it was nothing", and start saying "you are welcome". Many of these simple suggested phrases communicate care and respect for our clients.

By *Bill Murphy Jr. | Inc - Fri, May 16, 2014 3:09 PM EDT*  
<https://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/advisor/19-words-people-more-140000312.html>

Want to make a better first impression and engender positive feelings that last a long time? Focus on what you say as much as what you do. Here are 19 words--grouped into a handful of easy phrases--that you should make a habit of saying every day.

**Words No. 1 and 2: "Sir" and "ma'am"**  
 ...using these titles can be a sign of respect that gets people's attention.

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It can be important in professional relationships, especially when dealing with people you don't know well, and who are older or more experienced than you.

**Words No. 3 and 4: "You're welcome."**

...it seems people stopped saying, "You're welcome," and started substituting, "Yep," or, "No problem." "You're welcome" acknowledges that you've done something worth someone else's thanks, while "no problem" suggests that it wasn't that big of a deal. Saying the former phrase conveys that you think it was a worthwhile favor. That's an impressive message to send.

**Words No. 5 to 7: "Here's what's happening."**

...you don't want to be a know-it-all or spread rumors. However, even if you don't know the full story, being willing to share the information you have that affects others' lives can make you instantly more likable.

**Words No. 8 to 11: "How can I help?"**

Nobody accomplishes anything amazing alone. ...we're especially grateful to those who proactively try to help.

**Words No. 12 to 15: "I'll find out."**

...you're not only willing to offer assistance, but you're willing to go out of your way to do so.

**Words No. 16 to 19: "I believe in you."**

...a little bit of validation from other people can inspire people to work harder and achieve more. Four short words can have a huge, positive impact--both for the people you're encouraging, and for their feelings toward you.

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