

## We Need to Know More About Agriculture



By: Anna Nelson

The children laughed as the calf tried to lick their hands. They walked through the barn and looked at the cows munching on hay.

“This is where milk comes from?” a little girl asked.

The Morrison family just moved to Cache Valley from Chicago.

This was the first time their children had seen a cow in real life.

Agricultural education is an important part of living in a farming community. Those who move here need to gain basic knowledge about farming operations.

I have spent the past three years studying how to properly communicate agricultural topics to people in communities at Utah State University. I grew up on a farm, feeding

calves, cleaning stalls, and riding in the tractor with my dad. I took agriculture classes in high school. I was also an active member of my FFA chapter.

In the past decade, Cache Valley has grown larger. According to the United States Census Bureau, between 2010 and 2020 the population of Cache County alone grew by more than 20,000 people.

Many people moving here do not come from the same agricultural background I have. There is nothing wrong with that.

However, according to the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, Cache County had more than 1,300 individual farms, and Franklin County, just to the north over the state border, had more than 700.

Today, agriculture continues to be one of the main industries in the valley.

“People just don’t have a clue anymore,” local dairy farmer Brian Jensen said. “I think the biggest thing that needs to happen is that there needs to be a mass education about farm life and farm lifestyles.”

Jason Fellows, who is on the Idaho Farm Bureau Board of Directors and runs a ranching operation in the valley, explained that one of the main ways we as consumers can help farmers is by understanding where our food comes from and how it is produced.

“There’s a big disconnect,” Fellows said. “With more collaboration in agriculture and more collaboration in the community, I think we could be more sustainable.”

One way to give everyone in the valley knowledge about farming is to require an agriculture class in high school.

The curriculum could include educating students on organic vs. conventional farming, GMOs, and other controversial agricultural topics. The class could also include basic crop and soil details and a section on livestock.

This would give everyone a better understanding of where they are getting their food from and the process of food production.

I don’t blame anyone for moving into this amazing valley where I have lived my whole life. I welcome them.

But if you are going to live in an agricultural community – where the hometown university’s students are known as “the Aggies” – you need to know more about farming.

The first step in doing this is to provide better agricultural education.