

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Agriculture is a major driver for the Fergus County economy.

2016 presented producers with many challenges due to weather conditions and low commodity prices, pushing producers to concentrate on cost cutting and find new revenue streams. MSU Extension has proven extremely valuable to producers in helping to evaluate new enterprises and to help modify existing practices to make sure that we are producing food and fiber in the most efficient way.

Extension has been promoting more crop rotation to help diversify farm income and to help producers take advantage of market conditions to improve farm income. Pulse crop acres have been slowly increasing for several years, and we saw a large increase in lentil production in 2015. MSU Extension taught producers new to pulse crops how to manage this new crop and how to effectively market them to make up for low wheat prices.

As part of a multi-year effort, Extension has helped producers use soil tests and infield comparison plots to evaluate the economics of fertilizing grass and alfalfa hay. Local fertilizer dealers have reported increased fertilizer application for forage and producers

that are adopting these practices are seeing higher yields and larger profits. As part of this program, Extension is encouraging timely cutting and forage testing to help producers get the best combination of tonnage and quality to support our beef cattle industry.

Livestock producers are dealing with sharply lower prices in 2016, and Extension has been working with producers to help them utilize less expensive feed options and evaluate marketing options to manage risk and get the most value out of their production as possible.

Producers and landowners look to MSU Extension as a source of unbiased information, and many producers are utilizing Extension's resources to help them develop fair and effective lease agreements. MSU Extension in Fergus County works with nearly 100 lease agreements each year to help producers and landowners develop a partnership that benefits both parties. This is likely to be in increasing need, as it is becoming more common for agricultural producers to lease a significant amount of land from neighbors and absentee landowners.

Fergus-Petroleum County 4-H

In the 2015-16 4-H year 213 youth ages 5 to 18 were enrolled in our 4-H program. Eighty-four adult volunteers enrolled as leaders.

Our members enroll in a wide variety of projects. We had 408 projects related to animal science, 42 in communications and expressive arts, 26 in family and consumer sciences, 20 in environmental sciences, 44 in leadership and personal development, 12 in plant sciences and 31 in technology and engineering.

We offer four different camps in Fergus-Petroleum County: Cloverbud Day Camp for 5 to 8 year olds; Junior Camp for 9 to 11 year olds; Tweeny Trip for middle school youth; and Senior Leadership Camp for all teens. Sixty-five youth attended our local 4-H camps in the past year. In addition to the campers, 11 teens served as counselors, planning and implementing Junior Camp.

Montana State 4-H Leaders Forum was hosted by our district in the fall of 2016. The conference was held in Lewistown. Six local leaders served on the planning committee along with our local Extension staff. One hundred and sixty-six 4-H leaders from across Montana attended forum, along with an additional 40 that attended the 4-H Shooting Sports Leaders Training held in conjunction with forum.

The MSU Extension in Fergus County handles the entry and implementation of the 4-H Division and the 4-H/Youth Livestock Division of the Central Montana Fair in Lewistown. Fergus County and all surrounding counties are invited to participate in the Central Montana Fair. We had a total of 253 youth enter the fair, one-187 local 4-Hers, 45 4-Her's from surrounding counties, and 21 FFA members.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education

Denise Seilstad, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent has been serving the residents of Fergus County for the past 18 years. Many residents use the Extension office for one-on-one consultations and questions ranging from food preservation and safety to financial planning.

ServSafe Food Safety education was provided to 372 people throughout the year. 108 had the eight hour Full Manager training, while 55 had the 4 hour and 199 received the two hour employee/concession training. Thirteen pressure gauges were checked for safety throughout the year, helping keep food preservers and their families safe.



Denise Seilstad, teaching a class on Mediterranean Diet for Community Education.

Three human services programs are provided to the Fergus-Petroleum residents. Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) served 28 people in Fergus County, providing six weeks of self-management education. Powerful Tools for Caregivers, an educational program for friends and relatives acting as caregivers for an adult with a chronic medical condition, served 12 caregivers. Living Life Well, a program for people with chronic disease, provided nine people with skills needed in day-to-day management of chronic health conditions such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes, and heart and lung disease to maintain and/or improve their ability to carry out activities of daily living.

MSU Extension in Fergus County participated in a Healthy Hearts for Rural Women, (Strong Hearts) research project with Cornell University. Thirteen women, over 40 years of age, physically inactive and overweight were part of the study. Cornell University is currently compiling the data.

Strong People, Strong Bones is in its ninth year in Fergus-Petroleum County. This is an Extension program helping men and women slow down or prevent osteoporosis and arthritis by doing strength exercises. Two sessions running twice weekly throughout the year meet, serving 35 to 40 people.

Community Education classes reached 62 people over the past year, with healthy, quick and economic meal planning and preparation, encouraging families to cook and eat together.

Twenty-five youth, ages 10 -13 attended the Safe Sitter Babysitting Workshop, at which Extension teams up with Central Montana Hospital. These youth are taught skills and medical education to become responsible, dependable babysitters.

Contact Us



Denise Seilstad
Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent;

Darren Crawford
Agriculture Extension Agent

Jennifer Saunders
4-H Program Assistant

Bertie Brown
Administrative Assistant

Fergus County Extension
712 W Main, Lewistown MT 59457

Phone (406) 535-3919
E-mail fergus@montana.edu
Web <http://msuextension.org/fergus/>

<http://msuextension.org>