Welcome to McCone County

McCone County MSU Extension provides non-biased, research-based education to constituents in the county and neighboring areas. In 2016, McCone County MSU Extension offered programming in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Science, and Youth Development.

McCone County was established in 1919 and was named in honor of state senator George Mccone.

McCone County encompasses 2,594 sq. miles. Circle is the single incorporated town in the county and is also the county seat. The county has a population of 1700 people. Agriculture is the primary business in McCone County.

Clouds in McCone County, photo by Tandi Kassner
4-H Youth Development

McConé County has four 4-H clubs with 48 members and 15 leaders. 4-H continues to offer opportunities with events and activities throughout the year.

Enhanced life skills are gained through club meetings, project work, judging events, summer camp, mini-congress, market quality assurance, Rec Lab, club trips and outings, special interest group meetings, shooting sports events, training's and educational workshops, the county fair, fundraising events, a livestock jackpot show and the achievement program and banquet.

Involvement in 4-H allows for hands-on experience through project work. That hands-on experience develops skills for life, and guides decision-making for post-secondary institution selection or career choice and professional development.

The 4-H program also allows many opportunities for adults to be involved in life skills development of youth through project leadership as well as assisting the various projects and activities.

The 4-H Cloverbud enrollments continue to rise with increased interest and participation. In the 2016-2017 year we had five Cloverbuds. We have added many new options for Cloverbuds to work on throughout the year and to bring to fair. 4-H Program Assistant Tandi Kassner promotes 4-H and gives hands-on efforts working with each member to introduce them to what 4-H is about, as well as working diligently to meet the needs of each member within their project.

Nikki Heide, Kama Urton and Candy Milroy have been a great asset to our horse program. During the winter months they meet to work on project books and this year they hosted a horse clinic. During the summer months, they meet at least once a month to work on horse and rider assessments, showmanship, and general riding skills, maneuvers and riding patterns for fair.

McConé County has four active clubs. Ambitious Ants, Green & White, and Washington Warriors are our oldest clubs and the Redwater Wranglers is a fairly new club.

4-H members work on a few countywide fundraisers throughout the year, including fruit sales in the spring and selling Greytak calendars in the fall.
Agriculture

McCone County MSU Extension offers programming that addresses production issues, nutrition, forage testing, water testing and marketing for livestock producers. Programming is also offered for crop producers dealing with specialty crops, weed control, rental rates, and general crop production topics. Face-to-face programming is done through producer meetings and workshops, as well as one-on-one consultations in the office and/or at the farm or ranch.

A very effective means of communicating with the producers about a wide variety of issues is the weekly newspaper article, “Notes from Nelson.” The focus of this weekly column is current agricultural issues. The issues addressed often result in calls or visits to the Extension office to further discuss topics.

The severely dry summer of 2017 brought concerns of high nitrate levels in area forages. From June through November, approximately 160 forage samples were tested for nitrate content in the McCone county MSU Extension office. Of the samples tested, approximately 1/3 contained nitrates at a level that required special management, a small percentage of which required hay bales to be burned.

A very popular service of MSU Extension continues to be in the area of weed, plant and insect identification. Samples are brought in on a regular basis. Samples that cannot be identified immediately are submitted to the Schutter Diagnostic Lab on the MSU campus in Bozeman.

Livestock water quality continues to be a local concern. Educational programming was offered to help make livestock producers aware of water quality concerns.

A major programming focus for the past year has again been in the area of All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) safety. ATV’s are widely used on most Montana farms and ranches. Farmers and ranchers, as well as their employees and family members, are involved in too many accidents involving ATV’s, resulting in serious injury and deaths. Approximately 675 youth and 102 adults were involved in ATV safety-related events through the McCone County MSU Extension office. Nine events were held, including ATV Safety Rider Courses, school presentations, and farm safety camps. A special request was received from the University of Wyoming Extension for permission to use printed and web-based material previously developed by McCone County staff.

Other specific programming efforts included addressing stocking rates, rangeland noxious weeds, alfalfa management and cover crops.

Long day of forage testing, photo by Tandi Kassner
Family and Consumer Sciences

Day-to-day office contacts in the area of Family and Consumer Sciences most often involve basic food safety, home canning, estate planning, home gardening, plant care and home weatherization. Many of the daily contacts address economic concerns. With today’s economy, making the dollar go further will be as important as ever in most households.

McConé County has four Family and Consumer Science Clubs with a total of 37 members. Those members are active in a number of community functions: fundraisers, community service, nursing home resident functions, college scholarships, and providing bingo, prizes and premium money at the county fair.

Our local Homemakers groups include the Friendship, Prairie Elk, Brockway and the Triangle Club. Each club is active within the community and donates time and services, as well as money, to several charities.

The Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) training was held in February. The six-week course reached 12 people, with 10 of those completing and graduating the course. Local Extension staff and guest speakers presented a wide array of education segments addressing diabetes and tools to manage life with diabetes.