

Planning for on Farm Success

Young or Beginning Producer Business Planning Series

This business planning series was geared towards assisting young or beginning producers pursuing value-added ag business opportunities. Often, family operations must diversify and add income to an operation in order to support the parents as well as the next generation during a successful transition of the business. Other producers need to add value to what they produce in order to be able to quit their job in town and work on their agriculture business

full time. To address this need in business planning education, participants received instruction in the following areas:

- Strategic Planning and the Business Plan
- Financial Management
- Business and Financial Planning
- Market Analysis and Differentiation
- Financial Planning and Risk Management

The classes were held in a small group setting with time for discussion, which allowed participants to learn from one another and discuss business ideas. Instructors included field staff with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, successful entrepreneurs, local lenders and the local port authority. All participants agreed that the instructors were well prepared and helpful and that the information they learned would help to start, expand or enhance their farming or ranching operations. Many thought the most valuable aspect of the classes was exposure to new ideas and experiences and the group interaction. We look forward to building on this interest as producers add value by diversifying ag operations in Pondera County.



Participants engage in group discussion led by Rob Cook from the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center. The group interaction proved to be one of the most valuable aspects of the course. When asked what we could do to improve the series next year, multiple participants requested more time, additional classes and more discussion.

Welcome to Pondera County

Pondera County is a rural agricultural county approximately 1,640 square miles in size. It has private, state, tribal and federal lands. Pondera County is on the western edge of the Golden Triangle area of north central Montana and produces some of the best winter wheat grown in the United States.

In addition, barley, pulse crops, hay, and livestock (cattle and sheep) support many families and five Hutterite Colonies as the largest income producing segment of the local economy. The educational role of MSU Extension in Pondera County is significant to the producer's bottom line.

Ag Program Highlights

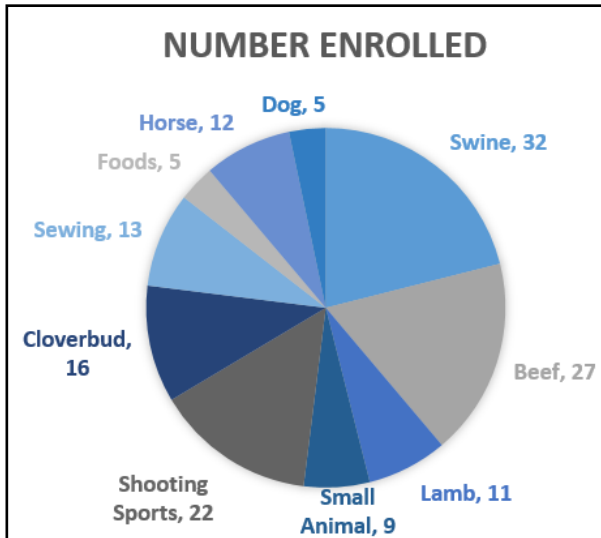
Shaelyn Meyer, Ag Extension Agent, offered many programs, workshops and services in 2016:

- Weed ID and Crop Disease Diagnosis
- Forage Management and Salinity Control
- Nitrate testing of forages
- Lowest cost/highest return feed plans for livestock producers
- Emerald Ash Borer Education
- Cropping Seminar: Best Practices for Farmers
- Education for Private Pesticide License Holders
- Coordinated volunteers to spray weeds at Swift Dam campground and trailhead
- Youth Ag Safety Program

Pondera County 4-H Highlights

29 Leaders and 97 youth participated in 2016

In 2016 the Pondera County 4-H program had 15 first time 4-H members. This year 4-H members collectively are enrolled in 27 project areas from Aerospace to Woodworking. The Top Ten projects are listed below:



A project day to recruit new members kicked off the year, offering six different project opportunities for youth to try something new. Dedicated 4-H leaders provided monthly hands-on workshops for the 6-8 year old Cloverbuds, numerous 4-H Club meetings, project specific workshops, community service projects, livestock weigh-ins and fun events like the Halloween Horse Costume party, shooting sports tournaments and the Marias Fair. Pondera County 4-H also hosted a statewide shooting sports leader certification.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Highlights in 2016

Rural Healthcare was a dominant theme this past year. Wendy Wedum, FCS Agent, participated on the Pondera County Health Department Community Health Improvement Planning Committee (CHIP). Issues related to mental health were specifically identified and resulted in community-wide educational opportunities including suicide prevention, mental health first aid, living with chronic disease and food preservation.

Overall FCS highlights included:

- Modified ServSafe Manager's training which included members from five Hutterite Colonies.
- Food Preservation Class with hands-on activities in preparing and canning pickles and jam.
- Lefse making class and Home Extension Club making lefse for residents at the Pondera Medical Extended Care.
- Talking about Rural Health issues with Pondera County Health Nurse to MSU President Cruzado's leadership team on a bus tour of central Montana.
- Teaching a Living Well with Chronic Disease class with the Pondera County Health Department.
- Training 11 new facilitators for Powerful Tools for Caregivers.
- Teaching over 100 youth proper personal hygiene at the Conrad FFA Farm Safety Day event.

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