



## Welcome to Musselshell and Golden Valley County

**M**usselshell and Golden Valley Counties make up the central two counties of the Musselshell Valley, where the Musselshell River makes its way to meet Fort Peck Reservoir. The two counties have a footprint of 3,046 square miles with a population of 5,409. The Bull Mountains are the central landscape of the counties, with prairie and foothills to the east and west. The two counties encompass over 1.9 million acres, 1.7 million of those are in agricultural production. The Musselshell and Golden Valley County agent position has traditionally been shared between the two counties.

This position serves a unique agricultural footprint; it is diverse and well-maintained through long-standing family operations that boast third and fourth generation farms and ranches, covering forested foothills, plains, river bottoms and badlands. Producers grow wheat, barley, hay, corn and peas on dryland and irrigated acres. Cattle and sheep ranches dot the landscape and each producer is considered an everyman, growing crops and raising livestock on their operation. Our annual precipitation is on the low end, netting in the thirteen-inch range. Many producers proudly tout us as the “Banana Belt” of Montana due to our mild weather. In the last decade, the communities have experienced fires, floods, and drought, which have served to introduce new cultural production methods in the area.



# MSU Extension offers forage and pasture solutions

## Musselshell Valley Cattle and Forage Symposium

In January 2017, MSU Extension held the Musselshell Valley Cattle and Forage Symposium in Roundup. The program featured a diverse selection of presenters and focused primarily on the cattle and forage industries as they operate in Musselshell and Golden Valley Counties. Presenters included MSU Extension beef and forage specialists Rachel Endecott, Meghan Van Emon, and Emily Glunk, as well as presentations from retired Central Ag Research Center superintendent Dave Whichman, John Lockie from the USDA Risk Management Agency, and Agents Marc King and Mat Walter.

This program was designed specifically around input by local producers, either in group discussion, phone calls or visits into the office. Those topics were eventually compiled to include: soil fertility and sulfur in alfalfa, forage rotations, feeding cover crops, controlling poisonous plants, liquid supplements, and feeding grains in small operations.

The program proved to be a success despite a January blizzard, with great attendance and all the presenters able to withstand the slick roads and white-out conditions. Producers were happy with the experience and requested the program become an annual staple in the counties. The 2018 program has been set and advertised for January with new presenters and topics that will be focused primarily on the recent drought and wildfires our counties have experienced.

### Emily Glunk presenting



## Pasture Wreck

During the last decade, the Musselshell Valley has experienced record fires, floods and drought, in some cases back to back. These counties are primarily in cattle and forage production and when any of these disasters occur, they significantly impact our grazing and forage acres. In 2017, MSU Extension decided to implement the Pasture Wreck course to assist producers with those acres that had burned, flooded or had been impacted by drought. The course was designed to provide information and tools to assist with pasture rehabilitation and reclamation.

The course occurred over a four-week period and attendees were presented with tools to better understand how our local plant communities work. Classes covered topics in soil science, range inventory, stocking rates, Web Soil Surveys, planting and species selections. The course provided valuable tools for the attendees, some of which were unknown benefits of having an agent with availability to conduct soil tests, evaluate stocking rates, and create planting plans. This information gave attendees new opportunities to take advantage of in spring and summer 2017.

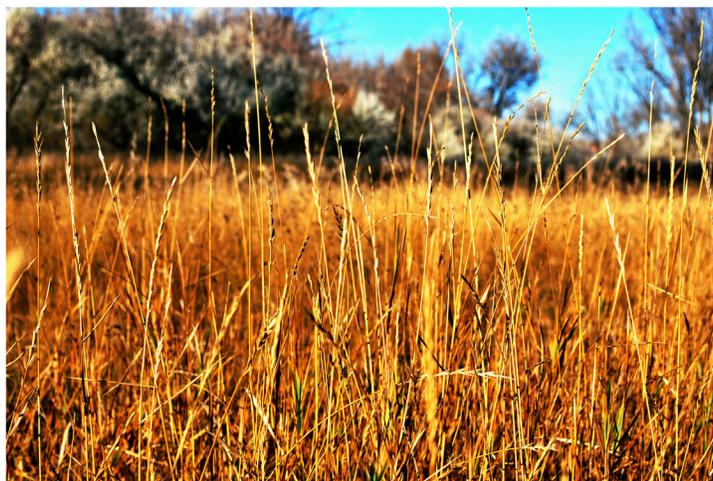


Photo by Mat Walter

## Roundup fourth graders attend NILE

This year at the 2017 Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE), Roundup Elementary students were invited to take part with “Ag in the Classroom,” a two-day event at the NILE, where area students are presented with agricultural education. For the last two years, Musselshell-Golden Valley County MSU Extension agent Mat Walter and Yellowstone County MSU Extension agent Callie Cooley have had the chance to teach about the five major crops grown in South Central Montana. This was the first opportunity for one of the schools from Walter’s county to attend the event. The two fourth grade classes traveled to Billings for a morning of agriculture education where they learned about parts of the agriculture industry that they normally see growing up in the Bull Mountains. This year they learned about crops, riparian zones, soils, rangeland, livestock, and honey bees. They also toured the NILE show itself and watched the stock shows taking place—an opportunity that most of these kids have never had. It was an opportunity for these students to expand their knowledge of agriculture, an important part of their lives. These are rural students, all familiar with ranching and the cattle industry, but here they were able to learn about the crops that they don’t get to see in the Bull Mountains. They had never seen a sugar beet before, or understood why the factory on the south side smelled so funky (because they’re making sugar!) they didn’t know that the Yellowstone Valley grew some of the best malt barley in the country, or that corn could be turned into so many products. It was a great experience for the kids, and Walter’s looks forward to teaching crop information to more students next year.



Mat Walter takes a selfie with fourth grade students at NILE.



### **EARLY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Mat Walter was honored this spring with the Early Achievement Award for his dedication to Pesticide Education across the state. This award is given to an individual who has demonstrated exceptional efforts and impacts in pesticide education for their first five years with MSU Extension."

After being hired in 2015, Mat has worked to strongly promote pesticide education across the region and across the state, speaking during train-the-trainer events and working with other agents to provide pesticide courses. He has worked to develop several training modules and demonstrations in tank mixing, pesticide movement and

safety. These modules have been used at training's across the state for both producers and to train and update other Extension Agents.

"It is exceptional for new MSU Extension agents to take this role due to the many facets of their position that often are overlooked," said Cecil Tharp. Walter previously worked in county weed control and in cropping research over the past decade.

### **contact us:**



### **EXTENSION**

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