



Welcome to Musselshell-Golden Valley Counties

Musselshell 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 MSU Extension agent position has traditionally been shared between the two counties.

and have encroached closer to both Musselshell and Golden Valley counties. Those species are Ventenata and Medusahead, both of which are extremely difficult to manage. The importance of keeping these grass species out of the counties was emphasized in three of the six program lectures which were specific to invasive grass control. Musselshell and Golden Valley counties have large cattle and sheep industries and due to last year's drought, a lot of forage has been shipped in for feed, and producers should be able to react to any new invasive plants brought in with that hay. The program also included a lecture on poisonous plant identification and control, which is steadily becoming a more recognized problem throughout the state. Many of the species covered, particularly Death Camas, are becoming a very real problem to producers and creating awareness about the management and identification of this species is paramount to the producer's success. Medusahead has not yet



Metal sign

Musselshell Valley 2018 Fall Pest Update

MSU Extension in Musselshell and Golden Valley counties offered a 2018 Fall Pesticide Update. This annual program is tailored each year to pesticide applicator needs that have been expressed through the year. The 2017 update focused on vertebrate pest control and grass establishment. In 2018, the program focused on invasive species, especially new invasive grass species. In the past three years, several species have begun to establish throughout the state



Callie Cooley, agent from Yellowstone County, presenting on grazing.

been found in any surrounding counties in South Central Montana, but *Ventenata* has been found in Big Horn and Yellowstone Counties. Working with other agencies in the county, including NRCS and the Musselshell Weed District, we have understood that these invasive species will eventually show up in our county, so we collaborated to ensure there is as much information and education to identify these invasive plants as possible before they arrive.

Musselshell-Golden Valley 4-H Fair Skill-A-Thon

2018 marked the first year that the Musselshell Valley Fair held the livestock Skill-a-Thon. Based around six categories, 4-H members are tested on their comprehension of the tasks laid out in the competition. Members may sign up for as many of the six categories as they choose: horse, beef, sheep,

swine, dog and plant parts. Each category comes in a bag we call a “kit,” which contains seven to eight posters and tests that require the participant to match parts or answer verbal questions. The Skill-a-Thon has provided a great alternative for our members to participate in our fair. Traditionally members showing any animal (large or small) were required to bring an informative poster on the subject. Our ten- and eleven-year members soon became underwhelmed with the repetition of the project. This year we instituted the Skill-a-Thon to allow members to choose whether to bring a poster or participate in the Skill-a-Thon. The event is held the week before fair and members can choose as many or as few of the categories as they please. Our first year showed great participation from both new and old members who decided to test their knowledge. Each category had five subject tables to be completed. For example, horse category topics consisted of labeling parts of the hoof, filling out and matching a medication label, transportation, parts of a skeleton and parts of a horse. The event was also split into classes so that Junior and Senior members had different difficulty levels. This event has provided a great skill test for our members. They participate in a minimum of three practices through the year and the kits are available to clubs and members to check out for practice. The kits (\$200-300) were purchased through grants obtained from the Musselshell Valley Community Foundation, as well as private donations.



Skill-A-Thon 2018

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