



## Welcome to Sheridan County

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Sheridan County is located in the northeastern most corner of Montana. Plentywood, the county seat, is located approximately 18 miles south of the Montana/Canada border and 24 miles west of the Montana/North Dakota Border. The MSU Extension Service is a three-way partnership between Sheridan County, Montana State University and the United States Department of Agriculture. Through the strength of this partnership, Extension Agents provide research-based programs to county residents in the areas of Agriculture/Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development and Family and Consumer Sciences. Agriculture production and agribusiness is the basis of the economy here.



A wheat field in Sheridan County. Photo by Colleen Buck.

# Agriculture Education

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## 2018 highlights and challenges

2018 presented unique challenges for Sheridan County Agriculture agent Colleen Buck. The flash drought of 2017 and its lasting effects on agriculture, coupled with bitter cold temperatures in January and February without snow, left farmers and ranchers wondering how the year was going to turn out. Then calving season came, and so did the snow. A late, wet spring pushed planting back a month, but crops soon caught up and did well, despite the cold and late start. The weather would throw another challenge farmers way in July when hail storms, straight-line winds and a tornado graced Sheridan County. Multiple crops were hailed out or flattened due to wind. Crops still standing yielded on average with other years, however due to low market prices, most crops are being stored on-farm. Wet weather at the end of September and early October caught farmers in the middle of harvest. In 2017, Buck tested over 50 samples of forage for nitrates and did multiple education events about precautions to take when feeding forages that may accumulate nitrates, which can be toxic to livestock. The education presented resonated with producers in 2018 and resulted in increased contacts with MSU Extension. One-on-one contacts this year have significantly increased as producers are stopping in to gather information on a multitude of subjects.

## MonDak Pulse Day

In February, the MonDak Pulse Day was held in Montana to update producers who grow pulse crops in Montana and North Dakota. This event is a joint venture between Extension personnel at Montana State University and North Dakota State University. Montana continues to lead the nation in pulse crop production, and Sheridan County remains one of the top three pulse-producing counties in the state. With the weather swings we have seen in the last couple of years, disease pressure on pulse crops is heightened. Furthermore, with the markets not performing as well as in the past, it is imperative that producers get the most up-to-date information on markets and cropping practices to aid in making difficult business decisions. This year, the MonDak Pulse Day reached over 125 producers. MSU Extension agent Colleen Buck is part of the MonDak Pulse Day organizing and planning committee.



An off-station research plot in Sheridan County. Photo by Colleen Buck.

# Nutrition and Health Education

## Montana Harvest of the Month

Montana Harvest of the Month (HOM), a program of Montana Team Nutrition, showcases locally-grown foods and exposes students to new, healthy foods. Monthly lessons include education, activities and taste tests on a focus food of the month. The Plentywood School participated during the 2017-18 school year and MSU Extension agent Sheila Friedrich provided the lessons and taste tests for four classrooms, including lessons on beets, grains, beef and lentils. HOM uses a voting system of Tried It, Liked It, Loved It to measure the success the lessons are having in encouraging students to try new, healthy foods. We have seen success in the numbers of the 74 students who have tried a food they had not eaten before. Ninety-four percent of participants tried the healthy foods offered; 56% reported liked the food; 26% loved the food; the remaining 18% were not sure or did not care for the food. School cafeteria staff report an increase in students who are selecting the featured food for the month when offered. "Harvest at Home" is a handout sent home with students to share with their families. The program has continued in the new school year and students and teachers are enthusiastic about opportunities to try locally-grown, healthy foods.



This student is ready to enjoy a cheeseburger on a stick during the Harvest of the Month beef lesson.

## Arthritis Foundation Exercise Class

Now in the fifth year, the Arthritis Foundation exercise classes are going strong and many participants have attended since the beginning. Classes are offered twice weekly in two locations and total participation has increased to about 35. Local physicians and physical therapists refer their patients to the classes as a way to continue to build strength and flexibility and relieve arthritis joint pain.

Participants state benefits to the class:

*"I believe I am doing as well as I am because I come to this class. I think my arthritis would be a whole lot worse if I didn't do this."*

*"My doctor told me I need to attend these classes. I probably wouldn't do this at home by myself."*

*"When I was done with physical therapy, they told me I should come to classes so I wouldn't go backwards. It is important for me to be here."*

*"I have less pain from my arthritis because of the exercises in this class."*

Almost every person commented on the social aspect and comradery they feel being in the program, which is an intended secondary benefit. The Montana Pioneer Manor (retirement facility) continues to be an important partner, providing the opportunity to use space in the facility for classes for their residents.

## Winter Series and Adult Education

Intermixed with the third year of the Winter Series, Sheridan County MSU Extension agriculture agent Colleen Buck was asked to teach an adult education class on the Basics of Livestock Nutrition. Class met once a week for three weeks, and participants reported that information presented changed the way they thought about feeding livestock. Winter Series topics in 2018 included Weather and Crop Market Predictions, Understanding Artificial

Insemination Protocols and Beef Cattle Nutrition, and Rangeland Management, Rangeland Weed and Narrowleaf Hawksbeard. The Narrowleaf Hawksbeard session was very well received. Narrowleaf Hawksbeard is a hard-to-control weed that is showing up in crops and rangeland alike. It can be extremely difficult to control, and therefore education on control measures is extremely important to agriculture producers.



A narrowleaf hawksbeard plant found in Sheridan County. Photo by Colleen Buck.

### contact us:



## EXTENSION

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