



Welcome to Sweet Grass County

Sweet Grass County is located in south central Montana. Don't confuse the town of Sweetgrass with the county of Sweet Grass. Sweet Grass County became a county in 1895, formed from parts of Park, Meager, and Yellowstone Counties. It has been at its present size of 1,855 square miles since 1920. The current population is 3,623. Ranching and mining are the primary economic drivers.

When Lewis and Clark traveled through this region, they named the area where the Boulder River and Big Timber Creek empty into the Yellowstone River as "Rivers Across." In the late 1800s, an Irish immigrant named the settlement Dornix, meaning "a rock that fits in the hand and is handy for throwing." In 1883, the town was moved due to complications with the railroad and was re-named Big Timber for its abundance of cottonwood trees lining the banks of the nearby Boulder and Yellowstone Rivers. In fact, a majestic 125-foot-tall cottonwood is located on the banks of the Yellowstone River right outside the city limits and was close to being the national champion cottonwood. Today, 200-year-

old cottonwood trees still line the banks of the Yellowstone River, meaning they are the same trees as the ones Lewis and Clark passed by two centuries ago.

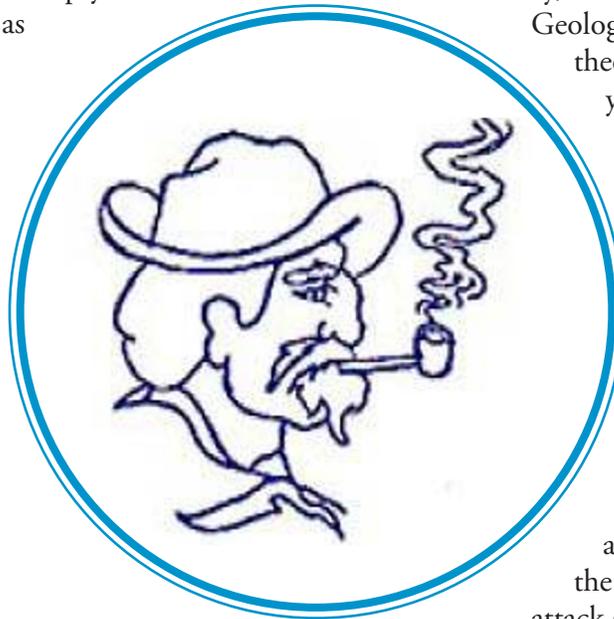
Sweet Grass County is home to the Crazy Mountains. There are several theories on how this range was named. The Indians called them the Mad Mountains for their rugged beauty and haunting winds that blow down the canyons. The Mad Mountains were so called because they could not tell if the weather was going to be fair or

stormy, as all signs failed in that region.

Geology plays a part in another theory. The lava upthrusts are young in the perspective of geologic time and do not fit in with neighboring rock formations, hence the name "crazy," or because of being wholly disconnected from any other range and being a sort of "crazy" formation. Another naming theory, and more widely accepted, is about a woman who went mad on the prairie, perhaps due to an attack and the death of her family.

She took refuge in the mountains.

Indian beliefs suggested crazy people be left alone, and this legend lives on in the movie "Jeremiah Johnson."



GO HERDERS! The logo for the
Sweet Grass County High School Sheepherders

Agriculture across Sweet Grass County

Livestock Nutrition

The winter of 2017-2018 was one of the coldest and snowiest winters on record since the late 1970s in Sweet Grass County. It proved to be extremely challenging to livestock producers in terms of meeting the nutritional needs of all species of livestock. MSU Extension responded by hosting several nutrition workshops that served to educate producers on a variety of topics, including forage testing, ration balancing and the nutritional requirements based on stage of production for various livestock species. Producers were able to interpret feed tests on their forages and with these tests in hand, develop rations to meet the production needs of their livestock while stretching their annual forages supplies. This, in effect, helped to minimize the economic impact to these ranchers by limiting the amount of extra forage they had to purchase to make it through the winter. Winter feed costs are considered to be the single largest input affecting profitability of ranches in Sweet Grass County.

The Life Blood of Agriculture is Water

Without water, agriculture and life as we know it cannot survive. Sweet Grass County, according to the DNRC, lies in a closed basin in regards to water rights and water use. MSU Extension presented a seminar that was attended by area ranchers and landowners to discuss the current status of water rights in Sweet Grass County. Participants learned about priority dates, allowed uses, how to check the current status of their water rights and some of the legal standings of the current water laws in Montana. This seminar, which was co-hosted with the Crazy Mountain Stockgrowers Association, proved to be one of the highlights of the 2018 year in terms of participation and follow-up questions fielded and answered for landowners in Sweet Grass County. Water and water use will continue to be a fiercely debated topic, not only for agriculture but for all property owners and continued efforts will be made to fill the educational demands of clientele in Sweet Grass County.

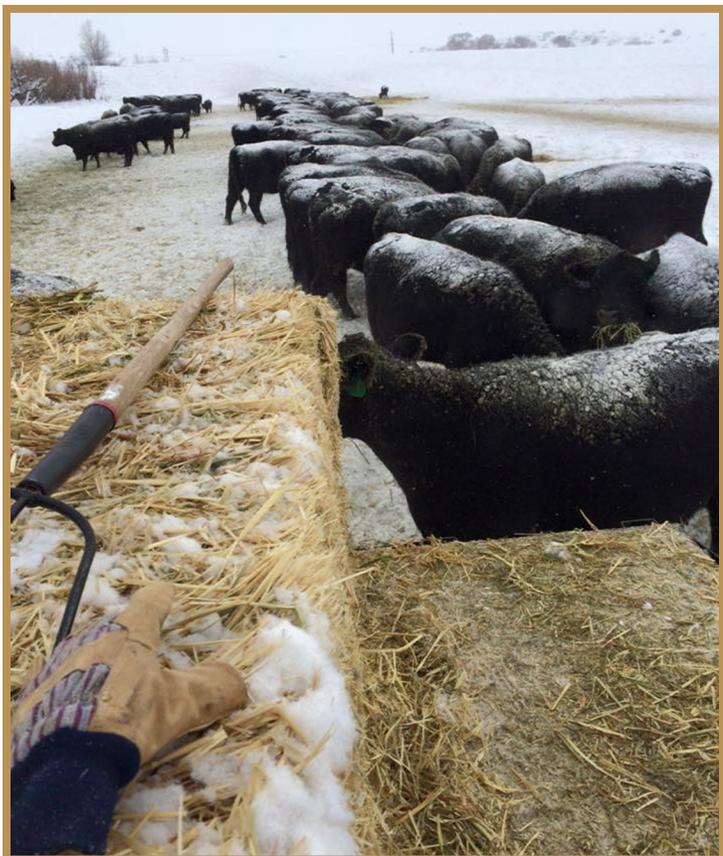


Photo by Kandi Schuman



Photo by Marc King

Active Lifestyles

Research has shown that individuals who participate in some form of physical activity tend to enjoy better health, higher self-confidence and reduced illness. For the past 12 months, a diversified group of co-eds ranging in age from 13 - 60 have met five days per week to gain instruction from MSU Extension agent Marc King on weight lifting techniques and fitness. Students have recorded their progress on basic lifts and have reported on their general health and academic performance. According to the participants, most have reported improvement in their academic endeavors, as well as experiencing reduced days missed due to illness. The older participants have reported fewer incidences of joint pain and an increased desire for physical activity. Furthermore, increased physical activity of older adults has been shown to improve balance, leading to reduced injuries due to falls. Developing healthy habits at a young age has been shown to improve the health status of rural Americans in numerous research articles.



Photo by Marc King

Applications of old and new technologies in the beef industry

In today's beef cattle industry, predictors of genetic merit and actual data help producers to capture increased value on their livestock sales. Predicting genetic performance has advanced significantly in the past decade through the use of DNA evaluation. Producers were introduced to genomic testing and interpretation of results during an MSU Extension one-day seminar. Producers learned how to collect and submit samples for genomic testing, interpret, and apply the results. Further, in an effort to assist producers in collecting actual data, MSU Extension has gathered carcass data on over 1,000 head of beef carcasses in 2018. The combination of genomic information and carcass data has aided producers in making genetic decisions for their cow herds. In theory, producers should be able to realize more value for their calf crops with the addition of this information.



A Prime quality grade of beef.
Photo by Marc King

contact us:



EXTENSION

Sweet Grass County

PO Box 640
515 Hooper St.
Big Timber, MT 59011
(406) 932-5146
sweetgrass@montana.edu
<http://sweetgrass.msuxextension>.



Marc King
Extension Agent



Kandi Schuman
Administrative Assistant