McCone County MSU Extension provides non-biased, research-based education to constituents in the county and neighboring areas. In 2019, McCone County MSU Extension offered programming in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Science, and Youth Development.

Established in 1919, McCone County was named in honor of state senator George McCone. McCone County encompassed 2,594 sq. miles. Circle is the single incorporated town in the county and is also the county seat. The county has a population of 1,100 people. Agriculture is the primary business in McCone County.

Agriculture

McCone County MSU Extension offers programming that addresses livestock production issues, nutrition, forage testing, water testing, and marketing. Programming is also offered for crop producers dealing with specialty crops, weed control, rental rates, and general crop production topics. Producer meetings and workshops are offered, as well as one-on-one consultations in the office and/or at the farm or ranch.

MSU Extension agent Ken Nelson communicates a wide variety of current agricultural issues in a weekly newspaper column, “Notes from Nelson,” which often results in calls or visits to the Extension office for further discussion. Nelson also teams with several other Extension agents to present current issues and information in a weekly radio spot on a Miles City radio station.

MSU Extension offers weed, plant and insect identification services; samples are brought in on a regular basis. Samples that cannot be identified immediately are submitted to the Schutter Diagnostic Lab. Forage samples can also be evaluated for nitrate content analysis.

This year, late season moisture and cooler than normal temperatures caused a severely delayed harvest. Programs focused educational efforts on helping producers deal with high grain moisture levels, sprouting, falling number tests, as well as new weed problems and hay storage issues.

Family and Consumer Science

McCone county needs in the area of Family and Consumer Sciences most often involve basic food safety, home canning, estate planning, home gardening, plant care, and home weatherization. Many of the daily interactions address economic concerns. Successful home and family programs this year included a four-week Gardening Workshop, which
instructed 46 participants on basic gardening practices, and a class that demonstrated the proper and safe use of pressure cookers for 14 participants.

4-H Youth Development

McCone County has four 4-H clubs with 48 members and 15 leaders. 4-H offers youth learning opportunities at events and activities throughout the year. 4-H project work allows for hands-on learning and experiences that can form the basis for post-secondary institution selection and, ultimately, career choice and development.

Youth can enhance life skills through club meetings, project work, judging events, summer camp, mini-congress, market quality assurance, Rec Lab, club trips and outings, special interest group meetings, shooting sports events, training and educational workshops, County Fair, fundraising events such as calendar or fruit sales, a livestock jackpot show and the achievement program and banquet.

The 4-H program also invites opportunities for adults to volunteer and help youth with life skills development through project and activities leadership.

The 4-H Cloverbud program serves youth ages 5-8, and enrollments continue to rise. McCone County has added new options for Cloverbuds to work on throughout the year and bring to the fair. The 4-H Program Assistant works with Coverbud members to introduce what 4-H is about and to meet the needs of each member within their individual projects.