



Spotted Knapweed Biocontrol Effort

1,500 Biocontrol agents released in Judith Basin County

Thirty people attended two workshops held in August to learn more about biological control of a common weed pest here in central Montana. Spotted knapweed was the focus of the meeting, along with information about Houndstongue, Canada Thistle, and Cheatgrass biocontrol agents. Guest speaker Melissa Maggio-Kassner, the Montana BioControl Coordinator, discussed some of the common misconceptions and myths surrounding biocontrol. After the classroom presentations in Raynesford and Geyser, we headed to the field and made two releases. The *Cyphocleonus achates*, a root weevil, was the insect dispersed. Some in the area may

remember a previous release of a seed head weevil of the *Larinus* spp. years ago. In searching the knapweed stands, the *Larinus* larvae was discovered in many plants. The *Larinus* makes its home in the seed head of the mature knapweed plant, and then exits in the summer of the following year through a hole in the seed head. The releases made will be repeated next summer in an effort to reduce the cost of weed control for local producers. Biological control efforts are a useful tool in areas that are hard to access with sprayers or animals. Once established, these populations will survive as long as the plant it feeds on is present.



Above: Exit hole from *Larinus* Spp. in a seed head. **Right:** *Cyphocleonus achates* waiting to be dispersed.

Welcome to Judith Basin County

The legendary White Wolf resides at the Basin Trading Post in downtown Stanford. This wolf harassed livestock and pets in the area for many years before meeting his end. Stop in the Trading Post to ready the whole story.



Nitrate Quick Tests Serve Judith Basin Producers

The MSU Extension Office in Judith Basin County carried out 25+ nitrate quick tests in 2016. Of those tests, there were several that prevented possible issues with livestock. Nitrates are tested in cereal grain forage that is intended to feed livestock because it can cause abortion or even death. Elevated nitrate levels are caused by stresses the plant endures while growing, such as drought or hail. Nitrate is an important nutrient as it is converted to protein by the plant and then utilized by the livestock feeding on it.

4-H Afterschool Program

MSU Extension in Judith Basin County partnered with Stanford Schools to host the inaugural year of the 4-H Afterschool program. Held October-May once a month in the multi-purpose room at Stanford School, attendance averaged 30 youth from pre-school to sixth grade. Topics for each session included wildlife, wind energy, health, aerospace, and entomology.

In addition to Stanford, students came from Denton, Geyser, and Hobson to participate in the learning activities.



A participant in the October program shows off his bat mask.

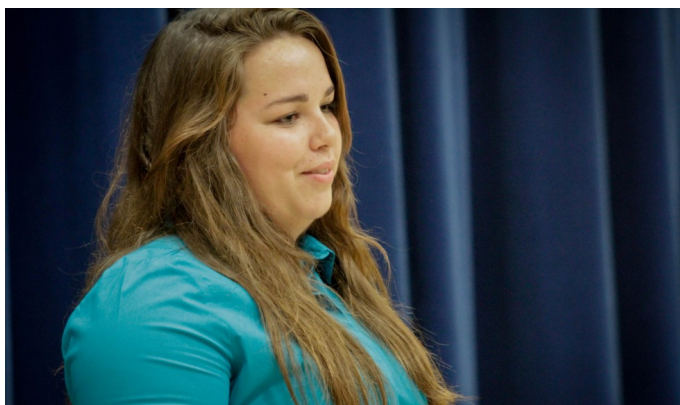
During the course of the afterschool program, 55 students were reached. Of those 55, 24 were already 4-H members. Seven have enrolled in 4-H as a new member as of October 2016. There are 15 more that aren't old enough to be a full 4-H member yet, but are waiting patiently to join!



Building gingerbread houses after learning about food safety and hand washing techniques brings a smile to these young faces!

Youth Participate in 4-H Congress

Seven youth leaders from Judith Basin attended 4-H Congress in Bozeman this year. This was a sharp increase from one attendee the previous year. Youth participated in public speaking and judging contests. One member



placed 3rd in their category, narrowly missing a trip to National Congress. The youth leaders learned many new leadership and networking skills at the workshops they attended. They also made many new friends to add to a growing network of energetic youth around the state.

Agriculture, FCS, and Community Involvement

Forage and Vertebrate Pest Workshop

The second year of a forage workshop held in conjunction with MSU Extension in Cascade County met the need for additional methods of control for vertebrate pests in the area. Ground squirrels have been a perennial problem, with pocket gophers recently adding their name to the list of nuisance pests in Judith Basin County. Stephen Vantassel,



Common Central Montana pest, the Richardson Ground Squirrel. Vantassel had many methods for control of this pest.

Vertebrate Pest Specialist for the MT Dept. of Ag. presented several management methods including: trapping, toxicants, fumigation and rodenticides.

The classroom portion preceded the hands-on demonstration of management techniques. Those in attendance agreed that the workshop was very informative. The knowledge gained has been put to use by several producers.

MSU Extension Judith Basin County participates in the “Bale Trail”



For over 25 years, the “What the Hay” contest near Utica brings hundreds of people to Central Montana. In the spirit of community involvement, MSU Extension has had an entry in many years of the “Bale Trail.” This year’s entry was “Hurray for Bull-Hay.” In 2015, Judith Basin County produced over 150,000 tons of hay to support its 84,000 cows and 7,000 sheep. Judith Basin was 4th in the state for alfalfa production last year.

Too busy to cook? Extension provides Freezer Meal class to help save time and money

A common problem for busy families is having time to prepare nutritious meals. Through freezer meal and slow cooker workshops, this problem can be alleviated. Partnering with MSU Extension in Fergus County, safe food handling techniques and proper freezing protocols were taught to interested participants. Learning how to make shopping lists for several recipes, and dedicating a day to making several dishes to wrap up and freeze is very helpful to families on the go in the working seasons. Advance preparation allows for saving time and money, while still eating healthy. Through this class, attendees were given the opportunity to make and keep two dishes each. They also received the recipe and instructions for many more.



Attendees busily prepare and wrap their dishes at the Freezer Meal Workshop during National Frozen Food Month.

Range Renovation Conference

Extension Provides Range Management Resources for Local Area Ranchers

Many producers consider renovating their rangeland to increase grass production. In addition, seeded pastures supply nutritious forage at times during the year when other sources are inadequate or unavailable. To ensure a satisfactory return for each dollar invested, seeded species must be adapted to the site's soil, climate, fit a rancher's needs and be properly established and managed. MSU Extension in Judith Basin partnered with Extension in Chouteau County to host Dr. Jeff Mosley, MSU Extension Range Management Specialist. Mosley gave a presentation on weed control and ground preparation focusing on management of sagebrush species, fringed sagewort, broom snakeweed and cheatgrass. During hour two, Mosley recommended desirable grass species, cover site preparation, and seeding techniques. He concluded with a presentation on post-renovation grazing management. This conference was well attended, and received several compliments. A Geyser area rancher commented, "He summed up everything I learned in two years at CSU in three hours." Several area ranchers were not able to attend, and expressed interest in more information in this area. Meetings are being planned to



A pasture in Judith Basin County that has been renovated recently. Weed control techniques and grazing management techniques promoted by MSU Extension have been applied.

meet this need in the future. Management practices that increase the value and production of current assets can help operations stay profitable in times of economic down-turn.

Contact Us



Judith Basin County

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