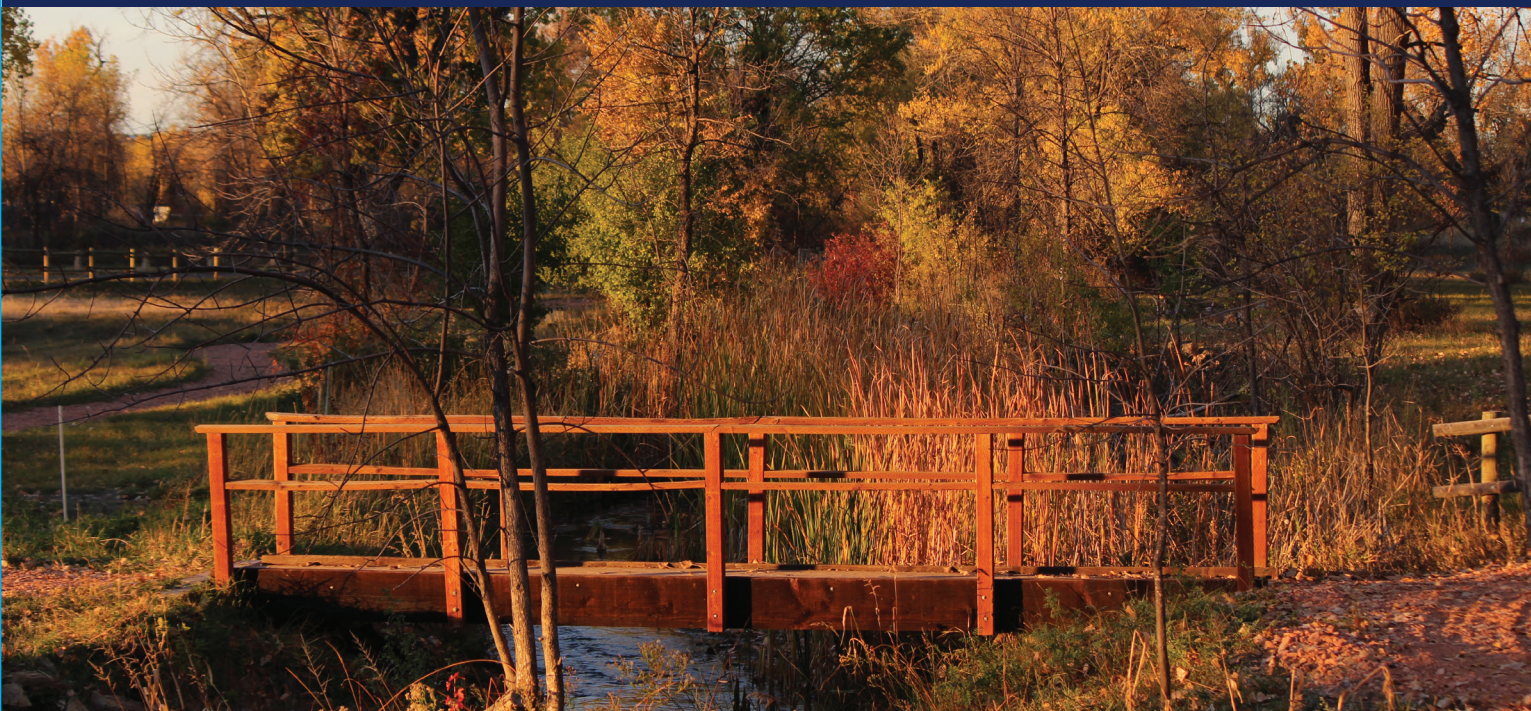


Custer County



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Beautiful day for a walk at Spotted Eagle by Chet Holmes.

Custer County MSU Extension is a non-formal educational program designed to help people use research-based knowledge to improve their lives. The primary mission of MSU Extension programs is to bring information from the Land Grant University to the people of Montana. Covid-19 has provided challenges that have improved a focus on flexibility and adaptation to new delivery methods. Our program includes, in addition to traditional activities like Winter Series, Arthritis Exercise, 4-H project workshops and contests, educational delivery through web-based platforms including WebEx, virtual meetings and blended techniques, allowing virtual instruction delivered to both a physically present and virtual audience.

Miles City, located in Custer County, serves as the economic hub for much of Southeastern Montana. With 8,500 of the 11,700 people in Custer County residing in Miles City, the bulk of the land mass of the county is rangeland with a portion of the county along the Yellowstone and Tongue rivers producing irrigated crops. Cattle is the major agricultural enterprise in the region with the pre-drought cow herd of 53,000 head in Custer County. The extreme drought of 2021, coupled with grasshopper infestation, has caused an estimated liquidation of that cow herd of over 50%. Extension agriculture programs

will focus on education to assist in rebuilding this cow herd in the coming years.

Custer County Agent Presents at SE Montana Winter Series

The Southeastern Montana Extension Winter Series program is offered annually by eight counties in SE Montana. The program consists of presentations of the same information at various locations. Due to Covid travel restrictions, Bozeman-based MSU Extension specialists were unavailable for the program. MSU Extension Beef Specialist Megan Van Emon, stationed at Fort Keogh in Miles City, and Custer County MSU Extension Agent Mike Schuldts filled this need by traveling the circuit over a two-week period in January. Schuldts made his presentation on forage production issues, including Managing Annual Forage Risk and Managing Resistance in Alfalfa Weevil. Van Emon presented on Managing Cattle Pests and Parasites. Local agents at each of the locations presented a topic relevant to their community. Presentations included Grasshopper Control, Cheat Grass Management and Personal Protective Equipment for Chemical Application.

All told, the program reached 367 producers, providing information that will result in numerous positive outcomes. These outcomes include alfalfa producers with a better understanding of how resistance happens and having tools and knowledge to manage resistance. The water strip method of nitrate evaluation was introduced so that producers will have a better understanding of the nitrate risk in annual crops and how to analyze this risk. Cattle producers attending the program were provided with a list of treatment products and their mode of action and will be better able to manage important cattle pests effectively with less chance of developing resistant strains.

To meet the needs of all those wishing to participate, we delivered the program both in-person and with the option of virtual attendance via WebEx.

Custer County 4-H Shooters Set State Records

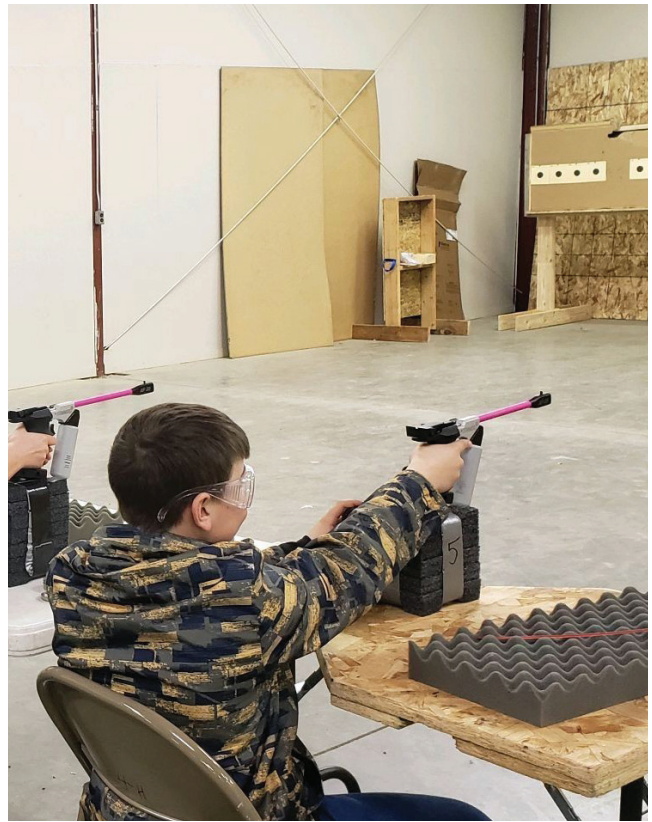
One of the shining stars of Custer County 4-H is the Snipers shooting sports program. The strong corps of volunteers and great community support allows them to continue to grow, and it's becoming more competitive each year.

Twenty-four members of the Custer County 4-H Snipers club competed in the 2021 State 4-H Shooting competition. Shooters competed in various divisions in air rifle and air pistol and all shooters placed in the top ten for respective age and event, with two sporter air pistol state records coming to the Snipers by Cooper Nansel and Eleanor Gard.

The program started with eight members and has grown in the last four years to over 45 members, ages 9-17. The program serves to educate on gun safety in a fun and competitive environment. Members and leaders have worked diligently to obtain funding in excess of \$30,000 through fundraisers, and programs such as National Rifle Association, Milestown Community Improvement Inc, Montana Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Custer County Veterans Association, Reynolds Market, and private individuals. Having the proper equipment has allowed the Snipers to be competitive this past year. The program had three competitions this year that allowed the use of sporter air rifle, sporter air pistol, .22 smallbore rifle, and .22 smallbore pistol.

In January, the Snipers hosted their first state-wide postal match, which served as a fundraiser. Over 120 shooters from across Montana 4-H programs submitted targets for various shooting ages and events. The Snipers had 32 shooters compete, with 28 placing in the top five of each respective age and event.

The Custer County 4-H Shooting Sports Program success would not be possible without the commitment and financial support from sponsors, committed parents and shooters, and





Previous Page: (top) 4-H Snipers Practicing by Irma Nansel; **(bottom)** Winter Series in Miles City by Cindy Berg; **This Page:** Tara Andrews retires

volunteer shooting instructors. The eight certified instructors commit time and effort to teach the 4-H Snipers gun safety, marksmanship, and keep the program in operation each year. There are plans to incorporate smallbore pistol and smallbore rifle as additional shooting disciplines in 2022. The passion for shooting sports is growing in eastern Montana thanks to the Custer County 4-H Shooting Sports Program.

FCS Agent Tara Andrews Retires

After 31 years as the Custer County MSU Extension FCS/4-H agent, Tara Andrews announced her retirement and her last day to be November 5. During this last year she continued to provide programs meeting the needs of both youth and adults.

Custer County Staff



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

Tara Andrews
FCS Agent

Michael Schuldt
Agriculture Agent

Cindy Berg
Administrative Assistant