

Fallon-Carter Counties



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Carter County, MT by Amanda Williams.

Fallon and Carter Counties are in the far-most Southeast corner of Montana, bordering North and South Dakota to the East and Wyoming to the South. There are about 3,000 people in Fallon County and about 1,000 people in Carter County. Agriculture is a major part of the local communities, with ranching and dryland farming being the major industries, and the oil and gas industries also contributing to the local economy. Hunting deer, elk, and antelope also brings visitors into the area, as well as other tourism interests like museums and dinosaurs.

MSU Extension services are shared between Fallon and Carter Counties and we aim to provide quality information and resources to our clientele on livestock production, pasture management, pest control, and many other topics.

Struggles of Drought

Like much of Montana, Fallon and Carter Counties experienced drought in summer 2021. Parts of the two counties were either in severe, extreme, or exceptional drought throughout the summer. Many producers faced struggles due to the drought. Producers experienced increased levels of grasshoppers that caused widespread destruction. Multiple

producers brought in blister beetles to identify, and to find answers on management options.

Many producers faced reduced yields in range and croplands. Feed was scarce and hay was hard to find. MSU Extension tested forage samples for nitrates and provided information and resources. Producers brought 252 samples into the office to be tested for nitrates, of those, 94 were over 10,000 parts per million, which meant they were too high in nitrates to be grazed or fed to livestock. High levels can cause acute toxicity symptoms and death. Most of the samples with elevated levels of nitrates were corn, weeds, sorghum, millet, wheat, oats, and triticale. Water was also in short supply this year. Many reservoirs and other water sources were much lower than they have ever been in the past or dried up completely. The MSU Extension office tested 60 water samples. We were able to check the water samples for total dissolved solids (TDS). Of those samples tested in the office, 10 came back with more than 3,000 ppm TDS, which could cause problems for livestock, and were recommended to be sent for further testing.

Living The Pledge

The MSU Extension Fallon-Carter Counties staff and 4-H Councils from Carter and Fallon Counties set their goal for

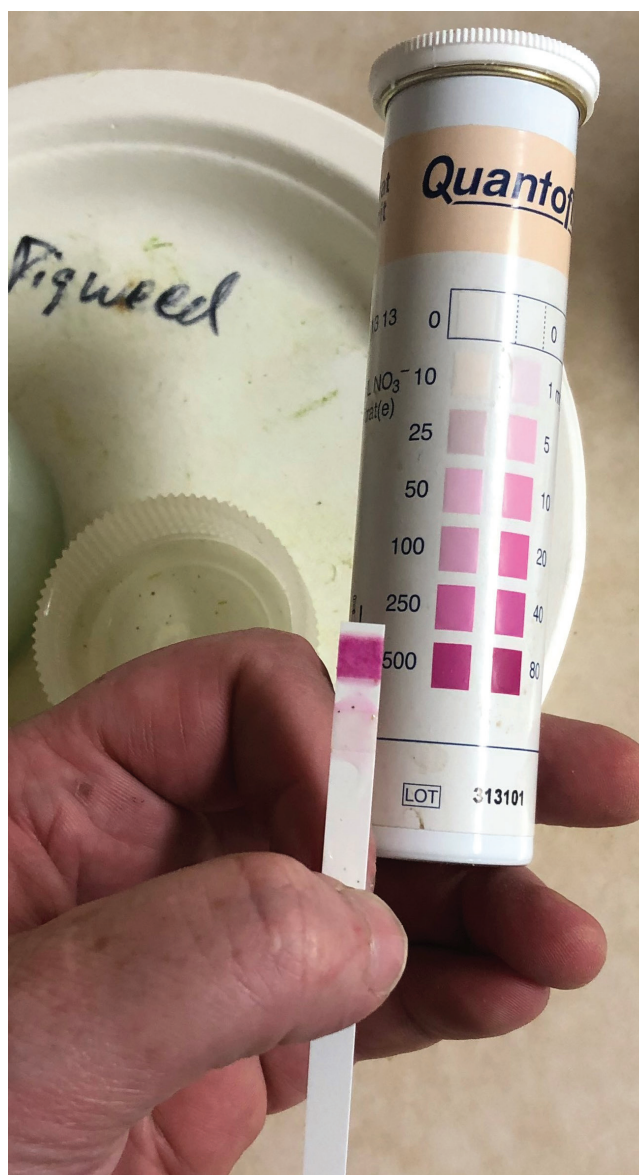
2020-2021 on promoting 4-H to increase enrollments and knowledge of the 4-H program with youth as well as adults. The group focused on the 4-H pledge and created workshops based on the four “H’s”: head, heart, hands, and health. Workshops included a forensic crime mystery, community service project, 4-H pride week and a color run. Youth gained skills during workshops: critical thinking, time management, and teamwork. The first annual “I pledge my health to better living color run” event focused on being active to promote healthy living and gaining general knowledge of the 4-H program. Community participation was strong, with 27 youth and adults completing the mile-and-a-half run.

Workshops were well-received and there are plans to continue them in the future. To keep working on increasing enrollment, there are also plans to include the local schools as much as possible through future webinars and in-person workshops. The efforts of leaders and ambassadors paid off, as there was a four percent increase in new members enrolling in Fallon County and a two percent increase in Carter County.

New Extension Agent

I started working as the new MSU Extension Agent for Fallon and Carter Counties in June 2021. I am an eastern Montana native who previously called Miles City home. I was an active member of 4-H for 11 years in Custer County, and assisted with the local fair in Miles City. I received my Bachelor’s degree in Animal Science with a minor in Natural Resources and Rangeland Management from Montana State University in 2018. Undergraduate research experiences at MSU and USDA-ARS Fort Keogh in Miles City sparked my interest in graduate school, and I finished my Master’s degree in Animal and Range Science at MSU in 2020. My research project evaluated the effects of the Lodgepole Complex Wildfire, specifically the recovery and effects of grazing on the vegetative community. Following graduate school, I worked at Fort Keogh on various projects, including a drought and grazing study, and taught classes online at Miles Community College.

I have been enjoying MSU Extension so far and look forward to the opportunity to work more often with producers, community members, and 4-H members. The community is welcome to stop by the courthouse in Baker or Ekalaka on most Tuesdays to ask questions or talk. They can also call or contact the office for help.





Previous Page: (top) Nitrate strip test from a weed sample brought in by a producer after they lost some sheep, by Amanda Williams; **(bottom)** New Extension Agent Amanda Williams; **This Page:** Some participants of the color run after all the dust had settled, by Kodie Olsen

Fallon-Carter Counties Staff



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

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