

McCone County

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Circle, McCone County

McCone County MSU Extension provides non-biased, research-based education to constituents in the county and neighboring areas. In 2021, McCone County MSU Extension offered programming in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Science, Community Development, and Youth Development.

McCone County was established in 1919 and was named in honor of state senator George McCone.

McCone County encompasses 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 1,700 people. Agriculture is the primary business in McCone County.

McCone County Agriculture

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

A very effective means of communicating with the producers about a wide variety of issues is the weekly newspaper article, "Notes from Nelson." The focus of this weekly column is current agricultural issues. The issues addressed often result in calls or visits to the Extension office to further discuss topics addressed.

The McCone County MSU Extension agent also teams with several other Extension agents who present current issues and information via a weekly radio spot on a Miles City radio station.

The severely dry summer brought on concerns of high nitrate levels in area forages. From June through November, over 200 forage samples were tested for nitrate content in the McCone County MSU Extension office. Of the samples tested, approximately 20% contained nitrates at a level that required special management, a small percentage of which required hay bales to be burned.

A very popular service of MSU Extension continues to be in the area of weed, plant, and insect identification.

Samples are brought in on a regular basis. Samples that cannot be identified immediately are submitted to the Schutter Diagnostic Lab.

Livestock water quality continues to be a local concern. Educational efforts were put forth to help make livestock

producers aware of water quality concerns. 46 water samples were brought to the Extension office for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) testing. 40% of the samples tested required special management for use and/or restriction from being consumed by livestock.

Other specific programming efforts included addressing stocking rates, rangeland noxious weeds, alfalfa management, cover crops, as well as a number of discussions about utilizing alternate and non-traditional feeds and forages.

McCone County 4-H

McCone County has four 4-H clubs: the Ambitious Ants, Green & White, Washington Warriors, and the Redwater Wranglers. We have gained in numbers over the last few years and ended the year with 52 members and 10 leaders. 4-H continues to offer opportunities through a number of events and activities throughout the year. This includes 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, a livestock jackpot show, and the achievement program and banquet.

We have a few countywide fundraisers throughout the year, including fruit sales in the spring and Greytak calendars in the fall. Involvement in 4-H allows for hands-on experience through project work. That hands-on experience forms the basis for post-secondary institution selection and, ultimately, career choice and development. The 4-H program also allows many opportunities for adults to be involved in life skills development of youth through project leadership as well as assisting the various projects and activities.

The 4-H Cloverbud enrollments continue to rise with increased interest and participation. In the 2020-2021 year we had 12 Cloverbuds. We have added many new options to participate throughout the year and to bring to fair. The 4-H Program Assistant promotes 4-H and works with each member to introduce them to what 4-H is about as well as working diligently to meet the needs of each member within their project.

In the past 10 years, we have worked diligently to upgrade the barns, bleachers, and buildings on the fair grounds. We have put in a new beef barn, horse barn, wash rack cement slabs, tie-out areas, and new electrical throughout the entire grounds. In 2021, we tackled the task of revamping our hog/sheep barn. This includes new commercial pens and a cement slab under the hog pens. We will also be putting in a playground area, equipped with a jungle gym and sandbox area.





Previous Page: (top) Hog and Sheep barn, by Tandi Kassner; **(bottom)** Forage Samples, by Tandi Kassner ; **This Page:** McCone County Museum, by Tandi Kassner

Community Development

McCone County Extension Staff have been involved in rejuvenating the local McCone County Museum. This has included assistance with grant applications, inventory and arranging exhibits, cleaning and remodeling exhibit areas.

The museum gets visitors from across the United States, as well as local community members, students, and youth groups. The museum focuses on displaying local historical items including fossils, Native American, early settlers, early agriculture, and homesteader items.

McCone County Staff



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

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