

Rosebud-Treasure Counties



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Rosebud-Treasure counties, by Nathan Satran Photography.

Rosebud and Treasure Counties represent a diverse landscape and population. Covering 6,000+ square miles, the two counties include three incorporated cities—Forsyth, Colstrip and Hysham—along with several additional communities and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. The northern portion of both counties provide wide open prairies met by the Yellowstone River. The southern portion offers rugged, pine-covered hills. Farming, ranching, energy development and railroad make up the majority of the diverse economic drivers. MSU Extension in Rosebud and Treasure Counties is in large part funded by the taxpayers in both counties and your local and financial support is greatly appreciated.

4-H Blazes the Trail for Beef to School

Adding local beef to the school menus in Rosebud County became a lot easier through the work of local 4-H'ers. Prior to the 2021 Rosebud-Treasure County Fair, the 4-H council embarked on a bold venture to purchase 4-H livestock from the fair and donate the beef to area schools. Up to this point, the local beef in school movement was just catching on. It took a little discussing and some brainstorming about the logistics of such an endeavor to make it real. However, when it was time for the fair, the outcome of the decision was clear

as the idea of purchasing and donating to the school caught fire. The Council bought two beef and other buyers soon joined in. When it was done, a total of five beef were bought and donated. Approximately, 2,400 pounds of local beef were given to five area schools.

“This is a win-win effort. Our 4-H'ers work hard for months to raise a quality steer to show and sell at the fair. It's great that they will be the ones to reap the benefits of having quality beef in their school lunches,” said Extension Agent Marley Manoukian. “I can't think of a better way to teach our 4-H members about giving back to their community and about agriculture. The kids talk about it all the time when they have beef at school. They are proud of their efforts and how they've contributed.” The success of the project wouldn't be possible without the tremendous assistance of the local cattlemen organizations, who covered the cost of the processing and assisted with the logistics and delivery to the schools. Given the positive feedback, the Extension staff believes the effort will continue to grow in the future.

Reimagining Rural Ignites Local Community

“Rural is changing, not dying,” is one of many insightful stances of rural sociologist Ben Winchester. Winchester, from the Minnesota Center for Community Vitality, was the main speaker for the MSU Extension-led Reimagining Rural Initiative. This ideology was present at the Newcomer’s Event held at the conclusion of the Reimagining Rural sessions. With over 50 new residents in attendance, people were excited to share their adoration for their new hometown. When asked what they liked about Forsyth, descriptions like “safe, quiet, friendly” were mentioned repeatedly. The turnout and positive vibe was awe-inspiring. “For those of us who have lived in the community for a long time, we’ve seen changes, many not for the better, and with that, we’ve created our own negative story. We overlook all the positive reasons of why we call this place home and why people would want to live here. This has reinvigorated our sense of community, for sure,” said MSU Extension Agent Jennifer Anderson.

Since the newcomer’s event, the Reimagining Rural Project is growing. The group is taking the lead on a community-wide rebranding project needed to stimulate local tourism and marketing efforts, along with community beautification and improvement ideas. Anderson talked about Reimagining Rural, “this is truly a grassroots, community-wide effort. We have folks from all sectors of our community invested; newcomers and lifelong residents, business owners, our local chamber and community foundation, to mention a few. It’s amazing to see the community coming together around an idea and shared vision for Forsyth’s future.” She added, “Extension is vital to Reimagining Rural. We are poised to lead efforts such as this because of our rural roots, relationships, and connections. This is a great example of Extension assisting rural communities across Montana.”

Extension During Times of Drought

Producers in Rosebud and Treasure Counties have been challenged with a severe and progressive drought that has brought grasshopper destruction and issues with forage and water quality.

The grasshopper outlook for the 2021 growing season showed both counties would be experiencing population levels over the economic threshold. MSU Extension hosted USDA-APHIS State Plant Health Director Gary Adams, who addressed Rangeland Grasshopper Suppression. Producers learned about the life cycle of grasshoppers and possible control measures.

Nitrate toxicity is a concern during times of drought. Producers brought 55 samples into the office to be tested for nitrates, with 32 testing over the safe level. Because of these





Previous Page: (top) CFNRC board members assist with the registration for the Forsyth Reimagining Rural Newcomers Event, by Jennifer Anderson; **(bottom)** Reservoir in Rosebud County; **This Page:** Five 4-H beef were donated to area schools through the Rosebud-Treasure County Fair, by Becky Stensvad

issues with forage quality, coupled with the limited amount of feed available, the Extension office hosted Dr. Megan Van Emon to discuss Winter Feeding Decisions. Producers learned about cattle nutrient requirements, alternative feeds, feeding high nitrate forage, and how to evaluate the nutritional status of cattle using body condition scores (BCS). Following this presentation, several producers noted they would implement BCS to track the nutritional status of their cows.

The drought brought livestock water concerns, as many water sources were left dry or with water that was often toxic to animals. Producers brought in 35 water samples and 16 tested over the safe level of Total Dissolved Solids. There is limited information on the effects of poor water quality on livestock. MSU Rosebud-Treasure County Agent, Marley Manoukian began working with Water Quality Specialist, Adam Sigler to gather more information on this topic. Water samples and livestock information was collected from producers who brought samples in for testing. Samples will be further tested at the Marsh Lab in Bozeman, and the results will be compared with the information gathered from producers to better understand the effects poor quality water has on livestock.

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