

# Wibaux County

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*A rare site of dry Beaver Creek, by Syndi Miske.*

**W**ibaux County is a small, rural, agricultural community composed of 890 square miles with roughly 1,100 people calling it home. The major industries include farming, ranching, and some oil production on the county borders. Currently, 75 percent of Wibaux County's total acreage is used to produce cattle and crops; the majority of producers are diversified in the production of both. This past year's drought has forced an increase in diversity within production agriculture, as many crops were unable to be harvested and many pastures could not sustain livestock needs. With the severe drought came an army of grasshoppers, some blister beetles, and increased nitrate levels in forages. This trifecta led to haying a variety of crops for livestock feed, which became a new common practice by producers in order to stockpile winter feed. This non-traditional practice for Wibaux County producers led to a high demand for forage nitrate testing provided by MSU Extension in Wibaux County. Read on for more information on the increasing need for forage nitrate testing.

## Testing for Nitrate Toxicity in Wibaux County Forages

The drought brought many challenges to Wibaux County. Livestock producers had to also worry about nitrate poisoning from forages. High nitrate levels can be found in cereal grains such as oats, rye, wheat, barley, triticale, etc. Nitrates can also be found in brome grass, fescue, sorghum, sudangrass, millet, corn, sweet clover, and alfalfa. Several weeds including kochia, pigweed, and thistle can accumulate nitrates as well. All of these forages were tested for nitrate levels this past year in Wibaux County. There were 17 varieties of forages with producer concerns regarding nitrate levels, totaling 91 nitrate tests. The Wibaux County MSU Extension office reported that 93 percent of the nitrate strip tests conducted had "generally safe" feed condition results. For producers to have the peace of mind that their cattle were safe to consume the limited availability of forages aided in tough operation decisions. There have been no known nitrate toxicity livestock deaths in Wibaux County to date. Due to the drought this past year, producers' awareness in the severity of nitrate toxicity has increased through MSU

Extension outreach and education. Going forward, the Wibaux County MSU Extension office expects to conduct more nitrate tests. Hopefully, the drought is over, but producers can continue to rely on this important and simple tool to keep their livestock safe when consuming forages with potentially poisonous levels of nitrates.

## Wibaux Health Fair “Masked Up”

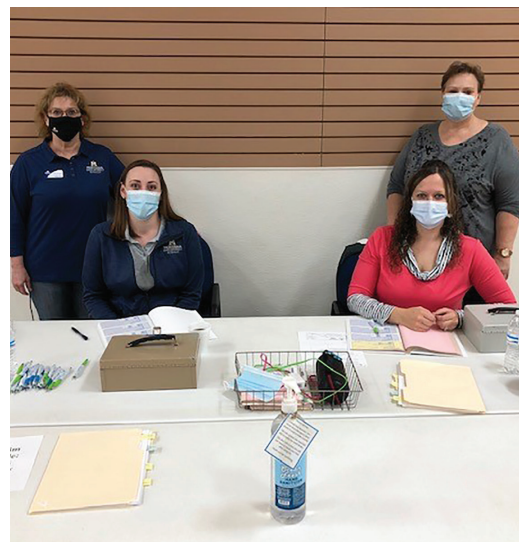
Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Wibaux Health Fair was canceled. The Health Fair Committee brought the blood draw back to Wibaux on March 25, 2021 with a few changes. The Wibaux Health Fair has been serving Wibaux County and surrounding communities with health-saving and cost-effective testing for many years. 2021 was the 32nd year offering the blood draw.

The health fair didn't include informational booths and the location was the Wibaux County Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall. With safety protocols in place such as hand sanitizer and everyone wearing a mask while inside the hall, CHI St. Alexis Health of Dickinson, North Dakota again provided lab personnel.

The first patient arrived at 5:55 a.m. and was headed out the door with a to-go breakfast by 6:00 a.m. The CHI lab, with assistance from the Beach Medical Clinic, saw 226 patients who received the following tests: 219 health panels, 90 PSAs, 135 Vitamin D, and 133 A1C. Although the Wibaux Health Fair has been a very social event in the past, participants were glad to have the service available while adhering to the safety protocols.

Wibaux and the surrounding communities are very supportive of this event. The annual event is sponsored by MSU Extension Wibaux County and the Wibaux County Health Department. The Health Fair Committee consists of Danielle Harper, MSU Extension Agent; Patti Goroski, MSU Extension Administrative/Program Assistant; and Trish Olson, Wibaux County Health Nurse.

Healthcare in Wibaux consists of a county-owned clinic staffed two days a week by Glendive Medical Center, and two days a week by Fallon Medical Complex. The health fair has proven to save community members thousands of dollars in health care costs. It has also saved the lives of those who have been referred to their primary care physician due to an abnormal blood profile or other screening test. Offering testing at a reduced cost encourages people to complete their blood work in a timely and cost-effective manner.



**Top:** The first bale, by Syndi Miske; **Bottom:** Standing: Patti Goroski, MSU Extension Wibaux County, and Trish Olson, Wibaux Health Department; Sitting: Danielle Harper, MSU Extension Wibaux County, and Karina Dale, Wibaux Health Department. The Wibaux crew masked and waiting for patients to arrive, by Stephanie Fong, Marketing & Public Relations CHI St. Alexis Health Dickinson

## Wibaux County Staff



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

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