

# Big Horn County



317 N. Custer Ave., Hardin, MT 59034 | (406) 665-9770 | bighorn@montana.edu | www.montana.edu/extension/bighorn/



*The hills seen from North Valley in November 2022, by Andrea Berry.*

**B**ig Horn County is located in south central Montana and is the sixth largest county in Montana at 5,023 square miles, with a population of more than 13,000 residents in the county, which includes the Crow Reservation and part of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. More than 3 million acres are used as farm or ranch land. Farms in Big Horn County produce hay, wheat, barley and sugar beets, while the primary livestock production is cattle.

Molly Hammond Masters was the Agriculture and 4-H agent for Big Horn County for six years. She moved to a new position with a conservation district in July 2021. Andrea Berry was the SNAP-Ed Instructor for Big Horn County/Crow Reservation/Northern Cheyenne Reservation and is the new Agriculture and 4-H agent as of July 2022.

Big Horn County MSU Extension serves all the county's communities by offering agriculture programs, providing 4-H youth development, and partnering with individuals and organizations in community development projects throughout the county.

## Surveying agriculture needs

With an Agriculture Agent position filled again in Big Horn County, there is a renewed effort to informally assess the needs of farmers and ranchers and to accommodate the expressed needs. Planning is underway for providing Pesticide Applicator Training in December, for the South Central Ag Tour in January and for Ladies Ag Night in February. Assessment efforts are ongoing through activities such as supervising a Corn Yield Contest with local farmers for the National Corn Growers Association, and through continuing to learn about ag practices from as many producers as possible through various interactions. Big Horn County MSU Extension is the liaison to specialists at MSU, answers a range of questions about ag concerns, and performs nitrate testing on hay and grasses for producers to ensure livestock feed safety.

## 4-H Council Restarted

After a hiatus of two years, the Big Horn County 4-H Council was restarted in September 2022. An exploratory meeting was held with 4-H leaders and volunteers in August.

At that meeting, a process was discussed and agreed upon for restarting the council and holding elections for council officers. Following that agreement, nominations for officer positions were accepted at the August meeting. Elections were held at the next meeting in September, and youth from all four 4-H clubs in the county participated in the election. The new council officers assumed their offices at the end of the September meeting after votes were counted. The new officers are working together to support and promote 4-H youth development in Big Horn County and to continue in the tradition of 4-H “to make the best better.”

## Construction Paper and Glue

When you look into a room of giggling 5-8 year-olds working on a craft project, you may only see scraps of paper and glue stuck to everything BUT the paper. What you don't see is that these emerging minds are developing creativity, building confidence, and forging new friendships, which is the foundation of things learned through 4-H. The 4-H program uses experiential learning to help youth become responsible, caring, and contributing leaders. This year the Big Horn County 4-H Cloverbuds received a People Partner grant from the MT 4-H Foundation to make 100 “Care Packages” that they distributed at the local fair and in the community. They made Valentines for a local nursing home, participated in public speaking and assisted in club highway cleanups. The future looks bright for 4-H in Big Horn County where Cloverbuds are learning to use their Heads, Hearts, Hands, and Health to make the world around them a better place.

## SNAP-Ed - Growing Together MT Nutrition Education Grant

The SNAP-Ed program provided nutrition and physical activity programming to adults and children throughout Big Horn County in 2022. In addition to direct education classes held in schools and at the MSU Extension office, the SNAP-Ed instructor worked on various Policy, Systems, and Environment projects throughout the county, primarily in gardening.

One project was recently featured in Lives & Landscapes magazine as a recipient of a Growing Together Montana grant. SNAP-Ed partnered with the Helping Hands Food Bank, the Farm to School program, and local individuals and businesses to build and maintain additional raised beds for growing fresh produce for food bank clients. In the second year of participating in this grant-funded project, the food bank garden was able to add rain barrels to store rainwater for watering the garden and built a spiral herb garden bed. Despite a challenging year for garden production that included a hailstorm and extreme heat, the garden beds produced nearly 150 pounds of produce for food bank clients.







**Previous Page: (top)** Corn harvest near Hardin for the National Corn Growers Yield Contest in November 2022, by Andrea Berry; **(bottom)** The 4-H Clover; **This Page:** Helping Hands Food Bank Garden in Hardin in September 2022, by Andrea Berry

## Big Horn County Staff



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**Jill Dale**  
Administrative Assistant

**Andrea Berry**  
Agriculture & 4-H Agent