



A creek in McCone County by Tandi Kassner.

McCone County MSU Extension provides non-biased, research-based education to constituents in the county and neighboring areas. In 2022, 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 square miles and Circle is the single incorporated town in the county and is also the county seat. The county has a population of 1,700 people, give or take a few, and agriculture is the primary industry.

ATV Safety

A major programming focus in 2022 was again in All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) safety. ATVs are widely used on most Montana farms and ranches. Farmers and ranchers, as well as their employees and family members, are involved in too many accidents involving ATVs, resulting in serious



ATV Safety on the range, by Tandi Kassner.

injuries and deaths. Approximately 160 youth and 75 adults were involved in ATV Safety-related events through McCone County MSU Extension. Five events included ATV Rider Courses (the five-hour hands-on training that results in ATV Safety Certification by the ATV Safety Institute), school presentations, and youth farm safety camps. The school presentations and youth farm safety camps employ small group sessions that show, up close, the dangers of ATVs and the importance of safety gear, as well as the importance of using age-appropriate ATVs and always riding with adult supervision. In addition to the programming offered, 250 ATV safety brochures were supplied for an ATV safety awareness event that was held in a neighboring community.

Forage Nitrate Testing

Last summer's severe drought, followed by a continued lack of precipitation, produced continued concerns of high nitrate levels in forage produced in the area. High nitrates in feed can be toxic to livestock. From January through October, approximately 130 forage samples were tested for nitrate content in the McCone County MSU Extension office. In addition, approximately 25 forage samples were sent in through MSU Extension to forage testing labs for nutrient analysis as well as nitrate content testing. Of the samples tested, approximately 28% contained nitrates at a level that required special management. With high nitrate levels, producers were given advice on how to mix and blend those forages with other feeds to safely utilize them. In some cases with excessively high nitrate content, producers were advised NOT to feed those forages. In one situation, a local producer experienced the loss of several cows in late winter to forage nitrate poisoning. With a very limited amount of hay remaining, the producer brought several samples to MSU Extension to be tested for each day's feeding to prevent further losses. For any samples with potentially-toxic nitrate levels, advice was given on how to blend them with other low nitrate content feeds.



Extension agent Ken Nelson (making a mess) cuts forage for testing, by Tandi Kassner.

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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