

Teton County



1 Main Ave South / P.O. Box 130, Choteau, MT 59422 | 406-466-2491 | teton@montana.edu | www.montana.edu/extension/teton/



Teton County 4-H at Camp Rotary near Great Falls in July 2022, by Jenn Swanson.

Teton County territory springs from the foothills of the Rocky Mountain Front and extends eastward onto the plains of North Central Montana. With just over 6,000 residents in 2,272 square miles (2.7 persons/square mile), an authentic rural way of life is alive and well here. As further proof, Teton's 6,100 people are outnumbered by 6,300 sheep and 45,000 cattle. Ranching and farming remain the lifeblood of our community, with winter and spring wheat, barley, peas, chickpeas, and lentils as the major crop commodities. Additionally, we are the gateway community to the Bob Marshall Wilderness and a hospitable stop on the road to Glacier National Park and other jewels in the region known as the Crown of the Continent. Teton County MSU Extension has four staff members offering a wide array of programs to support local residents, including a 4-H youth development program with more than 160 members.

Extension Office Connects Residents with Research, Testing, and Education

If variety is the spice of life, it is certainly reflected in the agriculture calls to Teton County MSU Extension. This summer, the office received more than 130 citizen calls for support on topics in agriculture and natural resources, including wildlife interactions, weed and insect identification, crop pest problems, herbicide selection, agricultural economics, crop rotation, weed-seed-free forage certifications, feed value testing, plant disease diagnosis, private applicator licensing, and tree health issues. Additionally, we conducted more than 40 in-office forage nitrate tests. We have expanded our offerings so that beginning in 2023 we can facilitate soil testing and conduct livestock water safety screening using new pH and electrical conductance meters. As one of the stops on the annual Golden

Triangle Cropping Seminar, Teton County will host specialists in January 2023 to discuss cereal grain varieties, pulse crop management, soil fertility, and estate planning.

In response to the extreme drought in our county in 2022 and the corresponding increase in questions about tree health, Teton County MSU Extension hosted a Tree Workshop in November 2022. The event was well-attended and rated as excellent by 67% of attendees. The most common outcome (20%) reported by participants was a commitment to more effective watering practices to help mitigate drought stress, followed by an increased appreciation of the importance of soil testing and compiling cultural management information to aid in diagnosing tree problems. Over 90% of participants desired to attend a follow-up tree pruning seminar scheduled for April 2023.

MSU Extension Revives Strong People Program

Strong People was a popular strengthening program offered in Teton County pre-pandemic. This year, with one new Agriculture agent and a vacancy in the Family & Consumer Science (FCS) office, we are focused on reviving the most popular FCS pre-pandemic programs. We have trained and certified two new instructors and partnered with the Teton County Health Department's Diabetes Prevention Program to bring back Strong People, Strong Bodies, a research-based program to improve balance, mobility, and mood in older adults. Strength training classes are offered twice weekly in Choteau to members of the public and participants in the Diabetes Prevention Program. Starting in January 2023, the same course will be offered in Fairfield to accommodate residents of the county's southern portion. Current participants report great satisfaction with the program, with one resident sharing, "This has been a game-changer for me. It works. I'm so glad I signed up!"

Prevention is a Priority

Non-medical use of prescription opioids and the use of dangerous street opioids are on the rise across the U.S. and both are particularly dangerous to youth. A multi-disciplinary community roundtable was held in December 2022 in Teton County to proactively develop our local capacity to prevent opioid addiction and overdose deaths. This roundtable event included a dynamic educational segment based on the grant-funded research conducted by MSU Extension. This collaborative effort between the MSU Extension Family & Human Development Team, the Teton County MSU Extension, and the Teton County Health Department exemplifies the collaborative spirit and research-based approach of MSU Extension.





Previous Page: (top) Photo of the iconic Ear Mountain, a popular destination for hikers and sightseers on the Rocky Mountain Front, by Jenn Swanson; **(bottom)** Nitrate testing is frequently requested in Teton County, by Jenn Swanson; **This Page:** Trees are a precious commodity along the Rocky Mountain Front, by Jenn Swanson

Teton County Staff



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Jennifer Swanson
Agriculture/4-H Agent

JoAnn McDowell
Administrative Assistant

Jamie Smith
Administrative Assistant