



MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

In Blaine County

Pedometer Program:

Researchers say that moderate amounts of exercise may help prevent weight gain and can promote weight loss in non-dieting individuals. Results from the National Health and Nutrition Survey indicate that approximately 61% of adults are either overweight or obese. Those individuals who are obese are at a higher risk for several health problems, including heart disease and diabetes. It is known that diet combined with physical activity plays an important role in weight management. Typically, this can be achieved by walking 30 minutes everyday. However, not everyone has time to walk in 30-minute sessions. Therefore, the number of steps taken daily has been promoted. Over the past year, 75 individuals participated in the Blaine County Pedometer Program. The program was started to help individuals in the community become more physically active and to promote an overall healthier lifestyle. The program consisted of individuals purchasing pedometers, recording how many steps were taken daily with the pedometer, submitting log sheets and sharing the data with the County Extension Agent. The information provided by the participants was used for statistical data purposes in order to evaluate results and improve the program. For example, participants not only shared steps taken with the pedometers, but also information of recorded changes in health readings, such as cholesterol and bone density. Over the past year, individuals have become more physically active; this is partly due to utilization of the pedometers.

FSNE/EFNEP:

Blaine County is fortunate to have in place a strong Nutrition Education Program. The Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) program was started just a year ago in Blaine County. Sixty to seventy percent of the time for the program is spent communicating, presenting, and teaching basic nutrition to individuals who are food stamp eligible. Food preparation, food safety, and food budgeting are also taught to the individuals. The program also networks within the community in order to provide opportunities to clients who participate. Currently, 20 hours per week is spent in the county for this program. The following agencies in the county have had contact with the FSNE program: Senior Citizens Centers, Food Pantry's, OPA offices, Mental Health offices, Mentally Disabled offices, Head Start programs, and Retirement Homes. This current year, the program will be expanding to teach youth curriculum to the schools which are Title 9 eligible.

Eastern Montana Consolidated Wool Pool Marketing

An MSU Extension Service led marketing enhancement project bringing more profit to Montana sheep producers by opening the world market to their product.

The Eastern Montana Consolidated Wool Pool Market was a proposal developed by Extension Agents from Phillips and Blaine Counties to combine wool marketing pools from eastern Montana and consolidate their wool lot for sale. This proposal had four main goals; 1) Improve grower knowledge of wool quality and on farm processing, 2) Increase total volume of wool for sale for all pools, 3) Separate wool into individual lines based on quality, 4) Increase returns for individual producers.

Blaine County Extension Office is located in the Old Armory Building in Chinook Phone 406-357-3200



An educational resource dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing research-based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of families, communities and agricultural enterprises.

In 2002, the Eastern Montana Consolidated Wool Pool Market was made of seven pools, including Hi Line (Rudyard to Glasgow), Plentywood, Lower Yellowstone (Sidney), Glendive, Wibaux-Beach, Circle, and Jordan. Combined, the pools delivered 207,130 lbs of wool into a storage facility in Jordan from 139 producers. Collectively, this represented 6.25% of the annual wool marketed in Montana (2001 Montana Agricultural Statistics). Total value of this wool was \$145,845. Comparisons to other pool sales indicate that the project resulted in increasing the value of the participating wool producers by 15.5% over other pool wools marketed in the state making the total increase in value worth \$22,605.

By 2003, a total of 224,185 pounds of wool was sold due to the addition of the Pondera and Fairfield pools. Total value received for this wool was \$202,638 applying the 15.5% factor indicates that the project returned \$31,409 additional dollars to the participating growers in 2003. The 2004 figures indicate that on 161,627 pounds of wool from 158 producers the value was \$136,387 and a value added figure of \$21,140 for the growers. This project has provide a total added value of \$75,145 at a marketing cost of \$41,505 for a \$33,648 total profit returned to the producers in the project. The \$41,505 has been spent in Eastern Montana through trucking and warehousing so that cost has boosted the local Eastern Montana economy as well.

Blaine and Phillips County agents secured a grant for \$15,000 in 2002 from the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Growth Through Agriculture program. This money was used during the first year to offset bag grading and coring of the wool for quality tests, shipping to a central storage facility, and re-handling of the wool in the storage facility. The American Sheep Industry Association further supported this project through the acquisition of a Lyco baler to use for the repackaging process, which was a \$7000 value for the participating growers. The Montana Sheep Institute at Montana State University also supported the project through funding the travel requirements of the team that participated in each delivery day.

Conclusion

Results of this project are very positive for the individual sheep producer. All wool lines received a higher price than traditional pool sales of a white and black face line. With the exception of the black face wool, sorting, grading, and coring wool in combination with packaging in a standard square pack, with consistent weight (higher than 300 lbs per bale) returned a higher price. Additionally, wool of a higher quality received a higher price. This provides an economic incentive for producers to purchase sheep with genetic traits that improve wool quality and at the same time compliment weaning weight and carcass quality characteristics. In the third year of the project we have tracked the wool through the marketing chain and have determined that though the improved sorting and packaging, the wool has been presented to the market so that it could enter the world market competitively. Wool from this project in 2004 was delivered to China, Uruguay, Taiwan and South Carolina. The product was purchased by an Australian firm. We have effectively opened up the world market to the small sheep producers in Eastern Montana with this project.