



MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

In Pondera County

Swift Dam Spray Day and noxious weed control efforts

Over 200 acres of public and private land around the popular Swift Dam recreation area have been sprayed for noxious weeds, primarily spotted knapweed. Extension served as the leader in GPS monitoring, sprayer calibration and noxious weed identification education. Over 50 landowners, concerned citizens, and various agencies cooperated on this project. A US Forest Service official said he was "shocked" to see the dramatic improvement in the riparian area around Swift Reservoir over the past two years.

The Marias Weed Group educated 80 people about noxious weeds by conducting the Marias Golf Weed event. Generally, the people who attend this event are not familiar with weeds and the problems associated with them.

4-H Shooting Sports

The Ag Agent instructed 15 new Archery & Air Rifle instructors to benefit Lincoln, Liberty, Toole, Choteau and Pondera County programs. Because of the emphasis placed on 4-H Shooting Sports, an 11-week course was conducted in Pondera County which helped the local 4-H participants win every category except Air Pistol in the four county match as well as placing in the Montana State Postal Match.

Range Management, Livestock Handling, and Animal Nutrition

Range Management was provided to a wide range of interested people ranging from 4th graders to University of Montana graduate students to local ranchers. Contacts included 500 students at the 2004 NILE held in Billings and 13 graduate students at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch.

The Ag Agent worked closely with five ranchers on low stress livestock handling techniques, ultrasound pregnancy testing and early pregnancy ultrasound embryo sexing. At one event, the average time for an animal worked through the chutes was 1½ minutes. This was accomplished using low stress techniques. The heifers, sold with a pre-determined expected calving date and sex of their offspring, brought a \$200/head premium.

Three ranchers learned how to use computer software in ration formulation, which was used on over 2500 cattle. One rancher estimated that it saved him \$50 per head in winter feed cost. With a 400 cow herd, this is a savings of \$20,000 without sacrificing production.

Pondera County Extension Office is located at the Courthouse in Conrad Phone: 406-271-4054



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.

Integrated Pest Management

The Ag Agent installed and monitored cutworm moth traps weekly for ten weeks. This information is used regionally through www.cutworm.org to predict flights and possible infestations throughout the Rocky Mountain Region. We found the only positive West Nile Virus sample verified in this area for 2004 from a three-month monitoring project in conjunction with the Center for Disease Control and MSU Entomology. This information was shared with local & regional health officials.

The Grasshopper RAAT workshop resulted in one producer saving over \$5000 by changing his planned spraying patterns, plus using a very environmentally safe insecticide. GPS monitoring of 25 Soil Moisture Data Sites were shared with producers, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, and the local USDA Farm Services Agency. The Ag Agent also attained Montana & International Certified Crop Advisor status in 2004.

After School Programs

The FCS Agent conducted an after school program in Brady on nutritional snacks for children, who may be receiving welfare and have limited access to a variety of foods. The youth learned about the importance of eating healthy, but fun foods, the food pyramid and how to make snacks that could be incorporated with proper nutrition. Participants made a variety of snacks and it was interesting that some of the youth ate the snacks right there, but a few of them took the snacks home so they would have some food for the next day.

During agricultural month, the FCS Agent presented "Bread in a Bag" at one of the local schools. This was a hands on activity that was both fun and educational. In the days leading up to the program, the students learned how wheat went from the field to the bag of flour. All the supplies needed for making breads were provided, including flour donated by Wheat Montana, and 54 students participated.

Pondera County 4-H

In order for the 4-Hers to go to fair, they have to sign up for the food booth. In order to work for the food booth, they have to be food safety certified. The FCS Agent made this a mandatory class in Pondera County. Working with the County Sanitarian, two classes were presented in Pondera County, one class in Toole County and one class in Glacier County. An estimated 170 members were certified. Each year, this class will be conducted in Pondera County. Food handlers must be certified every 2 years.

Grandparenting and Alzheimer's Education

The FCS Agent presented a class on "Grandparenting: Enriching Lives" to Pondera County residents. Participants indicated they were going to become more active in their grandchildren's activities. In addition, a class on Alzheimer's was presented. Participants ranged from those who have lived with the disease to those who are currently taking care of someone with Alzheimer's to those who were just concerned.