



# MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

## In Sweet Grass County

### **Cull Cow Marketing and Management**

During the two years that Extension conducted this program, 12 producers were involved. Investigations were conducted for custom feeding opportunities for cull cattle. After identifying a custom feeder, approximately 120 cull cattle were delivered to the feed yard. The cattle were tracked through the feeding phase and marketed directly to the packer. During this program, the producers involved learned about the economics of feeding the cull cattle produced on their ranches and they identified markets for the cattle. Over the two years, the average return to the producers was \$62.45 per head added profit. With the average consignment being 8 head, producers were able to capture an extra \$500.00.

### **4-H Judging**

For the past 10 years, Extension has conducted weekly livestock and meats judging practices for the 4-H members in Sweet Grass County. Practices start in September and run until June every year. To date, over 58 students have participated in the judging program. The life skills taught to the students are of the utmost importance; students learn to make decisions, critical thinking skills and oral communication skills. As of December 2004, student livestock and meats judges have received \$24,875.00 in scholarship money to continue judging at 4 different Junior and Senior Colleges.

### **Sheep Grazing**

During the past five years, Extension has been very involved in assisting local sheep producers and local land managers to come together and utilize sheep grazing as a tool for noxious weed management. This program has been very instrumental in helping to control the cost of noxious weed management for those land owners who have participated. It has also stabilized the sheep numbers in this county. Sheep numbers were in a continual decline prior to the grazing program. Sweet Grass County has actually experienced a 4% increase in sheep numbers, which has helped to stabilize the Sweet Grass County Wool Pool, which in turn has helped to stimulate economic development in terms of more agricultural dollars being available for use in this county.

### **Sweet Grass Natural Lamb**

This program has been a direct result of the stabilized sheep numbers in this county. Eight producers have come together and Extension assisted by identifying and receiving funding from three different sources. With these funds, a feasibility study has been conducted and a product designer was hired. Nine new, quick and innovative lamb products have been developed. We have held product demonstrations around Montana and have recently contracted with a local Montana marketing firm to market our products on the West Coast. It currently appears that this initial venture will result in adding value to approximately 800 to 1000 lambs per year.

### **Wolves**

At the request of the Sweet Grass Commissioners, Extension has conducted three wolf information meetings in Sweet Grass County. From these meetings, a clearing-house of wolf information has been developed for the producers of this county. The information gathered and supplied is as simple as suspected sightings, to compiling economic loss data that is supplied by the producers. This information has been used by the County Commissioners in their meetings with Political Leaders and Wildlife Agencies.

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Sweet Grass County Extension Office is located at 515 Hooper Street in Big Timber Phone: 406-932-5146



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.