



# MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

## In Madison/Jefferson/Beaverhead Counties

Beaverhead, Madison and Jefferson Counties comprise a large portion of Southwestern Montana (10,785 square miles) but have a relatively small population of 26,102 people. Reaching a relatively small population dispersed over such a large area is an ongoing challenge for the two Extension offices serving the three counties. The Extension office in Dillon houses one Agent, who delivers programs in Agriculture, Horticulture and 4-H to the people of Beaverhead County. The Whitehall Extension office serves Madison and Jefferson Counties with two FTE Agents. One serves the two counties with programming in Agriculture, Community Development and 4-H, while two other Agents each work half-time on Economic Development programs for Jefferson County.

Agents in the two offices responded to more than 8600 requests for information, in addition to delivering educational programs. The Extension Service uses available media to reach its clientele. The Beaverhead Agent delivers a weekday radio program and the Madison-Jefferson Agent writes a weekly news article for six regional papers. The Economic Development Agents manage the Jefferson Local Development Corporation and work closely with a number of economic development committees and advisory boards, as well as with the two mines that make up one fourth of the Jefferson County tax base. The economic development outreach also includes a weekly news article, a quarterly business roundtable discussion and one-on-one small business counseling.

Ranching remains the dominant industry across much of the area. Extension serves this clientele with a variety of services and educational outreach efforts. Extension helped 274 producers apply for over 2000 tons of Nonfat Dry Milk with a feed value of more than \$120,000 in the 2004 drought-relief program. Agents tested 73 forage samples with the nitrate quick test and certified 40 fields for the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage program, adding a market value of \$10 to \$25 to 3277 tons of hay. Agents in the two offices provided Market Quality Assurance training to 310 youth involved in market livestock projects and recertification training to 330 private pesticide applicators.

Extension plays a vital role as the coordinator and overseer of the 4-H youth program. Approximately 500 youth belong to one of close to thirty community 4-H clubs in the three counties. The 4-H program teaches youth life skills, while involving them in project work and volunteer community service.

Finally, Extension Agents act as a resource for homeowners and small landowners with questions about horticulture, weed identification and management, and tree care. The two offices handled approximately 850 requests for information or identification from homeowners and small landowners.

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Madison-Jefferson Extension Office is located at 309 E. Legion in Whitehall  
Beaverhead Extension Office is located at 2 South Pacific in Dillon

Phone: 406-287-3282  
Phone: 406-683-3785



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.

Beaverhead County is located in southwestern Montana, at the headwaters of the Missouri River. Beaverhead County is the largest county in the state with 3,549,870 acres or 5,551 square miles. The population of the county is 9,202 with about 4,000 living in Dillon. Agriculture is the major industry in the county, consisting of beef cattle, sheep, horses, alfalfa and grass hay. It also has small grains and seed potatoes. The Beaverhead County Extension office had a total of 4,834 contacts, both by phone or walk-ins to the office. Through a weekday radio program it hosts, the Extension Office is able to influence many people. The topics cover all aspects of Extension; family and consumer science, agriculture, 4-H, and community development.

In Beaverhead County, 87 direct home or ranch visits were performed, with 19 being yard and garden concerns, 58 crops/livestock and 10 being miscellaneous items. A total of 869 people contacted the office to have questions or concerns about Crops/Livestock answered, while a total of 300 people had questions about yard and garden topics.

This year training was provided for 126 private applicators to re-certify their Pesticide Applicator's License to be able to continue to buy and utilize restricted use pesticides. The training consisted of weed ID, proper use of pesticides and the proper way to apply pesticides. Beaverhead County was listed as a drought county and facilitates the Nonfat Dry Milk program for 134 producers that took part in the program this year.

The Extension office had a total of 2,742 inquiries regarding 4-H. These contacts were generated either by phone or coming directly into the Extension office. The Market Animal Quality Assurance program was presented to 179 4-H'ers to be eligible to exhibit their market animals at the fair. Many parents were also present to become acquainted with the proper procedures of handling animals. Beaverhead County put on the State 4-H Horse Show that was held September 17-19, 2004. Before the show, 254 businesses/people were contacted to be a part of the sponsorship for the show, which resulted in donations of \$11,580.

The Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program continues to be a big part of Beaverhead County Extension programming. Eighteen producers added value to 1800 tons of forage, which means approximately \$18,000 was added to the Beaverhead economy.

Nitrate Quick Tests were provide to producers of Beaverhead County. Forty forage samples were taken and given the Nitrate Quick test; about 20% of those were sent in for further analyses. These tests give the Extension office the opportunity to educate producers on the dangers of nitrate poisoning and ways to manage the nitrate potential while getting acquainted with the new agent.