



Winter Extension News

Note from Jeannie . . .

Season's Greetings to all! It's hard to believe I've already been on the job for nearly a year. This has been a wonderful community to move to; I truly appreciate how welcoming everyone has been.

Information on upcoming programs in the area this winter and on projects the extension office has been involved in during the last year are included in this newsletter. If you have any questions about the upcoming programs or anything else we can help you with, please call or email us.

Wind Energy Programs

Increasing awareness of Montana's wind energy resources has prompted many landowners to question whether or not they might have the ability to participate in the wind industry. Landowners in North Central Montana will have three opportunities to learn more about wind energy in coming weeks. MSU Extension Regional Economic Development Coordinator, Sarah Hamlen, will present workshops in Shelby, Conrad, and Great Falls during the week of December 10, 2007. These workshops will focus on wind energy opportunities from a landowner's perspective.



Opportunities range from installing small wind turbines on stock tanks or irrigation pumps to large scale wind development. Notes Hamlen, "The recent national focus on alternative energy has escalated the interest in wind energy in Montana. This workshop is designed to help landowners understand the various types of wind generation and to understand the potential risks and rewards of large scale development."

These workshops are free, open to the public, and landowners are encouraged to attend. No advanced registration is required. Workshops will be held in Conrad on December 11, at 11:00 am at The Lobby (no host lunch provided), Great Falls December 11, at 7:00 pm at the Cascade County Extension Office meeting room, and **Shelby** on December 12, at 1:00 pm at the Marias River Electric Building.

For further information about these workshops, please contact Jeannie Olmstead, Toole County Extension Agent, or call Sarah Hamlen at 406-209-7679 or email her at shamlen@montana.edu.

Calendar

December

12 Wind Energy

January

3 Truck Safety

7-10..... Crop Seminars

7, 9, or 10

Livestock Handling

17, 18, or 19

Stockman Seminar

22 or 23

Estate & Credit Planning

28 Annie's Project

29 Small Acreage

28 or 29

Shelterbelt Workshops

February

March

15 .. Tree Orders Due

Contact Us

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS



Farm Semi-Truck Safety Workshop

A program on farm semi-truck safety will be offered

Thursday, January 3 from 9

am to 3 pm in Shelby. Montana Motor Carrier Services will do a presentation on overall truck safety in the morning in the form of a walk-through truck inspection. In the afternoon Steven Don, Auto/Diesel/Agricultural Mechanics instructor from MSU Northern, will discuss the air system and air brake setting. Lunch will be catered by TLC Catering of Shelby. The cost of the workshop is \$25 to cover the cost of the speakers, workshop materials and lunch. This program is sponsored by the Toole County Extension Office. Please RSVP to the Extension Office at 424-8350 so we can have adequate materials and lunches.

Small Acreage Seminar

Small acreage landowners have different concerns than large-scale agriculture producers; therefore a seminar specifically aimed at these landowners will be held in Shelby. The seminar will cover three topics: Pasture Maintenance, by Wade Crouch, Cascade County Extension Agent; Weed Identification and Management by Jeannie Olmstead, Toole County Extension Agent; and Groundwater Pollution. The seminar is hosted jointly by the Toole County Extension Office and the Toole County Conservation District. The seminar will be January 29 from 6 to 9 pm in the Ambulance Shed in Shelby. This program is still being developed, so if you have any suggestions, please contact Jeannie in the Toole County Extension Office.

Cropping Seminar

Montana State University Extension service will be holding the annual series of Cropping Seminars in the Triangle in January. Speaking at the seminars will be Dr. Grant Jackson, from the MSU Western Triangle Agriculture Research Station (WTARS) in Conrad, on fertilizer management and fertilizer amendments; Dr. Greg Kushnak, also from the MSU WTARS, discussing local cereal grain variety trial results and results from a planting date study; Kevin Johnson of Centrol will talk about cheatgrass control and post-harvest weed management; and Dr. Kent McVay, a cropping systems specialist from the MSU Southern Agriculture Research Station at Huntley, who will discuss fertilizer placement and take feedback on what research will most benefit Triangle-area producers. Information on cropland insects, especially the Haanchen Mealy Bug, the Orange Wheat Blossom Midge and wireworms, will be presented by Cecil Tharp of Montana State University and local county agents.

Four Private Pesticide Applicator credits will be available for producers. No pre-registration is required, there is no charge and all producers are encouraged to attend. All seminars will start at 9:00 am. The dates and locations are listed below.

January 7 –

Great Falls – Family Living Center, Fairgrounds, contact Wade Crouch, 454-6980

January 8 -

Choteau – Choteau Public Library, 17 N. Main Ave. contact Mark Major, 466-2491

Conrad – Conrad Community Center, 106 S. Delaware, Dan Picard, 271-4053

January 9 -

Shelby – Ambulance Shed, Oilfield Ave., contact Jeannie Olmstead, 424-8350

Cut Bank – Courthouse Annex, 1210 East Main, contact Damon Bunting, 873-2239

January 10 –

Chester – Our Savior Lutheran Church, 10 E. Madison Ave, Tom Allen, 759-5625

Fort Benton – Ag Center, contact Judee Wargo, 622-3751



MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Annie's Project

Business Management Education for Farm and Ranch Women

Annie's Project will be coming to Montana this winter. Annie's project is a nationally recognized program designed to empower farm and ranch women to become better business managers, operators and partners in the ever-changing, dynamic and complex world of agriculture.

Annie was a woman who grew up in a small town in Northern Illinois. She married a farmer and spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved business partner with her husband. Together they did great things, but it wasn't easy. This project takes her experiences and shares them with farm and ranch women living and working in a complex business.

Annie's Project brings women together to find answers, sharpen business skills, grow confidence, recognize strengths and build friendships. There will be six 3-hour sessions in 12 locations around Montana starting in January, 2008. Shelby will host one location at the Toole County Courthouse. Each Monday evening session will run from 5:00 until 8:00 p.m., and include a light dinner. The sessions will cover topics such as Risk and Personality Assessment; Women and Money; Business Planning; Retirement and Estate Planning; Property Titles; Leases; Risk Management; Grain and Livestock Marketing; Insurance issues; and many facets of computer use. Registration is \$100 and includes all the supplies necessary for the program.

This program is being brought to you by Montana MarketManager and is sponsored by Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Cattle Women, Women Involved in Farm Economics, and Montana State University. Funding has been made available through the Western Center for Risk Management Education in conjunction with USDA-CSREES.

For more information or to register, contact the Montana Grain Growers Association at (406) 761-4596 or visit the website: www.montanamarketmanager.org/Education&Reference/WorkshopCalendar. You can also contact Jeannie at the Toole County Extension Office for more information.

INSECTS

Orange Wheat Blossom Midge Update

The Orange Wheat Blossom Midge (OWBM) (*Sitodiplosis mosellana*) is primarily a pest of spring wheat, although winter wheat is also susceptible. Midge infestation can cause losses of 30-50% and more, and the pest was found in 2006 in Cascade and Flathead counties, and in 2007 was a severe problem in Flathead county. The midge is a small orange fly (similar in size to a mosquito) that lays its eggs in wheat heads during flowering. The larvae do the damage as they feed on the developing kernel. Infected heads will look normal; however, there will be no grain kernel development, only yellow maggots where the kernel should be.

In 2007, a survey project was undertaken by extension agents in the Triangle Region to determine if OWBM were present in this region. The results of this survey show there were NO OWBM caught in any of these traps in the

Triangle. A very few small orange midges were caught in the traps; however, these midges were not the species that are known to be wheat pests. At this time, we have no reason to believe these orange midges were feeding on wheat. The traps in the Triangle were in fields for two to four weeks, and caught very few of the unidentified orange midges. In contrast, traps placed in the Flathead Valley were only out for a few days and caught a range of several to hundreds of the OWBM per day! If you are interested in seeing pictures of traps from this region compared to traps from the Flathead Valley, the extension office can email them to you.

We plan on repeating the OWBM trapping program next summer so we can continue to monitor if this insect spreads. At this time it is only a problem in the Flathead Valley.

Root Lesion Nematodes in Wheat

Johnson, W.A., Johnston, R.H., Grey, W., Burrows, M., and Dyer, A.T

Root lesion nematodes are a type of plant parasitic nematode known to occur in a wide range of crops. A statewide assessment of root lesion nematodes was conducted during 2006-2007 to determine the presence of damaging nematode populations in Montana soils.

The root lesion nematode moves from the soil into the plants' roots where they feed on the plant tissue. After feeding is initiated, nematodes can lay an egg every three days in root tissue or soil. There may be up to five generations each season. Root lesion nematodes are moved from field to field in soil on farm equipment, shoes, animals, and by wind. Root lesion nematodes have two advantages that make them persistent field pests. Firstly, they can enter a 'resting stage' when environmental conditions are harsh and revive under favorable conditions. In addition, they live in the root tissue and do not depend on soil moisture for survival. Studies in Oregon and Washington have attributed up to 36% yield reduction to nematode damage. It is difficult to accurately assess the yield damage from these pests as their distribution within a field and region can be quite patchy, and the damage is exacerbated by poor growing conditions such as drought or heat stress.

Nematode damage can be easily mistaken for nutrient deficiencies or root rot diseases. Affected plants display stunting, yellowing of older leaves, reduced tillering, and loss in test weights.

Though root lesion nematodes have a wide host range, it has been suggested that rotations to non-host crops, such as pea, safflower, flax, and triticale, help manage population densities. Resistant varieties will be the greatest achievement in nematode control; however, this research is just beginning and it is not currently known which varieties may have resistance to root lesion nematodes. There are no economical chemical control options. Nematicides are available, but are very expensive and only used on high-value crops in irrigated areas.

Field sampling procedures for root lesion nematode are being evaluated. Since field populations occur in 'hotspots', extensive sampling throughout a field is required in order to avoid unnecessary bias. Contact your county extension agent for help testing fields for root lesion nematodes.

During 2006 and 2007, pre-plant population densities of root lesion nematodes were measured across Montana. Seventeen counties were sampled, representing 82% of the total wheat acreage in Montana. In 2006, nematodes were found in 12 of 17 counties, in 41% of all field samples surveyed. In 2007, they were found in 11 of 15 counties, in 37% of all field samples surveyed (Table 1). The number of nematodes in soil samples was above the damage threshold of 2500 nematodes/kg dry soil in 14% and 13% of the fields in 2006 and 2007, respectively. In both 2006 and 2007, Toole County had one field (out of ten sampled) with nematode populations higher than the damage threshold.

Haanchen Mealybug Update

Dan Picard, Pondera County Extension Agent

The Haanchen Barley Mealybug has been identified as being in Montana since 2006. The mealybug outbreak in Idaho during 2003 did millions of dollars in damage. In 2007 the mealybug was found in Pondera, Teton, Glacier, and Flathead Counties. This insect has been detected in wheat, but it has been primarily affecting irrigated barley in this area.

The mealybug is usually found in the lower portion of the plant just above the crown area, under leaf sheaths or near the base of the tillers. The presence of a white, waxy, cottony substance is a good sign of a mealy bug infestation. Growers will need to closely observe the plant for the soft bodied insect that is about 1/5 inch long at maturity. Infested plants can look stunted and yellow.

To date, four growers have reported yield losses to the Pondera County Extension Office ranging from an estimated 16 to 45 bushels per acre. The Pondera County Extension Office has asked affected producers to complete a Grower Report Form to track the problem and to identify any practices that may reduce the chances of an infestation. In addition to the yield loss, the plants at harvest can be sticky and can cause problems for producers who straight cut. The barley does not feed right on the header and the return will plug up with the sticky chaff and awns.

At this time there are no known chemical controls and no reported way that the mealybug moves throughout the area. It is not known if it is not seed borne. There may be some cultural controls, but information needs to be collected and studied in more detail.



Toole County Drought Advisory Committee

The Toole County Drought Advisory Committee has begun meeting again this fall. Rick Tomscheck was elected chairman.

At the September meeting the drought committee worked on defining their role in the county. They decided they were to act as a liaison between local producers and state and federal governments to gain better recognition and better solutions for local drought conditions. The committee can collect the facts on a drought by tracking information from the weather stations and range clippings, which can then be used as supporting documents when the county applies for government drought recognition.

Producers are always welcome to attend the Toole County Drought Advisory Committee. Producer reports on how the drought conditions are affecting them as well as concerns about drought assistance programs will be included in the minutes, which will be sent on to the state drought advisory committee. The committee felt that as an organized county drought committee, complaints and recommended solutions endorsed by the board may have more impact than those from a single producer.

Toole County supplied five weather stations a couple of years ago which are located around the county. Precipitation throughout the county varies considerably, and the purpose of the weather stations was to provide more accurate monitoring. Of those stations, only one is currently functional. The county will fund maintenance on the stations this year, and Calvin Kanning agreed to help maintain the weather stations. He is currently in the process of repairing and updating them.

The range clippings were begun two years ago, but have been recorded sporadically. The committee decided this was a useful way to monitor the severity of a drought, and will continue to collect range clippings from designated locations in early July. The committee would also like to see the extension office oversee soil moisture surveys (taken with Paul Brown Probes) in early April, early July and early September. The committee would like training on how to properly do both soil moisture probe surveys and range clippings next spring or early summer.

The committee also feels they can play a role in information dissemination by publishing information about drought conditions and drought relief programs. This can be done in the newspaper, the FSA newsletter and in mailings such as the letter that is mailed with the results of the soil moisture survey in the spring.

The Toole County Drought Advisory Committee plans on sending a representative to the state Drought Advisory Committee Meetings. Rick Tomscheck, as president, attended the September meeting and reported on the activities of the state Committee to the Toole County Drought Advisory Committee. Local committee members participated in a survey by the state committee to help the state committee be more effective.

Is a half rate of fungicide applied early in the season economically advantageous?

Mary Burrows, MSU Extension Plant Pathologist

In a limited test of early season fungicide use on winter wheat, about half of the 15 growers participating received some yield benefit, says Mary Burrows, MSU Extension plant pathologist. The thought was that half-rate applications might be beneficial, because fungicides control leaf diseases including Septoria leaf blight and tan spot, which live on crop residue and have been increasing with no-till soil management.

The test was done with growers in Toole, Pondera, Choteau and Liberty counties and mainly under dryland conditions in a dry year. Of the 15 producer fields in the test, five producers received a one bushel per acre yield increase and one producer a four bu/a yield increase. Eight producers received no yield benefit, and one field was not harvested due to drought. "It's possible that more benefit would be seen in wetter years," Burrows said. "However, this test was too small to prove either benefit or no benefit." This trial will be conducted again next year.

She recommended that if producers wish to try a half rate of fungicide early in the season to see if yields increase, they should do so on a small strip of the field. If producers apply fungicide to the whole field, they should use a check strip with no fungicide to see if there is a yield benefit. More information on how to recognize and control these diseases can be found on the High Plains IPM website at highplainsipm.org.

STOCKMEN

Stockman's Seminar

Nationally renowned veterinarian Dr. Robert Mortimer, calving difficulty expert from Colorado State University is coming to central Montana to headline January's "Stockman's Seminar" being held in Great Falls, Hobson and Dupuyer. Dr Mortimer is one of the best in the world at teaching cattle producers how to; handle cows during calving, attend to cows having calving difficulties, and save calves. With calving season just around the corner, the timing is perfect for this event. Also on the program, Dr John Patterson, MSU Beef Specialist, "will address "Herd Health" issues including vaccinations, parasite control, nutrition and mineral supplementation.

Seminars are scheduled for Thursday, January 17, in Great Falls at the Family Living Center at the Fairgrounds from 12:30 to 4:30 pm; Saturday, January 19, in Dupuyer at the Community Hall, lunch and registration will be held 11:30 to 12:30 with the program to follow from 12:30 to 4:30 pm.

These seminars are brought to you by the County Agents in Central Montana. The cost for the seminar is \$10.00 per person. Vo-Ag students and 4-H members can attend at no charge. No pre-registration is required but plan to come early for the best seat. If you run cows, this is one to put on the calendar now! Call your County Agent with any questions.



Low Stress Stockmanship School

Richard McConnell and Tina Williams,
Hand 'n Hand Livestock Solutions

The low stress stockmanship school will include information the advantages to the handler and the livestock from a low-stress system, using the natural instincts of the livestock and how the handler's attitude, positioning and movement will affect the livestock as well as several other topics. All programs will run from 10 am to 5 pm. The program will be offered Monday January 7 in Havre; Wednesday January 9 in Great Falls at the Family Living Center at the Fairgrounds; and Thursday January 10 in Hobson at the Stevenson Sale Barn. The program will cost \$50 for first person and \$25 for each additional person. 4-Hers can attend for free.

IRM Calving Books Available

2008 Calving Books are currently available in the extension office.

SHELTERBELTS

Tree Orders

The information for tree orders from the Montana DNRC Conservation Nursery is now available in the extension office or the Toole County Conservation District office. It is good to order soon as they sometimes sell out. Orders are due by March 15 to ensure they are on the state truck for free delivery.

As a special note, the nursery plants to stop growing Russian Olive seedlings in two years. This is due to pressure from various conservation groups that are concerned about Russian Olive encroachment in riparian areas. Landowners that want to plant this species and order them from the state nursery will need to do so either this year or next year. Private nurseries may continue to sell Russian Olive in the future if no state ban is implemented. The DNRC Conservation Nursery does have a good supply of them this year. Russian Olive is a hardy mid-sized species that is a good upland survivor and game bird food producer. It is valuable species for upland and saline sites. It should not be planted in riparian areas where it can naturalize and become invasive. Should this occur, control can be obtained with herbicides that include 2,4-D ester, triclopyr, 2,4-D + triclopyr, imazapyr, and glyphosate.

Shelterbelt Establishment & Maintenance

The Glacier County Extension Office, in conjunction with the Toole and Pondera extension offices, is planning a program by MSU/UM Extension Tree Specialist Dr. Peter Kolb on shelterbelt establishment, maintenance and renovation. The dates are January 28 in Cut Bank and January 29 in Shelby and Conrad. Times have not been finalized. Look for upcoming notices or call the office for more information.

FINANCIAL SEMINAR

Upcoming Financial Seminars

Basic Estate Planning and How to be Credit Savvy

Presented by Marsha Goetting

MSU Extension Professor & Extension Family Economics Specialist
MSU Dept. of Agricultural Economics & Economics

Shelby:

January 22

Basic Estate Planning

Time: TBA (Afternoon)

There is no cost for the Seminar
but an optional fee of \$10 for
materials.

How to Be Credit Savvy

Time: TBA (Evening)

Both Seminars will be at the
**Marias River
Electric Meeting Room**

Conrad:

January 23

Basic Estate Planning

Time: TBA (Afternoon)

There is no cost for the Seminar
but an optional fee of \$10 for
materials.

How to Be Credit Savvy

Time: TBA (Evening)

Both Seminars will be at the
**Conrad
Community Center**

Call to register by January 17
Toole County 424-8350
Pondera County 271-4054

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The Montana State University Extension Service is an educational resource dedicated to improving people's lives by providing research based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of families, communities and agricultural enterprises.

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