

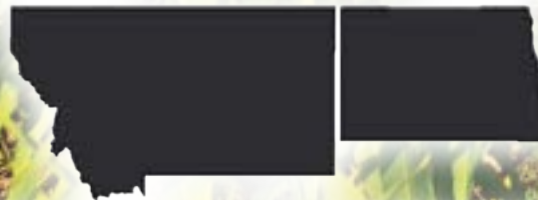
**March 2024**

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**Inside This Issue:**

**MONDAK**



**AG DAYS & TRADE SHOW**

A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event

**Farm & ranch monthly magazine published by The Roundup**  
PO Box 1207 • Sidney, MT 59270 | 406-433-3306 | [info@roundupweb.com](mailto:info@roundupweb.com)



2 AG ROUNDUP MARCH 2024

# MonDak Ag Days & Trade Show March 7-8

Submitted by Marley Manoukian Voll,  
MSU Richland County Extension Agent

MonDak Ag Days & Trade Show is scheduled for March 7-8 at the Richland County Event Center Sidney.

The trade show will open Thursday at 8 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. and again on Friday from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. There will be vendors onsite with their information, products, and services. Breakfast will be served both days with the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce hosting on Thursday and Richland County Farm Bureau hosting on Friday. Lunch will be available at the Event Center both days, as well. In lieu of the traditional banquet, the MonDak Ag Days Committee invites the vendors and the ag community to join us in a pitchfork fondue! The Pitchfork Fondue will be onsite at the Richland County Event Center. In addition to a great meal, the Pitchfork Fondue will have a cash bar hosted by the Ranger Lounge and Casino and live music.

The educational sessions will start Thursday at 10 a.m. and you can expect topics including an update from Greenwood Renewable Ventures, Grain Storage & Drying, a Seed Crushing Plant Update, the Basics of Estate Planning, Carbon Credits, Livestock Risk Protection, and an Agriculture and Government panel featuring elected officials.

The educational program on Friday will also begin at noon and topics include Feral Hogs, Warm Season Grass Ecology and Management (1 pesticide credit available), What's Next? 2024 Crop Market Outlook, and Mapping and Reporting Yields.

Please join Richland County Extension at the Richland County Event Center March 7-8 to take in MonDak Ag Days & Trade Show.

## MonDak Ag Days Agriculture In Government Panelists

Thursday, March 8, 4 p.m.

Pictured right, back row: (L to R) Stacy Zinn, 2nd Congressional U.S. Representative; Joel Krautter, 2nd Congressional U.S. Representative; Ric Holden; 2nd Congressional U. S. Representative; Bob Phalen, State District Senate District 17, Dawson. Front row: (L to R:) Steve Hinebauch, State District Senate District 17, Dawson; Rhonda Knudsen, State Senate District 15, Roosevelt; Brandon Ler, State House District 33; Morgan Thiel, State House District 30



A poster for the MonDak Ag Days &amp; Trade Show Agriculture in Government panel. The background is a field of golden wheat. At the top, the word "MONDAK" is written in a large, bold, black font, with a silhouette of the state of North Dakota below it. Below that, "AG DAYS &amp; TRADE SHOW" is written in a smaller, black font, followed by "A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event" in a very small font. The main title "AGRICULTURE IN GOVERNMENT" is in a large, bold, black font. Below that, the dates "MARCH 7-8 2024" and the location "RICHLAND COUNTY EVENT CENTER" are listed. The trade show hours are listed: "TRADE SHOW HOURS THURSDAY | 8AM - 5PM FRIDAY | 7AM - 3PM". Below the hours, it says "PRESENTING: 4:00PM". At the bottom, there are eight portraits of the panelists, arranged in two rows of four. Below each portrait is the name of the panelist. At the very bottom, there are logos for the sponsors: the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce, EGT, C&amp;B, and Butler.



STACY ZINN



JOEL KRAUTTER



RIC HOLDEN



BOB PHALEN



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RHONDA KNUDSEN



BRANDON LER



MORGAN THIEL







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Act. BW: **92** • Adj. WW: **736** • WW-R: **115**  
CED: **+6** BW: **+1.6** WW: **+74** YW: **+132** SC: **+1.72**



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**RA All Pro 369** 20832357

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Act. BW: **79** • Adj. WW: **682** • WW-R: **107**  
CED: **+15** BW: **-4.1** WW: **+46** YW: **+85** SC: **-0.62**



**RA Willy 388** 20834333

Will Resilient J055 x RA X53 Traveler 719  
Act. BW: **86** • Adj. WW: **720** • WW-R: **113**  
CED: **+5** BW: **-0.7** WW: **+66** YW: **+130** SC: **+0.33**



**RA 040 Success 3102** 20832325

RA Success 040 x 334Y Game Day 5185 J V  
Act. BW: **73** • Adj. WW: **739** • WW-R: **115**  
CED: **+11** BW: **+1.2** WW: **+77** YW: **+137** SC: **+1.95**



**RA Virtue 3111** 20835658

Sitz Virtue 11710 x Sitz Asset 402C  
Act. BW: **93** • Adj. WW: **808** • WW-R: **126**  
CED: **+3** BW: **+3.1** WW: **+85** YW: **+133** SC: **+1.22**



**RA Glory Days 3140** 20835627

SITZ Commerce 670F x Sitz Uncommon  
Act. BW: **90** • Adj. WW: **736** • WW-R: **115**  
CED: **+0** BW: **+3.3** WW: **+71** YW: **+119** SC: **+0.73**



**RA Reward 3145** 20832334

Sitz Reward 12220 x Mohnen Success 187  
Act. BW: **92** • Adj. WW: **716** • WW-R: **112**  
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# New Events Added to MonDak Ag Days March 7-8

## Pitchfork Fondue, Live Music and “Government in Agriculture” Panel Added This Year

By Kali Godfrey

**Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture Director**

The Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture brings the MonDak Ag Days & Trade Show to the Richland County Event Center March 7-8.

MonDak Ag Days offers nearly 50 agribusinesses in their tradeshow as well as education sessions throughout each day.

The Sidney FFA Club hosts a free-will lunch both days of the tradeshow. Breakfast will be provided by the Sidney Chamber on Thursday and by Farm Bureau on Friday.

Marley Voll, our Richland County MSU Extension Agriculture agent coordinated 2 full days of education sessions including local topics such as bioenergy from sugar beets, a seed crushing plant update from Buckshot Seeds, courses to

provide a pesticide point and more.

There will be a “Government in Agriculture” panel with an update from our local legislators and discussions with 2024 candidates on agriculture-related topics.

Rather than a formal banquet, the tradeshow will open to a pre-social and pitchfork fondue. The Pitchfork fondue is a ticketed event at \$25/ticket. The Pitchfork fondue features live music from local artist, Judd Burman and a cash bar from the Ranger Lounge Casino & Eatery. Tickets are available online, at the Sidney Chamber, and at the door of the event.

The Sidney Chamber is grateful to our sponsors for their continued support in bringing this event to town: Tri-County Implement, EGT, C&B Operations, Stockman Bank, Butler Equipment, Farmers Choice, Mon-Kota and Sidney Livestock Market Center.

**MONDAK**  
AG DAYS & TRADE SHOW  
A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event

**TRADE SHOW HOURS**  
THURSDAY | 8AM - 5PM  
FRIDAY | 7AM - 3PM  
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# MONDAK



# Thursday - Friday

# March 7-8, 2024

AG DAYS  
A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event

## Thursday, March 7th Schedule:

7am .....	Tradeshow Opens Breakfast <i>Provided by Sidney Chamber</i>	1pm .....	Basics of Estate Planning <i>Lauren Sukut &amp; Andria Mueller</i>
10am .....	Bioenergy from Sugarbeets <i>Casey Korejwo</i>	2pm .....	Getting Paid For Better Grazing: Building Soil Health Through Improved Grazing Practices <i>Chris Mehus &amp; Tara Povalish</i>
10:45am .....	Drying and Storage Guidelines for MonDak Crops and Climate <i>Kenneth Hellevang</i>	3pm .....	Livestock Risk Protection <i>Wendy Becker</i>
12:15pm .....	Seed Crushing Plant Update <i>Mark Erickson</i>	4pm .....	Agriculture & Government <i>Candidate Discussion</i>
		6pm .....	Pitchfork Fondue



## \$25 Pitchfork Fondue

6pm Thursday at the Richland County Event Center

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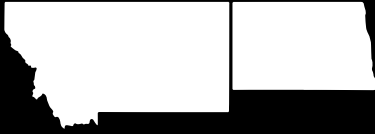


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# MONDAK



**AG DAYS**

A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event

# Thursday - Friday March 7-8, 2024

## Friday, March 8th Schedule:

7am .....	Breakfast <i>Provided by Farm Bureau</i>	12:30pm.....	What Next? 2024 Crop Market Outlook <i>Frayne Olson</i>
10am .....	The Wild Pig Situation: Why Montana Should Care <i>MSU Extension, Montana Department of Livestock, and USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services</i>	3pm .....	Tradeshow Closes
11:30am .....	Warm Season Grass Ecology and Management <i>Tim Seipel (One Pesticide Point)</i>		



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# MONDAK



## AG DAYS & TRADE SHOW

A Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture Event

## & PITCHFORK FONDUE

### Thurs & Fri, March 7th & 8th

### Richland County Event Center

#### Thursday

- 8:00 AM ..... Trade Show
- 10:00 AM - 10:45 PM ..... Bioenergy from Sugarbeets  
*Casey Korejwo*
- 10:45 AM - 12:15 PM ..... Drying and Storage Guidelines for  
MonDak Crops & Climate  
*Kenneth Hellevang*
- 12:15 PM - 1:00 PM ..... Seed Crushing Plant Update  
*Mark Erickson*
- 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM ..... Basics of Estate Planning  
*Lauren Sukut & Andria Mueller*
- 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM ..... Carbon Credits  
*Chris Mehus*
- 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM ..... Livestock Risk Protection  
*Wendy Becker*
- 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM ..... Agriculture & Government
- 6:00 PM ..... Pitchfork Fondue

#### Friday

- 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM ..... The Wild Pig Situation: Why Montana Should Care  
*Jared Beaver*
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM ..... Warm Season Grass Ecology  
and Management - 1 Pesticide Point  
*Tim Seipel*
- 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM ..... What Next? 2024 Crop Market Outlook  
*Frayne Olson*
- 3:00 PM ..... Trade Show

**Lunch Available Both Days Courtesy of FFA**

**\$25 Fondue Tickets Available Online**  
**or at the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce**  
**(909 S. Central Ave. Sidney, MT)**  
 Businesses can request to be invoiced for tickets as well



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# The Wild Pig Situation



**NORTHEAST MONTANA  
FERAL SWINE TOUR**

Wild pig populations are expanding across the US and Canada. Their destructive behavior can impact landowners, livestock producers, waterways and wildlife. Learn why wild pigs are such a problem, their threat to Montana, and the best way to respond to this threat.

Montana Dept. of Livestock, MSU Extension, and USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services will present in these locations:

DATE	TIME	TOWN	MEETING LOCATION
March 5	10 AM	Havre	4-H Chuckwagon, 1676 US HWY 2
March 5	3 PM	Chinook	Chinook Senior Center - 324 Pennsylvania St.
March 6	9 AM	Malta	Phillips County Library Meeting Room
March 6	3 PM	Glasgow/Ft Peck	Fort Peck Interpretive Center
March 7	10 AM	Scobey	Ambulance Room - 106 Railroad Ave E.
March 7	2 PM	Plentywood	Cousin's Restaurant - 118 S. Main Street
March 8	10 AM	Sidney	MonDak Ag Days - Richland Co. Event Center

Montana does NOT have feral swine. You can help keep it that way. Report sighting to Montana Department of Livestock - 406-444-2976

By Katelyn Sponheim

The wild pig population has sent a worrying ecological ripple through several parts of the United States and Canada. While Montana does not currently have feral swine, having management in place prepared to deal with their threat will likely prevent massive damage to our land, livestock operations, waterways and native wildlife. Landowners, livestock producers, public access hunters, and the general public all have a stake in the havoc that comes with an incursion of wild pigs.



Jared Beaver

Jared Beaver, MSU Assistant Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist, and others from the Montana Department of Livestock, USDA-APHIS Wildlife services, and Montana Invasive Species Council, will speak Friday March 8, at 10 a.m., at MonDak Ag Days on the subject: "The Wild Pig Population: Why Montanans Should Care". Just one of seven stops on the Northeast Montana Feral Swine Tour, Jared and his colleagues hope to spread awareness and education on how to best manage the threat. Part of the discussion will explain why recreational hunting is not the solution.

The co-founder and co-host of the Working Wild University podcast, which "immerses the listener in the action with the people and wildlife of the American West while exploring the challenges and success of sharing and managing working landscapes that support both people and wildlife", Jared works to bring together private landowners and wildlife biologists by finding common ground. His program focuses on habitat management of large mammals, population ecology, improving wildlife monitoring methods, habitat management, and wildlife-livestock conflict mitigation.

Jared wanted to thank the county extension agents who have worked tirelessly with him to put the Northeast Montana Feral Swine Tour in motion. Marley Voll, Richland County; Colleen Pagar, Hill County; Juli Snedigar, Blaine County; Christina Murphy, Phillips County; Shelley Mills, Valley County; Inga Hawbaker, Daniels County; and Jack Bazemore, Sheridan County; who has since accepted the county extension agent position for Beaverhead County.

## Livestock Risk Protection Subject Of Ag Days Presentation

Ranchers take risks every day, with their livelihood subject to weather, disease, and markets. On Thursday, March 7, Wendy Becker will speak about the new, more rancher friendly, Livestock Risk Protection insurance policy that is designed to insure against declining market prices.

The federally subsidized program which is available through crop insurance agents, has evolved to be more rancher friendly. Becker said it has changed quite a bit from when it was first presented. "There are new guidelines worth taking a second look at to see if it works for livestock operators," she stated.

There are different coverage levels and different classes of species to protect against a decline in livestock prices. Learn more about the program, eligibility,

coverage, and restrictions that are making this program an opportunity to protect against risk factors for ranchers.

Becker is the MSU Extension agent located in Roosevelt County. She received her degrees from Northwest College, Montana State University and North Dakota State University in animal and range science. She has worked as an extension agent for the last 19 years in both the county and reservation settings. Her extension program focuses on agriculture, natural resources, 4-H and youth development, and community development. She also farms and ranches with her husband and three sons.



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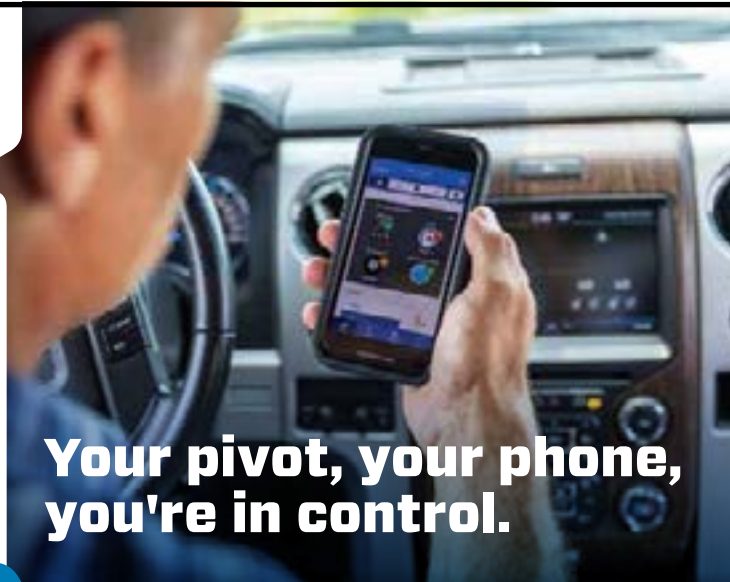
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# Bell Earns Top Honors With Golden Harvest



(Pictured L-R) Paige Bell being held by her father, soybean grower Devin Bell, who is also holding his eldest son, Rhett. Proud wife, Kaitlin, holds their youngest, Tyler. (Photo submitted)

By Dianne Swanson

Sidney farmer Devin Bell earned a spot with the top soybean growers in the country in the Go for the Gold Soybean Yield Contest sponsored by Golden Harvest Soybeans. His test plot of 20 acres of Golden Harvest soybean GH 0502XF yielded 69.51 bushels per acre, about two bushels more than his other varieties. "It was the highest yields I've ever had," Bell said. He farms about 250 acres of soybeans on irrigated land.

Farmers Choice, which is new to the area and sells Golden Harvest seed, approached Bell about trying their soybean seed. He is pleased that he did, as the results were better than expected. The win also brings a trip to Americas largest farmer-led, farmer-focused agricultural show in the country, the 2024 Commodity Classic, in Houston the end of February. Bell is looking forward to visiting with the vendors and attending seminars to extend his educational knowledge in commodity crops.

Bell says he was born into a farming family, went to college in Iowa for an Ag degree, then returned to join his parents Raymond and Trish Bell in the farming business. He has been farming in partnership with his father for 10 years and hopes to allow his kids an opportunity to farm as well. Alongside soybeans Bell grows alfalfa, corn, and wheat and has a small cow calf operation. Devin is married to Kaitlin Bell and they have three children: Rhett (5), Paige (3), and Tyler (1).

Golden Harvest says it is celebrating 50 years as a seeds partner with farmers to deliver custom solutions for each unique agronomic challenge. It is proud to recognize farmers who achieved top honors in the 2023 "Go for the Gold" yield contest with soybeans.

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# Korejwo To Give Update On Bioenergy From Sugar Beets

By Dianne Swanson

Casey Korejwo, Greenwood Renewable Ventures COO and president, will speak at MonDak Ag Days at 10 a.m., Thursday, March 7, on the future of sugar beets as a biofuel and give an update on the progress being made to develop a renewable energy plant just north of Fairview.

For almost a year, GRV has been working with Two Rivers Energy Growers Association to contract sugar beet acres to devote to the plant. The new growers association was formed after the dissolution of MonDak Beet Growers Association, specifically to negotiate with GRV. Progress was made very quickly with a sufficient number of growers already signed up to make the plant viable. However, both GRV and Two Rivers Energy Growers Association actively continue to seek more grower participation.

GRV has an agreement in place for 120 acres just north of Fairview and is currently working with an engineering firm to get an overall picture of what would be Phase I showing inputs and outputs. They also continue to work to secure

financial backing from private investors as well as state and federal incentives.

Korejwo is an oil and gas industry expert who has over 15 years of experience with a focus on energy transition in recent years. He is currently Greenwood Renewable Ventures COO and president, also president and COO of Pulse Energy Partners, and Cowboy Clean Fuels senior vice-president of operations. Korejwo is a co-founder of GRV and Pulse Energy Partners. GRV is the second company founded by the team that is focused on renewable energy and follows their founding of Pulse Energy Partners to focus on investment opportunities in energy transition. The team's experience in renewable energy also includes prior roles leading the development and operations of Cowboy Clean Fuels. Previously, Korejwo was Jagged Peak Energy staff reservoir engineer. Prior to joining Jagged Peak Energy, he served as asset manager at Ultra Petroleum Association, holding several reservoir and leadership roles while there. He started his career with Encana Oil and Gas, holding various operations and reservoir engineering positions. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in petroleum engineering from Colorado School of Mines and is a registered professional engineer.

It's a very exciting time for GRV, beet growers, and the community. Be sure to take in this informational presentation at 10 a.m., Thursday, March 7 at Ag Days.

## Basics of Estate Planning To Be Featured At MonDak Ag Days March 7 & 8

Lauren Sukut, Edward Jones financial advisor, Sidney, MT, and Andria Mueller, Minot, ND, will present the Basics of Estate Planning from 1-2 p.m., Thursday, March 7 during MonDak Ag Days to be held March 7 and 8 at the Richland County Event Center, Sidney.

Sukut's office looks to help their clients do life together. Emotionally charged situations can be difficult to process but having the right team on your side to walk with you can make all the difference.

She has worked with estate attorney Andria Mueller, Minot, ND, who specializes in creating estate plans and trusts. She is licensed in North Dakota, Montana and Nebraska. Learn the basics of what to expect when you start the estate planning process. Mueller will break down the terms and help you understand more of what goes into planning an estate.



Andria Mueller



Casey Korejwo, who is the COO of Greenwood Renewable Ventures and president, will speak at Ag Days on the future of sugar beets as a biofuel and give an update on the progress being made to develop a renewable energy plant just north of Fairview. (Submitted Photo)

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# Improving Grazing Practices & How Ranchers Can Make Carbon Credits Work Panel To Speak At MonDak Ag Days March 7

Chris Mehus, Chelsea Phipps, Tara Povalish will take the stage on Thursday, March 7 at MonDak Ag Days to speak on improving grazing practices and how ranchers can make carbon credits work for their operation.

Ag Days is held at the Richland County Event Center, and all educational speakers are free to attend.

Tara Povalish's portion will zero in on the carbon market and how the credits function.

## Hellevang To Speak On Drying & Storage Guidelines

Kenneth Hellevang will be speaking at the annual MonDak Ag Days in Sidney, at the Richland County Event Center, March 7-8. He will speak at 10:45 p.m. Thursday, March 7.

Ken's topic is "Drying and Storage Guidelines for MonDak Crops and Climate". Ken holds a Ph.D in engineering, is a registered professional engineer, a tenured NDSU professor and an Extension Engineer of Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering. As such, he has provided education and technical assistance in grain drying and storage to farmers, agribusiness, and professionals across the U.S. and internationally since 1980.

He will be discussing what practices and current technology he recommends for the MonDak region crops and climate. An understanding of the fundamentals of drying and storage is essential to helping producers pivot their program according to weather patterns.

Having researched grain, bean, and oilseed drying and storage systems extensively, Hellevang has been recognized by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers for his work. He holds the grade of Fellow, the highest honor bestowed on a member, and in 2018 was recognized as Professional Engineer of the Year. His use of engineering to improve the handling and storage of grain and food products merited him the Society's Sukup Global Food Security Award in 2019.



**Kenneth Hellevang**

Chris Mehus is the Western Sustainability exchange executive director. WSE works with ranchers, businesses, and organizations to balance the health of soil, water, climate, and wildlife habitat while increasing ranch profitability through regenerative agricultural practices, according to their website, [westernsustainabilityexchange.org](http://westernsustainabilityexchange.org). Chelsea, along with her husband, run a family ranch near Jordan, MT, and have been pursuing more soil-friendly practices for over a decade.

Mehus was born, raised, and educated in Montana. He uses his degrees in Wildlife Biology and Range Science to "assist and advocate for ranchers who have a strong conservation ethic". He has spent 10 years ranching in southern Montana, as well as working in rural business, economic, and financial planning. This working knowledge gives him a perspective on what drives ranchers to seek out non-conventional methods. Mehus will cover basic principles and strategies for improving your grazing system at 2 p.m. The subsequent benefits to plant communities and soil health open the door to carbon credit trading for ranchers. The Northern Great Plains Improved Grazing Carbon Program pays ranchers to "implement practices that increase the potential for the soil to sequester additional soil organic carbon". These practices range from increasing pasture splits, reducing grazing days, and letting land rest. The carbon levels are measured and reported in order to correctly transact the credits to land managers. The financial support from the credits encourages ranchers to use these practices, and long-term, improve the land they use for their operation.

Carbon's availability in soil determines water holding capacity, water filtration rates, available forage, and better soil structure; especially important in drought conditions. Native, a public benefit corporation, offers the contracts and performs the testing necessary to be part of the carbon credit exchange. Ranchers or land managers commit to, making a statement of public intent, 40 years of managing their land for optimum soil health in return for 40 years of carbon credits and payments. Knowing additional infrastructure is necessary for these changes, upfront capital is available to cover these costs and "bridge the key gap in the development of a carbon project".



**Chris Mehus**

# Initial Private Applicator Training March 5-6

MSU Extension will be offering an Initial Private Applicator Training on Tuesday, March 5, in Culbertson and Wednesday, March 6 in Glendive. Registration begins at 7:45 a.m. with the program starting at 8 a.m. and adjourning at 5:15 p.m. The program will be held at the Dry Prairie Rural Water Building, 5808 MT-16, Culbertson and the Yellowstone River Inn, 1903 N. Merrill Ave., Glendive.

Initial Private Applicator Trainings are for individuals who want to obtain a Montana Private Applicator License, which is required for anyone who is applying restricted-use pesticides to land that they own or lease. In addition, those who currently hold a Private Applicators license can attend to receive up to 6 recertification credits. If applicators have questions regarding their points or their license, please contact the Richland County MSU Extension Office at 406-433-1206; the Roosevelt County Extension Office at 406-787-5312 or Gabby Sexton at 406-377-4277 or Gabrielle.sexton@montana.edu.

The training will cover topics including the private applicator license, tribal license, reading and understanding product labels, record keeping requirements, pesticide law and regulations, integrated pest management, spray equipment calibration, pesticide safety and pesticides' fate in the environment. Speakers will include MSU Extension Agents from Valley, Daniels, Richland, McCone, Phillips, and Roosevelt counties. Additionally, Cecil Tharp, MSU Extension Pesticide Education Specialist and Diana DeYoung, Montana Department of Agriculture, will be presenting.

Lunch will be provided, please register by March 1 to provide an accurate meal count. For more information or to register, please contact the Roosevelt County Extension Office at 406-787-5312. Cost is \$20 for those attending for a license and \$10 for others.



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# Decline In Sheep & Lamb Inventory Indicates Opportunity For Ranchers

The U.S. sheep and lamb inventory is down 2%.

By NDSU Agriculture Communication

The all sheep and lamb inventory in the U.S. on Jan. 1 totaled 5.03 million head, down 2% from 2023, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service. The report indicated a year-over-year decrease of 2% in North Dakota, 3% in Minnesota and 9% in South Dakota.

"U.S. lamb consumption was 1.1 lbs. per person per year for 2023, and has room for growth domestically and abroad," says Travis Hoffman, NDSU Extension and UMN Extension sheep specialist. "We have the opportunity to rebuild our U.S. numbers to compete against imported lamb and match demand, as feeder and slaughter lamb prices are forecasted to increase 3-7% in 2024 and 2025."

## USDA Seeks Applications To Help Farmers & Ranchers Venture Into New & Better Markets

Submitted by Marlee Johnston, USDA Rural Development

Bozeman – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to help agricultural producers maximize the value of their products and venture into new and better markets.

USDA is making the grants available under the Value-Added Producer Grants [lnks.gd] program. The grants help farmers and ranchers generate new products, create marketing opportunities, and increase their incomes through value-added activities.

Eligible applicants include independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

USDA may award up to \$75,000 for planning activities or up to \$250,000 for working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product.

Planning activities may include conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans. Working capital expenses may include costs associated with processing, marketing, advertising, inventory, and salaries.

USDA is particularly interested in applications that will advance Biden-Harris Administration priorities to:

- Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD-funded projects; and
- Help rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

Applications for 2024 grants are now being accepted.

Paper applications must be postmarked and delivered by mail, email or in person to one of Montana's six offices [lnks.gd] by 4:30 p.m., MST, April 16, 2024. Electronic applications are due by 9:59 p.m. MST, April 11, 2024.

Additional information is available on page 2919 of the Jan. 17 Federal Register. [lnks.gd]

For more information or to apply here in Montana, contact USDA Rural Development Agriculture Producer State Specialist Marlee Johnston, at marlee.johnston@usda.gov.

The U.S. breeding ewe and ram inventory declined 2% with 60,000 fewer head, to 3.67 million head. This decrease is expected to lead to a 1-4% decline in U.S. lamb production in 2024 and 2025, according to the Livestock Marketing Information Center.

South Dakota is seventh in the nation in breeding sheep with 158,000 head. Minnesota is ranked 13th with 79,000 head, and North Dakota is 27th with 45,000 head.

The 2023 lamb crop of 3.03 million head was down 2% from 2022, and the January 2024 market lamb and sheep inventory, reported at 1.36 million head, was down 2% from 2023.

The 2023 North Dakota lamb crop decreased 8% to 44,000 head, year over year, but gained 7% in production efficiency, reaching 119 lambs per 100 ewes. Though there are fewer ewes, North Dakota producers are improving their management and return per ewe, says Hoffman.

The Minnesota lamb crop dropped 6% to 85,000 head of lambs. However, Minnesota is second only to Virginia for sheep production efficiency in the nation with 133 lambs produced per 100 ewes.

South Dakota leads the Northern Plains region, producing 175,000 head with an intermediate lambing efficiency of 122 lambs per 100 ewes in 2023.

Shorn wool production in the U.S. was 22.7 million pounds in 2023, with an average weight of 7 lbs. and a \$1.56/lb. average price paid. The total value for wool produced was \$35.3 million.

According to Hoffman, Minnesota sheep producers tend to emphasize performance with a variety of medium wool breeds in small-to-medium farm flocks, while larger operations with fine wool breeds are more common in western North and South Dakota.

Wool prices for medium wools have remained sluggish over the past several years, averaging \$0.30/lb. in Minnesota, while fine-fibered wools had higher returns, averaging \$0.95/lb. in North Dakota and \$1.25/lb. in South Dakota.

Overall, current feeder and slaughter lamb prices have remained high to begin the year with prices of more than \$250 per hundredweight for 60-90-lb. lambs expected for the spring.

"The enthusiasm of young producers is evident, and with lower U.S. sheep supply, opportunity exists for near or greater than \$200/hundredweight slaughter lambs this summer, resulting in a profitable 2024 lamb crop enterprise," Hoffman says.

The full USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service report is available online.



The 2023 North Dakota lamb crop decreased 8% to 44,000 head, year over year. (NDSU photo)

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Wed, Mar 20th.....Feeder Special, All Class Cattle Sale 9:00

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Wed, Apr 3rd .....Feeder Special, All Class Cattle Sale 9:00

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Fri, Apr 12th..... Thiessen's Regency Acres Angus 1:00pm  
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Wed, Apr 24th ..... All Class Cattle Sale 9:00



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# NDSU Extension Offers Updated Crop Compare Program For 2024

The spreadsheet helps farmers compare cropping alternatives.



The Crop Compare spreadsheet helps farmers compare cropping alternatives using the direct costs and yields from the 2024 projected crop budgets for North Dakota. (NDSU photo)

## By NDSU Agriculture Communication

North Dakota State University Extension has updated the Crop Compare program, which is a spreadsheet designed to compare cropping alternatives.

The Crop Compare program is available online at [ndsuhq.com/cropcompare](https://ndsuhq.com/cropcompare).

The program uses the direct costs and yields from the 2024 projected crop budgets for nine regions of North Dakota, but producers are encouraged to enter the expected yields and input costs for their farm.

The user designates a reference crop and enters its expected market price. Depending on the region, a broad selection of nine to 18 crops are compared. The program provides the prices for competing crops that would be necessary to provide the same return over variable costs as the reference crop.

“Producers can compare these “break-even” prices to expected market prices to see which crop is most likely to compete with the reference crop,” says Ron Haugen, NDSU Extension farm management specialist. “Grain prices can move quickly. The program provides a tool for producers to check the changing scenarios until final planting decisions are made this spring.”

The program includes an underlying assumption that fixed costs, such as machinery ownership, land, and the owner’s labor and management, do not vary among crop choices and therefore do not need to be included in the analysis.

Haugen adds, “In practice, there may be differences in fixed costs that should be considered. For example, there may be additional labor, management and risk associated with a competing crop.”



# Biebers Awarded 2nd Prize at National Wheat Yield Contest

By Dianne Swanson

Local farmers, Justin Bieber, and his dad, Jeff, have been looking to increase profitability on their 1700 acres of irrigated farmland since the closure of the Sidney Sugars plant ended decades of sugar beet growing. The three primary crops they now raise are corn, wheat, and soybeans. Looking to increase yields, Justin delved into various varieties of wheat. The duo settled on WestBred Wheat 9719 due to its proven high yield and good standability.

That variety, with increased nitrogen, and trying some new farming practices, yielded 109.33 bushels per acre, which was an excellent bump in yields. It also earned the

Biebers second place at the National Wheat Contest and a trip to the 2024 Commodity Classic in late February in Houston, TX, where they will be honored along with other winners at the National Wheat Show banquet. Jeff said that theirs was the first entry from this area in the contest, but many farmers have grown over 100 bushels per acre over the years.

The contest field seed was pre-treated with a fungicide/insecticide treatment and the field was fall fertilized prior to planting on the previous year's soybean field. Typically, their fertilizer rates for nitrogen are 150-160 units broadcast in the fall. The trial field had 160 units of nitrogen on it. Then, after

tillering, during jointing, they used a sprayer with stream bars on it to apply 20 gallons per acre of 28%, which is the equivalent of 60 more units of nitrogen. This was applied on about half the field so that half had a total of 220 units of applied nitrogen. Justin said that one benefit of waiting to apply in season is that the wheat plant will not tiller as much as if the nitrogen was applied before planting. By waiting until tillering was completed, the plant focuses on making grain instead of making a bigger plant. The difference in the two halves of the field was remarkable with the half receiving the extra nitrogen taking on a fuller, darker, healthier look.

The real test came when the combine entered the field. The first half with the 160 units of nitrogen yielded 90 bushels per acre, so it was running better than Bieber's average yields just from switching to a WestBred variety. When they entered the test half of the field with 220 units of nitrogen, the yield monitor in the combine showed a definite increase in bushels per acre. Documentation is required to enter the National Wheat Yield Contest, so Leslie Tveit was recruited to certify that the acres were measured correctly, and the combine and truck were empty before starting the trial. The truck was then weighed at the elevator to verify the production. Thank you, Leslie for the

help.

The final yield was 109 bushels per acre, which was a 20-bushel bump. Test weight was in the 60-lb. range, with protein around 14. After penciling out all the costs the extra nitrogen provided an additional return of \$76 per acre in a cash rent scenario!

The Biebers said they entered the National Wheat Yield Contest to prove that WestBred wheat seed could generate a yield of 100 bushels or more since it's critical that farmers receive as high of a return as possible, enabling them to keep wheat in the rotation on their farm as a profitable option. The second was to prove the value of stream barring the nitrogen on in-season. The goal is to

increase profitability by having the farm produce 100 plus bushels of wheat per acre every year.

Biebers are sharing their information since all the former beet growers are under the same conditions. "We are all trying to find cropping options and new-to-the-area farming practices to maximize returns to the farm," Jeff said. Sharing information and trial data is a proven way to shorten the learning curve.

Justin is entering his second year as a dealer for West Bred. Anyone interested in seeing these and other irrigated and dryland strip trial results is welcome to call him at 406-489-2188.



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# NDSU Extension Schedules Stop The Bleed Trainings through April

**NDSU Extension and the NDSU School of Nursing are offering Spring Stop the Bleed trainings for rural residents wanting to learn how to reduce deaths caused by unintentional injury.**

## By NDSU Agriculture Communication

Seconds matter in rural injury incidents or medical emergencies, and the time it takes first responders to travel to an injured person can be critical to survival, says Angie Johnson, North Dakota State University Extension farm and ranch safety coordinator.

To help reduce deaths caused by unintentional injury, NDSU Extension and the NDSU School of Nursing have partnered to offer free, Stop the Bleed trainings for residents of rural communities across North Dakota. Nursing faculty have traveled to North Dakota counties and worked with NDSU Extension agents to conduct the trainings.

“We are excited to offer more trainings this spring at a variety of locations across North Dakota,” shares Johnson.

Stop the Bleed is a nationally recognized, 90-minute certification program, providing participants with hands-on opportunities to recognize life-threatening bleeding and intervene effectively by properly using a tourniquet in the event of blood loss caused by an injury.

Trainings that have been scheduled for the 2024 spring season are:

Divide County: March 5 2 p.m. CST  
Williams County: March 5 5 p.m. CST  
Barnes County: March 6 9:30 a.m. CST  
Barnes County: March 7 9:30 a.m. CST  
McKenzie County: March 13 2 p.m. CST  
McKenzie County: March 13 5 p.m. CST  
Williams County: March 14 9:30 a.m. CST  
Williams County: March 14 1 p.m. CST  
Ramsey County: March 21 5:30 p.m. CST  
Ramsey County: March 21 7:15 p.m. CST  
Cass County: April 15 6 p.m. CST  
Cass County: April 16 6 p.m. CST  
Richland County: April 16 7 p.m. CST  
Sargent County: April 17 5:30 p.m. CST

Location details for each session and registration is available at [bit.ly/STBcountyregistration](https://bit.ly/STBcountyregistration).

Stop the Bleed sessions are of no cost to participants. However, preregistration is required one week prior to each training session. Sessions are limited to 10 to 12 participants. Personal Stop the Bleed kits will be provided on first-come, first-served basis.

Additional training dates will be scheduled in more locations across North Dakota for fall of 2024. If you would like to learn more about Stop the Bleed and to be notified of possible trainings near you, visit the NDSU Extension Stop the Bleed webpage at [ndsu.ag/stopthebleed](https://ndsu.ag/stopthebleed).

Emergency management personnel may qualify for National Continuing Competency Requirement (NCCR) and Local Continuing Competency Requirement (LCCR) units through this

training, and also may be eligible to become a certified Stop the Bleed instructor in their community.

Stop the Bleed training is funded through a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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**Participants at a recent Stop the Bleed training practice properly using a tourniquet in the event of blood loss caused by an injury. (NDSU photo)**



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# Despite Mild Winter, Spring May Bring Forage Challenges

In spite of predictions for a warmer and drier spring, ranchers should prepare for potential impacts to spring turnout.



NDSU Extension specialist James Rogers advises ranchers to consider whether winter feed supplies are enough to stretch into spring in case of delayed turnout. (NDSU photo)

## By NDSU Agriculture Communication

This year's warmer and drier winter conditions have created certain benefits for ranchers, such as easier winter feeding and simpler maintenance of water supplies. A major benefit of milder conditions is that cold weather stressors on the cow herd are lower, making it easier to meet cattle nutrient requirements.

As helpful as this mild weather has been, there are potential concerns ranchers should be aware of and be prepared for this spring, according to North Dakota State University Extension forage crops production specialist James Rogers.

"The Northern Plains is a fragile environment subject to extreme heat, cold and limited rainfall," Rogers says. "When these extremes occur, it can create instability in the system with long recovery periods. Looking at the forecast weather model from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center, the El Nino effect of warmer, drier weather is predicted to continue to the spring."

Forecast models are predicting continued above-normal temperatures with equal chances of above- or below-normal precipitation. In 2023, precipitation varied across North Dakota from below normal in the northern tier of the state to normal or above normal in the southern portion of the state. If the weather forecast models hold true, the implications for spring can mean one thing for the crop farmer and another for the rancher.

For the crop farmer, above-normal temperatures could mean earlier planting conditions compared to previous years. Potential downsides include early weed emergence and the uncertainty of receiving the precipitation necessary to get crops up and going.

For the rancher, a few more variables can cloud the picture. The first is how pasture and range plants were managed prior to the end of the grazing season.

Fall is a time when pasture and range plants are storing energy for spring growth. The basis for forage production is tiller production and growth. If tiller production is reduced, forage production will be lowered.

An NDSU study evaluated the effect of the intensity of fall grazing on forage production the following year. They found that severe fall use reduced forage production by 57% in 2022 and 54% in 2023.

"Severe fall use of pasture and range plants has a negative effect on energy storage, bud formation and tiller production, which results in reduced forage production the following year," Rogers says.

The second variable is unknown: What will spring conditions truly be? If temperatures continue to remain above normal, pasture and range plants will begin coming out of dormancy early. If precipitation remains below normal, biomass production could be delayed, meaning that spring turnout could also be delayed. On the other hand, spring could arrive late with late winter storms wreaking havoc on ranchers and livestock, as in the springs of 2021 and 2022. Rogers advises ranchers to be prepared for either situation and consider whether winter feed supplies are enough to stretch into spring.

The third variable is cow herd health and condition from now through spring. Calving season is underway and monitoring calf health, cow condition, herd bull health and management are all critical from now until the end of breeding season. Management now impacts rebreeding later.

"Current weather conditions are unusual for North Dakota, but take into consideration all variables, including previous months' weather conditions, past grazing management, current weather and future weather predictions, and use them to be prepared for whatever the Dakotas throw at you," Rogers advises.

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# NDSU Extension To Host Horse Management Webinar Series

**Topics include an overview of genetic diseases in quarter horses, weed and manure management in pastures, prevention and detection of diseases, and emergency first aid.**

**By NDSU Agriculture Communication**

Horse owners and stable managers will have the opportunity to learn management strategies and ask questions during a webinar series that North Dakota State University Extension is hosting at noon CDT on Wednesdays in March.

Topics will include an overview of genetic diseases in the quarter horse breed, weed and manure management in pastures, prevention and detection of communicable equine diseases, and emergency first aid until the veterinarian arrives.

“The goal of these webinars is to empower our equine owners in North Dakota to confidently apply what we share to their animal care routines or land and resources management,” says Mary Keena, NDSU’s Carrington Research Extension Center, livestock environmental management specialist.

“Understanding genetic diseases, knowing how to prevent a communicable

disease and effectively applying first aid to your animal while waiting for a veterinarian in an emergency situation may not only save the animal’s life but is also part of animal husbandry and ownership,” says Rachel Wald, McHenry County NDSU Extension’s agriculture and natural resources agent.

“Management of your grazing resources by way of weed and manure management can help you increase the usable parts of your pastures, ensuring longevity of the grazing season,” says Paige Brummund, Ward County NDSU Extension’s agriculture and natural resources agent.

The webinar presenters are NDSU Extension specialists and agents, NDSU professors and the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

Visit [ndsu.ag/horsewebinar](https://ndsu.ag/horsewebinar) to register for the webinars.



Emergency first aid is just one of the topics that will be covered during the NDSU Extension horse management webinar series. (NDSU photo)

# Help Keep Montana Free Of Wild Pigs

**Submitted by Brent C. Smith, Central & Eastern Montana Invasive Species Team program manager**

Wild pigs/feral swine are swine that have either escaped or were released intentionally, creating free-ranging swine populations. Wild pigs/feral swine can be found in 38 states with an estimated population of over six million animals. Wild pigs/feral pigs are also found in Canadian provinces bordering Montana. Prolific breeders, they can produce four to eight babies per litter. Wild pigs/feral pigs are highly adaptable, but prefer habitats with an abundant supply of water and dense cover. They are aggressive and pose serious ecological, economic, and health threats.

Currently, there are no known wild pig populations in Montana.

Wild pigs/feral swine harbor diseases (swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, tuberculosis, and others) and parasites, which can impact the livestock industry. Wild pigs/feral swine most commonly carry brucella suis and can cause false positive test in cattle for brucellosis and require temporary quarantine and operation interruption. They also carry zoonotic diseases and parasites that pose a risk to humans. Wild pigs/feral swine can and will cause extensive damage by fouling water sources for native wildlife, livestock, and humans. They will consume and jeopardize native wildlife and plants and compete for food and habitat resources with native animals. Rooting by wild pigs/feral swine causes erosion and can compromise sensitive ecosystems as well as render some areas impassable for farm machinery. Wild pigs/feral swine will prey on the young of livestock and wildlife such as kids, lambs, deer fawns, and ground-nesting birds.

Due to their reproductive efficiency, and movement behavior, wild pigs/feral swine cannot be eradicated by simple hunting practices. Hunting pressure that fails to eliminate all animals in a group (sounder) can result in further dispersion of animals. Wild pigs/feral swine that have experienced hunting pressure become more difficult to hunt and are harder to eradicate.

In the state Montana, feral swine/wild pigs are regulated by the Department of Livestock. Montana's definition of feral swine includes animals living in an untamed or wild state, as well as swine that appear to be contained for commercial hunting or trapping. Introducing/

transporting/releasing feral swine or wild pigs in Montana is illegal. Private land owners and public land users must notify the Department of Livestock immediately following a sighting of feral swine or wild pigs. Penalties for violation of Montana law includes fines of at least \$2,000 but not more than \$10,000 for each violation.

The Montana Department of Livestock has partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; USDA Wildlife Services; Montana State University Extension; Central & Eastern Montana Invasive Species Team; and the Montana Invasive Species Council on outreach efforts and response to reports of feral swine.

Wild pig/feral swine sightings must be reported within 24 hours. Reports should be made to the Department of Livestock emergency reporting number 406-444-2976.

Resources:

- Montana Invasive Species Council: Squeal on Pigs | Montana Invasive Species (mt.gov)
- USDA APHIS Wildlife Services: USDA APHIS | Feral Swine-Managing an Invasive Species
- Montana Department of Livestock: liv.mt.gov/Animal-Health/Feral-Swine



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# Grain Bin Rescue Equipment & Training Opportunities Available For Fire Departments

**NDSU Extension highlights the need for grain bin rescue equipment and training.**

## By NDSU Agriculture Communication

February is grain bin safety month. North Dakota is no exception when it comes to grain bin entrapments and engulfments. In 2020, North Dakota ranked second in the nation for recorded grain-bin-related entrapments in the Summary of U.S. Agricultural Confined Space-Related Injuries and Fatalities report from Purdue University. That does not account for any undocumented grain bin related injuries and fatalities.

Research estimates that 30% of confined spaces incidences, including grain bin entrapments, are unreported or undocumented. Farms and ranches employing fewer than 11 non-family employees are not covered by federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) injury reporting requirements, meaning many farm and ranch injuries are not reported.

“The best strategy for preventing grain bin engulfments and entrapments is to ensure the grain is in good condition in the bin,” says Angie Johnson, North Dakota State University Extension farm and ranch safety coordinator. “Grain that is in good condition should not bridge, crust or chunk, which eliminates any need to enter the grain bin in the first place.”

Monitoring and addressing grain moisture issues throughout the season can prevent unloading challenges that might tempt individuals to use dangerous intervention strategies, such as entering the grain bin to try to break apart the crusts or chunks to get the grain flowing into the auger or sump.

“If grain does lose quality and begins to crust, chunk or bridge, a zero-entry mindset is the best way to keep producers and their workers safe from entrapment situations,” says Johnson. “However, we know that many factors may lead an individual to enter a grain bin, making the need for intervention tools, trainings and rescue techniques a harsh reality.”

Johnson suggests volunteer fire departments discuss equipment needs and



**Training on the use of grain bin rescue equipment and techniques is necessary for fire departments to be able to respond effectively in an entrapment situation. (NDSU photo)**

training opportunities for responding to a grain bin rescue. Training is critical to prepare responders with the knowledge and skills to use equipment in a rescue situation. Fire departments can work with a local grain elevator and the North Dakota Firefighters Association or the Minnesota Safety and Security Consultation Specialists to set up a grain bin extrication and rescue training event. Neighboring fire departments can coordinate to ensure they are able to work together on a rescue. It takes a large team to respond to an incident, adds Johnson.

Grant opportunities can help fire departments interested in grain bin rescue equipment and training. Community members can nominate their fire department for one of the following grant opportunities:

### AgCountry Farm Credit Services

This grant program awards grain bin rescue tubes and a video/on-site training to fire departments in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota. Selection of a fire department is based on current department resources, geographic area served and proximity to other grain bin rescue units in the fire department's area. There are no restrictions regarding the size of the fire department; however, fire departments must be from the following eligible counties:

Eligible North Dakota counties are Barnes, Benson, Bottineau, Burke, Cass, Cavalier, Dickey, Divide, Eddy, Foster, Grand Forks, Griggs, LaMoure, McHenry, McKenzie, McLean, Mountrail, Nelson, Pembina, Pierce, Ramsey, Ransom, Renville, Richland, Rolette, Sargent, Sheridan, Steele, Stutsman, Towner, Traill, Walsh, Ward, Wells and Williams.

Eligible Minnesota counties are Becker, Beltrami, Big Stone, Chippewa, Clay, Clearwater, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Koochiching, Lac qui Parle, Lake of the Woods, Lincoln, Lyon, Mahnomon, Marshall, Meeker, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Redwood, Renville, Roseau, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Todd, Wadena, Wilkin and Yellow Medicine.

For questions, such as application deadlines, contact AgCountry at outreach@agcountry.com. Visit [www.agcountry.com/rescue](http://www.agcountry.com/rescue) to apply.

Nationwide Insurance and the National Education Center for Ag Safety

This grant awards grain rescue tubes and hands-on rescue training to first responders and fire departments across the U.S., especially in rural communities that do not have access to this equipment or currently possess this equipment and training.

Nominations will be accepted until April 30 at 11:59 p.m. CST.

Grant rules and instructions on how to make a nomination can be found at [www.mysightonline.com/grain-bin-safety/participate-partner/nominate](http://www.mysightonline.com/grain-bin-safety/participate-partner/nominate).

Contact the coordinators listed on each website for additional information about the grants and nomination requirements.

In addition to the opportunities mentioned above, NDSU Extension is working on a pilot project that will bring local fire departments, farmers and county emergency managers together to tackle grain bin safety as a team. For more grain bin safety resources from NDSU Extension, visit [ndsuhq.org/grainbinsafety](http://ndsuhq.org/grainbinsafety).

“Thank you to all who serve as volunteer firefighters, paramedics, first responders and more within your communities,” says Johnson. “Grain bin safety is a community safety and public health issue, as many people have been impacted or know of someone who has been impacted by a grain bin rescue or fatality. By working together to prevent grain bin entrapments and learn how rescue situations work, we can save lives.”



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# NDSU Extension Virtual Canola Production Update Meeting Set For March 12

**By NDSU Agriculture Communication**

The meeting will focus on the latest research in canola and will help growers and consultants make sustainable and profitable decisions.

Farmers and crop advisers interested in canola production management updates should plan to participate in the 2024 Getting-it-Right in Canola Production virtual meeting on March 12, from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

## NDSU Releases Crop Budget Projections For 2024

**Generally, most crop budgets in all regions project a profit for the year.**

The NDSU Extension projected crop budgets are guides for large multi-county regions. (NDSU photo)



**By NDSU Agriculture Communication**

The North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension projected crop budgets for 2024 are available for the state's farmers, says Ron Haugen, NDSU Extension farm management specialist.

The 2024 projected profits vary by region and crop.

"The budgets are guides for large multi-county regions," says Haugen. "Returns and costs can vary considerably between producers within a region. Also, the budgets estimate returns to labor and management with no consideration of price and yield variability or risk. A perfect comparison of crops is not achieved because different levels of labor, management and risk exist."

"Generally, most crop budgets in all regions, project a profit for the year, but not as profitable as 2023," says Haugen. "One reason is, in general, commodity prices are lower than 2023."

Fertilizer, chemical and fuel expenses are down, but land costs, repairs and interest are higher.

"Specialty crops may show a positive return, but usually have limited contracts and acreages, and also may have higher risk," says Haugen.

The NDSU Extension-developed budgets are available online at [ndsuhub.ndsu.edu/ag/ag-hub/getting-it-right](https://ndsuhub.ndsu.edu/ag/ag-hub/getting-it-right), or by searching online for NDSU Crop Budgets. Online, a PDF version is available as well as Excel spreadsheets for producers to fill in their own estimates.

Hard copies are available at NDSU Extension county offices.

This online-only meeting is conducted by North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension and is supported by the Northern Canola Growers Association.

"University and industry professionals will provide research updates and recommendations to assist canola farmers with production decisions for the 2024 growing season," says Anitha Chirumamilla, Langdon Research Extension Center cropping systems specialist and co-organizer of the event.

The webinar will be delivered by Zoom. There is no fee to attend but pre-registration is required at [www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/getting-it-right](https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/getting-it-right). All who preregister will receive emailed instructions for participating in the event.

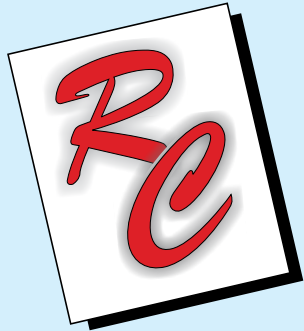
"This meeting will focus on the latest research in canola and will help growers and consultants make sustainable and profitable decisions," says Greg Endres, Carrington Research Extension Center cropping systems specialist and co-organizer.

Topics that will be covered include agronomic practices in irrigated and dryland canola, such as cultivar selection, seed rate, plant establishment and intercropping, fertilizer recommendations, disease, insect and weed management, and biofuel and crop market updates.

The presentations will be recorded and archived. Attendees also will receive a list of pertinent Extension canola production reference materials that will supplement information from the presentations. Certified crop adviser continuing education credits will be available for meeting participants.



**The meeting will focus on the latest research in canola and will help growers and consultants make sustainable and profitable decisions. (NDSU photo)**



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# Including Sulfur In Soil Fertility Programs Can Benefit Crops, According To Montana State Extension Specialist

Submitted by MSU News

Bozeman — Sulfur's role as an agricultural nutrient is often overlooked, but including it in soil fertility programs can positively impact crop yield, quality, and economics, according to a Montana State University Extension specialist.

Clain Jones, MSU Extension soil fertility specialist and professor in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences, said that modern phosphorus and potassium fertilizers contain less sulfur as a manufacturing byproduct than they historically did. Coupled with higher-yielding varieties and more intense cropping, leading to more sulfur being removed from fields, there is an increased chance for sulfur deficiencies. Sulfur-deficient plants are often stunted with yellow upper leaves, in contrast to yellow lower leaves, which indicates a nitrogen deficiency.

"Crops can respond to sulfur additions in a manner similar to nitrogen," Jones said, "Sulfur, like nitrogen, is a building block for proteins. If sulfur is deficient, crops may not use nitrogen fertilizer as efficiently, resulting in less than optimum grain protein and yield. By applying sulfur and increasing the efficiency of nitrogen use, farmers can also decrease nitrate leaching and soil acidification, and possibly lower the amount of nitrogen needed."

## Testing

Jones said there is no single recommended sulfur soil test as there is with nitrate. That's partly because soil sulfur availability is often highly variable across a field. Coarse-textured soils with low organic matter are the most susceptible to sulfur deficiencies. He noted that when six to 10 soil samples from across a field are mixed for laboratory analysis — which is the standard in Montana — one or two high-sulfur samples could skew the results and suggest the field doesn't need sulfur when most of it is deficient.

"Although more expensive in the short term, it can be highly beneficial to learn which parts of a field have low sulfur through 'grid sampling' instead of mixed samples," he said.

Jones recommends learning what sulfur test a laboratory uses. He said numerous soil tests are available, and each can produce very different results.

"For example, the Mehlich-3 test, which is used in midwestern and eastern states, greatly overestimates sulfur availability in higher-pH Montana soils," Jones said, "Calcium phosphate extraction tests are recommended for western soils, but other extracts might do an adequate job of assessing available sulfur, too."

In addition, Jones recommends testing sulfur fertilizer in strips within fields and conducting plant tissue sampling to learn if crops have sulfur deficiencies. Plant tissue testing should be done early in the season so that a "rescue" sulfur treatment can be applied to nitrogen-deficient areas.

## Fertilization

Jones recommends considering the "4Rs" — right place, right rate, right time, and right source for fertilization.

Because sulfur is needed early in the growing season, it should be applied at seeding, either in the furrow or side-banded. Side-banding avoids the risk of fertilizer damage to the seedling when high rates are placed in-furrow, he said. Sulfate is mobile and can also be applied as a surface broadcast application if ammonium sulfate is used.

Gypsum is less acidifying than ammonium sulfate, so Jones recommends using it on acidic soils, even though it's somewhat less soluble. Elemental sulfur, on the other hand, becomes available too slowly for in-season use and needs to be applied a year or two before it is needed. Fall applications of sulfate are not recommended because sulfur, like nitrogen, can be leached easily by fall-to-spring precipitation.

Unlike other major nutrients, there's limited guidance for sulfur fertilization rate requirements of Montana crops. Oilseeds, including canola and yellow mustard, need far more sulfur than cereals like wheat and barley, Jones said. He noted that

in high-yielding oilseed fields, 20 lbs. of sulfur fertilizer per acre should prevent sulfur deficiency, regardless of soil test results.

Alfalfa is also a large user of sulfur, needing about 22 lbs. of sulfur per acre for a 4-ton per acre yield. Cereals and pulse crops, like lentils, chickpeas, and peas, likely need only 5-10 lbs. of sulfur fertilizer per acre, with the higher amount needed on fields with high yield potential.

## Research

A recently accepted research paper by Perry Miller, MSU Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences professor, to be published in the *Agronomy Journal*, found that only 5 lbs. of added sulfur per acre increased lentil grain yield in 20% of sites in Montana and North Dakota. Due to the low cost of sulfur fertilizer, the average increased grain yield easily offset the sulfur fertilizer cost, even when accounting for sites where lentil grain yields did not increase, Jones said.

Jones is currently conducting research funded by the Montana Fertilizer Check-off with colleagues Miller, Pat Carr and Justin Vetch with the MSU Department of Research Centers to determine the sulfur needs of spring canola, pea, and wheat, and to evaluate different sulfur soil tests, following previous MSU studies on the effects of sulfur on lentil crops. In addition, there are ongoing Montana sulfur studies on winter canola led by Miller and on cereal forages led by Hayes Goosey, MSU Department of Animal and Range Sciences.

Goosey noted that adequate sulfur levels can decrease forage nitrate levels in cereal forages.

"Forage nitrate is a concern for livestock owners because it causes early-term abortions and other reproductive issues in pregnant animals," Goosey said.

Questions about sulfur or soil nutrients may be directed to Jones at [clainj@montana.edu](mailto:clainj@montana.edu) or 406-994-6076.

## REAL Montana Program Accepting Applications Until March 31

Submitted by MSU News Service

Bozeman — REAL Montana, a program from Montana State University Extension, is accepting applications for its next class until March 31. REAL Montana is a comprehensive two-year program offering in-depth education and training in the agriculture and natural resource industries. REAL stands for Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership.

Classes consist of up to 20 participants competitively selected to represent a variety of agriculture and natural resource industries across the state. REAL Montana prioritizes diversity in class structure, including geography, gender and industry sectors. This will be the sixth class offered.

The program seeks to build a network of informed and engaged leaders to agriculture and natural resource industries. Program highlights include eight in-state seminars, a national study tour in Washington, DC, and a 10-day international experience.

"We are excited to welcome a new class in 2024," said Tara Becken, REAL Montana program director. "Our program offers a unique and impactful experience for Montanans interested in increasing their leadership abilities."

Successful applicants will be announced in July, with the first class seminar in Bozeman on Sept. 19.

To learn more about the application process or to apply, visit: [montana.edu/realmontana](http://montana.edu/realmontana). Questions may be directed to Becken at [tara.becken@montana.edu](mailto:tara.becken@montana.edu) or 406-930-4205.



### Farm & Ranch Show

The McKenzie County Ag Expo in Watford City held their Farm & Ranch Show Feb. 7-8. Pictured above is engineer Evan Wheeler (left) and member representative Pat Heiser, McKenzie Electric Cooperative, speaking to producers and workers in the ag industry about farm safety practices.



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# Stick Pony Rodeo Results

**McKenzie County Ag Expo, Feb. 10**  
Barrels Fast Times:  
C-Noah Erickson; Y-Joley Johnson; Jr-Kylee Shelton  
Pole Bending Fast Times: Y-Joley Johnson; Jr-Kylee Shelton  
Keyhole Fast Times: C-Noah Erickson; Y-Joley

Johnson  
Goat Fast Times: C-Gracelyn Loshe; Y-Joley Johnson; Jr-Zoey Mitchell  
Roping Fast Time: Jr-Zoey Mitchell  
Children All Around: 1-Noah Erickson; 2-Gracelyn Lohse; 3-Banks Leiseth

Youth All Around:  
1-Joley Johnson; 2-Evelina Jacobson; 3-Harper Bradford  
Junior All Around:  
1-Zoey Mitchell; 2-Kylee Shelton; 3-Joleah Hickel  
Hard Luck Award:  
Lucille Sokolofsky



Junior All Around winners 1-Zoey Mitchell; 2-Kylee Shelton; 3-Joleah Hickel. (Photo submitted)



Youth All Around winners 1-Joley Johnson; 2-Evelina Jacobson; 3-Harper Bradford. (Photo submitted)



Children All Around: 1-Noah Erickson; 2-Gracelyn Lohse; 3-Banks Leiseth. (Photo submitted)

## Stick Pony Rodeo

Evie Jacobson races through the poles for a fast enough time to earn 2nd place Overall Reserve Champion in the Stick Horse Rodeo held at the McKenzie County Ag Expo on Saturday. (Photo by Kathy Taylor)



Banks Leiseth is all smiles as he competes in the Stick Horse Rodeo sponsored by the Mon-Dak Quarter Horse Association. Banks was the 3rd place overall winner in the children 0-4 division. (Photo by Kathy Taylor)



## McKenzie Co. 4-Hers Tour Sidney Meat Processing Facilities



The McKenzie County 4-H Junior Leaders traveled to Sidney on Feb. 18 for educational tours of M3 Meats and Reynolds Market to learn how livestock is processed and sold to customers. Pictured above is Colton Moran (far right) and Joe Thompson, M3 Meats, explain how animals are processed.



M3 Meats employee Joe Thompson tours the meat aging room with McKenzie Co. 4-Hers.

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# USDA Releases 2022 Census Of Agriculture Data

## Agricultural statistics provided down to the county level

Submitted by Logan Kruse, Montana Department of Agriculture Communications Officer

Helena – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has announced the results of the 2022 Census of Agriculture, spanning more than 6 million data points about America’s farms and ranches and the people who operate them down to the county level. The information collected directly from producers shows a decrease in the total number of Montana farms. The data shows an increase in the number of new and beginning (operating 10 or fewer years on any farm) as well as young (under the age of 35) producers in Montana. The full Census of Agriculture report as well as publication dates for additional ag census data products can be found at [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus). Ag census data can also be found in NASS’s searchable online database, Quick Stats.

“We are pleased to provide updated Census of Agriculture data to all those who serve U.S. agriculture, especially the producers who gave their time to complete the questionnaire. Census of Agriculture data tell a story. This comprehensive snapshot every five years helps data users to see trends, shifts in the industry over time, and helps

producers do business,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “Overall, though there are always changes across U.S. agriculture, the data remain largely consistent with the previous ag census. Data users will also notice some new data on the topics of hemp, precision agriculture, and internet access.”

Ag census data provides a valuable insight into demographics, economics, land use, and activities on Montana farms and ranches such as:

- There were 24,266 farms and ranches in Montana, down 10.3% from 2017 on 57.6 million acres a decrease of 1%.

- Family-owned and operated farms accounted for 92.8% of all Montana farms and operated 80% of land in farms.

- Montana farms and ranches produced \$4.54 billion in agricultural products, up from \$3.52 billion in 2017. The majority (55%) of the sales were from crop sales. The grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas category led with 43.0% of all sales, followed by cattle (38.6%). With farm production expenses of \$4.36 billion, Montana farms had net cash income of \$1.14 billion. Average farm income rose to \$46,889.

- 83.6% of Montana farms had internet access in 2022, a slight increase from 81.4% in 2017. However, 78.7% of farms and ranches across the United States had internet

access.

- A total of 2,544 Montana farms and ranches used renewable energy producing systems compared to 2,555 farms in 2017. Nearly all the Montana farms (85%) with renewable energy systems reported using solar panels.

- In 2022, 931 Montana farms sold directly to consumers, with sales of \$15.7 million. Value of sales increased .3% from 2017.

- The 1,080 farms with sales of \$1 million or more were 4.5% of Montana farms and represented 98.7% of sales and government payments. The 13,723 Montana farms (57%) with sales of \$50,000 or less accounted for 2.6% of sales and government payments in Montana.

- The average age of all Montana producers was 59.3. The average age in 2017 was 58.2 years.

- There were 11,724 Montana farmers with 10 or fewer years of experience, an increase in the number of beginning farmers from 2017 of 7%. Beginning farmers in Montana are younger than all farmers, with an average age of 46.9.

- The number of Montana producers under age 35 was 3,689, comprising 8% of all Montana producers.

- In 2022, 17,830 female producers accounted for 40% of all Montana producers, compared to

36% of all U.S. producers. Sixty-seven percent of all Montana farms had at least one female decision maker.

“The 2022 Census of Agriculture can be used to help communicate the story surrounding Montana agriculture as it stands today and its pace of rapid change,” said Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark. “This data helps farmers and ranchers make vital decisions on their operations as well as helping direct us as a department towards providing top tier support to our producers through our programs and services.”

The national response rate for the 2022 Census of Agriculture was 61%; more than 40% of responses were submitted online. Montana’s response rate for the 2022 Census of Agriculture was 59.3%; more than 40% of responses were submitted online. Ag census data highlight publications are available at [nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights](http://nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights).

First conducted in 1840 in conjunction with the decennial Census and conducted since 1997 by USDA NASS, the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture, the Census of Agriculture remains the most comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the nation.

# MSU To Host Inaugural Montana Agritourism Conference May 3

Submitted by MSU News

Bozeman – The Montana State University College of Agriculture and Montana Agritourism Fellows Program will host a new conference focused on the confluence of agriculture and tourism on Friday, May 3, on the MSU campus. The event will include speakers, educational sessions, and networking opportunities for attendees.

The conference, titled “Building Agritourism from the Ground Up: Inviting You to the Table,” will run from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in the Strand Union Building. It is the culmination of a year of collaboration and learning by the first-ever cohort of the Montana Agritourism Fellows Program, which was established in 2022 to engage Montana producers in developing an environment of agritourism in the state. The event is also supported by the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, for which MSU has served as the host institution since 2018.

Registration for the conference costs \$50 per person and the deadline to register is April 19. A full agenda and registration can be found at [www.montanaagritourism.com/events-2-1](http://www.montanaagritourism.com/events-2-1).

The 14 members of the Montana Agritourism Fellows Program came from nine Montana communities. Over a year, they visited sustainable agritourism operations across the state and learned about management, business, media relations, and other relevant topics.

Topics covered at the event will include starting an agritourism business; marketing and communication; funding opportunities and initiatives focused on agritourism; public engagement; and more. Speakers will include Cole Mannix, Old Salt Co-op founder, Helmsville; Nick DeCastro, LandTrust founder of recreation access network, Bozeman; and Glenna Brown and Elena Bigart, University of Montana’s Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research.

“Our conference is designed to bring together industry leaders and professionals from various backgrounds in tourism, agriculture, education, community development, and more,” said Shannon Arnold, MSU’s Department of Agricultural and Technology Education professor and a member of the leadership team for the Montana Agritourism Fellows Program. “We are looking forward to a day of insightful discussions, learning from experts, and networking with peers from around the industry.”

Along with Arnold, the program is led by Dustin Perry, Department of Agricultural and Technology Education head; Kim Woodring, Toole County Extension agent; and Beth Shirley, MSU’s Department of English technical communication assistant professor.



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