Return on Investment

MSU Extension Agents Katrin Finch and Nicole Gray extend gratitude and appreciation to the Hill County Commission and Hill County constituents that support the Hill County MSU Extension Office. MSU Extension would also like to recognize all the volunteers and participants that utilize and share the information provided through Hill County MSU Extension.

The education and resources provided to Hill County comes from tri-funded support between county, state, and federal governments. The county provides almost 40% funding, state almost 40% funding, and federal about 20% funding. This support provides Hill County MSU Extension with resources to provide pertinent, unbiased, research-based information and programs.

Hill County Quick Stats

- 16,596 population
- 2,916 square miles
- Median age: 34 years old
- Median Household Income: $43,509
- #1 Economic Driver: Agriculture
- Rocky Boy Indian Reservation population of 3,323 residents
- Top 3 Employers: U. S. Border Patrol, BNSF Railroad, healthcare and education

Hill County MSU Extension By the Numbers

- 24 new private applicators earned certification
- 150 crop samples received from Hill County producers
- $20 Fast from Freezer class weekly grocery savings per family
- Eight lives saved through proper canning procedure recommendations

Contact Us

Katrin Finch
Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent; 4-H Youth Development

Nicole Gray
Agriculture Extension Agent; 4-H Youth Development

Amanda Powell
Administrative Assistant

Rhonda Gregoire
SNAP-Ed Nutrition Assistant

Hill County Extension
315 4th Street, Havre, MT 59501
Phone  (406) 265-5481 x 233
E-mail  hill1@montana.edu
Web  msuextension.org/hill
Agriculture in Hill County

The 2016 growing year was unusual for Hill County producers. A mild winter with an early spring presented some challenges for producers. Continued unexpected growing conditions from the year before caused a large increase in insect populations that affected cereal crops.

Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (WSMV)

- Hill County ranks second in Winter Wheat and third in Spring Wheat
- It is estimated that 60% of winter wheat had different levels of WSMV infection
- Over 70 samples sent to Schutter Diagnostic Lab for tests
- Over 70 producers attended an in-field presentation in Hingham from five counties with Mary Burrows, MSU Plant Pathologist Specialist
- 122 producers attended the MSU Northern Agricultural Research Center field day. Nicole Gray, Hill County MSU Extension Agent gave a WSMV and insect update during the cereals tour
- Third party recommended crop termination
- MSU Extension recommendation on average saved producers $14,169.60 per farm
- Estimated 24 farmers who contacted MSU Extension in May applied glyphosate a week prior to planted and delayed planting winter wheat by at least 3 days

Nitrate Quick Test

Cattle nutrition is a key component of any ranching operation. Proper cattle nutrition can improve breeding potential, increase weaning weights, and improve calf health. The majority of a beef cow’s nutrition comes from forages. Therefore, it is in the rancher’s interest to implement best management practices while haying or purchasing hay. The Hill County Extension Office assists producers with implementing best management practices through numerous methods including the Nitrate Quick Tests that help detect the presence of nitrates. High amounts of nitrates in a cow’s diet can lead to poor appetite, slow growth, and potential abortion. Over 50% of nitrate tests were positive for the presence of nitrates. Samples that were quantitatively tested for nitrates gave producers an option to utilize these forages through ration balancing. The Hill County Extension Office worked with these four ranches that had high presence of nitrates to safely feed cattle.

Nitrate Test Savings for Producers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of losing 1 calf</th>
<th>$690</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe hay to mix (20 tons)</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>$4,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calving is an important time of year for ranchers.
Family and Consumer Sciences Education

Serving Safe Food for All

The CDC estimates that one in six Americans receive treatment from a foodborne illness each year. In a continued effort to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illnesses providing food safety education has been an important piece of programming in Hill County. Individuals from health care, churches, and a variety of other small establishments participated and received their Food Handler certification.

- 181 people were provided Food Safety Education throughout the year.
- 48 Hill and Blaine County participants took the 8-hour ServSafe® Food Manager certification class
- 38 completed their 8-hour ServSafe® Food Manager certifications.
- 75 4-hour ServSafe® Food Handler class participants
- 69 High School Students earned ServSafe® Food Handler certification.

Saving One Penny at a Time

Determined in the 2015 needs assessment, financial management is a major concern for Hill County individuals. In April of 2016, Katrin Finch of Hill County MSU Extension teamed together with a consumer loan banker to provide a three-week financial series. The educational series highlighted spending plans, development of a budget, determining net income, emergency savings, types of credit, credit scores and home loans. While the focus was to provide tools to advance individuals financial situation, attention was also brought to record keeping. Record keeping is a lost art as we move into a digital age. Participants were encouraged to use the “Track’n Your Savings Register” supplied by MSU Extension. After attending this class one participant said “I did not realize how many different things go into calculating my credit score.”

- 80% of participants reported taking active steps to improve credit scores (ie: submitting on time payments, not utilizing the maximum spending limit, reviewing credit scores)
- 75% of participants reported establishing an emergency savings account

Community through Cooking

Nothing tastes better than a home cooked meal after a long day at work. A group of 12 individuals attended the “Fast From the Freezer” workshop to reduce the occurrences of eating out in their households. This class provided nutrition information about home-cooked meals, tools and tips for freezer meals, and how to keep food safe in household. Participants also learned about the cost of “pre-made” meals can cost more than buying separate ingredients to make the same meal at home.

- Eight meals for 12 different households in less than three hours
- Average savings of $20 on bi-monthly grocery bill

One participant said “it is so nice to be able to spend more time with family and less time in the kitchen during the busy week days.” Another stated “as a result of this class, our family has started making seven to ten meals every Sunday afternoon.” The importance of family meal time provides time to visit, create tradition and provides time to slow down from our busy lives.
**“Making the Best Better” with Hill County 4-H**

**Hill County 4-H Projects**
- Animals
- Biological Sciences
- Communications and Expressive Arts
- Community / Volunteer Service
- Consumer and Family Science
- Environmental Education / Earth Sciences
- Foods and Nutrition
- Leadership and Personal Development
- Plant Science
- Technology and Engineering

**Exchange Trip to Dawes County, Nebraska**

Twelve Senior members and three adult chaperones of the Hill County 4-H Program traveled to Dawes County, Nebraska. This was part of the Interstate Exchange program. This program’s purpose is to educate youth for global living in an ever-changing world. The group traveled to a uranium plant, the fur trade museum, and among other adventures, visited Mount Rushmore in Rapid City, South Dakota, before they headed home. This coming summer Hill County 4-H members plan to share the treasures of Montana with the Dawes County 4-H.

**SNAP Education in Hill County**

On average one in nine Montanans face food insecurity or hunger. In an effort to help the individuals of Hill County navigate the food system on a budget, Hill County SNAP Educator Rhonda Gregoire provides education to individuals that are eligible for SNAP benefits.

Many participants in both the youth and adult classes report having an increased intake of fruits and vegetables as a result of this program. One student said, “When I went to the store with my mom, I told her how many servings of vegetables we need, we vegetables with every meal now.”

- 12 Adult participants completed the six week course
- 350 + youth ages 8-12 participated in the six week course
- 92 % reported an increase in safe food handing practices
- 69 % of youth reported eating more vegetables

4-H member assisting with market steer initial weigh in during December.

Dawes County and Hill County 4-H’ers at Mount Rushmore in Rapid City, SD.

Participants of SNAP-Ed with new crockpots, a roast and potatoes donated by Cattle Women of Montana.