



www.thomas.ksu.edu

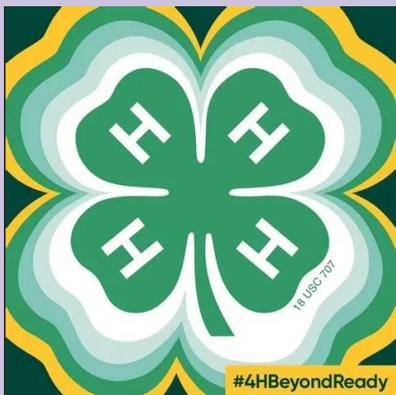
Thomas County

K-State Research and Extension News

*Knowledge
for Life*

March 2026

Volume: 204



Summer Internship Opportunity



Become an intern with the Thomas County Extension Office to help with agriculture questions, plan 4-H events, assist with fair, and more, all while building your resume!

Thomas County Extension is an equal opportunity employer.

Summer 2026 Position:

May 26th through August 1st

Normal work hours will be from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Not including camps and fair week.

Applicants must be 18 years old, with a high school diploma or GED equivalent.

Application deadline:

Friday, April 17, 2026

Interviews will be held the following week

Applications are available:
Online at www.thomas.k-state.edu
or at the
Thomas County Extension Office
350 S. Range Ave. Suite 16
Colby, KS 67701

For more information please call the office at 785-460-4582 or email TH@listserv.ksu.edu

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K-STATE
Research and Extension

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.ksre.ksu.edu

Walk Kansas 2026: March 22 - May 16

Walk Kansas is a K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) health initiative that promotes personal health and well-being by helping participants adopt healthful lifestyle habits. It is primarily a team-based program that will help you:

- be more active with support from friends and family
- make healthier nutrition and beverage choices
- learn helpful techniques to reduce stress



Walk Kansas celebrated its 25th year in 2025. The program continues in 2026 with a **new online tracking system**, new (virtual) trails to explore, and plenty of motivation to help you move more and feel better!

You have options!

- Form or join a Walk Kansas team at your office/workplace, church, school, neighbors, community groups, and family (near and far.) You can participate in Walk Kansas from anywhere – any state or country.
- Would you rather go solo? Not a problem. You can register and walk solo on one of our virtual solo trails.
- Your Team Captain will register your team, or you register yourself for the solo trail.

When the program begins, log in your favorite physical activities in ‘minutes’ in the online challenge tracker, or report steps from your fitness tracker. You will also log cups of fruits/vegetables you eat daily, and water you drink (optional). Go to <https://www.walkkansas.org/> to register. March 1.

4-H County Club Day

County Club Day will be held on March 27nd at Colby Community College. Now is the time to start thinking about how you might like to participate.

Categories are:

- ◆ Model Meetings
- ◆ Public Speaking
- ◆ Project Talks
- ◆ Demonstrations & Project Talks
- ◆ Instrument Solo
- ◆ Piano Solo
- ◆ Skits
- ◆ Reading

All entries are due by:

5:00 pm on Wednesday, March 18th.

Call the Extension Office to sign-up. 785-460-4582

Email Tracy at tfagan@ksu.edu

or Helen at hpgiefer@ksu.edu

4-H Club Day is an exciting opportunity for participants to showcase their 4-H projects, talents, and skills developed throughout the year. Each presentation is carefully evaluated by experienced judges who assess the content, delivery, and overall quality of the work. Participants receive ribbons as awards, with different colors representing levels of achievement—typically purple for outstanding work, blue for excellent, red for good, and white for lacking minimum requirements. This event not only recognizes individual and/or group accomplishments but also helps young people build confidence, develop public speaking abilities, and learn to accept constructive feedback in a supportive environment.

Upcoming Events for March 2026



4th: K-State Garden Hour: Naturalistic Landscape Design Style --Kansas Perspectives and Flexible Approaches for Every Garden - via Zoom [First Friday e-Call- State Housing Resources - Kansas State University Events](#)



4th: Field to Fork Webinar: Food Preservation
11th: Field to Fork Webinar: Vegetable Garden Myths
18th: Field to Fork Webinar: To Sous Vide or Not Sous Vide
25th: Field to Fork Webinar: Edible Plant Parts
More information here: [2026 Field to Fork Webinar Series | NDSU Agriculture](#)



6th: Cattlemen's Day - in Manhattan
Register Here: [Cattlemens Day](#)



3rd: Crop Talk Webinar Series: Fungicide Applications in Corn and Sorghum

10th: Crop Talk Webinar Series: What's Bugging You? Insects to Watch for in the Field

More Information Here: [CropTalk Webinar Series | K-State | Kansas State University](#)

Walk Kansas 2026

March 22 - May 16

Registration closes
March 30th.

JOIN THE WALKING CHALLENGE

WALK KANSAS

AN 8-WEEK HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHALLENGE!

21st: NW Super Saturday Judging Contests and Workshop - Hays

This year's Super Saturday judging event will take place on March 21st at Fort Hays State University. There will be 8 judging contests—Crops, Entomology, Horticulture, Life Skills, Livestock, Livestock Skill-A-Thon, Photography and Wildlife Skills for 4-H & FFA youth 7 - 18. You can judge at 1 or all of these great contests. There will also be several workshops in the afternoon to help 4-H'ers explore project learning. Watch for more info as these activities are finalized!

For more questions, contact Robyn Trussel at rdeines@ksu.edu, 785-798-5020; or Chandra Plate cplate@ksu.edu or 620-388-7157

Bigger cattle, greater need for animal welfare and management



By Colton Tripp, K-State Extension news service

Since 2010, the USDA has reported that the U.S. beef cattle herd has declined 12%, from 31.7 million in 2010 to 27.9 million in 2025, though producers are still able to meet beef demands through efficient cattle.

But a Kansas State University researcher suggests that producers need to take a closer look at the management of their cattle, as they progressively get larger in the next generation.

A.J. Tarpoff, an associate professor and beef veterinarian with K-State Extension, suggests that producers need to take a deeper look at how cattle are managed while in transportation and in finishing facilities, considering that they are bigger and more efficient than ever before.

“As an industry we are using less feed, less water, and less time to be able to get these animals on a per-pound-of-beef basis,” Tarpoff said. “We’re doing better than we ever have before.”

He suggests that even though the individual welfare of the animals themselves is not the major concern, there are concerns in the facilities and management when transporting and finishing these cattle.

“From our beef quality audits, we have seen an increase in bruising issues on the carcass,” Tarpoff said. “We are seeing a lot of bruising on our middle meats, the ribeye, the strips and the sirloin. These three major cuts are seeing a majority of these bigger bruises and are having to get trimmed off at the processing plant.”

The cuts that are trimmed cannot be processed into a finished product, and the beef that remains after the trimming tends to be downgraded.

“It’s a huge financial discount to our industry dealing with some of these bruising issues,” Tarpoff said.

He said that bruises often are caused during transportation. As cattle grow to a larger size and live weight, trailer compartments have been known to not be conducive to a 1,600- to 1,800-pound steer. Tarpoff urges producers and others who manage the cattle to be aware of these issues when loading and unloading the animals.

Tarpoff also suggests taking into account animal welfare, even past the producer’s control.

“Even in basic facilities at the processing facility, there are some animals that may not necessarily fit through the working facilities,” Tarpoff said.

He emphasized that even processors can prepare their facility and transportation plans to prepare for larger, more efficient cattle.

“We need to prepare for the future. We don’t anticipate that we’re going to take a drastic 90-degree turn and go to a much smaller framed animal, not in today’s marketplace,” Tarpoff said. “We’re going to make them bigger. We’re making them more efficient. We’re going to continue down that path.”

Alongside the management of these animals, Tarpoff said producers need to manage the welfare of cattle while finishing them once they are off the farm.

“It’s important in our industry looking forward, that we need to be nimble enough to make individual decisions at a population level,” Tarpoff said. “If there’s an individual within a pen that probably shouldn’t go to 1800 pounds, we want to make sure that it gets marketed before there’s a locomotion (the movement, gait and ability of cattle to walk, stand and move from place to place) concern.”

He adds: “We need to be making sure our pen floor is as comfortable and structurally sound as possible, so our animals don’t have any issues. We should be asking ourselves whether we are moving those animals in an appropriate way to make sure that we are maintaining their locomotion, that we’re monitoring that regularly before an issue becomes larger.”

Tarpoff said the locomotion of the animal does not always derive from the farm of origin; better decisions need to be made on the feedlot to understand when they need to go; and when they can continue to feed the animals.

“We just want to challenge the industry to make sure everyone is aware of the concerns that if we’re going to move forward and plan for the future, I think this is where we start,” he said.

More information regarding beef cow size and heavier carcass weights, and the implications they have on the cow herd and feedlot performance, will be presented at the [113th K-State Cattlemen’s Day on March 6](#).

More information on beef cattle and their efficiency also is available online from [K-State Beef](#).

St. Patrick's Day and Corned Beef

March is the time of year that we starting seeing signs of spring! Between St. Patrick's Day and March Madness basketball, there will be lots of celebrations.



A traditional St. Patrick's Day feast celebrated by Irish-Americans includes corned beef and cabbage. My personal favorite treat is a Rubeen sandwich. So what is corned beef?

According to the [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service](#), corning is a form of curing. The name comes from Anglo-Saxon times before refrigeration. In those days, the meat was dry-cured in coarse "corns" of salt. Pellets of salt, some the size of kernels of corn, were rubbed into the beef to keep it from spoiling and to preserve it.

Today brining — the use of salt water — has replaced the dry salt cure, but the name "corned beef" is still used, rather than "brined" or "pickled" beef. Commonly used spices that give corned beef its distinctive flavor are peppercorns and bay leaf.

Corned beef is made from one of several less tender cuts of beef like the brisket, rump or round. Therefore, it requires long, moist cooking. Keep food safety in mind when preparing corned beef. It can be cooked on top of the stove or in the oven, microwave or slow cooker.

Corned beef may still be pink in color after cooking. This does not mean it is not done. Nitrite is used in the curing process, which fixes pigment in the meat and affects the color.

Allow the brisket to stand for about 20 minutes after removing from the heat. This will make it easier to slice, and it is best sliced diagonally across the grain of the meat.

Plan the Garden to Preserve Food Later

Gardeners rejoice! Spring is on its way and now is the time to plan what produce to plant. Besides planning what to put in



**Kansas
Garden Guide**



the ground, plan ahead to preserve the bountiful harvest.

Depending on ground space and weather, growing a garden can yield fresh, nutritious produce to enjoy throughout the year. Two resources can help with your planning.

The first is K-State's [Vegetable Garden Planting Guide](#). It gives vegetable yields per 100 feet of land, planting guidance, and a planting calendar from planting to harvest. For example, 100 feet of green beans should yield 120 pounds of beans. Yield can also be calculated per person. For green beans, 15-16 feet of plantings per person. Based on what is planted, plans can be made to preserve the produce. To can the green beans in the above example, the 120 pounds of beans will make about 60 quarts of canned beans.

An [approximate yield chart](#) can be found in Table 2 of So Easy to Preserve, 6th edition.

For more gardening information, check out the [K-State Horticulture Fruit and Vegetable Gardening Programs](#) website.

Pi (or Pie) Day is 3.14!

Math experts can celebrate this day! But it is also a great excuse to enjoy a piece of pie. Plan now to preserve your own pie filling!



There are four popular fruit pie fillings you can preserve at home, including apple, blueberry, cherry, and peach. Now is the time to plan for canning these tasty fillings. One key ingredient is Clear Jel® in the cook-type form. Do not use instant Clear Jel® for canning. This is a type of corn starch that can withstand the cooking and processing steps and still produce a clear, soft texture. It can be found in bulk food stores or online.

Learn more and get the recipes from the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#). They also have recipes for mincemeat pie filling and green tomato pie filling.



Junior Producer Days

Junior producer days are held to provide educational material and hands-on experiences for youth, parents, leaders, and extension agents.

2026 Junior Beef Producer Day

Date: Saturday, March 7, 2026

Cost: \$20/person

(Registration Deadline: Feb 13, 2026)

2026 Junior Sheep Producer Day

Date: Saturday, April 11, 2026

Cost: \$20/person

(Registration Deadline: March 20, 2026)

[Kansas Junior Producer Days](#)

Thomas County Fair



July 26th - August 1st



4-H Council Scholarship

Thomas County 4-H Council Scholarships are open to Thomas County high school seniors enrolled in 4-H. An application with high school transcript, 500 Word essay, and a reference letter from a non-family 4-H Leader, Project Leader, or Extension Agent. Applications are available at the Extension Office and must be turned in by **March 16th**. [Click here](#) for an application. [Click here](#) for Guidelines.



Small Animal Weigh-In

Small animal weigh-in will be held **April 18th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm** at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Make-up day if necessary will be **April 25th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**. Regular visual tags are \$3 each. Please let the extension office know if you are needing **Kansas State Fair or KJLS tags BEFORE weigh-in and how many**. Please have your livestock ready and bring cash or check to purchase tags.

We need volunteers to help unload, load, and move the animals during weigh-in. Please contact the office if you are able to help!



YQCA Training Required for all Livestock Participants

The Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certification training will be required for 4-H members ages 8-18 to be able to show and sell their livestock this year for fair. 7 year-olds are encouraged to attend, but will not become certified. **Species that require certification include beef, hogs, sheep, goats, poultry and rabbits.** This training focuses on food safety, animal well-being, and life skill development. The office will be hosting two in-person dates (will be announced soon) for members to receive their certificate. If they cannot attend either in-person date they are able to complete the training online. In-person training locations and dates are to be determined. The training will be \$3/participant in-person or \$12 online. All certificates of completion are due to the office by July 1st. For questions and to register, please call the Extension Office at 785-460-4582.

Shooting Sports Projects

4-H members who are enrolling in the various shooting sports disciplines must enroll via 4-H Online in a timely manner so they will receive full educational benefit of the sport. 4-H members must be 8 years old before Jan. 1 of 2026 to participate in shooting sports. Spring State Qualifier: March 14th, Deadline: February 28

More information can be found here:

[Local Shooting Sports Qualifiers](#)

Horse Papers

Horse Identification papers are due to the Extension Office on May 1st. The 4-H Horse ID Certificate has been updated for the 2025 4-H program year. Please destroy previous versions of the ID form and use the update certificate moving forward. The form must be front and back only, not two separate pages and must have a standard-sized photo attached with all markings visible. Here is the [new form](#).





Club Attendance

Business must be conducted at the meeting in order for the meeting to qualify for attendance. College students who enroll in 4-H for their final year must still attend 5 meetings either in person or by technology such as Skype or Zoom.

Club members and leaders can check their attendance record by going to the Thomas County 4-H BAND group. **Club leaders or a designated club member should send attendance sign-in sheets to the office after each meeting to ensure timely record-keeping.** Drop off sign-in sheets at the office or email to hpgiefer@ksu.edu.

Schedules & Calendars

A new 4-H year began October 1, and with that our 4-H community club leaders and project program leaders are developing their schedule of events and activities. Please contact the Thomas County Extension Office at 785-460-4582 with the dates and locations of your meetings and events. Our office has a calendar posted on our website for your convenience. If you have a meeting or event you would like us to add, or if you make changes to regularly scheduled meetings, please let us know. This will help us keep an updated calendar and will help ensure you get the dates you need for the 4-H Building without scheduling conflicts.

This is a reminder that we get use of the building without a fee through the Thomas County Fair Board, so we need to appreciate their gracious offer. There are times when that building is rented to the public and that revenue is used for maintenance expenses.

This is also a good time to remind 4-H leaders that the building needs to be cleaned after each use, even if that means someone before you did a poor job of cleaning. Having our 4-H members clean the building after each use teaches responsible behavior. Leaving the building cleaner when we leave than when we arrive shows our appreciation and mature attitude.

A thank you note to the Fair Board for their support

during the fair and for the use of the building would be a great way to show appreciation.

Project Goals

With reenrollment complete, youth have selected their projects and now it is time to set their 2026 goals.

- **Action:** What are you going to do?
- **Result:** What are you going to accomplish?
- **Timeline:** When are you going to complete the action?

A well-written goal combines all three of the above points! Project goals should be set by the end of January. The Kansas 4-H Program has a guide for [Setting Project Goals](#) for free online.

ZBooks—Online Record Keeping

Speaking of goals, this would be a great time to create an account with ZBooks to begin working on your record books for 2026! ZBooks is an online record keeping platform that is extremely user friendly and designed specifically for Kansas 4-H Project Record Books. Features of Zbooks include mobile friendly, internet based, unlimited entries, permanent records that roll over year to year, and more! There is even a section specific for setting goals for the upcoming 4-H year. Visit [ZSuite](#) for instructions on registering for an account, creating member profiles, new project reports, etc. There are even step by step video tutorials to assist you!

ATTENDING A STATE-SPONSORED 4-H EDUCATIONAL EVENT? 4-H COUNCIL WILL COVER 25% OF THE ATTENDANCE FEE. JUST BRING YOUR RECEIPT TO THE NEXT 4-H COUNCIL MEETING FOR APPROVAL!





March 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 	2	3 	4	5	6 	7
8	9 AH - Club Meeting	10 	11 	12 Fair Board Meeting	13	14
15	16 Scholarship Deadline  BPG/SV/Gem Club Meetings	17 	18 	19	20	21 <i>Super Saturday in Hays</i>
22  	23 	24	25 	26 - 28 		
29	30	31	AH = Abilene Hustlers BPG = Brewster Prairie Gem Gem = Gem 4-H SV = Solomon Valley PP = Pawsome Paws SS = Shooting Sports			



K-STATE

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Thomas County Office Complex

350 South Range Ave. Suite 16

Colby, Kansas 67701

Bookmark our website for quick reference to educational and informational resources as well as contact information for all of your questions:

<http://www.thomas.k-state.edu>

Check us out on Facebook:

K-State Research and Extension Thomas County 4-H



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