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Thomas County

K-State Research and Extension News

*Knowledge
for Life*

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Research and Extension

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4-H RE-ENROLLMENT & NEW ENROLLMENT

New 4-H members, as well as returning 4-H members, may enroll/re-enroll online starting **Wednesday, October 1, 2025**. ALL returning 4-H members need to be enrolled by **December 1, 2025** in order to participate with 4-H in the 2026 Fair. At this time, please double-check all contact information for accuracy. Also, there is a \$15 4-H program fee per child to enroll. The Extension Office *highly* recommends using a debit/credit card for payment to expedite the enrollment process. If you have questions regarding the fee, please call the Kansas State 4-H Office at (785) 532-5800. For other questions, please call the Extension office at (785) 460-4582.

4-H Project Record Books, Officer Notebooks, Club Seal Forms & Achievement Pin Forms

Due – Monday, October 13th!!! Club notebooks for Secretary, Treasurer, Reporter and Historian are to be turned in with Project Record Books. We want the entire 4-H year to be included in these books when they are judged.

4-H Officer Training

Officer Training will be Monday, October 27, 2025 at 6:30 PM in the 4-H Building. See Page 6 for more details and information.

2026 Program Development Committee Elections

Watch for the ballot being emailed later this month.

The Thomas County Extension Council is responsible for conducting the Extension Program in Thomas County. Each year we elect new members to the Program Development Committees. It is these committees that design the Extension program for Thomas County.

Each Program Development Committee (PDC) consists of six members who serve a two year term. New members from each PDC are elected each year. The entire Extension Council is comprised of 24 members with six members represented from each of the Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H and Youth, and Community Vitality committees.

A ballot will be sent by email, but if more ballots are needed for members in your household, ballots will be available at the Extension office. After marking your ballot, please return it to the Extension Office by mail, by email, or by hand delivery. Ballots will not be accepted after 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 3rd, 2025.

The results of our election will be announced at our annual meeting on Friday, November 14, 2025. At this meeting, the Council shall elect from its own members, nine people to serve on the Executive Board, which consists of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and five other members. The Executive Board has the responsibility for the entire Extension Program in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H & Youth and Community Vitality.

The problems and needs of people and their communities are in a constant state of change.

Extension programs should reflect these changes. It is important, therefore, that the County

Extension programs be given careful and continuous attention, so please take time to vote! All

Thomas County citizens in your household, 18 years of age and older, are eligible to vote.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
Fair Premium Checks are available for pick-up at the Extension Office

Upcoming Events

October

1st: K-State Garden Hour: Keys to Successful Community Garden Spaces Noon-1:00pm via Zoom [Click here to register and see past presentations!](#)



3rd: First Friday e-Call: Sustainable practices to benefit people, profit, and the planet.

[Click here for more information!](#)



3rd - 5th: KJLS

[Click here for more information!](#)

5th - 11th : National 4-H Week - Beyond Ready



11th & 12th: State Shotgun Match



22nd: 4-H Officer Training will be at the 4-H Building at



11th & 12th - 48 Hours of 4-H Service Challenge

[To find out more, click here!](#)

25th - 26th: Shooting Sports Instructor Training & Renewal in Cimarron

28th: 4-H Volunteer Training

[Register here!](#)

13th: 4-H Projects Record Books, Officer Notebooks, Club Seal Forms & Achievement Pin Forms - Due Monday, October 13th!!

15th: Living Well Wednesday - Scam Smarts: Staying Safe in a Scamming World [More Information Here!](#)

29th: Quarterly Virtual Town Hall -Our quarterly local food town halls are held virtually on Zoom and are open to anyone across the state of Kansas that is interested in learning more about local food projects, organizations, and opportunities across the state.

[Register Here!](#)

Knowing What's in Every Bite: Understanding CRP Forage Quality



By Jason Warner, cow-calf specialist

If I asked 10 different producers this question: "How good of quality do you think is your CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) forage for grazing?", I would expect that 9 would respond with something to the extent of "Not much better than trees!" or "About like corn stalks after harvest!". Maybe the other 1 person would say something like "Don't waste your time!". The reason for the proposed question is because that is exactly what KSU Extension Agents and Beef Specialists across the state have been working on to better understand recently.

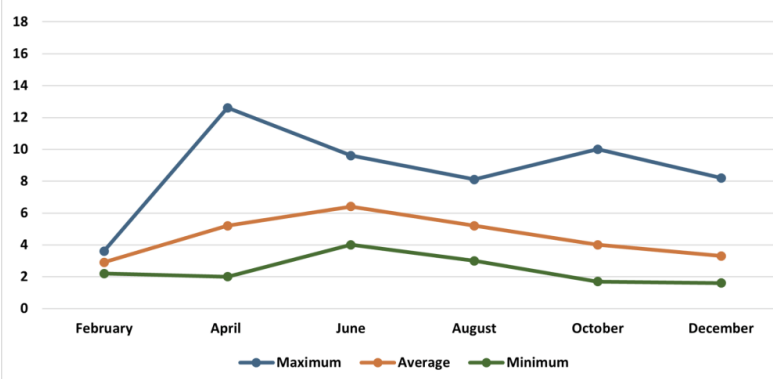
While we typically think about pasture forage quality in the context of native grasslands, CRP lands represent a significant source of forage for producers in some areas. For us in Kansas, CRP lands in 2024 comprised over 12% of the state's total native grasslands. Back to the question of forage quality, it is a forage resource where available data to help guide producers is quite scarce. Certainly, emergency grazing or haying of CRP during drought is the most common reason these forages are utilized, but there may be many other situations that lead to usage by producers. Information on standing forage quality is necessary for accurate feeding recommendations for producers, and it also applies to situations in which CRP tracts are harvested as hay. Yes, calf prices are at record high levels but our goal should still be to optimize our supplement inputs by avoiding both over- and under-supplementation. Having accurate forage quality estimates is key in helping us do so.

To improve our understanding of seasonal nutrient content changes of CRP forages across Kansas, a statewide assessment was recently conducted. Project details and preliminary data may be found in the 2025 KSU Cattlemen's Day Report (Schwartz et al., 2025; <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5977.8660>). In short, all standing forage above 1 inch was collected, so prior management impacted the sample quality. Some

samples would contain the current and prior year growth. Be sure to check out the 2026 Cattlemen's Day Report when available next spring which will contain the final summary of this project as a snapshot of those data are presented here.

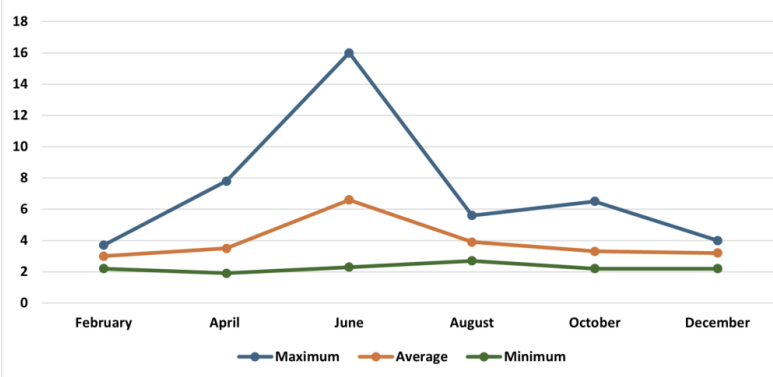
In general, crude protein increased during the growing season and decreased during fall and winter for both eastern and western Kansas samples. For eastern Kansas samples, crude protein (% dry matter basis) ranged from less than 3% in February to over 6% in June, but some samples were as high as nearly 10% during that month (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Crude Protein (% DM Basis) of Eastern KS CRP Forage



On average, eastern Kansas samples were 4% crude protein in October and declined going into winter. Samples collected from western Kansas ranged from 3% crude protein in February to over 6% in June with wide ranges noted during the primary growing season months (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Crude Protein (% DM Basis) of Western KS CRP Forage



The key takeaway here is that these data have been generated to help serve as a benchmark guide for making informed nutrition decisions when CRP forages are used. There are certainly times when beef cow nutrient requirements may be met by CRP forages alone and times when supplementation will be needed. Keep in mind the following points: 1) variation in forage nutrient concentration exists 2) production stage of the cowherd will determine how well CRP forages meet requirements and 3) operation specific forage sampling can always help fine-tune nutrient intake estimates, but these data are a useful point of reference in getting started.

Knowing a little science can help with making holiday candy

When it comes to making holiday candy, K-State Research and Extension food scientist Karen Blakeslee says it's a cooking process that usually turns into a food science experiment.

"Candy is basically divided into two categories: crystalline or non-crystalline," Blakeslee said.

Fudge is an example of a crystalline candy that requires special attention during the cooking process.

"You have to be careful when making fudge because sometimes you get little crystals that form inside and gives a grainy feeling in your mouth," Blakeslee said, adding that some crystals are acceptable, but "the goal is to limit the size of crystals that form when you're making fudge" or other crystalline candies.

"The size of the crystals should be very small to reduce the chance of a grainy texture," she said, adding that creams and fondant are additional examples of crystalline candies. They should be smooth, creamy, and easy to chew.

Fudge, she said, "is basically chocolate, corn syrup, butter and sugar, and maybe vanilla or other flavoring such as peppermint." For a quality end-product, Blakeslee said butter is key; don't use margarine or another substitute.

"Butter is important because the fat in cream helps prevent crystals from forming when making fudge," Blakeslee said.

Corn syrup can also help to prevent crystals from forming in fudge, she notes.

"If water gets into the product during the cooking process, crystals can form, so it becomes a balance between controlling the heat – how long you cook it – and watching for any kind of excess moisture," Blakeslee said. "Even humidity in the air can be absorbed into a candy and cause

problems. It really is a science experiment every time you make this type of candy."

In non-crystalline candies – toffee and peanut brittle are two examples – Blakeslee said you don't want any crystals to form, not even small ones. Other examples include lollipops, caramels, and nougats.

"For this type of candy, the sugar mixture is cooked to higher temperatures, such as the hard crack stage," Blakeslee said. "During cooking, moisture evaporates and the temperature rises higher than the boiling point of water. Reduced moisture content and rapid cooling are key factors in making non-crystalline candy."

According to Blakeslee, when making these types of candy, limit stirring to help reduce the formation of crystals.

Some cooks choose to add baking soda to brittle, which Blakeslee says lowers the acidity and makes the candy more brittle, or more porous: "It's easier to break and easier to bite and chew," Blakeslee said.

Blakeslee is also coordinator of [K-State's Rapid Response Center for Food Science](#), which offers many [more tips on food safety for the holidays online](#).

Blakeslee spoke recently about considerations for holiday candy-making on the weekly podcast, [Sound Living, available online from K-State Research and Extension](#).





New 4-H Year Begins in October

October marks the beginning of the new 4-H year and the opening of member enrollment. Where can youth and parents start if they are interested in enrolling in 4-H and want to learn more about what 4-H has to offer? The following are some questions and answers that can help any prospective members or parents learn more.

What is 4-H?

4-H is one of America's oldest and largest youth development organizations. It is a volunteer-led, informal education program administered through local county extension offices, state land-grant universities and the USDA. It features nearly 6 million members, rural, suburban, AND urban, throughout all 50 states and some foreign countries.

What does 4-H offer?

- Leadership opportunities for youth at the local and state level.
- Recognition for work and achievement through fairs, scholarships, awards, and more.
- Opportunity to participate in county, regional, state, and national events, including camps, educational programming, leadership positions, and conferences.
- Decision-making skills and opportunities through participation in club meetings, community service, and project work.

What makes 4-H different from other youth development organizations?

- **Self-determination** — Youth decide what projects they want to participate in, as well as how their clubs operate and support members and the community they live in. 4-H is the only youth development organization where members actually decide how it operates.
- **Experiential learning** — Members actively participate in their interest areas. Want to learn about insects? Start a bug collection in the entomology project. Like to work with your

hands? Build a rocket in rocketry or a table in woodworking projects. Learn to bake your favorite pie in foods and nutrition project. Interested in something that isn't an official project? No problem! Enter the Self-Determined project and come up with your own unique creation.

- **Research-based support from local, state and national experts** — 4-H is administered in Kansas through K-State Research and Extension, giving 4-H members, volunteers, and leaders access to the latest data in research and youth development.

Why 4-H?

A better question might be "Why not 4-H?"

A recent study of 4-H members across Kansas showed some positive results in areas of decision making, leadership, communication, and citizenship.

- 95% are comfortable making their own decisions
- 89% don't succumb to peer pressure
- 96% reported they can make a difference through community service
- 95% reported an increased effort to allow everyone to have a voice.

Who wouldn't want youth to become better leaders, citizens, communicators, and decision-makers?

Joining 4-H

If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining 4-H, contact the Thomas County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-460-4582.

You can also learn more about joining and the different clubs in Thomas County by going to our [website](#). Feel free to contact Club Leaders to get a feel for how you might fit into that club.

You can also Follow us on Facebook @Thomas County Extension/4-H.

4-H Re-enrollment

Re-enrollment opens on October 1st for all of our current 4-H members and closes December 1st. To re-enroll please visit 4-H

Online at 4honline.com.





Achievement Banquet

The Achievement Banquet will be held on Friday, November 21st in the 4-H building at 6:30pm. This event will showcase the winners of the 2025 Fair and the achievements of the 4-H members this past year. [Please RSVP to your club leaders to help us better prepare for the banquet.](#)

4-H Officer Training

Officer Training will be Monday, October 27, 2025 at 6:30 PM in the 4-H Building. We will start off with pizza and conversation then break into groups for the training. Please RSVP to the Extension Office with how many slices of pizza you would like by October 24th; \$2 for each slice - includes drink - by noon on the day of the training. The October 4-H Council meeting will follow.

48 Hours of 4-H

The weekend following National 4-H Week (October 5-11) is the perfect opportunity to setup a service project and join the **48 Hours of 4-H Service Challenge**, October 11-12, 2024. Register your projects and then follow up with a report so Kansas 4-H will see all the great work that happened across the state, you can find more information about 48 Hours of 4-H [here](#). The theme for National 4-H Week is "Beyond Ready" you can find more resources and information about the theme [here](#).

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.





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. The deadline to enroll in the BB, Air Pistol, and Air Rifle projects is coming soon. Stay tuned for more information.

KYLF

[Kansas Youth Leadership Forum](#) will be held on November 22-23 at Rock Springs 4-H Center. This event is for youth ages 14-18 before January 1, 2026. It will feature workshops, consulting groups, inspirational speakers, State 4-H Youth Leadership Council Elections, and opportunities to learn and have fun. Registration deadline is Wednesday, October 15th, 2025 by midnight. Scholarships to attend the event are possible through the Bill Draper Fund. Contact the office if you would like more information! Registration link coming soon.

Volunteers

It's that time again and we need your help!! The enrollment period for adult volunteers is the same as that for 4-H members, October 1st through December 1st. Returning volunteers will need to re-enroll on 4-H Online and verify their information just like returning 4-H members. If you are a new volunteer, please contact the office so we can get the forms and instructions to you. Call the office at (785) 460-4582 or email hpgiefer@ksu.edu.

****If you know someone who would be a great resource for our 4-H members to learn from, (friend, community member, etc.) please contact the office. We are always looking for new project leaders and volunteers.****

Project Leader Training Resources

Kansas 4-H Volunteer Project Leader resources are available for individuals looking at becoming a project leader! Topics include: Personal Development; Public Speaking; STEM: Rocketry; FCS: Textile Science; Animal Science: Livestock; Service Learning; Creative Arts—Visual Arts: Barn Quilts; Financial Literacy; and Ag & Natural Resources: Wildlife. For more information go to the 4-H [website](#).

Photography Shutterbugs Events



Shutterbug events are photography workshops put on across the state by the Kansas State 4-H Photography Committee. Workshops are typically scheduled as a morning session and concentrate on a variety of aspects of composition. The events typically end around Noon. Examples of sessions include: Portfolio, Camera Features, Panning, Close-ups, Aperture Settings & Kaleidoscopes/Reflections

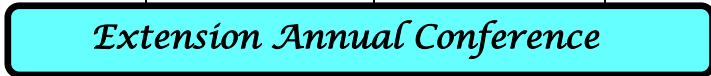
- Fall 2025—Manhattan
- Fall 2025—Hays

More information coming soon!

**TO MAKE THE
BEST BETTER**



October 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
						
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
						 
						
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
 	DUE IN OFFICE!! 4-H Projects Record Books, Officer Notebooks, Club Seal Forms & Achievement Pin Forms		Living Well Wednesday	KS CROP INSURANCE WORKSHOP 		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
						
						
26	27	28	30	31		
	Officer Training 4-H Council Mtg. @ 4-H Bldg. 6:30					
		 4-H Volunteer Training 		AH = Abilene Hustlers BPG = Brewster Prairie Gem Gem = Gem 4-H SV = Solomon Valley PP = Pawsome Paws SS = Shooting Sports		



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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



K-State Research and Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means of communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact two weeks prior to the start of the event. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.