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Thomas County

K-State Research and Extension News

*Knowledge
for Life*

January 2026

Volume: 203

Friend of Extension

The Thomas County Extension Council has selected **Dustin “Dusty” Quenzer** as the Friend of Extension Award recipient in recognition of his ongoing commitment and dedicated support to the Thomas County Extension program.

Dusty served on the Thomas County Extension Council Board from 2020–2024 and held the position of Board Chair in both 2023 and 2024. Since 2023, he has represented Thomas County on the State Extension Advisory Council, a consultative body that provides guidance and feedback to the Director of Extension on matters impacting Extension operations and outreach across Kansas.

In addition to his leadership service, Dusty has graciously sponsored numerous K-State and Extension events through his business, Quenzer Seed and Feed, and he is a consistent supporter and attendee of Extension activities throughout the year. In 2023, Dusty and his wife, Mandy, were honored as the Willie’s Farm Family representing Thomas County.

Thank you, Dusty, for your exceptional leadership, your advocacy, and your continued dedication to strengthening the Thomas County Extension program. Your service truly makes a difference.

4-H Family of the Year

Chad and Angela Zimmerman have been devoted volunteers with the Thomas County 4-H Program for many years, exemplifying the true spirit of service and leadership.

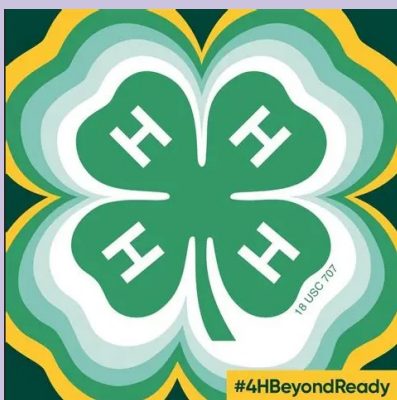
Chad has served as a Shooting Sports Instructor for 18 years in Air Pistol and 1 year in Air Rifle, guiding 4-H youth with integrity, enthusiasm, and a strong commitment to safety. Beyond teaching shooting fundamentals, he is widely respected for imparting meaningful life lessons that extend well beyond the range. His leadership has also been instrumental in organizing and hosting an annual state-qualifying event for Air Pistol and Air Rifle, benefitting youth not only in Thomas County but also from surrounding communities.

Angela has been equally dedicated to strengthening the 4-H experience through her service as an assistant club leader for the Gem 4-H Club. Her leadership, encouragement, and unwavering support for youth development have contributed greatly to the club’s continued success. She is known for fostering a positive, welcoming environment where members feel valued, supported, and inspired to achieve their goals.

Together, Chad and Angela have raised all five of their children through the Thomas County 4-H Program, with each completing between 10 and 12 years of active membership. Their longstanding dedication, leadership, and advocacy have had a lasting impact on the program and continue to inspire future generations of youth.

Thank you, Chad and Angela, for your outstanding service to the Thomas County 4-H Program. Your commitment truly makes a difference.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE



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Friend of 4-H

NWKS Radio has provided outstanding support to the local 4-H chapters, demonstrating a strong commitment to community engagement and youth development. Their consistent coverage of 4-H activities—especially during fair—has significantly enhanced public awareness and celebration of our members' hard work. Through on-air broadcasts, social media presence, and live event coverage, NWKS Radio has ensured that the achievements of our youth are recognized beyond the fairgrounds.

Coverage of this nature is rarely provided outside of athletics, yet our 4-H members prepare for fair throughout the entire year. In many ways, the fair represents the “ag sport” for these young people, and NWKS Radio has helped showcase the dedication, effort, and excellence they bring to their projects.

In appreciation of their commitment and partnership, we are proud to recognize NWKS Radio with the 2025 Friend of 4-H Award. We look forward to many more years of collaboration and continued support.

Thank you, NWKS Radio, for all you do for the Thomas County 4-H Program.

thank you



Upcoming Events for January 2026



4th: K-State Garden Hour: Honey Bee Colony Management and Key Floral Resources in Kansas - via Zoom [First Friday e-Call- State Housing Resources - Kansas State University Events](#)



14th: Ag Profitability Conference in Colby - Farmers, ag professionals, and community members — you're invited to a day packed with insight, learning, and tools to help navigate today's shifting ag economy. **RSVP: January 8th 785-460-4582**

13th: Calving School - in Paola **15th: Calving School - in Sharon Springs**



Kansas State University's Department of Animal Sciences and Industry, in partnership with the K-State Research and Extension program, will provide an overview of effective calving management practices. The program will include a review of the stages of the normal calving process as well as guidance and practical tips for managing difficult calving situations. [Register here!](#)

Cover Your Acres

20th & 21st: in Oberlin Winter Conference

Cover Your Acres is a producer-driven meeting featuring new ideas and research-based updates for crop production in Northwest Kansas and the Central High Plains. In response to current challenges, this year's program also includes agricultural economics, legal, and risk management topics. [Register here!](#)

20th: Kansas Corn & Soybean School - in Dodge City

The Kansas Corn and Soybean Agronomy Series is coming in January to Dodge City, sponsored by Kansas Soybean and Kansas Corn. With input from growers, the traditional corn and soybean schools have been retooled into a fresh, fast-paced agronomy series designed to prepare growers to meet today's challenges and opportunities. Each session of the Kansas Corn and Soybean Agronomy Series features a powerful lineup with top private sector and university experts who will share insights on managing crop diseases, fertility management, herbicide strategies, markets, crop insurance and ag programs. [Register here!](#)



20th & 21st: No-Till On the Plains 30th Anniversary- in Wichita

Each year No-Till On the Plains presents educational events such as the world-renowned Winter Conference, Fundamentals of Soil Health workshops, Advanced Concepts in soil health workshops, field days, International tours, and regional bus tours, allowing attendees to get practical and relevant production and management information from fellow producers and predominant scientists. Our goal at No-Till on the Plains is to make farmers and ranchers more profitable, while improving their soil resource! [Register here!](#)

28th: Soil Fertility School - in Colby

Extension specialists cover a number of topics related to soil fertility. Call 785-460-4582 or email hpgiefer@ksu.edu

29th: Local Food Virtual Town Hall

The January Town Hall will feature a presentation from the Sunflower Foundation on Food is Medicine and a presentation from the Kansas Food and Farm Coalition about 2025 Legislative Session Farm to Plate Advocacy. [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

*Hard work is not a thing that you do;
it is a way of life that you cultivate.*

Upcoming Events for February 2026



1st: 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](#)

3rd: Swine Profitability Conference in Manhattan

This annual event is designed to address key factors influencing pork producer profitability and business decision-making. The conference will feature a lineup of speakers discussing various topics, including input costs, pork demand, labor efficiency, herd health, and daily management decisions.

[Swine Profitability Conference](#)



11th: Field to Fork Webinar: Planting Techniques - Make All the Difference: From Tomatoes to Apple Trees

18th: Field to Fork Webinar: New and Promising Vegetable Varieties for 2026

25th: Field to Fork Webinar: The Prepared Consumer: From Grocery Aisle to Emergency Plan [2026 Field to Fork Webinar Series | NDSU Agriculture](#)



12th & 13th: Women Managing the Farm Conference- Held in Manhattan, "Forging the Future"

Women Grow the Farm is a comprehensive program to connect women involved in the many aspects of agriculture. The annual conference **provides valuable tools and materials to address production, price, human, financial, and legal risks of farm women at all levels.** [Registration — Women Managing the Farm](#)

WOMEN
GROW
the FARM

17th & 18th: Farm & Ranch Transition Conferences

17th - Fort Scott

18th - Fredonia

Join Kansas State University Department of Agricultural Economics' Office of Farm and Ranch Transition and the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas for a conference to help prepare for the transition to the next generation. This conference is for any farm family in any stage of planning for a transition.

[Farm and Ranch Transition Conferences | AgManager.info](#)



20th: KARTA Ag Tech Conference in Manhattan The Kansas Ag Research and Technology Association is an organization of innovative people including farmers, researchers and industry persons who share a common desire to learn more about production agriculture. [Register here!](#)

27th: Local Food Producer Workshop in Oakley

These workshops are an opportunity for producers and small food businesses to learn more about selling their products through farmers markets, direct-to-consumers sales, and other local market opportunities. Participants can connect with other producers and learn from their peers to improve their business success. [Kansas Local Food Systems | Transact](#)

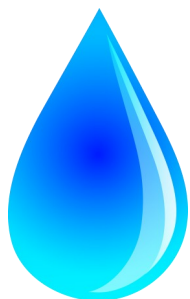


Success is not how high you have climbed, but how
you make a positive difference to the world.

Even in winter, gardens need water

Yards may need another shot of moisture even after recent rain and snow to alleviate stress in lawns and gardens, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini.

"A good, deep watering with moisture reaching at least a foot down into the soil is much better than several light sprinklings that just wet the top portions of the soil," Domenghini said. "A deep watering will ensure that the majority of roots have access to water."



Domenghini urged homeowners to test the moisture content in their yard's soil by pushing a metal rod or wooden dowel into the ground. "Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet," she said. Measure how far down the implement goes to determine the amount of moisture is in the soil.

"Although all perennial plants benefit from moist soils before winter, it is especially important for newly planted or over-seeded lawns, as well as newly transplanted trees and shrubs due to their limited root systems," Domenghini said.

"Even trees and shrubs planted within the last 2-3 years are more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant. Evergreens are more at risk because moisture is lost from the foliage."

Domenghini shared a few tips for watering common areas of the yard:

Trees and shrubs planted within the last year. Drill a small hole in a five-gallon bucket near the bottom, then fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once so that you apply 10 gallons. Slow release bags with micropores can be

purchased as an alternative to using a bucket. Larger trees planted 2-3 years prior may require more water.

Large trees. Using a soaker hose, circle the trunk one-half the distance to the dripline, or the outermost reach of branches. On smaller trees, you may need to circle the tree several times so that tree roots will be watered.

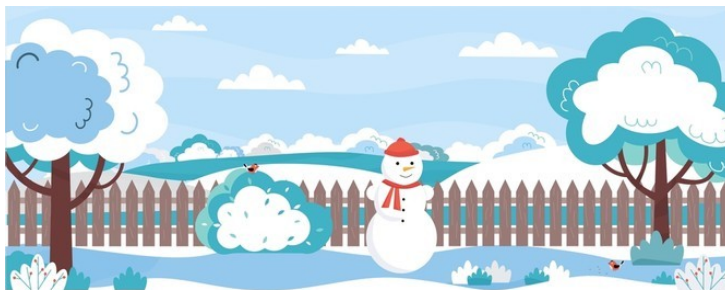
Newly established bed or foundation plantings. Hook the beginning and end of a soaker hose to a Y-adapter to equalize pressure, which encourages more uniform watering.

Fall planted or overseeded lawns. Use an overhead sprinkler. Watering to a depth of 12 inches is more difficult; try to reach at least six inches deep.

Domenghini said watering once a month if conditions are dry and warm should be enough to help landscapes through the winter.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).





Tips for better organizing your kitchen

By Pat Melgares

Deep cleaning and organizing the home kitchen is often associated with spring, but a Kansas State University food safety expert says the start of a new year can be an ideal time to tackle cluttered cabinets, crowded refrigerators and overstuffed drawers.

Karen Blakeslee, a K-State food scientist and coordinator of the [Rapid Response Center for food science](#), said many people are surprised by what they find once they begin sorting through their kitchens.

“The start of the new year, everybody’s trying to get organized, clean things out, so why not start in the kitchen area and see what kind of mystery food you might find in your kitchen,” Blakeslee said.

Cabinets and cupboards are often prime trouble spots because items get pushed to the back and forgotten. Blakeslee recommends taking everything out, cleaning shelves thoroughly and allowing them to dry. Broken packages can attract pests, she said, so sealing cracks with caulk and discarding damaged or unused items is important.

If a utensil or gadget hasn’t been used in a year or more, it may be time to let it go. “If you’ve got 10 spatulas and you really only need two, pare it down,” Blakeslee said. Extra items can be donated or passed along to college students or others just starting out.

Using drawer organizers, small bins and baskets can help keep items corralled and make it easier to put things back where they belong. Lightweight storage racks on the back of cabinet doors can hold items such as plastic wrap, foil and storage bags for quick access.



Blakeslee also suggests grouping items by purpose. Bakers, for example, may benefit from creating a baking center where flour, sugar, yeast and mixers are kept together. Frequently used dishes and silverware should be stored near the sink or dishwasher to make unloading easier.

A general rule, she said, is to keep the most-used items between shoulder and knee height, while seldom-used items can be stored higher up. Seasonal items, such as cookie cutters, can be kept out of the way but labeled so they’re easy to find.

Checking dates is another key step. Spices typically last six months to a year, and canned foods should be rotated so the oldest items are used first. High-acid canned foods, such as tomatoes and fruit, generally keep 12 to 18 months, while low-acid foods like vegetables and soups may last two to five years. Home-canned foods should be used within one year.

Refrigerators and freezers also need regular attention. Blakeslee recommends removing everything, cleaning shelves and drawers by hand and sanitizing surfaces with a mild bleach solution. Labeling and dating freezer items can help prevent forgotten leftovers from lingering too long.

“Things don’t last forever,” Blakeslee said. “But when you organize your kitchen in a way that makes sense, you can save money, reduce food waste and make cooking safer and less frustrating.”

For those with mobility issues or arthritis, she added, a wide range of step stools and jar-opening gadgets are available. “Keeping things organized can even help your brain remember what you have,” Blakeslee said, “and that makes everyday life a little easier.”

The publication, [Essential Home Maintenance](#), includes more tips on organizing around the home, and is available for free online from the [K-State Extension bookstore](#).



Pizza Fundraiser

Thomas County 4-H members will be selling pizza during the months of December and January! Please find a 4-H Youth if you would like to place an order. Pizza sales sheets are due by January 17th. Our pizza assembly day is planned for Saturday, January 31st. 4-H members, save the date!



Horse Panorama

The 2026 4-H Horse Panorama has been scheduled for February 21 & 22 in Rock Springs. Horse Panorama is a compilation of various contests related to the Horse Project. Contests include: quiz bowl, hippology, public speaking presentations, photography and educational posters.

Registration open! [Horse Panorama](#)

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)

4-H PLEDGE

I pledge my **HEAD** to clearer thinking,
my **HEART** to greater loyalty,
my **HANDS** to larger service,
and my **HEALTH** to better living,
for my club, my community,
my country, and my world.



Kansas Junior Producer Days

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.



Band APP

This is a friendly reminder for 4-H members, leaders, and parents to download and stay up to date with the BAND app. BAND is a mobile application used to facilitate group communication. You can find announcements, reminders, calendars, photos, files, and more on the application. There are groups for each club, 4-H Council and Thomas County 4-H. You can join the county group at [this link](#). If you want to join a group or need help downloading/navigating the app, please contact the Extension Office.



Beef Weigh-In

Beef weigh-in will be held February 14th from 9:00am to 11:30am at the CCC Farm. Make-up day will be February 21nd if necessary. Please bring cash or check to purchase your tags. Each market steer/heifer is required to have an ear tag at the county fair and state fair. Breeding animals are not required to have tags at our fair.

Please let the extension office know if you need state fair ear tags and the quantity. Breeding heifers intended to show at the state fair need state fair ear tags.

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](#).



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!



January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 <i>K-State Garden Hour</i> 	8	9	10
11	12	13 Calving School Paola 	14	15 Calving School Sharron Springs 	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		<i>Cover Your Acres</i> Winter Conference				
25	26  4-H Council	27	28 Crop Fertility School Colby 	29	30	31 Pizza Making Day 
				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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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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