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# Thomas County

## K-State Research and Extension News

*Knowledge  
for Life*

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February 2025

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### Meet the new Office Professional

My name is Tracy Fagan. I was born in Quinter and my family were from Gove. Because my father was in the Marines and then a Missionary, I was given the opportunity to travel from an early age.

I grew up in the Pacific - Guam and Micronesia. Exotic fruits and vegetables were an everyday occurrence. We raised chickens, both for slaughter and harvest fresh eggs. For a long time the only way we were able to have fresh produce and eggs was to grow it. I learned the importance of hard work and perseverance.

I attended a private college in Southern California for Elementary Education. From California, I moved to Arizona to start a family.

In 2002, I moved to Kansas to help care for my mother who had terminal cancer. During my sixteen years living in Oakley, I was very successful at growing a garden. My brother and father both had gardens and we would swap produce, much like a family co-op.

I have worked a variety of jobs, all of which I have learned many great skills. While I may not know much about 4-H, I will try my best to learn. I'm excited to help with all the upcoming events for this year.

My goal is to be an asset and help to our community for Thomas County Extension Office. Please feel free to stop in and introduce yourself, to put a face with a name.

### Scholarships

The Kansas 4-H Foundation and Thomas County 4-H Council have scholarships available for high school seniors. Check out the 4-H Tidbits page to learn more!

### Beef Weigh-In

Beef weigh-in will be held Saturday, February 15th from 9:00am to 11:30am at Colby Community College Farm. See the 4-H Tidbits page for more information. **Tags have changed prices!**

### Walk Kansas is Almost Here!

Get your teams together now! The KSRE Walk Kansas health initiative will be held March 30—May 24, 2025.

The goal of Walk Kansas is to help teams of six people or individuals be more active, make better nutrition choices, and lead a healthier life. Sign up and Walk Kansas!

## Friend of Extension

The Thomas County Extension Council has selected **Linda Taylor** as their Appreciation Award recipient for her continued support of Thomas County Extension. Linda has not only served on our program development committees but also is a wonderful advocate of our 4-H program.

Linda has played a vital role in our Thomas County 4-H fundraising efforts by supporting our notorious pizza fundraiser. We have been hosting the 4-H Pizza Fundraiser for 18 years. Linda always goes the extra mile in facilitating this fundraiser by not only working after hours placing large orders but also in assisting and organizing the day of pizza assembly which can be a little chaotic. In 2024 she helped our 4-H members assemble 1,461 pizzas in a few short hours to provide some perspective. Her continued support of the office is appreciated and does not go unnoticed.

Thank You, Linda for all you have done for the Thomas County Extension Program.

## 4-H Family of the Year

**Jared and Karla Haggard** have been volunteering with 4-H for several years. Jared has been serving as an Archery Instructor for almost 15 years now. Throughout his time as a volunteer, he has been known to lead our 4-H youth in an admirable way. He not only teaches them the foundations of shooting archery but has been known to provide valuable life lessons. Jared has also led the charge in several grant-seeking or fundraising events to continually update equipment to provide the best for our Archery Project Members. Jared plays a crucial role in organizing and hosting a local archery state-qualifier each year for not only Thomas County 4-H members but those in the surrounding areas as well.

In addition to Jared, Karla has been known to be a huge advocate and promoter of Thomas County 4-H. Jared and Karla have raised all three of their children in the Thomas County 4-H Program where each of them were 11-year members. You could always count on the Haggards to be one of the first to volunteer their time and efforts at fair, community events, and 4-H club activities.

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



# 4-H GROWS HERE

## Friends of 4-H

**Angie Harris** has been an incredible supporter of 4-H for many years. Angie has been running our 4-H Dog Project for almost 10 years now as a project leader. She not only facilitates weekly practices leading up to the fair but also plays a crucial role in organizing and hosting our County Fair Dog Show every year. Angie has led the charge in fundraising to continually update the dog equipment several times to provide the best for our Dog Project Members. She is known for her fondness of dogs, but more importantly for instructing and leading our 4-H members with immense compassion. She embodies the true meaning of a selfless volunteer.

Therefore, we would like to recognize Angie Harris with the 2024 Friend of 4-H Award and look forward to more years of working together.

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

**Randy Wilson** has been a long-time supporter of 4-H. Randy has provided immense help with livestock spring and fair weigh-ins alongside his colleagues from Farm Credit of Western Kansas for many years. In addition to his support of 4-H members throughout the year, Randy was a very generous supporter when it came to the Thomas County Fair. Randy led the purchase of many animals over the years through Farm Credit of Western Kansas. Randy has always been genuinely invested in 4-H members, their projects and achievements throughout time. Without his continued support, the Thomas County 4-H program would not be where it is today.

Therefore, we would like to recognize Randy Wilson with the 2024 Friend of 4-H Award. Thomas County 4-H would also like to congratulate you on your retirement.

Thank you for all you have done for the Thomas County 4-H Program.

*Thank you*



# Upcoming Events

## February

**5th--K-State Garden Hour:**  
Maximizing Water Efficiency  
Through Drip Irrigation



[Watch past Garden Hours here!](#)

**11th--Crop Talk Webinar Series:** Weed  
Management in the Age of New Technology  
[Register here!](#)

**12th--Living Well Wednesday webinar:** 52 Ways  
to Climate Proof Your Finances  
[Register here!](#)

**12th—Field to Fork webinar:** How to Start Own  
Flower & Vegetable (Transplant Indoors)  
[Register here!](#)

**13th-14th—Women Managing the Farm  
Conference-** Held in Manhattan, the theme this  
year is “Forging the Future”  
[Register here!](#)

**18th--Crop Talk Webinar Series:** Getting the  
Most Out of Your Irrigation Water  
[Register here!](#)

**19th—Field to Fork webinar:** Anatomy of a Food  
Recall  
[Register here!](#)

**19th-20th— Grant Writing Basics – Online  
Workshop**  
[Register here!](#)

**25th--Crop Talk Webinar Series:** Leveraging  
Precision Ag Tools  
[Register here!](#)

**25th--Farm & Ranch Transition Conference-** in  
Colby. Repeated sessions will be held in Wichita  
on 2/26 and in Lawrence on 2/27.  
[Register here!](#)

**26th—Field to Fork webinar:** Growing Tips for  
Summer & Winter Squash  
[Register here!](#)

**28th—Local Food Producer Workshop–** in Hays  
[Register here!](#)

## March

**4th--Crop Talk Webinar Series:** Dryland Tillage &  
Rotations  
[Register here!](#)

**5th—Field to Fork webinar:** Let's Preserve Salsa  
[Register here!](#)

**5th--K-State Garden Hour:** Establishing a Native  
Prairie Stand at Home  
[Register here!](#)

**7th--Cattlemen's Day-** in  
Manhattan  
[Register here!](#)



**11th--Crop Talk Webinar Series:** A New Corn  
Disease: Corn Stunt  
[Register here!](#)

**12th—Field to Fork webinar:** The Science  
Behind Indoor Plant Lighting  
[Register here!](#)

**12th--Living Well Wednesday webinar:** Pinchin'  
Pennies in the Kitchen  
[Register here!](#)



**19th—Field to Fork webinar:** Pickling Safety  
[Register here!](#)

**26th—Field to Fork webinar:** Tips & Tricks for  
Vegetable Production  
[Register here!](#)

**28th—Local Food Producer Workshop–** in  
Garden City  
[Register here!](#)

**30th—Walk Kansas Starts**  
[Register Here!](#)

## April

**2nd—K-State Garden Hour:** Increasing  
Vegetable Yield  
[Register here!](#)

## **Risks of feeding wrapped hay bales**

When it is time to feed net wrapped hay bales, some producers put the hay with the wrap on in a grinder and chop it up together, while others choose to remove the wrap before offering free choice hay to the herd.

On a recent Cattle Chat podcast, a question came from a producer who discovered a dead cow with a ball of plastic in her gut that likely came from eating bale wrap.

“Even chopped plastic can form a ball in a cow’s gut that will accumulate over time and can in some cases lead her to die,” K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said.

This has to do with how feed moves through the rumen, which is a chamber in the cow’s stomach, K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said.

He shares that as the feed passes through the rumen in the normal digestion process of a beef animal, there is a liquid layer that the feed must sink through to get to the next chamber – the reticulum.

“The particles have to be dense enough to sink into the reticulum, but plastic pieces are very light so they float and can accumulate in the rumen over time,” Lancaster said.

He added that the plastic ball acts like a plug either preventing gas release or passage down the digestive tract.

Eating chopped plastic is a greater challenge for cows than for cattle on feed because of the years of a cow’s life versus that of a feedlot steer, Lancaster said.

“A greater percentage of a cow’s diet is hay, and she is consuming it over a lifetime compared to a steer who only has about 10% of his diet as hay and he is only in the feedyard for about five months before being processed.”

With that in mind, the experts agree that the best strategy for the herd is to remove all plastic wrap before offering the hay to the herd.

Along with the lessened risk of digestive

issues, Brian Lubbers added that removing the wrap is also physically safer for the cattle.

“That wrap can get stomped in the mud and get tangled around their legs, which in some cases leads to lameness for the animal.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to [Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.



## **Safely grazing sorghum residue**

Jason Warner, K-State Research and Extension cow-calf specialist, discussed safety considerations when allowing cows to graze sorghum residue after harvest. [Full video here.](#)

“The quantity and quality of (sorghum) residue is the highest it is going to be immediately following harvest,” Warner said.

He said that K-State research indicates that in most situations, there should be enough dry matter residue from the grain sorghum harvest to support one non-lactating cow for 50 to 60 days per acre.

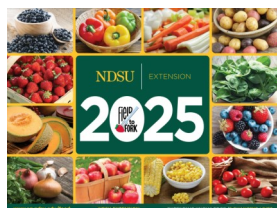
Producers often are concerned, however, about nitrate toxicity and prussic acid toxicity, which can cause a form of asphyxiation – or oxygen loss – to the animal. Both conditions are more common in years when crops are drought-stressed, according to Warner.

“With nitrate toxicity, nitrates will accumulate in the bottom one-third of the stock, or stem,” he said. “So, always remember that we don’t want to force those animals to graze down into the lower one-third of the stock by leaving them on those residue fields longer.”



Prussic acid may accumulate in the upper portions of the residue. Warner notes that producers can reduce the risk of prussic acid poisoning by avoiding grazing just prior to a killing freeze, when the plant is still actively growing.





## **NDSU Field to Fork Webinars**

North Dakota State University Extension will again host the Field to Fork Wednesday Weekly Webinar series. It will be held online from 2-3pm on Wednesdays from February 21st through May 1st.

Experts from across the region will provide information about growing, preserving and preparing specialty-crop fruits and vegetables safely.

Presentations will be recorded and archived for later viewing, in case participants are unable to attend. The webinars are free of charge, but registration is required. For more information and to register, [visit the Field to Fork website](#).

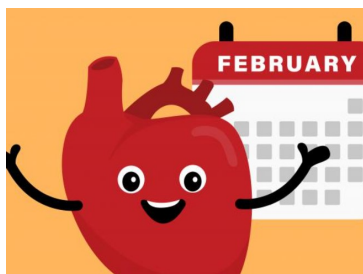
## **American Heart Month**

February is designated as [American Heart Month](#). As a leading cause of death in the U.S., it is important to make your heart a priority. You have the power to take action to protect yourself against heart disease. Small heart-healthy actions like adding more movement to our day or choosing healthy foods, can have a big impact on protecting #OurHearts.

Heart health isn't a destination, it's a journey--and every day is a fresh start! Here are some simple ideas to reduce your risk for heart disease and keep your heart healthy:

- ◆ Try adding an extra vegetable to dinner
- ◆ Take a 30-minute walk
- ◆ Get 7-9 hours of sleep
- ◆ Ask others to join you on the journey

Learn more at the [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#) website.



## **Bake for Family Fun Month**

The [Home Baking Association](#) has designated February as "Bake for Family Fun Month." Each week they have prepared baking activities, recipes and opportunities to help families get started in the kitchen! This can be a multi-generational activity with tasty treats to share.

This is the list of ideas for each week in February.

- Week 1 – Let's Get Started Baking
- Week 2 – Bake for My Valentine
- Week 3 – Baking History and Traditions
- Week 4 – Baking for Others

## **Safety of Canned Foods that Freeze in Winter**

Recent cold weather has created challenges for all of us. Power outages can lead to many problems. If you have canned foods, either home canned or commercially canned, in a storage location that froze, what can you do?

Check for broken seals or seams in metal cans or broken glass in home canned foods due to expansion of the food and liquid inside the container. If all are intact, they can be saved. Thaw gradually and store at room temperature.

For commercially canned foods, if seams are broken, that can lead to contamination and be unsafe to eat. Discard these cans.

For home canned foods, discard broken glass containers. If the lid became unsealed, and the jar thawed to room temperature, discard these too.

If a glass jar became unsealed but is still frozen, this can be safely used immediately or transferred to a new container and stored in the refrigerator or freezer.

During cold weather, wrap jars or cans in paper and cover with blankets to insulate them. Another option for vulnerable storage locations is to prop open pantry or cupboard doors to allow warm air inside.

For more information on food safety during power outages, visit the [KSRE Food Safety website](#) or the [Oregon State University Extension website](#).



## Achievement Banquet

On November 22nd, we had another successful Achievement Banquet where we celebrated many 4-Her's and their accomplishments from this past year. We also have prizes and thank you cards that still need picked up!

## Horse Panorama

The 2025 4-H Horse Panorama has been scheduled for February 22-23 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. More information [here](#).

## Junior Producer Days

Junior producer days are held to provide educational material and hands-on experiences for youth, parents, leaders, and extension agents. Click [here](#) for the flyers, more information, and registration.

### **2025 Junior Swine Producer Day**

Date: Saturday, March 1, 2025

Registration closed.

### **2025 Junior Meat Goat Producer Day**

Date: Saturday, March 22, 2025

Cost: \$20/person

Registration Deadline: February 26, 2025

## Discovery Days

Discovery Days offers in-depth training through educational sessions from content and youth development experts. It will be held June 4-6 on the K-State Campus. Registration is coming soon. Click [here](#) to learn more about the event.



## Beef Weigh-In

Beef weigh-in will be held February 15th from 9:00am to 11:30am at the CCC Farm. Make-up day will be February 22nd if necessary. Please bring cash or check to purchase your tags. Each market steer/market 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 but do for KJLS and Kansas State Fair. **Tags are now \$4/piece** due to the [2024 Animal Disease Traceability rule](#). Everything will be tagged with an 840 EID unless there is one already in place.

## Small Animal Weigh-In

Small animal weigh-in will be held **April 12th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm** at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Make-up day if necessary will be **April 19th 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!

## Super Saturday

The NW 4-H Super Saturday Judging Contest will take place on Saturday, March 22, starting at 9 a.m. This great event is taking place at **Colby Community College**. Judging Contests included will be Crops, Entomology, Horticulture, Life Skills, Photography and Livestock and Livestock Skill-a-thon. Register [here](#), walk-ins welcome!

## Club Attendance

For the 2024-2025 program year, 4-H members wishing to participate in the livestock auction are required to **attend 5 club meetings between the months of August 2024 and July 2025 and complete the Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) training each year.** YQCA Meeting times to be scheduled soon.



## Project Leader Resources

The Kansas 4-H Volunteer Project Leader Training Series recordings and resources are available [here](#). The resources are designed to help provide tangible examples of activities you can do with youth in their 4-H projects and connect you to useful resources to aid in your teaching. You can find additional resources for various projects on the [4-H website](#) or you can contact the Extension Office for assistance.

New and returning volunteers need to complete the Volunteer Application/Renewal on 4-H Online. If you have questions, call the office at (785) 460-4582 or email [ldespain@ksu.edu](mailto:ldespain@ksu.edu).

## Scholarships

The Kansas 4-H Foundation partners with Kansas 4-H to offer over 50 different scholarships to help fund higher education for 4-H youth who are high school seniors or older. For a copy of the application and a list of available scholarships, please visit the Kansas 4-H Youth Development [website](#). All applications and additional documentation must be submitted online no later than **March 1**. Thomas County 4-H Council Scholarships are open to Thomas County high school seniors enrolled in 4-H. Applications are available at the Extension Office and must be turned in by **March 15th**.

## County Club Day

County Club Day will be held on Friday, March 28th at Colby Community College. Now is the time to start thinking about how you might like to participate. Activities include demonstrations, project talks, dancing, music and dramatics, reading, etc. More information involving registration will be given in future newsletters, so stay tuned!

## Spring Shows are Coming!

- Thomas County Fair Board Show: 26th & 27th
- CCC Classic Show: May 10th

## 4-H Camp 2024

Ready, set, register! 2025 4-H camp sessions at [Rock Springs Ranch](#) are now available for registration. A full list of session dates and costs for Summer Camp 2025 can be found [here](#).

## Camp Lakeside—Save the Date!

Camp Lakeside will be held on June 9th-10th this year. We have 10 camper spots (ages 7-9) and 2 counselor spots (ages 14-18) available. Cost is \$140 per camper. Camp Registration will open March 1st. The theme this year is Exploring the Waters at Camp Lakeside!

## Project Goals

With reenrollment complete, youth have selected their projects and now it is time to set their 2025 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 2025! 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 [here](#) 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!



## Thomas County Fair 2025

The 2025 Thomas County Fair will be held July 21st—26th.

This year's fair theme is 'Twas the Night Before Fair.



# February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Pizza Making Day
2	3 AH—Meeting @ 4-H Bldg. 7pm	4	5 	6 SS	7	8
9	10 BPG—Meeting @ Henry Hall 7:30pm GEM—Meeting @ Gem Comm. Bldg. 7pm SV— Meeting @ 4-H Bldg. 7pm	11 Crop Talk Series	12 Field to Fork  	13 SS Fairboard Mtg. @ 8pm Women Managing the Farm	14 Women Managing the Farm	15 Beef Weigh In 
16	17	18 Crop Talk Series	19 Grant Writing Basics Field to Fork 	20 SS Grant Writing Basics	21	22 Beef Weigh In Backup
23	24 4-H Council Mtg. 	25 Crop Talk Series	26 Field to Fork 	27 SS	28 Local Food Producer Workshop - in Hays	March 1 State 4-H Scholarship application due 
					PP = Pawsome Paws SS = Shooting Sports AH = Abilene Hustlers	BPG = Brewster Prairie Gem Gem = Gem 4-H SV = Solomon Valley



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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 & Twitter:**

**K-State Research and Extension Thomas County 4-H**



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