

McPherson County

K-STATE EXTENSION NEWS

July/August 2026



Shad Marston, Agriculture & Natural Resources, County Agent

July brings county fairs, warmer temperatures, and even more commitments for our agricultural community. With wheat harvest behind us in central Kansas, our attention quickly shifts to putting up hay, controlling weeds in fields and pastures, monitoring livestock, and preparing for the fall harvest season. The life of a Kansas farmer and rancher rarely slows down this time of year, and there is always another task waiting just around the corner.

Here at K-State Extension McPherson County, we are also staying busy planning educational programs, events, and activities that serve all areas of our community. As you look through this newsletter, I encourage you to review our upcoming events and find a program or activity that interests you and your family.

Summer is also fair season, and we invite everyone to attend one of the two county fairs held in McPherson County. Our fairs provide an excellent opportunity to support local youth, enjoy family-friendly activities, and celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of our 4-H members and community exhibitors. There truly is something for everyone to enjoy.

Take time this summer to learn something new through an Extension program. Whether your interests are in agriculture, horticulture, family and consumer sciences, health, or youth development, our goal is to provide research-based information that helps make your work and daily life a little easier, more profitable, and more rewarding. Together, we can continue making the land, farms, ranches, and communities we call home even better for future generations.

As we celebrate Independence Day, I hope everyone in our community can take a little time away from the busy schedule to enjoy family, friends, and all the blessings that surround us. Have a safe and enjoyable Fourth of July, and we look forward to seeing you at an upcoming Extension event.

-Shad

Livestock News

More Than Beef: The Many By-Products We Get from Cattle

by Shad Marston

When most people think about cattle, they think about the wholesome beef products that help feed families across Kansas and the nation. However, beef is only one part of the story. Sometimes, I think we take for granted where many of the products we use every day actually come from. Cattle provide a wide variety of by-products that are an important part of our modern lifestyle.

A by-product is anything produced from an animal besides the primary meat product. Through modern processing and manufacturing, nearly every part of the animal can be utilized in some way. This not only reduces waste but also provides valuable materials for hundreds of products we use daily.

More Than Beef: The Many By-Products We Get from Cattle Cont'd

Many common household items contain ingredients derived from cattle. Soaps, shampoos, cosmetics, lotions, and lipsticks often use fats and proteins that originated from cattle. Medicines and health products may contain gelatin, which is made from collagen found in animal tissues. Gelatin is commonly used in capsules, vitamins, marshmallows, and other food products.

The automobile industry also benefits from cattle by-products. Tires, lubricants, adhesives, and some plastics may contain compounds derived from animal fats. Leather from cattle hides is used to make shoes, belts, wallets, furniture, sports equipment, and vehicle interiors.

Agriculture itself depends on cattle by-products. Bone meal and blood meal are valuable fertilizer sources used by gardeners and farmers. Animal fats can be used in feed ingredients, industrial lubricants, and even renewable fuels.

Many people are surprised to learn that cattle by-products are found in products such as crayons, paints, inks, photographic film, insulation materials, and some sporting goods. Medical supplies, including certain surgical products and pharmaceuticals, may also utilize materials sourced from cattle.

The beef industry has long practiced utilizing as much of the animal as possible. This approach helps improve sustainability, reduces waste, and creates additional value from every animal raised by producers. For Kansas cattlemen and women, these by-products represent another way agriculture contributes to our economy and daily lives.

The next time you use a bar of soap, put on a pair of leather boots, take a vitamin, or drive your vehicle, remember that cattle provide much more than a great steak or hamburger. The products we rely on every day are often connected to agriculture in ways many of us never realize. Understanding these connections helps us appreciate the important role cattle and livestock producers play in supporting our quality of life.

Products made from cattle

BRAIN

Anti-aging Cream,
Medicine

BLOOD

Imitation eggs,
Cake mixes,
Dyes and inks,
Adhesives,
Minerals,
Medicines,
Laboratory research
materials

HOOVES/HORNS

Adhesives,
Plastics,
Pet food,
Plant food,
Photo film,
Shampoo and
conditioner,
Lamination,
Wallpaper,
Plywood

BONES

Refined Sugar,
Charcoal,
Fertilizer,
Glass

HAIR

Hair
Air filters,
Brushes,
Felt,
Insulation,
Plaster,
Textiles

SKIN

Gelatin,
Flavorings,
Sheetrock,
Adhesives,
Medicines,
Candies and
Confectionary

FAT

Chewing gum,
Candles,
Detergents,
Fabric softener,
Deodorant,
Shaving cream,
Perfume,
Cosmetics,
Creams and lotions,
Crayons,
Paint,
Oils & Lubricants,
Biodiesel,
Plastics,
Waterproofing agents,
Cement,
Ceramics,
Chalk,
Explosives,
Fireworks,
Matches,
Fertilizer,
Antifreeze,
Insulation,
Linoleum,
Rubber,
Textiles,
Medicines

INTERNAL ORGANS

Instrument strings,
Tennis racquet strings,
Hormones, enzymes,
vitamins and other
medical materials

MILK

Adhesives,
Plastics,
Cosmetics,
Medicines

MANURE

Fertilizer,
Nitrogen,
Phosphorous



New World Screwworms

by Cassandra Olds, Veterinary Entomologist, Kansas State University, New World Fact Sheet for Producers

The New World screwworm is an economic threat to live-stock and wildlife that was eradicated in the United States in the 1960s and again after a reappearance in 2016. The areas infested by this pest are changing. There are concerns about a reintroduction into the United States.

This fact sheet provides livestock owners and workers with information about the biology of the New World screw-worm fly, the principles of sterile insect technique, the risk of an outbreak occurring in Kansas, and what to do if there is a suspected infestation.

What is the new world screwworm?

The New World screwworm, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, is a parasitic fly that causes myiasis, which is the invasion of living tissue by fly larvae, also called maggots. Adult flies are 3/8 inch (9.5 mm) long and have a distinctive metallic blue sheen and large orange eyes. The fly has a wide host range and targets any warm-blooded animal, including livestock, wildlife, domestic animals, and, although less often, humans.

The adult female fly lays eggs in batches of 200 to 300 along the edges of wounds. The female fly can lay 3,000 eggs in her lifetime. Wounds as small as a thorn prick or a tick bite can serve as an infestation site. The female may also lay eggs on intact mucosal membranes like those surrounding the eyes, nose, mouth, vulva, and prepuce. After 12 to 24 hours, eggs hatch and fly larvae burrow closely together, head down into the wound. It is this screw-like burrowing behavior that gives the fly its name.

The larval stage can take between four and 12 days, and as they develop, the wound area expands. A straw-colored (and sometimes bloody) liquid is secreted with a distinctive, putrid smell. This smell attracts more female flies to the area to lay eggs. Once larvae reach 5/8 inches (17 mm)

in size, they drop to the ground and pupate below the soil. Depending on the temperature, an adult fly will emerge from the pupa after at least seven days. Infested animals may show signs of pain, lethargy, depression, and reduced appetite. They may also bite, lick, and rub the affected area.



Figure 1. Adult New World screwworm fly showing distinctive metallic color with three dark stripes on the thorax (Photo: USDA-APHIS).

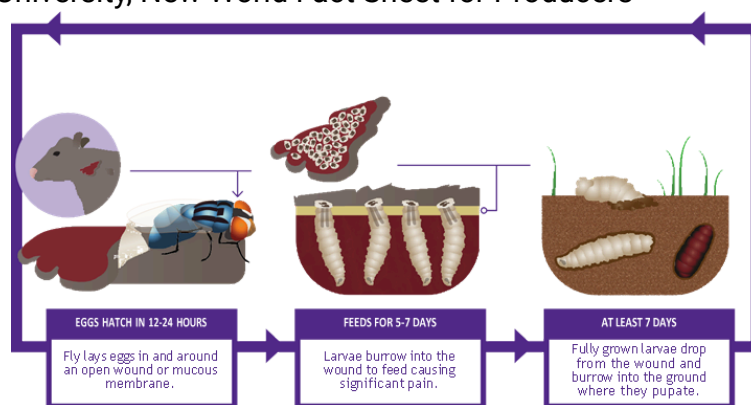


Figure 2. Life cycle of New World screwworm flies (adapted from USDA APHIS drawings).

Historic range and potential establishment of New World screwworm populations in Kansas

Before its eradication in the United States, the New World screwworm was a significant economic burden. Through active surveillance efforts and the release of sterile flies, the New World screwworm was eradicated from the United States in 1966. In 2016–17, an outbreak occurred in the Florida Keys where the New World screwworm significantly affected Key deer populations. Release of sterile flies began in October 2016, and successful eradication was declared in March 2017.

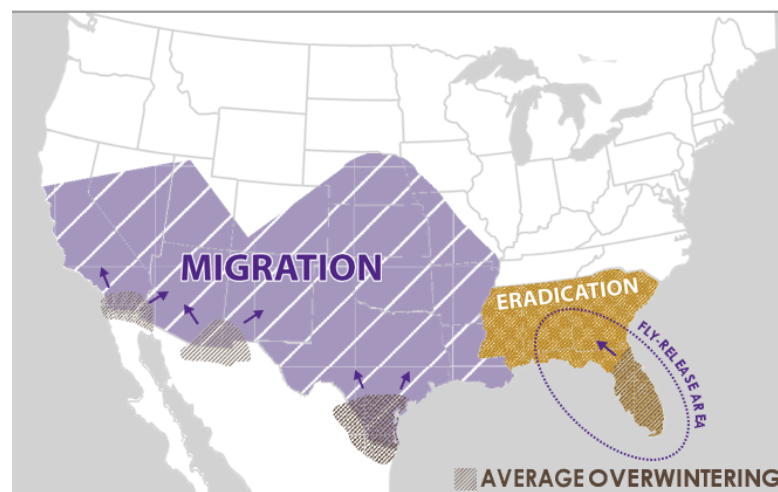


Figure 3. Map of the historic range of New World screwworms in the United States with Florida eradication sterile fly release zone shown (adapted from Knipling EF, 1960).

Since 2023, New World screwworm populations have spread north throughout Panama, into Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, and Mexico. This expansion has raised concerns about the fly reestablishing in the United States. Up-to-date information regarding New World screwworm and outbreak surveillance can be found on the USDA-APHIS Screw-worm page (www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm).

New World Screwworms Cont'd

The New World screwworm is not tolerant of cold weather. Adults do not survive air temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Larvae dropping from the host between 15 and 20 degrees Fahrenheit usually die. Pupation does not occur in dry soil when the mean average daily temperature is below 46 degrees Fahrenheit.

Historically, year-round populations were restricted to the lower quarter of Texas, southern New Mexico, Arizona, California, and parts of Florida. In areas where temperatures were too cold to support fly development over winter, annual expansions from overwintering areas occurred every spring and summer. The rate at which fly populations expand and the distance covered is dependent on several factors, including climate, availability of food, mating, and hosts. Modern outbreaks have been calculated to spread at a rate of 0.75 to 1.25 miles per day.

New World screwworms are not expected to establish year-round in Kansas or further north due to climate conditions. Currently, the primary risk of introduction into Kansas is through the movement of infested animals from outbreak regions during the spring and summer months. If the fly becomes reestablished in southern states, annual expansion into Kansas from the south may occur. As wildlife serve as hosts of the New World screwworm, wildlife contributes significantly to the spread of infection, even if domestic animal movement is restricted. Surveillance and rapid targeted sterile insect deployment through the sterile insect technique is the only successful method of control for the New World screwworm.

Control of flies through the sterile insect technique

If populations re-establish in the United States, the sterile insect technique is the only proven effective method to control fly populations. Female New World screwworms only mate once in their lifetime, while males can mate multiple times. By rearing New World Screwworms under laboratory conditions and sterilizing them through exposure to cobalt 19 radiation, sterile male flies can be released into the environment where they outnumber and outcompete wild males to mate with wild females. Once mated with a sterile male, wild females do not mate again and can only lay sterile eggs, resulting in population reduction over time. This method relies on releasing flies continuously into affected areas, and surveillance is critical to deploy flies most effectively. Although many flies are released into an area, humans are unlikely to encounter them in large numbers.

Sterile flies are currently produced by the Panama-United States Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm (COPEG). More information on the process of raising sterile flies can be found on the USDA APHIS Ready Reference Guide on Sterile Insect Response

(www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nws_rrg_sterileinsectresponse.pdf).

The USDA recently announced plans to develop a New World screwworm rearing facility in Mexico, which would provide additional sterile flies to support control efforts (USDA Press Release 0122.25). The STOP Screwworms Act was introduced in the Senate on May 14, 2025, which aims to provide support for a facility to raise sterile New World screwworm in the United States.

How can you protect your livestock?

Severe infestations can lead to significant tissue damage, secondary infection, and death. To minimize risk, inspect any animals arriving from out-of-state, especially if the animals are coming from an area close to current outbreak zones. Look for wounds and larval infestations. Keep any wound areas clean and treat with an antiseptic and insecticide.

In areas experiencing outbreaks, animal husbandry practices that create wounds, such as branding, dehorning, calving, and ear tagging, need to be monitored. Wounds as small as tick bites can become infested. The lone star and Gulf Coast ticks (Figures 4 and 5) have long mouth parts and, in high numbers, can cause significant hide damage. Gulf Coast ticks and spinose ear ticks can cause damage to the ear sufficient to attract New World screwworm flies. Keep up to date on tick-control practices.

Young animals are the most susceptible to the infestation due to their size; therefore, they should be closely monitored. After birth, the area around the navel is often a site of infection and should be kept clean. Trauma to the dam during calving should also be cleaned and monitored for infestation. In countries where New World screwworm occurs, infested animals can be treated with doramectin as well as prophylactically before a wound-causing event, such as surgery and branding. Currently, doramectin is not labeled for use against the New World screwworm in the United States. Extra-label usage requires a veterinary prescription and administration. Additionally, concerns about the development of resistance in both the New World screwworm and other species, such as gastrointestinal nematodes and external parasites, mean that drug treatment should not be used as a primary method of control for the New World screwworm. Always consult with your veterinarian to make sure products are being used correctly and according to regulations.

Wildlife can also be affected by this fly, and white-tailed deer are particularly sensitive to infestation. Monitor for any suspicious behavior or deaths in wildlife populations on your property. Maintain good relationships and communication with your neighbors and your veterinarian so that communities can respond quickly and effectively if situations change.

New World Screwworms Cont'd

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What to do if you suspect an outbreak

If larvae are found infesting a live animal, do not panic. Many other fly species can also cause myiasis. It is important to get any larvae identified to rule out a New World screwworm infestation. Begin by taking a photo of the infestation and recording the animal number and history of travel. To avoid further spread, do not move the suspected animal. Isolate and secure the animal and contact the State Animal Health Commissioner, APHIS Area Veterinarian, and your personal veterinarian immediately.

Contact information for Kansas:

- Animal Health Commissioner: Dr. Justin Smith, 785-564-6601
- Assistant Animal Health Commissioner: Dr. Sara McReynolds, 785-564-6792
- APHIS Area Veterinarian Office: 785-228-6565

Read the full fact sheet here: https://entomology.k-state.edu/extension/human-and-animal-health/New%20World%20Screwworms_June2025.pdf

Upcoming Events

MCPHERSON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

 Market Dates: Every Saturday, Starting June 6 - September 30

 Market Time: 7:30 - 11:00 AM

 Location: Blue Roundtop Building - 710 W. Woodside

 Contact: 620-241-1523



Cattlemen's Clinic

Join fellow producers, experts, and industry partners for a day of practical education, networking, and tools you can put to work on your operation.

-  Enjoy lunch while you learn
-  Producer-focused education
-  Industry-led sessions
-  Actionable solutions and insights
-  Market outlooks and management tips



August 14, 2026
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Kansas Municipal Utilities
2090 EA Ave McPherson, Kansas 67460

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension
McPherson County

MERCK
Animal Health

Z ZINPRO

PURINA

2026 Pre-Plant Wheat School

Monday, August 24, 2026

First United Methodist Church
1200 East Kansas Avenue
McPherson, KS 67460

Meal: 6:30 p.m. Program: 7:00 p.m.

RSVP to smarston@ksu.edu or tregehr@ksu.edu
or by calling our office
620-241-1523

Program Topics	Ladies Program
Romulo Lollato Associate Professor, Agronomy	Wheat A Minute! A Teach & Taste Experience
Kelsey Anderson Onofre Assistant Professor, Plant Pathology	Hosted by FCW Agent-Chuck Laughlin and 4-H Youth Development Agent-Laura Savage
Sarah (Lancaster) Ganske Assistant Professor, Agronomy	

K-State 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 for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact, Shad Marston, four (4) applicable weeks prior to the start of the event by emailing smarston@ksu.edu or by calling 620-241-1523. Requests made after the deadline 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. Kansas State University Agriculture Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Operations Lieutenant Officer of the McPherson Police Department, Stacy Snyder, talking with participants at Farm Safety Day Camp held at the K-State Extension - McPherson County Office in conjunction with McPherson County Farm Bureau Association, McPherson County 4-H Junior Leaders, and Mid Kansas Coop, on June 3, 2026



Clover Corner



McPherson
County

Laura Savage

4-H Youth Development Extension Agent

Laura's Letter

We are less than one month away from our McPherson County 4-H Fair! I would strongly encourage you to begin making your entries via the new online Fair Entry system early! While this is a system not new to 4-H or the Kansas State Fair, it is new to us in McPherson County. While change can introduce additional stress, I want to encourage you to take a moment, take a breath, and enjoy your fair season! I am always here to help and am beyond ready (see what I did there?) to see y'all at our McPherson County 4-H Fair!

-Laura

Schedule of Events

July 7	Intern Cookie Decorating Camp	August 5	Family of the Year Nominations Due
July 13	Pen Reservations, Fashion Revue	August 5	State Fair Entries Due
	Scripts, Talks and Demonstrations	August 11	4-H Council Meeting
	Entries Due	August 11	Ambassadors Meeting (virtual)
July 16	All Other Fair Entries Due	August 15	State Horticulture Judging Contest
July 16-18	McPherson County Fair	Aug. 22-23	4-H Livestock Sweepstakes
July 22	Intern Fishing Camp	Sept. 10	State Fair Projects Due to Office (9 AM)
July 23	Intern Cake Decorating Class	Sept. 11-20	Kansas State Fair
July 25-27	McPherson County 4-H Fair		
Aug. 3-7	Culinary Circuits		

McPherson County 4-H Fair

Red, White, and Moo!

We are excited to have you join us for the 2026 McPherson County 4-H Fair! Fair shirts will be available to order through Stewart's Sports until July 5th. Check your "Weekly Wednesday" or our Facebook Page for the site link!



Deadlines

As we are preparing for the McPherson County 4-H Fair, please make sure you are turning items in on time! This will help us ensure a smooth Fair!

July 13th: Fashion Revue, Sewing & Textile, Talks & Demonstration Entries

Please submit scripts at this time.

July 16th: ALL Fair Entry entries (both static and livestock)

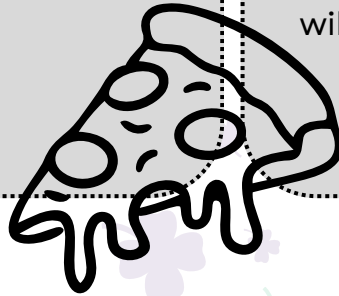
Pizza Ranch Luncheon

Saturday, July 25th, 12:00 PM-2:00 PM

Tent

New this year to our McPherson County 4-H Fair is the Pizza Ranch Luncheon. As a fundraiser for 4-H Council, we will be selling pizza by the slice from Pizza Ranch!

Have a kind of pizza that you want? Send your requests to Laura by July 7th! While I can not guarantee, any type of pizza, there will be a variety available! Come hungry and invite your friends and family!



Parade of Champions

This year, we are bringing back the Parade of Champions Luncheon on Monday, July 27th. Grand Champions from each project area will be invited to attend, meet their donor, and receive their award!

Family members may also attend but will need to purchase a ticket for \$10.

State Horticulture Judging Contest

When: Saturday, August 15, 2026

Where: Manhattan, KS

What: A 4-H State Horticulture Judging Contest testing their ability to identify plants and judge classes! This contest will be hosted by the Department of Horticulture, Forestry, and Natural Resources!

Livestock Sweepstakes

August 22-23

Register by August 1st!

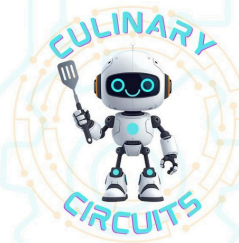
This event is hosted in Manhattan and includes a livestock skillathon, meat judging contest, livestock judging contest, and quiz bowl!

Culinary Circuits

August 3-7

See flyer to the right!

Join us for a mixture of robotics and cooking in August!



Monday, Wednesday, and Friday - Get ready for a flavor-packed adventure in the kitchen as we whip up delightful, hands-on recipes with a dash of fun!

Tuesday and Thursday - Dive into the fascinating realm of robotics, where creativity meets technology as you build, code, and bring your ideas to life!

August 3-7, 2026

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Ages 10-14

McPherson County Extension Office

600 W. Woodside

McPherson, KS 67460

A FREE & HANDS-ON CLASS!



tinyurl.com/CulinaryC2026



Kansas State Fair

The Kansas State Fair will be here sooner than you know!

August 5th

State Fair Entries due to the
McPherson County Extension Office

September 10th

State Fair Projects due to the McPherson
County Extension Office by 8:00 AM for
transport to Hutchinson

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY Extension
McPherson County
Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and
Cooperative Extension Service K-State Extension is an equal
opportunity provider and employer.



Watch Life Hatch Before Your Eyes: Embryology Comes to the McPherson County 4-H Fair!

Get ready for one of the most exciting additions to this year's McPherson County 4-H Fair — a live chick hatching embryology exhibit, made possible through the generous sponsorship of **YOUR McPherson Tractor Supply!**

This immersive, hands-on experience will bring the wonder of new life right to the fairgrounds, giving visitors of all ages a front-row seat to one of nature's most remarkable events.

Embryology — the study of embryo development — has long been a cornerstone of 4-H youth programming across the country. Chick hatching projects introduce young people to fundamental concepts in biology, animal science, and responsible care for living creatures. The 21-day incubation journey of a fertilized chicken egg is one of the most fascinating and observable life cycles in the natural world, making it an ideal hands-on science experience for fairgoers.

Here's what to expect at the exhibit: fertilized eggs will be placed in a regulated incubator at the start of July, and visitors will be able to observe the eggs — and, with any luck, watch live hatching take place! Throughout the fair, K-State Extension staff and 4-H volunteers will be on hand to lead brief educational lessons that follow the developmental stages of a chick embryo, from the formation of the heart and circulatory system in the early days, to the development of feathers and the beak in the final stretch before hatching.

Even better — we are working to incorporate a live webcam feed so you can track the progress of the eggs in real time, whether you're at the fairgrounds or following along from home! Check our McPherson County Extension social media pages and website for updates on how to access the live feed.

Stage-by-stage lessons will cover topics including how temperature and humidity affect development, how to 'candle' an egg to see the embryo inside, and what happens in the critical final hours before a chick pecks its way into the world. These lessons are designed to be engaging for elementary-age children and interesting for adults alike.

A huge thank you to **YOUR McPherson Tractor Supply** for sponsoring this exhibit and helping make agricultural education a highlight of the 2026 fair season. Stop by the embryology display at the McPherson County 4-H Fair, July 20–27, and experience the miracle of life firsthand. You won't want to miss it!



Photo Source: Canva

Fire Up the Flavor:

Celebrating National Grilling Month the Safe and Delicious Way

July is National Grilling Month, and across McPherson County and beyond, the smell of smoke and sizzle signals that summer is in full swing. Whether you're a backyard grill master or just getting started, this month is the perfect time to sharpen your technique, double down on food safety, and try a new seasoning blend that might just become your signature go-to.

Grilling offers real nutritional advantages: high-heat cooking allows excess fat to drip away from meats, and vegetables grilled with minimal oil retain much of their natural nutrient value. That said, the summer heat also creates the ideal environment for foodborne bacteria to multiply rapidly — making safe food handling every bit as important as good technique.

USDA Grilling Safety Essentials:

According to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, the number one rule of safe grilling is to use a food thermometer — every time. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. The USDA recommends the following safe internal temperatures: whole cuts of beef, pork, veal, and lamb to 145°F with a three-minute rest; ground meats to 160°F; and all poultry to 165°F. Never thaw meat on the counter — always thaw in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave, and cook immediately after thawing. Marinate meats in the refrigerator, never on the kitchen counter or outdoors. If you plan to use marinade as a sauce, reserve a separate portion before adding raw meat. Perishable food should not sit out for more than two hours — or just one hour when the outdoor temperature is above 90°F.

Pro Tips from the Grill:

Clean your grill grates before every cook session. Preheat to the appropriate temperature before placing food on the grates. Use separate plates and utensils for raw and cooked meat to prevent cross-contamination. Grill in a well-ventilated area and never leave an active grill unattended. Keep a fire extinguisher or bucket of water nearby for safety.

Never-Fail All-Purpose Grilling Seasoning:

This versatile dry rub works beautifully on chicken, beef, pork, fish, and grilled vegetables. Mix together: 2 tablespoons smoked paprika, 1 tablespoon garlic powder, 1 tablespoon onion powder, 1 teaspoon ground black pepper, 1 teaspoon kosher salt, 1 teaspoon dried oregano, 1 teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust to taste), and 1 tablespoon brown sugar. Store in an airtight container and apply generously at least 15–30 minutes before grilling for best flavor penetration. For fish or shrimp, a light coating applied just before grilling works perfectly.

This summer, make safety part of your grill tradition — and enjoy every smoke-kissed bite. For more grilling food safety guidance, visit K-State Extension, www.fsis.usda.gov or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854.

National Make a Difference to Children Month:

Every Child Needs a Champion

July is National Make a Difference to Children Month — a month-long observance dedicated to raising awareness about the vital role that caring adults play in the lives of children. Founded in 2006 by child advocate Kim Ratz, this observance calls on individuals, families, communities, and organizations to take intentional action to guide, support, and uplift the children in our lives and in our communities.

The research on what children need to thrive is clear and consistent: safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with caring adults are among the most powerful predictors of healthy development, academic success, and long-term well-being. When a child has even one trusted adult in their corner — a parent, teacher, neighbor, coach, or mentor — the outcomes across every domain of life improve measurably.

The need is significant. According to national data, approximately one million children in the United States experience abuse or neglect each year, and at least 20,000 young people age out of the foster care system annually without the family connections most of us take for granted. Studies consistently show that children who have mentors are more likely to pursue higher education, develop better decision-making skills, and lead more stable and fulfilling lives.

But making a difference in a child's life doesn't require a formal mentoring program or a major time commitment. Research shows that even small, consistent acts of positive attention — a warm greeting, genuine interest in a child's day, sharing a skill, or simply showing up — create the kind of secure attachment that children need to grow into confident, capable adults.

This month, consider how you might intentionally invest in a child's life. Volunteer with a local youth organization, 4-H or Boys and Girls Club programs. Mentor a young person through your workplace or faith community. Be a reliable, encouraging presence for a niece, nephew, neighbor, or grandchild. Advocate for policies and programs that support child welfare, early education, and family stability.

K-State Extension's 4-H program is one of the largest positive youth development organizations in the nation, reaching over six million young people each year with research-based programming designed to build life skills, confidence, and community connection. This July, we celebrate all the adults who show up for young people — and we invite you to join their ranks. Every child deserves a champion. Be one.

National Picnic Month:

Enjoy the Outdoors Without the Foodborne Illness

July is National Picnic Month, and Kansas summer offers the perfect backdrop for a meal in the great outdoors — whether at a local park, the lake, a family reunion, or your own backyard. But picnicking in warm weather also means navigating some real food safety challenges. Warm temperatures allow bacteria to multiply rapidly in foods left out too long, making proper food handling essential for keeping your outdoor meals safe and enjoyable.

Food safety experts from the FDA, USDA, and Cooperative Extension programs across the country agree on a set of core practices for outdoor dining safety. At the heart of all of them is one key principle: keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot, and never let perishable items linger in the temperature danger zone — between 40°F and 140°F — for more than two hours. In Kansas summer heat, that window drops to just one hour when outdoor temperatures top 90°F.

Packing and Transport Tips:

Use an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Aim to keep cooler contents at or below 40°F. Place raw meats in sealed containers at the bottom of the cooler — below ready-to-eat foods — and consider using a separate cooler for drinks to reduce how often the food cooler is opened. When driving to your picnic, keep the cooler in the air-conditioned car, not in a hot trunk. Once at the site, place the cooler in the shade and keep it closed as much as possible.

At the Picnic Table:

Wash hands thoroughly before handling food. If running water isn't available, bring hand sanitizer or moist towelettes. Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and ready-to-eat foods. Never marinate meats outside — always marinate in the refrigerator and transport in the marinade in the cooler. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables before packing them, including items with skins or rinds you won't eat.

Wise Food Choices for Outdoor Dining:

Choose foods that travel well and are less prone to spoilage: hard cheeses, whole fruit, dry crackers, and individually wrapped portions. For protein-based dishes like potato salad, pasta salad, or deviled eggs — some of the riskiest picnic foods — keep them chilled until the moment of serving and discard any leftovers that have sat out beyond the safe time limit. When in doubt, throw it out. Foodborne illness is never worth the risk.

For more food safety guidance, contact your local K-State Extension office or visit foodsafety.gov and the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service at fsis.usda.gov. Have a safe, delicious, and wonderful summer picnic season!

Mark Your Calendar: The McPherson County Fair Is July 16–18!

One of the best summer traditions in McPherson County is almost here — the McPherson County Fair returns July 16–18! We hope you'll make plans to join us for three days of fun, fellowship, competition, and community pride.

The county fair is more than just an event — it's a celebration of everything McPherson County stands for: hard work, agricultural heritage, family values, and the spirit of community. The fair includes both Open Class and 4-H exhibits, making it an opportunity for participants of all ages to showcase their skills, talents, and interests.

From livestock shows and 4-H project exhibits to Open Class entries in photography, foods, clothing, and home arts, there is truly something for everyone. Fairgoers can enjoy a wide variety of displays and demonstrations that highlight the creativity and dedication found throughout our county.

4-H members have spent months preparing their projects, and the fair is their chance to share what they've learned. Be sure to take time to visit the 4-H exhibits and shows to see the outstanding work of local youth.

In addition to exhibits and shows, the fair features exciting evening entertainment. The CPRA Rodeo will take place Thursday and Friday nights, offering high-energy competition and family-friendly fun. On Saturday night, the Demolition Derby will wrap up the fair with crowd-favorite action. Throughout the fair, attendees can also enjoy food vendors and additional entertainment on the grounds.

You may have heard about the embryology project as well. This educational experience will be housed at the K-State McPherson County Extension Office in July, as part of the upcoming 4-H Fair, where we hope to have hatching during the fair.

The McPherson County Fair is a great opportunity to connect with neighbors, support participants of all ages, and celebrate the community we all call home. Whether you've attended for years or are planning your first visit, it's a summer tradition you won't want to miss.

Stay tuned to the McPherson County Extension website and social media channels for a full schedule of events, show times, and details. We'll see you at the fair — July 16, 17, and 18!

August is National Eye Exam Month: Your Vision Deserves a Checkup

August is National Eye Exam Month — a timely reminder, especially as families prepare for back-to-school season, that a comprehensive eye exam is one of the most important and often overlooked steps in annual healthcare. Whether you're a child about to enter a new school year or an adult who hasn't seen an eye doctor in a few years, this month is your cue to schedule that appointment.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 12 million Americans over the age of 40 have some form of vision impairment, and many of these cases are either preventable or correctable with early detection. The challenge is that many of the most serious eye diseases — including glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts — develop silently, with little or no noticeable symptoms in their early stages. By the time vision changes become apparent, significant and sometimes permanent damage may have already occurred.



Photo Source: Canva

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) recommends that all adults receive a baseline comprehensive eye exam by age 40, with exams every one to two years after age 65. People with existing risk factors — including diabetes, high blood pressure, a family history of eye disease, or previous eye injury — should be seen more frequently, as directed by their eye care professional. Children should have their eyes examined before starting school, as the American Optometric Association estimates that approximately one in four school-age children has an undetected vision problem that can interfere with learning and development.

Beyond vision correction, a comprehensive dilated eye exam gives your doctor a unique window into your overall health. Eye exams can reveal early signs of systemic conditions including diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and even certain cardiovascular diseases — sometimes before other symptoms appear elsewhere in the body.

Tips for protecting your vision year-round include eating a diet rich in leafy greens and omega-3 fatty acids, wearing UV-protective sunglasses outdoors, avoiding smoking (which significantly raises the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts), and managing chronic health conditions carefully.

This August, take 30 minutes to protect a lifetime of clear sight. Call your optometrist or ophthalmologist and schedule your comprehensive eye exam today. If cost or access is a concern, contact the McPherson County Extension office — we can help connect you with vision assistance resources in our community.

The Heat Is On: Understanding and Preventing Heat-Related Illness This Summer

As summer temperatures continue to climb across Kansas and the nation, heat-related illness has emerged as one of the most pressing and underappreciated public health concerns of the season. Extreme heat is now the leading weather-related cause of death in the United States, surpassing tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes combined — and yet, it remains one of the most preventable.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke exist on a spectrum of heat-related illness that can affect anyone — but older adults, young children, outdoor workers, athletes, and individuals with chronic health conditions face the greatest risk. In rural communities like those in McPherson County, heat risks are compounded by outdoor agricultural work, limited shade in work environments, and the physical demands of farm and ranch labor. Even healthy adults can be caught off guard on days when high humidity combines with intense heat to push the heat index well above the air temperature.

The difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke is critical and can be life-saving to understand. Heat exhaustion symptoms include heavy sweating, cool and pale or moist skin, fast and weak pulse, nausea, muscle cramps, and dizziness. The response: move to a cool place, apply cool wet cloths, and sip water. Heat stroke is a medical emergency — it occurs when the body's internal temperature exceeds 103°F and the cooling system fails. Symptoms include hot and red skin (with little or no sweating), rapid and strong pulse, possible unconsciousness, and confusion. Call 911 immediately.

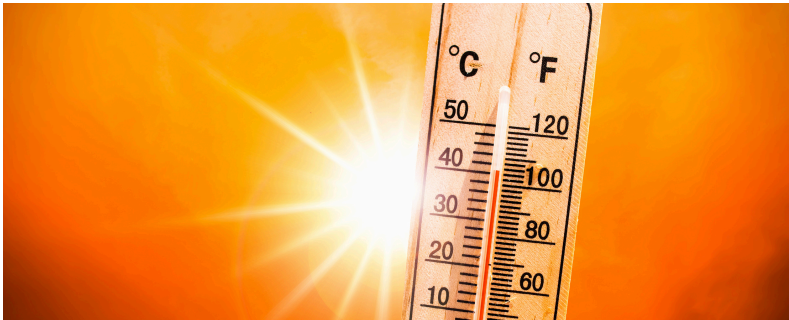


Photo Source: Canva

The Heat Is On Cont'd

Prevention starts with hydration, shade, and scheduling. Drink water consistently throughout the day — don't wait until you feel thirsty. Outdoors workers and athletes should consume approximately 8 ounces of water every 15–20 minutes during intense exertion in hot conditions. Schedule strenuous outdoor activity for early morning or evening hours when possible. Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and a wide-brimmed hat. Never leave children or pets in a parked vehicle — even with windows cracked, interior temperatures can reach deadly levels within minutes.

Communities also have a responsibility to protect their most vulnerable members. Check in on elderly neighbors during heat events. Know the location of local cooling centers. Watch for heat advisories from the National Weather Service, which are issued when heat index values are expected to reach 105°F or higher.

This summer, treat extreme heat with the same respect you give severe storms. Stay informed, stay hydrated, and look out for one another. For more heat safety resources, visit the CDC's Extreme Heat page at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/extremehat) or contact your local K-State Extension office.

The Rural Housing Shortage: Why It Matters for Every McPherson County Resident

Ask community and economic development leaders across rural Kansas what their top challenge is, and a consistent answer rises to the top: housing. Not just the cost of housing — but the availability of it. Across rural communities in the Midwest and nationwide, a growing shortage of quality, affordable housing is quietly undermining workforce recruitment, economic growth, and community vitality in ways that touch nearly every resident and every sector.

The pattern is increasingly well-documented. A 2025 study examining rural vitality across the Midwest found that nearly two-thirds of surveyed residents believed finding affordable housing in their region was difficult, and close to 60 percent said their community lacked a variety of housing options. This shortage particularly affects first-time homebuyers, young families, renters, and essential workers — the very people communities need to attract and retain in order to grow and sustain their local economies.

The ripple effects are significant. Businesses struggle to recruit employees who cannot find housing. Healthcare systems — already stretched thin in rural areas — lose the ability to attract physicians, nurses, and other clinical staff. Schools see enrollment decline as young families bypass communities where they cannot find a home to purchase or a rental they can afford. The rural housing shortage is not just a real estate problem; it is an economic development problem, a workforce problem, and a community health problem all at once.

According to the Federal Reserve, rural communities that successfully address housing needs — by increasing housing supply, supporting first-time buyers, renovating aging housing stock, and reducing regulatory barriers — are significantly better positioned to attract and retain the residents and workers they need for long-term vitality. Place-based economic development, which focuses on making communities attractive places to live before trying to attract employers, is gaining traction as an effective model for rural revitalization.

In Kansas, several tools are available to communities tackling housing challenges, including USDA Rural Development loan and grant programs, Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) financing, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. K-State Extension's Community Vitality programming can help local leaders assess housing needs, engage community members in visioning processes, and connect with available resources.

The good news is that McPherson County has real assets to build on: a strong agricultural economy, an engaged civic community, quality schools, and a deep tradition of neighbor-helping-neighbor. Addressing the housing shortage is one of the most impactful investments a community can make in its own future. If you are interested in learning more about housing development or community vitality resources in McPherson County, contact the K-State Extension office.



Upcoming Events



Wednesday, July 1, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

K-State Garden Hour Webinar: Addressing Food Insecurity Through Extension

Wednesday, August 5, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

K-State Garden Hour Webinar: Local Food Gardening Projects in Kansas



Jul 3, 2026 09:30 AM

Aug 7, 2026 09:30 AM



Jul 8, 2026 12:00 PM

Aug 12, 2026 12:00 PM

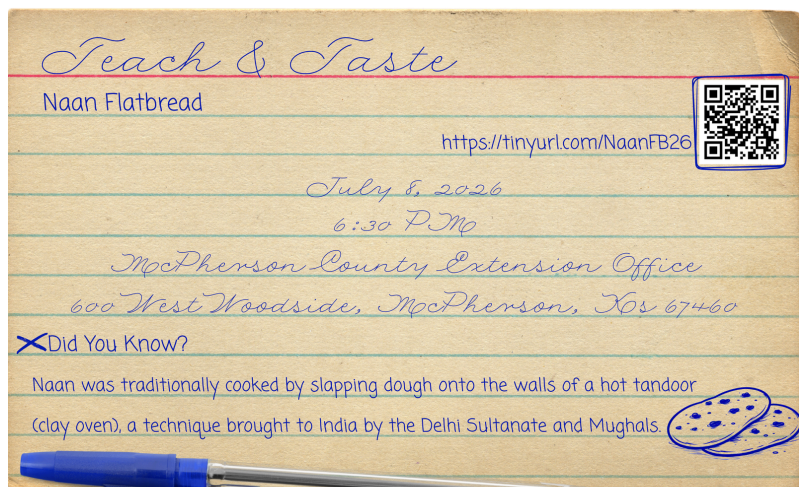


Date and Time: July 14, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Location: Covenant Church, Gym, 102 S. Washington St., Lindsborg, KS

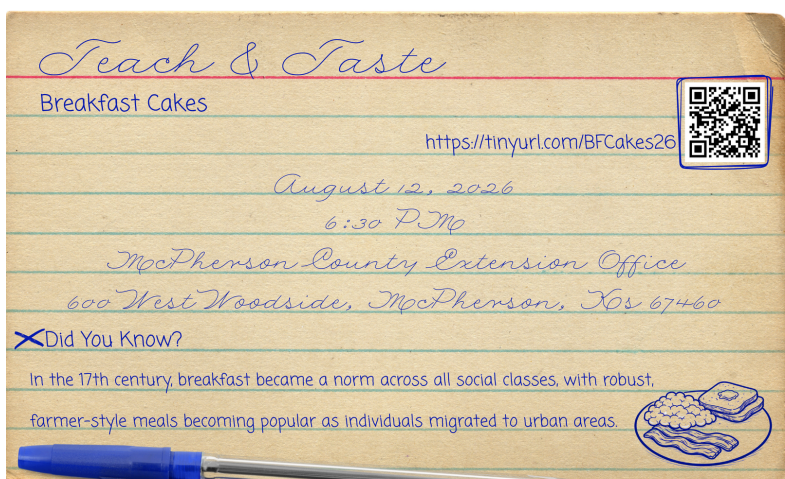
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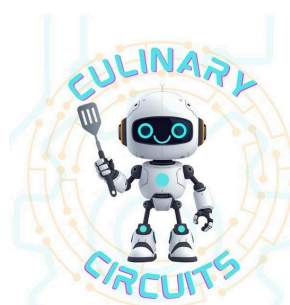
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Monday, Wednesday, and Friday - Get ready for a flavor-packed adventure in the kitchen as we whip up delightful, hands-on recipes with a dash of fun!

Tuesday and Thursday - Dive into the fascinating realm of robotics, where creativity meets technology as you build, code, and bring your ideas to life!

August 3-7, 2026

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Ages 10-14

McPherson County Extension Office

600 W. Woodside

McPherson, KS 67460

A FREE & HANDS-ON CLASS!



tinyurl.com/CulinaryC2026

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To schedule time with Chuck follow the link below or scan the QR code.

<https://calendly.com/claughlin-ksu/meeting-with-chuck>



Sign up for our newsletter to stay informed about upcoming events, calendar updates, and exciting webinars happening in your area. See a selection of upcoming grants, discover senior and military discounts, access important county resource phone numbers, and never miss out on local happenings. If you don't see your event listed, use the link provided to add it to the county-wide calendar. Stay engaged and connected—subscribe today! To add events to the community calendar visit: <https://tinyurl.com/MCAddEvent>



<http://eepurl.com/iicSFN>



Extension
McPherson County

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Agriculture & Natural Resources
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Radio Every Monday:
7:40 AM-96.7 FM KMPK
7:40 AM-98.9 FM KMCP
7:40 AM-95.5 FM KLBG
Ad Astra Radio Station

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Chuck Laughlin
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claughlin@ksu.edu