

McPherson County

K-STATE EXTENSION NEWS

September 2026



Photo Credit: Lauralee Myers, KSE
McPherson County
Preplant Wheat School 2026



Shad Marston, Agriculture & Natural Resources, County Agent

September is here, kids are back in school and with it comes the first signs that fall is just around the corner. Gardens are winding down, fall harvest is underway, pastures are changing, and cooler temperatures will soon remind us that the seasons are turning. For our agricultural community, this is a busy time of year as we finish summer work, prepare livestock for fall and winter, and begin planning for the next growing season.

Fall brings plenty of opportunities to get a few things done before winter arrives—checking livestock, evaluating forage supplies, preparing equipment, managing crop residue, controlling weeds and making plans for next year's crops and pastures. It is also a good time to look back at what worked well this year and what changes might improve your operation for next year.

As always, K-State Extension is here to help. Whether you have a question about crops, livestock, forage, pasture, gardens or your home landscape, don't hesitate to contact the McPherson County Extension Office. We appreciate the opportunity to work alongside our local producers, homeowners and agricultural community.

-Shad

Livestock News

Management Considerations for Fall 2026

by Shad Marston

As summer begins to wind down, fall is an important time for cattle producers to evaluate the herd, forage supplies and overall management plan before winter arrives. A little preparation now can pay dividends when cold weather and calving season arrive. Here are several management considerations from K-State Extension to keep in mind this fall.

Cow Herd Management

For spring-calving herds, fall is a good time to evaluate cows at weaning. If you have not already made plans for weaning, now is the time. Test available forages and have needed feedstuffs on hand before calves are weaned. Make sure waterers are clean and working properly and that weaning and receiving facilities are ready.

Body condition scoring (BCS) cows at weaning is an important management tool. Record those scores using the K-State Extension BCS Record Book (Books are at the Extension Office). Female nutritional requirements are relatively low immediately after weaning, making early fall an excellent opportunity to add weight and condition to cows that need it rather than waiting until closer to calving.

Schedule pregnancy checking and fall herd health work if it has not already been completed. Compare this year's pregnancy rate with previous years. If pregnancy rates have changed, take time to consider whether nutrition, body condition, bull performance or other management practices need to be adjusted.

When making decisions about feeding or marketing cull cows, consider the cost of gain compared with the potential value of that additional weight. Not every pound added to a cull cow will necessarily pay for itself.

For fall-calving herds, review calving health protocols and make sure calving equipment is cleaned, serviced and readily available. Nutritional needs increase as cows enter lactation, so adjust the nutrition program accordingly.

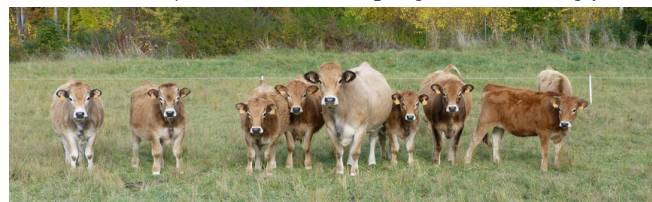


Photo Source: Canva

Management Considerations for Fall 2026 Cont'd

Producers planning fall breeding should also schedule breeding soundness examinations for bulls. Monitor bull body condition, especially young bulls. Bulls that finish the summer breeding season at a BCS of 5 or less may need additional nutrition to regain condition before the next breeding season.

Mineral and Forage Management

Fall is also the time to review your mineral program. Keep records of when mineral is offered, how much is provided and how much the herd consumes. If cattle are consuming twice the target amount, the cost of the mineral program can quickly add up.

Remember that grass tetany risk is greatest in lactating cows. As cattle move onto cool-season grasses and winter annuals, pay attention to magnesium levels in the mineral program.

Take an inventory of harvested hay and begin sampling forages to determine their nutritional value. Testing hay can help producers develop a more accurate and economical fall and winter feeding program. Be especially aware of hay harvested at higher-than-normal moisture levels, which can increase the potential for molds and other anti-nutritional compounds.

Test for nitrates and prussic acid when appropriate, particularly when grazing drought-stressed forages or sorghum-related crops.

Calf Management

For calves, schedule any remaining pre-weaning vaccinations and processing activities. Producers should also consider the economic value of implanting nursing fall-born calves and weaned spring-born calves when appropriate.

If you are retaining replacement heifers, begin planning your breeding program well in advance. Synchronization programs require careful attention to timing and product use. For producers using MGA, follow the specific label and protocol recommendations to ensure consistent intake and proper timing before prostaglandin administration.

Grazing Crop Residues

Crop residue can provide valuable fall and winter grazing, but it requires management. When grazing harvested fields, remember that nitrates tend to accumulate in the lower portion of the plant, particularly the bottom third of the stalk.

Be cautious with sorghum and sorghum-sudangrass regrowth. Prussic acid risk increases with new growth following grazing or weather events, and the period around a frost deserves particular attention. Fields with significant amounts of downed grain also require additional management because cattle can consume large quantities of grain very quickly.

Plan Ahead

Finally, take some time this fall to look beyond the immediate task at hand. The K-State Management Minder is a useful tool for helping producers plan key management activities throughout the year. Also, with feeder calf prices remaining strong, consider whether price-risk management tools make sense for fall-born calves.

Fall management is about preparing before you need to react. Evaluate the cows, test the feed, check the bulls, review your mineral program and make a plan for the months ahead. Good records and thoughtful management decisions this fall can help set the cowherd up for a successful winter and calving season.

Farm News

Don't Give Wheat Streak Mosaic a Green Bridge

by Shad Marston

As wheat planting approaches across Kansas, one of the most important jobs for wheat producers is controlling volunteer wheat. K-State Extension is reminding producers that volunteer wheat is much more than a weed—it can become the “green bridge” that allows wheat curl mites and wheat streak mosaic viruses to survive from one wheat crop to the next. The wheat streak mosaic complex includes wheat streak mosaic virus, Triticum mosaic virus and High Plains wheat mosaic virus, all of which can be transmitted by the tiny wheat curl mite.

Volunteer wheat provides an ideal summer host for those mites. If it remains green until fall planting, the mites can move directly into the new wheat crop.

K-State recommends that producers take volunteer wheat control seriously immediately after harvest and again before fall planting. The 2026 recommendation is to have all volunteer wheat terminated and completely dead before the beginning of the regional 30-day wheat-free window ahead of the optimal winter wheat planting period. Producers should also avoid planting wheat, rye or triticale during that wheat-free period because these crops can maintain the green bridge.

Remember, a little volunteer wheat can create a big problem. K-State research shows wheat curl mites can survive only a few days without a living host, so eliminating that green bridge gives mite populations a chance to die before the next wheat crop emerges. There are also no recommended insecticides that provide effective control of wheat curl mites. With the amount of wheat shattering and volunteer wheat following the 2026 harvest, now is the time to scout fields, roadsides and neighboring areas. Good wheat streak mosaic management starts with destroying volunteer wheat early and thoroughly. Variety selection and proper planting timing can help, but they are no substitute for breaking the green bridge.

As K-State Extension reminds us: “Start clean, stay clean, and give your next wheat crop a fighting chance.”

Preparing Your Lawn and Garden for Fall

by Shad Marston

September is a month of transition in the garden. Summer vegetables are still producing, but cooler temperatures remind us that the growing season is winding down. Fall is also an excellent time to plant, divide, renovate and clean up many areas of the landscape. A little work now can improve next year's garden and landscape.

- **Vegetables and Fruits**

Continue harvesting vegetables as they reach their proper stage of maturity. Pick apples and pears and store them in a cool location to help extend their freshness. Pumpkins should be harvested when the flesh has developed a completely orange color. When picking pumpkins, avoid carrying them by the stem, as a broken stem can reduce storage life. Winter squash is ready to harvest when the rind is hard enough that it cannot easily be punctured with a fingernail. For a fall crop of cool-season vegetables, September is a good time to plant lettuce, spinach and radishes. Keep weeds under control and remove them before they have an opportunity to produce seed. Herbs can also be dug from the garden and transplanted into pots to provide fresh herbs indoors during the winter months.

As tomato plants continue producing, removing smaller, immature fruits can help the plant put more energy into developing the larger, more mature tomatoes before the first frost.

- **Flowers**

Fall is an excellent planting season for many ornamental plants. Spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips and daffodils can be planted now. September is also a good time to dig, divide and plant peonies and divide many established perennials, particularly those that bloom in the spring.

Removing seedheads from some perennials can help prevent unwanted reseeding throughout the garden. Chrysanthemums can be planted now to provide excellent fall color. If you grow gladiolus, dig the corms as the foliage begins to turn yellow. Allow them to air dry before storing them in a cool, dry location for winter. As plants begin to die back, clean up garden areas by removing diseased and insect-infested plant material. Good garden sanitation can help reduce problems that carry over into next year's growing season. Adding organic matter such as compost can also help improve soil structure and fertility.

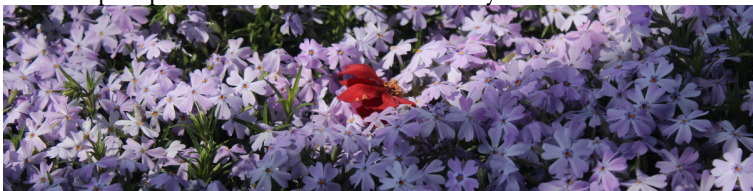


Photo Source: Lauralee Myers, KSE-McPherson County

- **Lawns**

September is one of the best times to establish or renovate cool-season lawns such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue. New lawns can be seeded or sodded, while established lawns may benefit from renovation practices such as verticutting. Core aeration can help relieve soil compaction and improve water and nutrient movement into the root zone. Fall is also an important time to fertilize cool-season turf. Follow soil test recommendations and avoid applying more fertilizer than the lawn needs. Continue mowing regularly, generally maintaining cool-season turf at about 2 to 3 inches. Keep the mower blade sharp to provide a clean cut and reduce unnecessary stress on the grass.

- **Trees and Shrubs**

September is a good time to plant both deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Fall planting allows plants to establish their root systems before the heat and drought stress of next summer. Continue cleaning up fallen leaves and consider composting them rather than sending them to the landfill. Remove broken and dead branches from trees, but avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs such as lilac and forsythia at this time. Pruning these plants now can remove flower buds that were formed for next spring. Don't forget to scout trees and shrubs for bagworms. Hand-picking is best this time of year and destroying bags now can significantly reduce the number of bagworms that hatch and feed on landscape plants next year.

- **Houseplants**

As nighttime temperatures begin to cool, start preparing houseplants for their move indoors. Bring tropical and tender plants inside before temperatures consistently fall into the 50s. Before bringing plants indoors, inspect, clean and wash them thoroughly to help prevent insects and other pests from coming inside with them. Plants can also be fertilized before winter conditions arrive and growth slows. If you enjoy having a poinsettia bloom for Christmas, September is the time to begin planning for the short-day treatment needed to initiate flowering. Poinsettias require long periods of uninterrupted darkness each night for several weeks to develop their colorful bracts.

September is a busy month in the garden, but it is also a month of opportunity. By harvesting what the garden has produced, preparing plants for winter, planting for next spring and taking care of the lawn and landscape, homeowners can finish the growing season on a strong note and give their gardens a head start for next year.

Upcoming Events

Beef Stocker Field Day

Registration is now open for this year's 27 annual KSU Beef Stocker Field

Day which will be hosted in Manhattan, KS on Thursday, September 24 at

the KSU Beef Stocker Unit. The day will start at 9:30 a.m. with registration

and coffee and will conclude with a good old-fashioned Prairie Oyster Fry.

The schedule is as follows:

9:30 a.m. Registration & Coffee

10:00 a.m. Introductions

10:15 a.m. Beef Cattle Outlook - Dr. Glynn Tonsor, K-State Agricultural Economics

11:00 a.m. Producer Panel: Does Theileria impact the health of newly arrived stocker cattle?

-Dr. Cassandra Olds, K-State Entomology

-Margaret Ann Smith, Southlex Cattle Co., Lexington, VA

-Dr. Gregg Hanzlicek, K-State Diagnostic Laboratory

-Dr. Don Coover, SEK Genetics, Galesburg, KS

-Moderator- Wes Ishmael, Executive Editor, Hereford World

12:15 p.m. Barbeque Brisket Lunch

1:00 p.m. The Alltech Method: Proven Strategies for Stocker Cattle Performance - Dr. Vaughn Holder, Alltech

2:00 p.m. Considerations for Using Corn Silage in Growing/Backgrounding Programs - Dr. Galen Erickson, University of Nebraska

2:45 p.m. Break

3:15 p.m. Optimizing Mineral Nutrition of Calves - Pre- and Post-Weaning

Strategies - Dr. John Arthington, University of Florida

4:00 p.m. Developing Tactics of When and Where to Pen Cattle

- Dr. John Groves, Livestock Veterinary Service, Eldon, MO

5:00 p.m. Cutting Bull's Lament

**After the program be our guest for Prairie Oysters

Pre-registration is \$30 per person and is due by September 10. After that date or On-site, the cost is \$40 per person. For complete details and registration, visit [*asi.k-state.edu/events/stockerfieldday/*](http://asi.k-state.edu/events/stockerfieldday/)

For more information contact Dale Blasi (dblasi@ksu.edu or 785-532-5427) or Katie Smith (katiesmith@ksu.edu or 785-532-1267).

Dairy Calf Care Workshop

Kansas Dairy Commission and K-State will offer a workshop this fall for dairy producers, technicians and veterinarians. These workshops will focus on colostrum management, feeding times and pain management. All workshops will include morning presentations, lunch and a farm tour in the afternoon. These workshops are free to attend and provide continued education that can be used for the FARM program.

For more information or questions, contact Victor Gomez-Leon (vgomezleon@ksu.edu or 785-532-2652).

Workshop: September 29

Location: Amish Community Building, 5917 W. Mills Avenue, Hutchinson, KS 67501

Invited speaker: Dr. Gustavo Schuenemann, The Ohio State University

Farm to visit: Miller Dairy

Pre-registration: Patrick Bergkamp (pbergkamp@ksu.edu or 620-662-2371).

KSU Swine Day

Save the date for this year's Swine Day, to be hosted on November 19 at the K-State Alumni Center.

The trade show, with more than 30 exhibitors, will begin at 8 a.m., followed by a great program with updates on K-State Applied Swine Nutrition Research, and featuring a presentation from Dr. Annie Lerner, Director of Nutrition and Research at Schwartz Farms Inc. on "Evaluating Technology: From Concept to On-Farm Implementation." Pre-registration is \$30 per participant and due by November 10.

On-site registration is \$50 per participant.

There is no charge for any K-State students if they are pre-registered. The complete schedule and online registration information can be found at [*asi.k-state.edu/events/swine-day/*](http://asi.k-state.edu/events/swine-day/).

For more information, contact Katie Smith (katiesmith@ksu.edu or 785-532-1267)



Clover Corner



Laura Savage
4-H Youth Development Extension Agent

Laura's Letter

Congratulations on making it through another year of McPherson County fairs! It is always a great time to see all of our McPherson County 4-H members together-competing, learning, and showcasing their hard work in each of their project areas!

While September is a little slower of a month for most, I would strongly encourage you to make sure you are staying on top of deadlines for pin applications and record books (October 1st)! Also, we are introducing a National 4-H Week Challenge!

Thank you for a wonderful year of McPherson County 4-H! Let's have an even better year next year!

-Laura

Stay in the Know!

Want to stay updated with McPherson County 4-H and other Extension Programs?

Follow us on Facebook!

Want to receive text message notifications?

TEXT "ALERT" to 22300



One Call Now--Text "ALERT" to 22300



McPherson County Extension Office



McPherson County 4-H

Schedule of Events

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Sept. 7 | Office Closed |
| Sept. 9 | State Fair Projects (non-food) due by 5:00 PM |
| Sept. 10 | State Fair Projects (foods only) due by 8:15 AM |
| Sept. 11-20 Kansas State Fair | |
| Sept. 21 | State Fair Projects Return to Office by 2:00 PM |
| Sept. 21 | Photography Explorations |
| Sept. 28 | Photography Explorations |
| Sept. 30 | Photos for Library Due to Office |
| Oct. 1 | Applications and Record Books Due |
| Oct. 4-10 | National 4-H Week |
| Oct. 5 | Photography Explorations |

Master Schedule

McPherson County 4-H Master Calendar:

*****Dates are accurate at the time of publication. Changes may occur as additional classes and opportunities are identified.*****

Do you ever find yourself wondering, “What on earth is going on in McPherson County 4-H?” Me too! 😊 Here is a master calendar of important dates until the end of December!

Sept. 1	“Early Bird” Registration Discount Ends for Photography Explorations
Sept. 7	Office Closed
Sept. 9	State Fair Projects (non-food) due by 5:00 PM
Sept. 10	State Fair Projects (foods only) due by 8:15 AM
Sept. 14	Registration Closes for Photography Explorations
Sept. 11-20	Kansas State Fair
Sept. 21	State Fair Projects Return to Office by 2:00 PM
Sept. 21	Photography Explorations, Extension Office, 7:00 PM
Sept. 28	Photography Explorations, Maxwell Wildlife Refuge, 6:30 PM
Sept. 29	Ambassador Meeting (Zoom)
Sept. 30	Projects for Library Due to Office
Oct. 1	Applications and Record Books Due (Pin, Club Seal, Ambassador, “I Dare You”, etc.)
Oct. TBD	Ambassador Meeting
Oct. 1	New 4-H Year Begins! Enroll in 4-H Online!
Oct. 1	4-H Council Meeting
Oct. 4-10	National 4-H Week
Oct. 5	Photography Explorations, Extension Office, 7:00 PM
Oct. 10	Great Plains Nature Photographers Meeting
Oct. 15	Registration Deadline for Kansas Youth Leadership Forum
Oct. 16	Deadline for Achievement Banquet Tickets
Oct. 16	Deadline for Wichita Thunder Education Day Tickets (limited supply, order early)
Oct. 19	Pizza Ranch Community Impact Night (contact Laura to volunteer)
Oct. 29	Trunk or Treat (5:30-7:00 PM)
Nov. 1	Achievement Banquet
Nov. 1	Pick up library projects at Achievement Banquet
Nov. 2	Club Financial Reports Due
Nov. 11	Education Day at Wichita Thunder
Nov. 15	4-H Enrollment Deadline to have enrollment fees waived
Nov. 21-22	Kansas Youth Leadership Forum
Dec. 1	Countywide Committee Application Due (contact Laura for more info)
Dec. 3	4-H Council Meeting (email)

National 4-H Week Challenge

This year we will start a National 4-H Week Challenge! This will be a competition between clubs with a variety of ways to earn points throughout National 4-H Week and the month of October!

How Do I Earn Points?

Activity/Event	Points Earned
Wear a McPherson County 4-H Shirt to School during National 4-H Week	1 point/member
Send a thank you note to a volunteer, club leader, or mentor	2 points/note Max: 1 member can only earn 10 points
Send a letter to the county commissioners (template provided, bring the completed letter to Extension Office)	5 points/member
Display at School or Community Space	5 points/display
Participate in Community Impact Night at Pizza Ranch	10 points/member or volunteer
Speech or Presentation at School	10 points/member
Have a friend or classmate (non 4-H member) attend a 4-H meeting or 4-H event with you	15 points/new member
Participate in McPherson County 4-H Trunk or Treat	50 points/club
Food Drive *points calculated by average number of food items per member* *If you receive a cash donation, \$1=1 food item*	>1 food item per member: 10 points >3 food items per member: 20 points 3-5 food items per member: 50 points >5, <10 food items per member: 75 points 10-20 food items per member: 100 points 20+ food items per member: 150 points

National 4-H Week Challenge

This year we will start a National 4-H Week Challenge! This will be a competition between clubs with a variety of ways to earn points throughout National 4-H Week and the month of October!

How Do I Earn Points (Cont.)?

An image of you completing the event must be submitted to Laura via email by Monday, October 12th @ 5:00 PM! This includes food drive item totals!

Events excluded from this deadline include the Community Impact Night and Trunk or Treat participation since these may happen after National 4-H Week ends.

When will the winner be announced?

I will announce the winner at the Achievement Banquet! The winning club will receive a cash donation to their club and will be recognized at the Achievement Banquet!

The second-place club will also receive a cash donation to their club!

How will the winners be calculated?

Winners will be calculated based on the average points earned per member enrolled in the club! This is to help reduce the advantage of larger clubs.

For example, Club A has 50 members and earns 400 points (average 8 points/member). Club B has 12 members and earns 160 points (average 13.33 points/member). Club B would win due to the average number of points earned per member.

Ambassador Applications

Love 4-H? Want to develop your leadership skills?

Apply to be a McPherson County 4-H Ambassador!

Ambassadors are McPherson County 4-H members in grades 8-12 who help promote 4-H and organize local events! Apply by October 1st using the application on our website!

Record Books

What do I need? To complete a record book, you must have a personal information page, Kansas 4-H Project Report (one report per project area), and a permanent record in a 3-ring binder. Please use a separate 3-ring binder for each project!

How do I complete these forms? These forms can be either completed via a PDF format (found on our website) or using Zbooks!

When are record books due? Record books are due by October 1st!

What if I need help completing my record book? Ask your club leader for assistance! Club leaders, with the assistance of the club screening committee, will go through each record book before it is submitted to the Extension Office!

Chill Out!

Were you nice and comfortable in the 4-H building at the Fair?

Support the 4-H Building Air Conditioner Fund!

This is a community fundraiser to purchase and install an air conditioner unit in the 4-H Building! Not only do we use this building during our McPherson County 4-H Fair, this building serves multiple county businesses, organizations, and residents throughout the year!

Know someone who uses the 4-H building throughout the year? Make sure to share this important fundraising opportunity with them!



https://mccf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=5336

Event Spotlights

GREAT PLAINS NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS ANNUAL MEETING & EVENTS

*Free for 4-H
members in the
photography
project!*

OCTOBER 10, 2026

Keynote Speaker: Brennen Nicole



Kansas State Fair

Good luck to all of our
McPherson County 4-H
members who are competing
in the Kansas State Fair!

I would strongly encourage all
McPherson County 4-H
members to attend! It is a great
way to get project ideas for
next year!

Cell Phone Photography Exploration

- **September 21st, 7:00 PM, Extension Office, Exposure Triangle Meeting**
 - Learn about exposure and taking silhouette photos!
- **September 28th, 6:30 PM, Maxwell Wildlife Refuge**
 - Silhouette Practice & Wildflower Photography, Maxwell Wildlife Refuge!
- **October 5th, 7:00 PM, Extension Office, Cell Phone Gizmos Meeting**
 - Learn about gizmos that you can use to enhance your photography with your cell phone!

Other Details:

- \$15 for per person for all three classes, register by September 1st to receive \$5 off your registration fee. **Registration closes on September 14th at 5:00 PM.**
- **Parents need to register for the Maxwell Wildlife Refuge Tram tour as well to accompany children under 14.**
- Every individual will need to bring their smart cell phone to the class.
- Open to ages 7-18.
- **You must register for all three classes.**



<https://tinyurl.com/CPPE2026>



2027 My Hometown Calendar Is Coming!

The 2027 My Hometown Calendar (5th Anniversary) is coming, and work on the new calendar is underway. Now is the time to start thinking about the events, activities and important dates you want your community to know about! Each year, the My Hometown Calendar helps residents keep track of what is happening throughout McPherson County.

Community organizations, clubs, schools, churches, businesses and other groups are encouraged to submit their events so they can be included in the calendar.

Planning an event for 2027? You can enter it anytime at tinyurl.com/mcaddevent.

Entering events early helps prevent scheduling conflicts and gives residents an opportunity to plan ahead. We had some dates fill up last year, so get your events in early. Whether it is a community festival, fundraiser, educational program, meeting, workshop, concert, sporting event or another activity open to the public, getting it on the calendar helps spread the word.

As you begin planning for the new year, take a few minutes to look at your organization's 2027 calendar and get those dates lined out. Don't wait until the event is just around the corner—enter your 2027 events now!

National Coupon Month: Make Your Money Go Further

September is National Coupon Month, making it a great time to take another look at how you shop and find ways to stretch your household budget. Couponing doesn't have to mean spending hours clipping coupons or buying things you don't need. Used wisely, coupons can be one tool to help reduce the cost of items already on your shopping list.

One of the best coupon strategies is to start with what you need rather than what is on sale. Make your grocery list, check what you already have at home, and then look for coupons and sales that match your list. A coupon isn't really saving money if it encourages you to purchase something you wouldn't otherwise buy.

Try these coupon strategies:

- Compare the final price. A coupon doesn't automatically make an item the best deal. Compare the price after the coupon with other brands, store brands and competing stores.
- Combine sales and coupons when allowed. Some stores allow certain coupons to be used on an item that is already on sale. Check your store's current coupon policy before shopping.

- Use store apps. Many grocery stores offer digital coupons that can be loaded directly to your loyalty account. Check the app before heading to the store.
- Be flexible with brands. If your usual brand is full price but a comparable product is on sale with a coupon, trying another brand may save you money.
- Pay attention to expiration dates. Organize paper coupons and digital offers so you don't miss opportunities to use them.
- Don't buy simply because you have a coupon. A \$1 coupon doesn't save you \$1 if you spend \$5 on something you didn't need.
- Watch quantities. Stocking up can make sense when an item you regularly use is deeply discounted, but don't buy more than you can reasonably use before it expires.
- Most importantly, remember that couponing is a budgeting tool, not a competition. The goal isn't to see how much you can buy—the goal is to spend less on the things your household actually needs.

National Food Safety Education Month: Four Steps to Safer Food

September is National Food Safety Education Month, an opportunity to refresh our knowledge about preventing foodborne illness. The FDA estimates that about 48 million Americans experience foodborne illness each year—about 1 in 6 people—with approximately 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths annually.

The good news is that many foodborne illnesses can be prevented by following basic food safety practices at home.

Remember four simple words: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.



Photo Source: Canva

National Food Safety Education Month: Four Steps to Safer Food Cont'd

- **Clean:** Wash your hands with soap and water before, during and after preparing food. Clean countertops, cutting boards, utensils and other surfaces that come into contact with food.
- **Separate:** Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs away from foods that are ready to eat. Use separate cutting boards when possible, and don't place cooked food back on a plate that previously held raw food without washing it first.
- **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to make sure foods reach a safe internal temperature. Color and appearance aren't always reliable indicators that food is fully cooked.
- **Chill:** Refrigerate perishable foods promptly. The FDA recommends the 2-hour rule: perishable food should not remain at room temperature for more than two hours, or more than one hour when the temperature is above 90°F.

Food safety is particularly important for people who are at higher risk of serious illness from foodborne infections, including young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions.

This month, take a few minutes to review your family's food safety habits. A clean kitchen, proper food handling and the right cooking and storage practices can go a long way toward keeping everyone safe.

Get Ready Before You Need to Be Ready

September is National Preparedness Month, a reminder that emergencies and disasters can happen with little warning. Preparedness isn't about expecting something bad to happen—it's about taking reasonable steps now so you are in a better position to respond when something does happen. FEMA's Ready campaign encourages households to prepare for emergencies and build resilience before disaster strikes.

A good place to start is with your household's basic emergency plan.

Know your risks. Think about the emergencies most likely to affect your area, such as severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, flooding, winter weather, power outages or other hazards.

Make a communication plan. Decide how family members will contact one another and where you will meet if you cannot return home. Make sure everyone knows how to receive emergency alerts.

Build an emergency kit. Keep basic supplies available, including water, nonperishable food, medications, flashlights, batteries, a first-aid kit and important documents.

Don't forget your pets. Include food, water, medications and other necessary supplies for your animals.

Preparedness can also mean taking small steps instead of trying to do everything at once. This month, check the batteries in your flashlights, update your emergency contact list, gather important documents or add a few items to your emergency supply kit.

Being prepared is easier when you do it a little at a time—and much harder when you're trying to do it after the emergency has already started.

Start the Conversation: National Suicide Prevention Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness, promote hope and encourage people to seek help when they are struggling. SAMHSA emphasizes that suicide is preventable and that everyone can play a role in prevention by recognizing warning signs, starting conversations and connecting people with help.

Sometimes we worry that bringing up a difficult subject will make things worse. In reality, simply asking someone how they are doing and giving them an opportunity to talk can be an important first step.

Pay attention when someone you care about seems unusually withdrawn, hopeless, overwhelmed or different from their normal behavior. A friend, family member, coworker or neighbor may be dealing with something they haven't shared.

You don't need to have all the answers. You can:

- Listen without immediately trying to fix the problem.
- Ask how the person is doing and whether they are safe.
- Take concerns seriously.
- Encourage them to connect with a trusted person or professional.
- Stay connected rather than allowing someone who is struggling to become isolated.

Most importantly, don't assume someone else will reach out. A simple phone call, text message, visit or conversation can remind someone that they are not alone.

Suicide prevention is not just a September topic. Building communities where people know one another, look out for each other and feel comfortable asking for help is something we can practice throughout the year.

Kids Take Over the Kitchen Day: Let the Kids Cook!

National Kids Take Over the Kitchen Day is September 13, the same day as National Grandparents Day in 2026.

That makes this a perfect opportunity to combine two generations in the kitchen!

Cooking with children isn't just about making a meal. The kitchen can become a classroom where children practice reading, math, science, communication, organization and responsibility—all while learning a skill they can use for the rest of their lives.



Photo Source: Lauralee Myers, KSE - McPherson County
4-H Youth Development Agent Laura Savage teaching knife skills at "Welcome to the Show", a middle/high school cooking program KSE -McPherson County held.

And grandparents have a wonderful opportunity to pass along more than recipes. They can share family food traditions, stories about meals from their childhood and the techniques they've learned over the years.

Consider letting children take the lead on a family meal. Depending on their age, they might choose the recipe, make a shopping list, measure ingredients, wash produce, mix ingredients, set the table or help with cleanup. Younger children can handle simple tasks while older children can take on more responsibility, with appropriate adult supervision.

Have a family recipe that has been passed down through generations? This is a great day to make it together and tell the story behind it.

Don't worry if the kitchen gets a little messy. The goal isn't a perfect meal. The goal is building skills, confidence, memories, and connections between generations.

Building Stronger Communities One Neighbor at a Time

National Good Neighbor Day is September 28. It is a simple reminder that strong communities start with people who know, care about and look out for the people around them. Being a good neighbor doesn't have to involve a major project. Sometimes the smallest actions make the biggest difference.

Introduce yourself to a neighbor you haven't met. Check on someone who may need a little extra help. Offer to pick up groceries for an older neighbor. Share extra garden produce. Bring someone a plate of cookies. Help with a yard project. Invite a neighbor for coffee. Or simply take the time to stop and have a conversation.



Photo Source: Canva

Good neighbors also help create communities that are more prepared and connected. When we know the people around us, we're more likely to notice when someone needs assistance during a storm, power outage, illness or other emergency.

September 28 can be the beginning of something that continues all year. Who is one person in your neighborhood you could get to know a little better?

A stronger community doesn't happen by accident. It is built one conversation, one helping hand and one neighborly act at a time. Share your good neighbor activities on our facebook page to help spur ideas in others.



Photo Source: Canva



How to Divide and Transplant Like a Pro:
Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

Groundcovers for Kansas--Covering Your Bases:
Wednesday, October 7, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.



Wednesday, September 9, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.
Wednesday, October 14, 2026 at noon to 1 p.m.

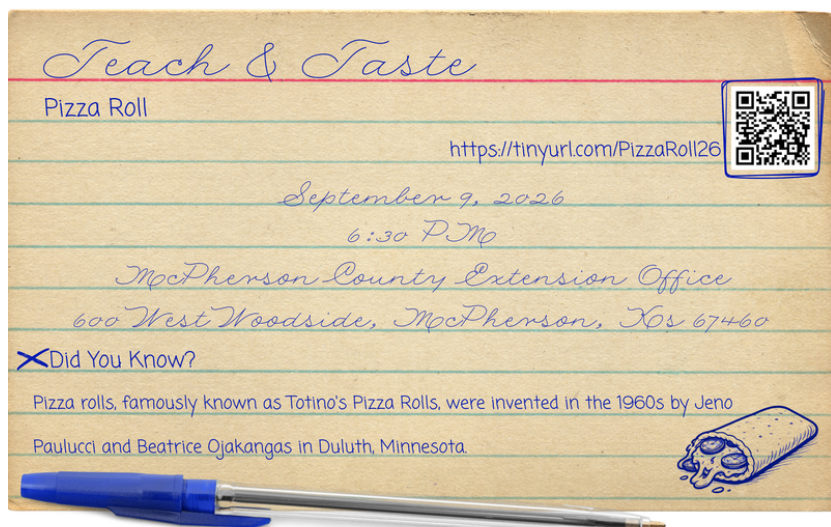


September 4, 2026 09:30 AM
October 2, 2026 09:30 AM



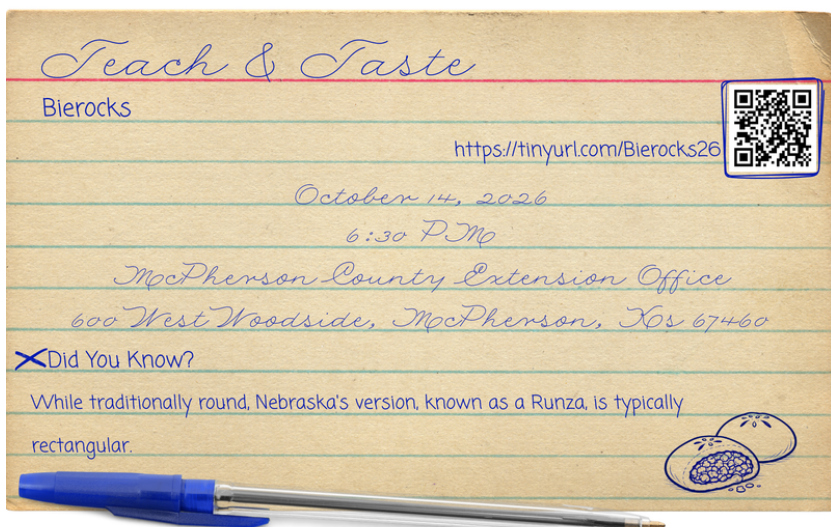
September 8, 2026 at 6:30 PM (Last Class of the Year)
Covenant Church, Gym, 102 S. Washington St., Lindsborg, KS

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>



This Class Is Hands-On & Free!

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.



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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>





Extension
McPherson County

Kansas State University Extension
McPherson County
600 W. Woodside
McPherson, KS 67460

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

AGENT CONTACT INFORMATION

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Agriculture & Natural Resources
smarston@ksu.edu

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

Laura Savage
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