



**Value-Added Ag March Feature:
Double X Bar Farm & Ranch - Helena, MT**



As part of Montana Ag Month, the Montana Department of Agriculture and Governor Gianforte visited Double X Bar Farm and Ranch in Helena, MT to where Governor Gianforte proclaimed March 2024 Montana Agriculture Month.

In his proclamation, the governor also declared the week of March 17-23, 2024, Montana Agriculture Week, and March 19, 2024, Montana Agriculture Day.

“Montana is known around the world for its superior-quality beef and commodities,” Gov. Gianforte said. “Now more than ever before, it’s important we uplift our producers and support the folks who nourish our communities, create good-paying jobs, and add value to our supply chain.”





Joining Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark, the governor toured the farm and ranch with operator Tim Dusenberry and heard about the production of his family's grass-fed, grass-finished beef and pasture-raised pork.

“The big step we took when we started doing regenerative agriculture was going directly to consumers,” said Tim Dusenberry, second-generation farmer and rancher. “Going to the farmers’ markets, social media, and word of mouth has really helped us provide our products to people. I’m looking forty years down the line so that my kids have something to work with.”

Helena-area residents may know Double X Bar and the Dusenberrys from summertime farmers’ markets where they sell their beef, pork, and refrigerated products, providing the community with nutrient-dense protein.

The visit comes on the heels of the recent announcement from Governor Gianforte and Director Clark of the state’s \$818,954 investment in innovative, value-added agriculture projects through the Montana Department of Agriculture’s 2024 [Growth Through Agriculture \(GTA\) program](#).

The department, through GTA grants and loans, supports innovative Montanans and their businesses that produce and commercialize agricultural products and processes, that in turn, create wealth and jobs in communities and on farms and ranches.

From Plevna to Kalispell, a total of 22 agricultural businesses throughout the state were awarded funds to advance Montana’s agricultural economy.

“Family farms and ranches like Double X Bar strengthen our economy and the entire agriculture industry,” Gov. Gianforte said. “This week and month are all about celebrating what’s best about Montana agriculture, and we have a lot to celebrate when it comes to the hardworking families that produce food and fiber for our state and nation.”

The governor’s proclamation may be viewed [here](#).



Montana Wheat & Barley Update: \$3,900 Awarded at Inaugural March Madness: Research Review

With Montana State’s men’s basketball team qualifying for The Dance, Monday’s March Madness: Research Review rhymed with a sweet irony of the NCAA berth. Held in Bozeman, the first annual competition between MSU plant sciences students featured 19 competitors, vying for \$3900 in scholarships. Brandon Tillett took home first-place honors with his project focused on the effects of climate change on pollination timing in spring wheat. The Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) hosted the event.

“MWBC invested \$2.3 million in research-related projects in our most recent grant cycle,” said Kent Kupfner, MWBC executive director. “Traditionally in the spring, we ask faculty to brief our board on their project progress. Sam Anderson, our research and market development director, came up with the idea to instead involve the students who are behind the scenes.” The lively competition mimicked Shark Tank with students pitching their projects in less than five minutes. MWBC board members and sponsors made up the judging panel.

Winners of March Madness are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| First: Brandon Tillett - \$2000 | Climate change effects to pollination |
| Second: Jared Lile - \$1000 | Creating a model to predict end use quality traits |
| Third: Chloe Hinson - \$500 | Identifying key genes for heat stress protection |

Honorable Mentions:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Caleb Hale - \$100 | Effects of TBI on tillering |
| Lochlin Ermatinger - \$100 | Satellite imagery to identify exact WSS infestation dates |
| Akshara Bathini - \$100 | Enhancing stem pith production of solid stem |
| Jessica Williams - \$100 | Relationships between stay-green and root traits |



Kupfner said that the board and staff were pleased with the first year’s attendance, but even more important, it was a good experience for students. “When they hit the ground running in professional life, they will need to be able to communicate their work to others who don’t necessarily understand all of the complicated science. They had the opportunity to strengthen their communication skills while learning more about what producers are looking for.” That link was noted by many – connecting Montana farmers to students doing the lab work is critical to solutions in the field.

March Madness was moderated by Colter Brown of Northern Ag Network, including updates by Dr. Sreekala Bajwa, vice president, dean and director for MSU’s College of Agriculture; Boyd Heilig, president of Montana Grain Growers Association (MGGA); and Terry Angvick, board chairman, MWBC. MGGA and Montana Grains Foundation provided matching dollars for scholarship awards. For more information regarding the event or the 2024 grant cycle, email wbc@mt.gov or call 406-761-7732.



Montana Ag Week 2024

Although we (here at the MDA) have the opportunity to help and serve our Montana producers everyday, Montana Ag Month, Ag Week, and Ag Day are meant to take the chance to recognize and thank our amazing producers who commit their lives to feeding our state and world.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is proud to honor and celebrate the state's ag industry, farmers, ranchers, and producers that contribute to feeding the world as well as the Montana way of life!



Governor Gianforte visited with Silver Bow County 4-H members to kick off Montana Agriculture Week and hear from young Montanans on how the program has impacted their lives.

"Montana 4-H has earned a well-deserved reputation for nurturing the potential of our youth and strengthening our communities for generations to come," Gov. Gianforte said. "This Ag Week, we recognize the vital importance of agriculture in our communities and the essential role that 4-H plays in preparing the next generation of leaders to sustain and innovate in this critical field."

Hearing from students and touring the farm, the governor learned about the animals they are raising to show at the county fair, and of the impact 4-H has had on their lives and in their community.

"I started in 4-H when I was six years old. I was very shy when I first started, and since then I've come out of my shell. It's helped me be a team leader and to help other kids with their projects, from sheering to showmanship skills," said Abby Swoboda, Silver Bow County 4-H member and high school junior.

Serving nearly 25,000 Montana kids in all 56 counties each year, Montana 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth development program in the state. Youth participate in a variety of program projects, from raising animals, to gardening, to robotics.

Development opportunities are also offered to youth members in the form of leadership programs, public speaking opportunities, and mentorship to younger members.

4-H offers more than 200 different projects and experiences that actively engage youth in learning and developing the life skills needed to prepare for meaningful employment, make a positive impact as leaders in their communities, and become well-informed citizens who actively engage in their communities and the world.

"The biggest thing that kids take away from 4-H is leadership, responsibility, and work ethic. They work really hard on all of their projects, and we try to relate life skills back into those 4-H projects instead of just focusing on the project skill itself – from public speaking, to record keeping, to time management," said Kellie Kahtani, Silver Bow County 4-H agent.

Speaking to the importance of programs like 4-H to ensure the future generations are interested and prepared to continue the tradition and economic vitality of the agriculture industry in Montana, the governor added, "By creating opportunities for the next generation, we cultivate a future where Montana producers can not only feed the world but also grow our economy and create good-paying jobs."

To learn more about Montana 4-H and how to get involved with a local chapter, see [here](#).



Director Clark Joins Gov. Gianforte in Hosting Montana Ag Producer Lunch

Ag Week Value Added Highlight Visit

Continuing ag week in Montana, Governor Gianforte and Director Clark shared a meal with local producers in Charlo to promote the state's agriculture industry.

"Montana's farmers and ranchers play a critical role in our communities by providing essential products that nourish our state and nation," Gov. Gianforte said. "During Ag Week, we recognize their hard work and dedication to ensure that we have access to high-quality, locally sourced food and other products."



Meeting with producers from the Flathead, Gov. Gianforte heard from ranchers, farmers, grain growers, manufacturers, and small business owners over lunch at Ninepipes Lodge in Charlo.

“It’s great to show off our producers and show how easy it can be to do a transaction with local farmers and ranchers,” Courville said. “Sometimes it seems inaccessible if they aren’t at the farmers’ market, so getting face-to-face to understand how that side of our business operates and how it makes ends meet for us as a local rancher, producer, as opposed to trying to ship it away.”

Fourth-generation farmer and Ronan native, Bridgett Cheff, echoed Courville adding, “Getting local products out to consumers is really important because it not only supports local businesses, but it also promotes the genuine quality that these farmers and ranchers in the valley produce, all the while promoting healthy nutrition for growing families.”

To help small businesses, as well as family farms and ranches, the governor increased the business equipment tax exemption from \$100,000 in 2021 to \$1 million, eliminating the tax burden for 5,000 Montana businesses.

“With more money in their pockets, small business owners, farmers, and ranchers can invest back in their operations to innovate and create jobs,” the governor added.

Discussing expanding opportunities for Montana producers to get their product to the market, the group highlighted the state’s Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) that makes Montana one of few states in the nation where state-inspected meat and poultry processors can ship their products across state lines.

“This agreement was a huge advantage. Right now, I have to have my product federally inspected and there are very few inspectors – I was lucky to have one close to me in Ronan. But this allows more options,” said fourth-generation rancher Brittany Cathey of Cathey Cattle Company.



Gov. Gianforte Highlights Support for Montana Meat Processors

Governor Greg Gianforte visited Central Avenue Meats and highlighted the state's investments in building a stronger workforce to support the meat processing industry in Montana.

“By investing in value-added processing and manufacturing in Montana, our producers are able to keep pace with a transforming agricultural industry, expand their production, and create more good-paying jobs,” Gov. Gianforte said. “Now that we’ve built more butcher shops, it’s time to strengthen investments to build up our workforce and meet the needs of employers.”

In 2020, the governor approved American Rescue Plan Act Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program awards with over \$12.3 million awarded to Montana meat processors. Thanks to this investment, the amount of meat processed in Montana facilities has more than doubled since the governor took office.

Increasing meat processing capacity in the state to add value to Montana commodities is among the governor's top priorities.

During the visit, the governor announced wait times for processing across the state has decreased significantly.

Discussing the ability to increase processing capacity, Central Avenue Meats owner and operator Drew Hicks added, “I am very happy wait times for individual ranchers on custom kills has gone down a lot. We are hopeful for progress on the federal inspection process to increase our capacity.”

Hicks continued, “One of the things we are hopeful for is a federally inspected slaughterhouse that is in or near Great Falls. We don't have something that is as close as we need it, and part of that delay is due to workforce concerns.”

Highlighting Montana programs that help increase the skilled labor force for meat processing businesses, the governor mentioned the Miles City Community College internship-based certificate and Montana State University Northern's meat processing center for students to gain hands-on experience.

“I am excited to see these programs going. Working with the local Great Falls workforce, we are training our own employees but are looking for other ways to expand apprenticeships,” Hicks added.



Montana Agritourism Conference Agenda Announced for 2024 at MSU - Bozeman

Hosted by the Montana Agritourism Fellows and Montana State University,
the Montana Agritourism Conference comes to MSU in May of 2024.

Featuring educational sessions, networking opportunities, and keynote
speakers regarding the value and importance of the agritourism industry in
Montana.

More information at: <https://www.montanaagritourism.com/>

MONTANA AGRITOURISM CONFERENCE

MAY 3, 2024 9:00AM - 5:00 PM
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY - BOZEMAN
SUB BALLROOMS



PROGRAM TIMES & SPEAKER DETAILS

9:00 AM	Welcome by Shannon Arnold , Director of Montana Agritourism Fellows Program
9:15 AM	Welcome by Clayton Marlow , Regional Director for Western SARE
9:30 AM	Introduction of Montana Agritourism Fellows
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Glenna Brown, Elena Bigart, and Melissa Weddel from Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research : <i>"The Evolution of Montana Agritourism - Preliminary Results from a Statewide Study"</i>
10:30 - 11:00 AM	Nic De Castro, Founder of LandTrust : <i>"Connecting Agritourism and LandTrust for Visitor Engagement"</i>
	Breakout Sessions:
	Room 1: "Understanding Your Agritourism Visitors" : Susan Joy, Program Manager for Made in Montana at Dept. of Commerce; Dax Schieffer, Director of Voices of Montana Tourism
11:15 AM - 12:15 PM	Room 2: "Past, Present, and Future for Montana Agritourism: Developing a Statewide Association" : Hailey Vine, Food & Agriculture Development Officer for Montana Dept. of Agriculture; Sam Blomquist, Montana Food & Ag Development Center Network and Prospera; Shannon Arnold, MSU; Alma Galloway, Board of directors for the NC Agritourism Networking Association
	Room 3: "Starting An Agritourism Business" : Tana Canen, Owner of Mahlstedt Ranch, and Carissa McNamara, Owner of Wild Horse Lavender
12:15 PM - 12:30 PM	Break
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch sponsored by MSU Extension, Montana Department of Agriculture, and Montana Farmers Union
1:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Keynote Speaker: Cole Mannix, Founder of Old-Salt Co-op : <i>"Old Salt Co-op: How a Montana Meat Company is Rebuilding Community Through Hospitality and Agritourism"</i>
1:30 PM - 1:45 PM	Break
	Breakout Sessions:
	Room 1: "Sustainable Agritourism Production Practices" : Todd and Molly Barkley, Owners of Barkley's Home Grown; Tienna Canen, Owner of Mahlstedt Ranch
1:45 PM - 2:45 PM	Room 2: "Marketing and Communication Strategies for Agritourism Businesses" : Tamara Robertson, Owner of Wandering Acres, and Haylie Shipp, Western Ag Network and Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
	Room 3: "Funding Opportunities for Agritourism Businesses" : Andy Fjeseth and Hailey Vine, Montana Department of Agriculture
2:45 PM - 3:15 PM	Ice Cream Social sponsored by Montana Department of Commerce
3:15 PM - 3:45 PM	Keynote Speaker: "Insurance for Agritourism Operations", Matt Sailor, Senior Underwriter for Mainstreet America Insurance
	Breakout Sessions:
3:45 PM - 4:45 PM	Room 1: "A Comparative View of Agritourism from Europe to the Midwest" : Renata Endres, Teaching Assistant Professor in the Recreation, Sport and Tourism and "Agritourism Liability Exemptions and Insurance Incentives" Bryan Endres, Professor of Food & Environmental Law at University of Illinois
	Room 2: "Adding Value to Your Agritourism Business" : Jon and Erin Turner, Owner of Turner Farms, and Laura Garber, Homestead Organics
	Room 3: "Insurance for Agritourism Operations: A Discussion" : Matt Sailor, Senior Underwriter for Mainstreet America Insurance, and Leavitt Great West Insurance, Holly Hovland and Josh Pulst
4:45 PM - 5:00 PM	Closing

Agritourism Fellows Directors:

Dr. Shannon Arnold - Montana State University - shannon.arnold@montana.edu
Kim Woodring - Montana State University Toole County Extension - kimberly.woodring1@montana.edu
Dr. Dustin Perry - Montana State University - dustin.perry@montana.edu
Dr. Beth Shirley - Montana State University - bethshirley@montana.edu

Conference Sponsors:





MDA Accepting Applications for State Grain Lab Director

Position is open until filled with first review of candidates April 1

The State Grain Laboratory, located in Great Falls and Plentywood, MT, is responsible for the operation of a statewide grain and commodity inspection program. The Lab provides official grain and commodity inspection services to grain producers and the grain industry as provided for in Title 80, Chapter 4, Part 87, MCA, and under a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Federal Grain Inspection Service (USDA/FGIS). Accurate and unbiased official grade/protein inspections and laboratory tests are performed in compliance with federal and state grain standards. The State Grain Laboratory is the only USDA/FGIS designated official grain inspection service in the state of Montana.

For more information or to apply, please visit:

<https://mtstatejobs.taleo.net/careersection/200/jobdetail.ftl?job=24140842&tz=GMT-06%3A00&tzname=America%2FDenver>



The Montana Department of Agriculture
is accepting applications for our
State Grain Lab Director.

*Position is open until filled with first
review of candidates April 1st, 2024.*

APPLY NOW

*To apply visit:
mtstatejobs.taleo.net
or scan the QR code below*



**For more information,
please visit:**

<https://mtstatejobs.taleo.net/>

The position is responsible for the overall development and administration of the State Grain Laboratory Bureau. The position requires concepts and theories of agriculture, business administration, trade, and public administration; public and media relations management; program management & more.





Made in Montana Trade Show 2024

The Made in Montana Trade show was back in Helena this March making it 26 total years that the show has been in operation. The Lewis and Clark Country Fairgrounds Hall was filled by almost 6,000 attendees over the two days.

Director Clark joined Katie Lane of Lane Legacy Beef on Voices of Montana to chat all things beef and value-added agriculture.



We had a great day chatting with vendors (including Hindu Hillbilly Honey) that were showcasing so many amazing value-added ag products.



MDA On the Road & Where to Catch Us

- Montana Soil Health Week - Statewide | April 1 - 7
- Montana Soil Health Day - Statewide | April 3
- NASDA Emerging Markets Mission - Vietnam | April 5 - 12
- In-Person Pesticide Training - Great Falls, MT | April 10 - 12
- Oilseed Public Hearing - Remote (Zoom) | April 10
- AAGIWA - San Antonio, TX | April 14 - 16
- Alfalfa Seed Advisory Committee Meeting - Remote (Zoom) | April 16
- Montana Economic Dev. Assoc. Meeting - Red Lodge, MT | April 23 - 25
- Montana Grape & Wine Association Meeting - Billings, MT | April 25 - 27
- Montana Agritourism Conference - Bozeman, MT | May 3



Montana Department of Agriculture Announces 2024 Pesticide Disposal Events

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is facilitating spring pesticide disposal events in the Columbia River Basin region during the week of April 10th-12th, 2024, in Libby, Polson, and Butte. Summer disposal events are set for July 9th-11th, 2024, in Eureka, Clearwater Junction, and Butte. These additional pesticide disposal events were made possible through the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (MT PSPP).

The primary objective of the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program is to have a lasting impact on the health and water quality of the upper Columbia River Basin (CRB), knowing that protecting the upper basin will also have a sustained positive effect downstream. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program was started in 2016 to better monitor and make a positive impact in the Columbia River Basin.



PESTICIDE DISPOSAL EVENTS

SPRING & SUMMER PESTICIDE DISPOSAL EVENTS

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Summer disposal events are set for **July 9th-11th, 2024**, in Eureka, Clearwater Junction, and Butte.

The pre-registration deadline for the spring event is Monday, April 1, 2024, and the pre-registration deadline for the summer event is Monday, July 1, 2024. Registrations for pesticide waste collection events are accepted on a first come, first-serve basis. There is no charge for the first 200 pounds of material; amounts over 200 pounds are assessed at \$1.00 per pound, and products are weighed on site. Additional fees may apply to pesticides with dioxins or dioxin precursors.

SPRING EVENT

Wednesday, April 10th – Libby, MT
Thursday, April 11th- Polson, MT
Friday, April 12th- Butte, MT

SUMMER EVENT

Tuesday, July 9th- Eureka, MT
Wednesday, July 10th- Clearwater Junction
Thursday, July 11th-Butte, MT

Please visit the Montana Waste Pesticide Disposal Program page to register. For more information, please visit agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-Waste-Disposal-Program or contact Carli Davis at **(406) 465-0531**.

These additional pesticide disposal events were made possible through the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (MT PSPP).





What We Have Been (responsibly) Drinking Lately:

We like to get our “Drink of the Month” into different hands around the department.

Here’s one for spring and warmer days ahead.

“The Otter Water Session Pale Ale”

OG: 1040 ABV: 4.5% IBU: 25

”The session pale ale is perfect for those hot days when floating on your back in a Montana river sounds like the best way to spend an afternoon. Otter Water is an extra-pale, extra-refreshing session pale ale that delivers crisp citrus hop flavor without the bitterness of an IPA or traditional pale. Low alcohol and high quaffability will let you have an afternoon beverage without needing a nap.”

PHILIPSBURG
BREWING CO.
MONTANA

What We've Been Listening To Recently:



**Everyone Needs More Marty in their Life:
April 2024**

1. El Paso - Marty Robbins
2. Devil Woman - Marty Robbins
3. My Woman, My Woman, My Wife - Marty Robbins
4. Big Iron - Marty Robbins
5. A White Sport Coat - Marty Robbins
6. Saddle Tramp - Marty Robbins
7. Doggone Cowboy - Marty Robbins
8. They're Hanging Me Tonight - Marty Robbins
9. The Master's Call - Marty Robbins
10. The Cowboy In The Continental Suit - Marty Robbins

We'd Love Your Feedback



Agriculture and in specific, Montana Agriculture is all about community. We thought, one does not have to be directly involved with agriculture to be apart of this community. Thus, our external facing monthly newsletter was created. It is meant to inform, inspire, educate, and reach our agricultural community hand out to whomever would like to be a part of the happenings here at the MDA.

Like to see a section that we didn't cover this month? Let us know! We'd love to hear from you.

Until then, happy April Friends!