

AGRICULTURE

INSIDE AG JULY 2026

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A Message from the Dean
- College of Ag in the News
- Recent and Upcoming Events
- Accomplishments and Highlights
- New Programs & People



MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

College of
AGRICULTURE &
MONTANA AGRICULTURAL
EXPERIMENT STATION

College of Agriculture | July News & Highlights

A quick look at research, people, and impact across the College.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are enjoying the warm, sunny days of summer. Across the college, we have been busy with summer orientations and field days, and it has been wonderful to see so much activity.

Our orientation numbers show significant growth compared to this time last year. Thank you to our advising and student success staff, faculty and administrators who have done an outstanding job helping new students enroll in the classes they need while welcoming and engaging with their families.

I am also excited that the grand opening of the new MSU Wool Lab is scheduled for 11 a.m. on July 17. I hope many of you will be able to attend this important milestone for the college. You should have already received an invitation to the event.

On the national front, we continue working with our peers through the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities to address ongoing challenges related to formula and grant funding. We are encouraged that Congress has restored Hatch funding to last year's levels, despite the president's proposed budget eliminating that funding.

Finally, if you haven't already done so, please take a few minutes to share your input on MSU's Strategic Plan by completing the survey at www.montana.edu/strategicplan.

Thank you for everything you do to support our students, colleagues and the mission of the College of Agriculture. I wish you a safe and productive remainder of the summer.

Yours in service,

Sreekala Bajwa

VP, Dean and Director





UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 SUMMER FIELD DAYS

July 7	8:30 a.m.	<u>Western Triangle Agricultural Research</u>	Conrad
July 8	8:15 a.m.	<u>Central Agricultural Research Center</u>	Moccasin
July 9	8:30 a.m.	<u>Northwestern Agricultural Research Ce</u>	Creston
July 15	8:00 a.m.	<u>Eastern Agricultural Research Center</u>	Sidney
July 16	8:00 a.m.	<u>Post Farm</u>	Bozeman
July 23	8:00 a.m.	<u>Lutz Farm</u>	Belgrade
July 30	4:30 p.m.	<u>Western Agricultural Research Center</u>	Corvallis





UPCOMING EVENTS

COMBINED STATE LABS GRAND OPENING

JULY 17, 2026

The College of Agriculture will celebrate the grand opening of the Combined State Laboratories on Friday, July 17, which includes the new Wool Lab! The building brings together MSU, the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Montana Department of Livestock to expand research, diagnostics and industry collaboration. The grand opening will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. corner of South 19th Avenue and Lincoln Street.

TOWNE'S HARVEST GARDEN FARMSTAND OPENS!

JUNE 25, 2026

Shop fresh, organically grown vegetables and flowers at the Towne's Harvest Garden farmstand every Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m., beginning July 9. The farmstand will be held through Aug. 27 at the Horticulture Farm barn, 2730 W. Garfield Road, before moving to the northeast corner of the Plant Bioscience Building on campus. The farmstand is open to the public, and cash and credit cards are accepted.



COLLEGE OF AG IN THE NEWS



Montana State University bus tour visits southeast Montana communities

Administrators, faculty, staff and student leaders visited eight rural communities to hear about how MSU is partnering and how it can further serve the state.

 Montana State University / Jun 24

Montana State University bus tour visits southeast Montana communities



Montana State doctoral student awarded national research service grant for gut microbiome, arsenic research

Montana State University doctoral student Trenton Wolfe has received a prestigious National Institutes of Health fellowship to support research on how antibiotics affect the gut microbiome's ability to process arsenic, a topic inspired by his upbringing.

 Montana State University / Jun 19

Montana State doctoral student awarded national research service grant for gut microbiome, arsenic research

COLLEGE OF AG IN THE NEWS



Montana State researcher discovers a critical cellular system that may one day lead to treatment of some cancers

Cysteine is critical to cells because it helps them build proteins and defend against damage.

 Montana State University / Jun 12

Montana State researcher discovers a critical cellular system that may one day lead to treatment of some cancers



Seed grants awarded to Montana State, community projects across Montana

Projects include cancer support for rural youth and a leadership incubator for rural principals and teachers in Montana.

 Montana State University / Jun 8

Seed grants awarded to Montana State, community projects across Montana

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

ANIMAL SCIENCE PROGRAM EARNS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Montana State University Department of Animal and Range Sciences has received accreditation for its Bachelor of Science in Animal Science program from the American Society of Animal Science. The accreditation recognizes the program's commitment to excellence in animal science education.

SARE SPOTLIGHT: SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN MONTANA

Western SARE-funded projects continue to support agricultural research and outreach in Montana. Recent highlights featured by Western SARE include an MSU graduate student's chickpea research project and several Montana-based soil health initiatives showcased during Soil Health Week.

Learn more through Western SARE's recent articles:

[Safeguarding Chickpeas](#) | [Building Soil Health in Montana](#)

EDUCATE ACADEMY WELCOMES FUTURE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS

The Department of Agricultural and Technology Education recently hosted its second annual eDucATE Academy at MSU. Ten high school students from across Montana explored degree pathways in agricultural education, communications, leadership, and extension while participating in hands-on learning activities, teaching micro-lessons, and building connections with peers interested in agricultural education careers.

TEACH TRAILER TAKES AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION ACROSS MONTANA

The TEACH (Technology Education and Agricultural Collaboration Hub) Trailer continues to expand its statewide outreach, bringing hands-on demonstrations of precision agriculture, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), digital fabrication, renewable energy and other emerging technologies directly to communities across Montana. This summer, the mobile agricultural technology lab participated in the President's Tour at the Southern Agricultural Research Center in Huntley as well as the Northern Agricultural Research Center Field Day in Havre, with additional visits planned for the Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center in Conrad, the Central Agricultural Research Center in Moccasin and the Northwestern Agricultural Research Center near Kalispell.



GRADUATE STUDENTS RECEIVE BOWMAN FELLOWSHIP

Congratulations to **Diva Rigney** and **Matthew Conrad**, graduate students in the Department of Animal and Range Sciences, for receiving the Dr. Janice Bowman Graduate Student Fellowship. They will each receive \$5,000 to use toward graduate student expenses.

Diva Rigney is a master's student researching strategic supplementation to mitigate cold stress in cattle grazing low-quality forages. She is advised by Tim DelCurto.

Matthew Conrad is a doctoral student researching uterine metagenomics and reproductive health in the postpartum mare. His advisor is Amanda Bradbery.



NEW PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: GROW SCHOLARS

The College of Agriculture's new GROW (Growth through Research, Opportunities and Work) Scholars Program is already connecting its first students with paid agricultural research experiences across Montana.

GROW recruits students before they graduate from high school and matches them with research opportunities at the seven Montana Agricultural Experiment Station research centers and within College of Agriculture academic departments. The first cohort is nearly fully placed, with Kindra Sedgwick, Reese Conover, Grant Holen and Trevor Nation among the inaugural GROW Scholars gaining hands-on research experience while supporting MSU's land-grant mission.

Students who commit to the College of Agriculture can begin research before or during their first year at MSU. Throughout college, GROW Scholars have the opportunity to continue working with faculty and staff mentors, receive a \$2,000 scholarship and participate in a four-year cohort experience. It is open to any student curious about agriculture, life sciences, or natural resources, and is willing to work at developing the future of Montana agriculture.

The program is open to students interested in agriculture, life sciences and natural resources. Looking ahead, Program Director Joe Lackman is expanding outreach efforts to connect with students, families and communities across Montana and grow the next generation of agricultural leaders.



Joe Lackman, GROW Program Director

Learn more at
ag.montana.edu/grow or
contact Joe Lackman at
joe.lackman@montana.edu

NEW FACES IN THE COLLEGE OF AG

We have a few new faces to recognize in the College of Ag!

The Dean's Office is pleased to introduce three new members of our College of Agriculture team.



Erica Strickland, Budget and Fiscal Director for COA and MAES

Erica has a varied background focusing on financial data and databases. She started working for S&P Global, a corporation that collects and publishes financial data for companies traded on the American Stock Exchange, NASDAQ and international markets. While raising small children, the family decided to move to Montana and buy a small hardware store to have more scheduling flexibility. After learning the ins and outs small company bookkeeping and selling through e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Wal Mart, she moved over to the public sector and worked as the Finance Director for Park County for 10 years. The Montana local government background lends itself well to learning COA budgeting and fiscal processes. She is excited to expand into the education arena and support agricultural education and research at MSU, and she can't wait for her first field trip.



Sara Carr, Budget Analyst

Sara was no stranger to Bozeman before making Montana her permanent home. After her adult son moved to the area eight years ago and following several visits each year, she and her family decided it was time to leave California and reunite in Montana. Her professional background includes hotel and restaurant management, local government finance, grant administration and a sprinkling of theater production. She brings a creative approach to problem-solving, along with a fondness for math and spreadsheets. When she isn't focused on the financial success of the College of Agriculture, Carr enjoys talking to her plants, crafting, baking and spending time outdoors.



EmmaLee Rotlisberger, Communications Specialist

EmmaLee is a two-time graduate of Montana State University, earning both her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Department of Agricultural and Technology Education with an emphasis in agricultural communications. Before joining the College of Agriculture team, she worked as a graduate teaching assistant and was an intern with the MSU News Service. She is excited to combine her passion for storytelling with her love of agriculture by highlighting the people, research and programs that make the college unique. Outside of work, she enjoys photography, baking, and fishing.

Wishing a very warm welcome to all our new colleagues.
We are so glad you're here!

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!



Scan the QR code to submit news, research highlights, events
and story ideas for future communications.