



Fergus Petroleum Co FSA
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County Committee Members

Dan Boyce, Chairperson
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Judy Hedman, Reg Member
Jill Knerr, Reg Member
Steve Morris, Reg Member

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John Nahrgang, CED.....108
Kim Billadeau, PT.....110
Karen Boyles, FLM.....113
Vickie Baumgartner, PT.....107
Michele Gilpatrick, PT.....106
Les Melichar, PT105
Alta Pallett, PT.....109
Cheryl Tucek, CPT104
John Ahlgren, Field

Dates to Remember:

April 8 – Office closed from noon to 5 pm

April 9 – Office open 1 - 5 pm

May 1 - NAP Pull-Off Date for forage acreage.

May 5 – Dairy Disaster Assistance Program III sign up ends

May 15-Aug. 1 – Primary nesting season

June 2 – Final loan/LDP availability date for Corn, Dry peas, Grain sorghum, Lentils, Mustard seed, Safflower seed, Small chickpeas, Soybeans, and Sunflower seed harvested in 2007

July 15 – Acreage Reporting Deadline

July 15 – 2007 production for NAP APH deadline

July 15 – 2007 NAP application for payment deadline

Notice of Loss – must be filed within 15 calendars after the date of the disaster occurrence or date damage was apparent

September 30 – October 1 – Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture, Billings

Fergus-Petroleum FSA

April 2008

Public Comment Available on CRP Managed Haying and Grazing

FSA is accepting public comment on proposed changes to allowable frequencies of managed haying and grazing on CRP acres and changes to primary nesting season dates, during which managed haying and grazing is not permitted.

The proposed changes, if adopted, would apply to those lands enrolled in CRP after September 25, 2006 and existing CRP contracts where managed haying and grazing was not authorized prior to that date. For such lands in Montana, current managed haying and grazing frequencies are once in ten years for managed haying and once in five years for managed grazing. The primary nesting season is from May 15 – August 1. Montana's FSA State Committee determined that changes to the current program provisions were warranted. The proposed changes are to allow managed haying once in five years and managed grazing once in three years. The proposed primary nesting season dates are May 15 – July 15. The public now has the opportunity to comment on whether the proposed changes would be beneficial to wildlife and wildlife habitats on CRP acres in Montana.

Comments received will be considered for a state-specific environmental assessment that will evaluate the affects of the proposed changes in Montana. Comments must be received by close of business on **April 19, 2008**. Comments may be mailed to: MHG EAs, Geo-Marine Incorporated, 2713 Magruder Blvd., Suite D, Hampton, VA 23666-1572 or by logging on to <http://public.geo-marine.com>. Separate comments may be submitted for each area of concern which includes: proposed action, proposed alternatives, water quality, wetlands, floodplains, sole source aquifers, wild and scenic rivers, wildlife, vegetation, threatened and endangered species, socioeconomic resources, cultural resources, air quality, hazard waster materials, and soil quality. Comments are not limited to the above alternatives. Other alternatives may be suggested.

OFFICE CLOSED FOR TRAINING MEETING

The Fergus-Petroleum County FSA office will be closed from noon on Tuesday, April 8 through 1 pm on Wednesday, April 9 to allow all of the staff to attend a training meeting.

BVD-PI Biosecurity Project

As it enters its third year, the 2008 Montana BVD-PI Herd Biosecurity Project continues to help improve the health of Montana's cow herd and add value to the state's calf crop. In 2008 the project will again provide technical assistance and a screening supply "kit" to Montana ranchers who want to test their cattle for persistent infection (PI) with bovine viral diarrhea (BVD) virus.

The project assists ranchers in preventing transmission of the BVD virus from PI animals to their breeding herds.

The BVD virus exists in cattle worldwide – and can cause severe hardship for ranchers and cattle feeders that experience outbreaks of the disease. Research shows the annual loss in reproductive efficiency alone due to only one PI animal can range from \$14 - \$24 for every cow in the herd.

The main negative health effects of BVD virus is it inhibits conception and causes abortion in susceptible female cattle. The virus suppresses the immune system, making infected animals more susceptible to other diseases. PI animals usually have a very high amount of virus circulating in their blood and they shed virus very efficiently to susceptible animals. The disease has no human health implications and meat from infected cattle is no threat to the beef consumer.

Testing for PI status is an once-in-a-lifetime event. If an animal is PI negative at birth, it will always be negative. If an animal is PI positive at birth, it will always be positive.

Using this knowledge and a relatively inexpensive "pooled" diagnostic approach, testing can cost less than \$2 per head.

Ranchers wanting to participate in the project must apply through Montana State University. For more information about the project, Contact Clint Peck, director of Beef Quality Assurance programs for Montana State University at 406/896-9068 cpeck@montana.edu, or Mo Harbac, 406/994-4323 mharbac@montana.edu or visit the website at www.mtbqa.org.

The project is supported by the Montana Stockgrowers Association and is funded through the Montana Beef Network.

Conservation Compliance

Federal regulations discourage the production of crops on highly erodible cropland unless the land is protected from erosion by an approved conservation system. Status reviews are conducted to ensure producers follow a conservation plan on highly erodible land.

In addition to the highly erodible land, a person may not plant an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after Dec. 23, 1985, or convert a wetland to make agricultural production possible after Nov. 28, 1990.

Failure to comply with these provisions will cause a person to be ineligible for USDA benefits. County Committees may review noncompliance situations for good faith and provide relief in approved cases.

2008 Managed Grazing Periods

The Farm Service Agency State Committee has approved two 60-day managed grazing periods for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for 2008.

- Spring managed grazing can occur March 15th – May 14th
- Summer managed grazing can occur July 16th through September 13th

Since only two grazing periods are allowed, producers who can not begin grazing until August 2nd will only be allowed to graze through September 13th.

Dairy Disaster Assistance Program Signup Resumed

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) resumed signup for the Dairy Disaster Assistance Program (DDAP) III on March 5, 2008.

Eligible dairy producers who suffered production losses in 2005, 2006, or 2007 may apply to receive benefits until May 5, 2008 when sign up ends. Production losses must have occurred between Jan. 1, 2005, and Dec. 31, 2007 due to natural disasters.

Contact the local FSA office for detailed eligibility requirements.

How Safe is Your Water Well?

Private water well owners have a responsibility to protect ground water from contamination and ensure their water system is providing good quality drinking water. Conducting an annual well check-up should be taken to ensure the proper operation of your well. A check-up will allow you to monitor water quality and extend the life of your system.

As a minimum, test your water annually for coliform bacteria and nitrates. Tests can also be conducted for contaminants specific to your area. Your water should be tested if there is a change in the water's taste, odor, or appearance; after the well system is serviced; or after a flooding event.

Inspect the well parts to ensure they are in good repair. The well should have a two-part cap with a rubber seal, if it does not, the cap should be replaced. Inspect your pressure tank and associated plumbing.

Check the area around the well for hazardous materials such as paint, cleaning supplies, motor oil, and pet waste. Never dump hazardous materials on your property or pour them down the drain. Dispose of old or unwanted prescription drugs and other medications by removing them from their original containers, mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter, put them into another container, and throw them into the trash. Although these are the best disposal methods now, they are not ideal. Some local pharmacies have unwanted drug take back programs.

Information on collecting samples can be provided by your water quality district, county sanitarian, or the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). You may also contact Taylor Greenup, Montana Watershed Coordination Council at 406/444-3527 or DEQ's Source Water Protection Program at 406/444-1595 or by logging on to <http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/swp>.

Wind Turbines or Oil/Gas Leases

If you have mortgaged your land to FSA approval is required prior to entering into wind turbines or oil/gas leases or development. Failure to obtain prior agency approval could result in loan default. Please check with the office if you are considering any of these options.

Source Water Protection Program

The value of a clean drinking water supply cannot be overestimated. Source water used by communities to provide drinking water can be obtained from streams, rivers, lakes, springs or underground aquifers. Activities nearby, upstream or within a watershed of these types of source waters can pose a threat to the quality of the water. Ensuring these untreated source waters are protected from contamination can reduce the costs of treatment and risks to public health.

The Source Water Protection Program is a program to assist rural and small communities served by public water systems to reduce or eliminate the potential risks to drinking water supplies. The Montana Rural Water Systems will be working with communities to develop a source water protection plan that can be effectively and economically accomplished within each community. Protection of source waters requires an investigation of the issues and a response that creates a system of management. Protection measures are practices to prevent contamination and form the first barrier to drinking water protection.

For further information regarding the project, contact Kristi Kline 406/454-1151 or www.mrws.org.

Crop Disaster Program (CDP)

If you had a qualifying 35% crop loss in 2005, 2006, or 2007 and had federal crop insurance on the crop, you may be eligible for benefits under CDP. The office has scheduled appointments for all producers whose information showed up on an insurance download. If you think you had an eligible loss and have not yet received an appointment, please contact the office and talk to Les or Cheryl.

U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SERVICE AGENCY
FERGUS-PETROLEUM COUNTY FSA
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Sept. 30 – Oct. 1 – Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium. Billinas

Changes to Your Farming Operation

To ensure a smooth transition when a new Farm Bill is passed, FSA is encouraging producers to notify us of any changes to your farming operation including land ownership or lease changes, entity changes including members and shares, and who is authorized to sign documents for the operation or individuals. It is anticipated there will be policy changes and new forms to complete when new programs are implemented. Details will be published in this newsletter as they are known.

The Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (IPEA) implemented stronger internal controls and reviews of payments issued. **The FSA database of payments issued will be compared against the Social Security Administration (SSA) database of deceased individuals.** It is very important that FSA be notified of the death of a landowner, member of an entity, or anyone that may be earning USDA benefits. There are actions that can be taken to ensure payments are issued correctly and not considered an overpayment. Contact your local office for more information.

A new face in our office

Kim Billadeau has joined our office staff as of March 31st. She will be working in the payment eligibility and Sodbuster/Swampbuster program areas as well as assisting in other programs.

Welcome, Kim!