

DISTRICT DIRT

PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Fall 2025

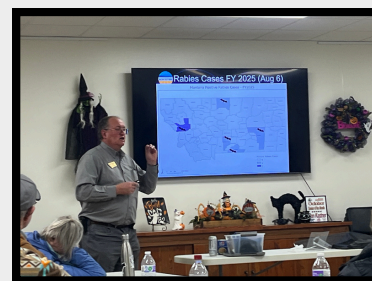
*Local Common
Sense Conservation*

Photo Credit: Reba Ahlgren

PCCD Annual Applicators Class



Our district recently hosted an Applicators Class led by Stephen M. Vantassel, Vertebrate Pest Specialist with the Montana Department of Agriculture. Participants earned three applicator credits while learning practical methods for controlling coyotes, voles, and bats. Stephen discussed habitat reduction, trapping, and baiting for vole control, along with bat exclusion techniques such as sealing entry points and installing one-way doors to safely remove colonies. He also covered coyote management strategies focused on prevention and livestock protection. The class offered valuable, hands-on information to help applicators manage pests effectively and responsibly.



Stephen M. Vantassel,

Vertebrate Pest Specialist, Montana Department of Agriculture

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**Petroleum County
Conservation
District**

Ag Community Spotlight

SKYLAR STENSON



"A successful hunt at the ranch with the family"

Skylar was raised on the Rocky Mountain front outside of the little town of Dupuyer. She grew up on the family ranch with her parents, Kip and Adele, and two older sisters, Amber and Jessica. Being raised in a close-knit community meant staying busy with everything from acting in community plays to participating in 4-H and sports, and much more. Before high school, their family moved to eastern Montana where she was in a large class of 12. Today her parents continue to run the ranch in the beautiful badlands, but the mountains will always hold a special place in her heart.

After high school she attended Montana State University in Bozeman. She realized from a young age that helping teach other new skills or increase their abilities was very fulfilling, largely learned from her mom. Her dad was a big influence in Skylar developing a love for history. These two passions were some of the foundations that led her to earn a bachelor's degree in

Social Studies Education. While at MSU Skylar attended as many football games as possible, loved to go swing dancing at live bands, hiking, and making new connections. After college, Skylar went to work in Miles City and taught Middle School Social Studies. Having grown up playing sports she was excited for the opportunity to coach 7th grade volleyball and help her young students develop both their athletic abilities and confidence. Her girls brought home the championship plaque for their league two years in a row.



"Enjoying a camo-themed ski day with friends in Red Lodge"

A few years of teaching led Skylar to want to connect more with her agriculture roots. For about two years she worked in the realm of agritourism. She worked with landowners to generate additional value from their property by allowing short term access to their property for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other outdoor activities. When the ACES Conservation Technician

position was posted, it was the type of opportunity that she had been looking for. Now Skylar gets to assist producers with conservation efforts important to them, the natural resources, and future generations.



"An unforgettable girls' trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness"



"The people who mean the most - my family"

Today, she has been with ACES for almost a year. Skylar loves that she is only a short drive, for Montana standards, away from her sisters, niece, and nephew in Bozeman or her folks in Wibaux. Outside of work, she stays busy with intramural volleyball, skiing, quilting projects, cooking, and loves the opportunity to curl up with a good book. She is looking forward to continuing working in this amazing area, with hardworking people that remind her of the family and values that she was shaped by.

LONE STAR TICK

By Joshua Hobbs, Coordinating Wildlife Biologist, Pheasants Forever Inc, Quail Forever



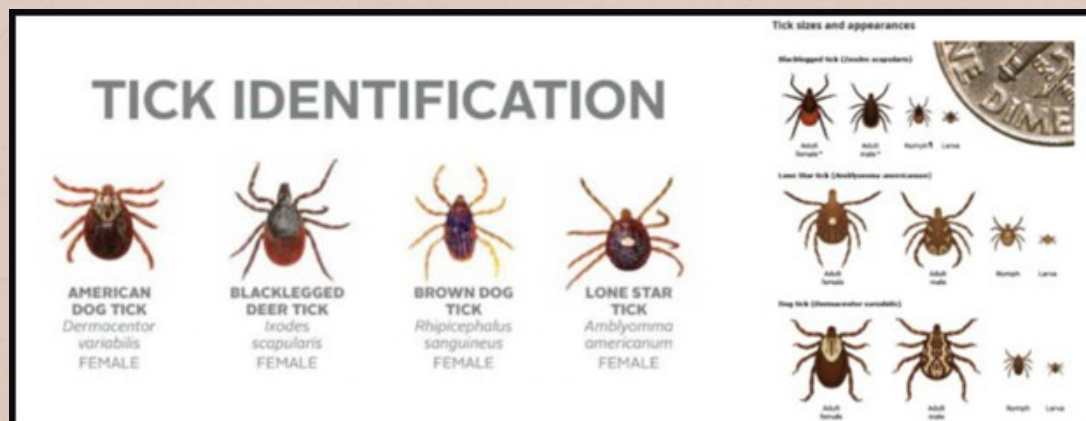
Alpha Gal syndrome is a new and emerging allergic condition that can have life changing implications for ranchers and sportsman alike. This condition is triggered by a tick bite, from the Lone Star tick, which can introduce a carbohydrate known as galactose-alpha-1,3-galactose (Alpha Gal) into the bloodstream. For those who develop this allergy, like me, exposure to this sugar through the consumption of red meat and other products derived from mammals can lead to severe allergic reactions.

People with Alpha Gal syndrome may experience various symptoms, including hives, gastrointestinal cramps or distress, and even anaphylaxis, typically occurring three to six hours after eating mammalian products, particularly occurring at night. This delayed reaction made it very difficult to diagnose and many nights contemplating going to the emergency room. It's very important for ranchers, who often work closely with livestock and may consume meat regularly, to be aware of this condition. For sportsman who work with dogs or tick prone wild game, it is

very important to protect themselves and do regular checks of themselves and hunting dogs. For anyone who works or recreates in tick prone areas, taking precautions to protect yourself is crucial.

Learning to live with Alpha Gal syndrome requires a significant change in dietary habits. A large portion of my food happiness derived from eating beef, elk and venison. Affected individuals must avoid not only red meat but also gelatins, dairy products, and certain medications derived from mammals. Reading ingredient labels becomes crucial. While the condition is challenging, many find that they can still lead active lives by focusing on a diverse diet of chicken, pheasant, grouse, basically any fowl, fish, vegetables, and plant-based proteins. Trust me, there are only so many ways to prepare chicken.

In closing, ranchers and sportsman should consider preventive measures against tick bites, including wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent for



themselves and pets as well as conducting regular tick checks during or after outdoor activities. By educating themselves about Alpha Gal syndrome and taking proactive steps, those affected can continue to enjoy their lifestyle while managing this life-changing challenge.

CITIZEN SCIENCE 101

By Brent Smith

Central & Eastern MT Invasive Species Team Program Manager



Red Eared Slider



The term “citizen science” refers to research conducted by or with participation from the general public or amateur/nonprofessional researchers of natural sciences, social sciences and many other disciplines. While the definition and scope of citizen science may differ between individuals and organizations, it is ultimately the effort to expand the “sample size” of observations for research- something especially important for invasive species prevention and management.

Numerous organizations, governmental agencies, and other entities use citizen science as a means to conduct their research efforts and support their mission. For example, when an individual reports a plant or animal that they deem “unusual” given the known species in the area, that report can be shared with the proper professionals- the local extension office, FWP, etc.- to confirm the identification of the species. Citizen science is critical to support the work of Montana’s invasive species management organizations and agencies.

With today’s advances in technology and AI, there are more online platforms and smartphone applications available to help the public identify and report observations. One of the most popular and user-friendly apps is iNaturalist.

It works like this: you download and open the app to your mobile phone, take a photo (or several) of the organism, and the app searches an international database for organisms that best match what you have photographed. Once the identification is complete, you can choose to post it onto the iNaturalist database. This allows the observation- and its exact or obscured location on a map- to be reviewed and verified by experts. Once that is done the data becomes “research grade” and is available to researchers, organizations, and any interested individuals worldwide.

Japanese Brome



Alternatively, you can use a conventional camera to take photos and upload them to the iNaturalist website. To learn more about iNaturalist visit www.inaturalist.org

Rush skeleton



Ventenata



You can help manage and prevent the spread of invasive species by becoming a citizen scientist to protect Montana’s ecosystems and economy. Contact CEMIST, your local Conservation District or MSU Extension Office to learn more!

WINNETT ACES

Rangeland Improvement Program

What is the RIP?

- The RIP assists ranchers across Central Montana with cost-share opportunities for projects that improve agriculture operations and wildlife habitat on working lands.



Impact of RIP

- Fiscal and technical support allows ag producers to implement conservation practices, restore and improve the prairie, and support wildlife.
- Projects improve soil, water, and wildlife habitat.
- Common project types
 - New or remove/replace fence
 - Water infrastructure
 - Reseeding
 - Mesic



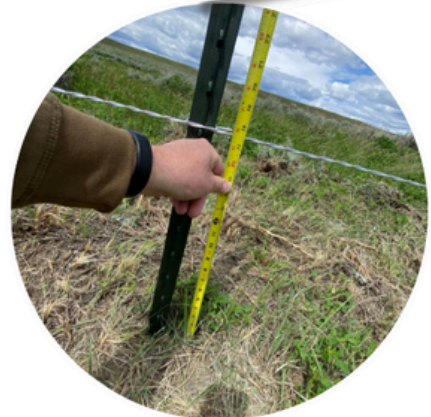
Apply Today!

- Online application is available at tinyurl.com/acesrip
- Visit winnettaces.org to explore our website and Conservation page
- Applications accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed quarterly
- Interested or have more questions? Feel free to contact us!



CONTACT INFO

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- 🌐 skylar@winnettaces.org
- 👤 Desi King-Conservation Program Manager
- 🌐 desi@winnettaces.org





7th Annual Winnett ACES Pasture Golf Tournament



1st Place



2nd Place



3rd Place

Homesteading Workshop September 17 - Sourdough



Amanda Flann with "As Much As You Knead" from Billings put on a very informative and fun workshop on all things sourdough including how to make starter and recipes, improve and maintain sourdough starter, sourdough history, myths, tips & tricks, and baking do's and don'ts.



Announcements & Notices

DISTRICT 411

310 PERMITS are required:

If you are planning any project including the construction of new facilities or the modification, operation, and maintenance of an existing facility that may affect the natural existing shape and form of any stream, its banks or its tributaries. Any private entity or non-governmental individual that proposes to work in or near a stream on public or private land must obtain a 310 permit prior to any activity in or near a perennial stream.

When in doubt please call the Conservation District Office @ 429-6646 ext. 104 for more information.

PCCD Office Hours:

Mon thru Thur, 10am-5pm

*NOTE: The PCCD Office is currently closed. Please email petroleumcd@macdnet.org

Are you (or know someone) interested in joining the PCCD Board as an Associate Supervisor?

The Petroleum County Conservation District through education, outreach and program and project development works hard to put local common sense natural resource conservation on the ground and to educate the current and future producers and landowners on natural resource conservation all while helping them to continue sustainability in their businesses.

The Petroleum County Conservation District regularly partners with other conservation districts, watershed groups, stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, as well as some NGO's and nonprofits to put conservation on the ground.

Our CD is involved in many programs and educational outreach/workshops, as well as rental and sale items.

We currently have Associate Supervisor positions open. These are a great way to learn about and participate in the PCCD. If you have interest in resource conservation and education and are interested in joining the PCCD Board (or would like to learn more) please contact Trish at PetroleumCD@macdnet.org.

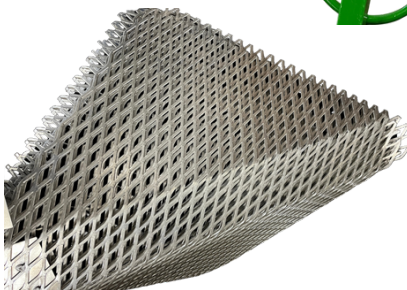
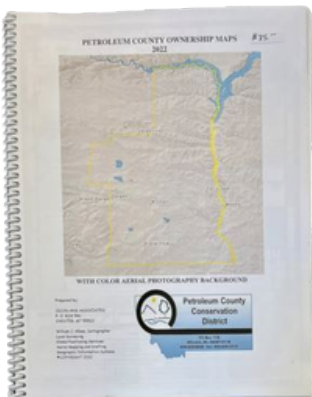
Time to Order Trees!

Need trees for your property? Ordering deadline is March 1st, but if you wait till March there is a high chance trees will be sold out already.



To order, please email petroleumcd@macdnet.org to have an order form emailed or you can find the order form on our website www.petroleumcd.org, under the "Tree" tab.

Items for Purchase or Rent at the PCCD



FOR RENT

Tree Planter

Fabric Layer

Level & Tri-pod

Flow Meter

Rangeland Monitoring Bag

No-Till Drill

EZ Ject (woody invasive species control)

FOR SALE

2023 Land Ownership Maps

Fabric rolls (by roll/foot, depend on size) & fabric staples

Wildlife Escape ramps

Sage Grouse Fence Markers

Gate Closers

*****Email the CD Office for availability of all items. Prices are subject to change*****

The public is always invited to the Conservation District meetings. Regular meetings are held each month at the USDA/PCCD office up on the hill. Meeting time is usually the last Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. Look for notices posted around Winnett.

All PCCD and NRCS programs are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, nation of origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Petroleum County Conservation District Board

JC King - Chairman, Elected Supervisor
Brenda Brady - Vice-Chairman, Elected Supervisor
Laura Kiehl - Treasurer, Elected Supervisor
Ralph Corbett - Urban Supervisor
Rodney Rowton - Rural Supervisor
Butch Arthur - Urban Supervisor
Tye Lund - Supervisor

VACANT - Associate Supervisor

PCCD – NRCS Office Staff

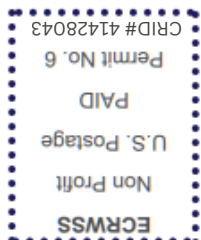
Trish Smith - PCCD Administrator
Katie Lund - PCCD Fiscal Manager
Loyd Bantz - District Technician
Reba Ahlgren - NRCS District Conservationist
Mike Lucas - NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist
Allison Martin - MWC Coordinator
Molly Masters - MRCDC Coordinator
Brent Smith - CEMIST Program Manager
Skylar Stenson - Conservation Technician
Lesley Rolls - Water Conservation Program Manager

If you are interested in joining the PCCD Board, have rental/sale or 310 permit questions, please reach out to the CD:
petroleumcd@macdnet.org, 406-429-6646 ext 104

For more up to date information on events and meetings please check out the District's:

Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/Petcocd55> OR Website @ PetroleumCD.org

Postal Patron



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