

NDSU Extension - Ward County

County Narrative for April, May, June 2020

Extension Agents Holly Arnold, Ellen Bjelland, Paige Brummund, Emily Goff, and Trisha Jessen

New to Our Team

Welcome to **Kitty Torkelson**, our new Horticulture Assistant! She started on May 1st. Kitty has been a Master Gardener since 1998 and is excited to share her knowledge and experience. She replaces **Ken Eraas**, who retired in 2019.

We also welcome **Aspen Lenning**, our summer Extension Intern. **Aspen** attends Dickinson State University, where she is studying agriculture. During her time with us, **Aspen** will participate in all programming areas with the agents.

Horticulture

Though it was a slow start to the gardening season, **Kitty** still received gardening questions and has been making home visits to diagnose horticulture problems. She is also busy writing articles for the Minot Daily News to share her knowledge and experience with the community.

Additionally, many of the gardening workshops usually held in April and May were cancelled due to COVID-19.

The Master Gardeners, along with **Kitty**, have been working on a garden plot at the North Central Research Extension Center called the Hunger Free Garden. The purpose of the garden is to grow produce for area food pantries. This garden is also serving as a plot for a weed control study. If you get a chance, please visit the garden.

The Master Gardeners will be setting up the "Let's Talk Plants" booth at the Minot Farmers Market in the Trinity Parking lot. The Master Gardener Pollinator Garden is, once again, part of the Minot Symphony Orchestra Secret Garden Tour, to be

held August 12th. Master Gardeners will be available to answer any gardening questions or concerns at either event.

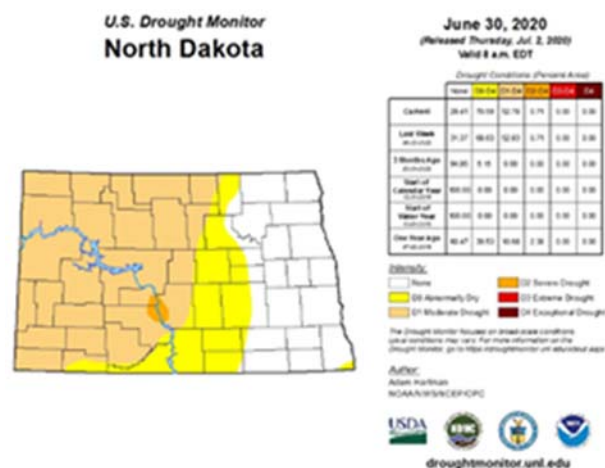
Field Visits and Surveys

Paige Brummund collaborated with producers across the county to conduct a number of field surveys during the growing season. Some of the data collected includes wheat midge, wheat establishment, variety sample collection, soil quality, and multiple crop disease and pest data.

Paige, also works with livestock producers on forage sampling, grazing readiness and utilization, compost management, water quality, annual forage production and silage production.

Drought Concerns and Assistance

Paige assisted with drought survey data collection, focusing on drought remediation education for livestock and crop producers. Ward County is experiencing its fourth consecutive year of spring drought conditions. The excessive rain in September of 2019 created a situation where the subsoil was saturated resulting in difficult spring seeding conditions, yet the top soil was dry and seeded crops were showing signs of drought.



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The absence of May moisture set back many seeded crops and has reduced the forage availability. Rangelands rely on early spring moisture to produce high yields and grass production is below average across the county. Water quality concerns are also becoming more widespread as summer temperatures rise. NDSU Extension resources are shared with producers to manage risks and help with planning for the future.

Extension ANR Programs Convert Quickly to Virtual Platforms

COVID-19 restricted face-to-face meeting opportunities. **Paige** had to modify many of the previously planned in-person conferences and meetings to a virtual format using Zoom video conferencing. **Paige** taught and co-hosted virtual events, such as Horse Judging Certification, Livestock Manure Management Program,



Livestock Immunity and Biosecurity, Freeze Branding Workshop, Livestock Grazing and Pasture

Management, and Livestock Parasite Management, Cover Crops on Prevented Plant Acres, and weekly 4-H Livestock Showmanship seminars.

Paige also provided education on how to legally and safely obtain meat from local producers, as the food supply chain experienced disruptions due to COVID-19.

In addition, **Paige** served on numerous local, state, and national committees that were involved in converting face-to-face conferences, programs, and meetings to modified virtual versions of the events.

Clean, Disinfect and Sanitize – A Response to COVID-19

Ellen Bjelland prepared and delivered a short presentation on cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing for the televised Minot Area Joint Information Center on April 14th. This information was also distributed via social media and in the Minot Daily News.

Feeding Families in Need – A Response to COVID-19

In cooperation with the Great Plains Food Bank, 1400 food baskets were distributed to families of all incomes through the Farmers to Families program. NDSU Extension provided copies of “A Pocket Guide to Preparing Fruits and Vegetables” for recipients. This same publication will be distributed at area Farmer’s Markets this summer.

Also, in response to COVID-19, **Trisha Jessen** compiled an online directory of programs in Ward County to help feed families. It includes the location, hours, and details of where to pick up food from schools, food pantries, soup kitchens, and more. The resource directory also included information for other helpful programs such as Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits.

Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

Ellen and **Trisha** continue to teach their yearlong diabetes prevention class. Classes have transitioned from weekly to monthly sessions. Due to COVID-19, classes moved online in

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March. Beginning in July, they will transition back to in-person sessions, following social distancing guidelines.

Adult Nutrition Education Using Zoom

Nutrition education sessions continued to be offered, even during COVID-19. **Trisha** offered sessions using Zoom to adult participants at organizations, such as Second Story, Independence, and most recently Harmony Center. Sessions focused on ways to feed families nutritious food while on a tight budget. Participants were able to interact, offering suggestions and asking questions.

On the Move to Strong Bodies for 4th Graders

Trisha taught a 5-lesson Strong Bodies series to 4th grade classrooms. This curriculum provides hands-on activities to increase knowledge and change behavior related to nutrition and fitness topics, with an emphasis on building strong bones and muscles through healthful food choices and physical activity. Families receive weekly newsletters and each week students track one of the following: calcium, protein, water, fruit/vegetable intake, and physical activity. Due to COVID-19, the last few sessions were recorded and sent to the teachers. The teacher added the assignment to the students' weekly homework; one session per week.

On the Move to Better Health

After in-person classes were cancelled at area schools, **Ellen** offered to finish the sessions she had started in Sawyer, Berthold, and Surrey schools via Zoom. Two schools took her up on the offer and she recorded the sessions and shared with the teachers.

Virtual Kids Cooking School



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, **Ellen, Trisha, and Aspen** decided to pursue the idea of a virtual kids cooking school. **Ellen** shared this idea across the state and ended up partnering with Dickey and Cass counties to produce a series of YouTube videos and lesson materials. The series will begin July 7th with 30 young people participating. We will let you know how it went in the next quarterly narrative!

Parent Education

COVID-19 has presented some challenges for Parent & Family Resource Center programming. Since mid-March, **Holly Arnold** has been working from home per NDSU Extension guidance. She has offered classes and support groups via Zoom. One series/three sessions of "Active Parenting the First Five Years" was held with five parents attending. "Active Parenting of Teens" was also held via Zoom (1 series/6 sessions/19 parents).

Three series/nine sessions of "Let's Talk Parenting" (a caregiver support group) was also offered via Zoom. Fifteen people participated.

The face-to-face parent education at the Ward County Jail has been temporarily postponed. Between January 16 and March 12, 2020 there were seven 2-hour "Turning Points" sessions and 42 mothers participated. "Turning Points" is a curriculum developed for incarcerated parents.

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The twice weekly programming at a residential treatment center has also been postponed, for now.

The remaining four sessions of "Signing with Your Young Child" was provided via Zoom and completed in May. The class was one series/eight classes and had 20 participants.

All numbers are unduplicated-each participant counted once.

4-H Youth Development

Along with the rest of the office, **Emily Goff** utilized online platforms, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to communicate with other office staff, agents, and 4-H families.

Emily was presented with the unique opportunity to have a "Virtual Exchange" with Tennessee. A Tennessee 4-H Agent contacted **Emily** to collaborate. They set up several Zoom calls with youth from different locations in Tennessee and Ward County, North Dakota.

Emily has been assisting several 4-H clubs with their meetings. Using Zoom, she was able to provide a way for the clubs to still remain connected with each other during COVID-19.

Emily has also been teaching Distracted Teen Driving classes to 66 youth in Mandan and Beach using Zoom. She is one of the few certified instructors in the western part of the state.

The announcement of the North Dakota State Fair being cancelled and ongoing social distancing rules, prompted many calls between the Ward County 4-H Council Executive Committee and NDSU Extension Ward County staff to develop a plan for Achievement Days. The

team has put together a plan that will allow the 4-H youth to enjoy the majority of activities they normally would during Achievement days, while incorporating social distancing protocols. It has been a lot of thinking, planning, and work to make this happen and it is safe to say, the gang is ready for Achievement Days to come to fruition.

Other

With Ward County staff working both at home and in the office (NDSU still encourages working from home where possible), weekly staff meetings have been held via Zoom for the last three months. The purpose of these meetings is to stay connected and share programming.