

Making a Difference by Responding to the Needs of Kansans During the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic March 16 - May 26, 2020

Extension professionals are known for their flexibility and resilience. These skills were tested over the past few months with the immediate and unprecedented changes precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. With guidance and support from K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) administrators, state and local extension professionals responded in timely, relevant, and innovative ways to address the needs of Kansans throughout the state.

K-State Research and Extensions' Covid-19 response was guided by the Kansas Citizen Response Survey. The survey was developed and conducted primarily via social media and helped identify and prioritize the needs of our citizens and guide our system-wide response. The survey was conducted from April 2, 2020 to April 20, 2020 and resulted in 1,341 unique responses. The results were shared broadly across the KSRE system. KSRE professionals collaborated with one another and with other state and community partners to develop resources, deliver information, and offer training and virtual learning opportunities across Kansas.

The situation required everyone to share their skills in unique, innovative ways that a few months ago may not have been envisioned. Below is a sampling of programs provided by K-State Research and Extension faculty and staff.

Global Food Systems

Department of Agricultural Economics- A series of webinars began in late March and continued through late May to keep producers and industry stakeholders informed as marketing chains were disrupted, packing plants were closing, and in general the agriculture economy experienced unprecedented volatility. Nearly 2,500 viewers participated in at least one webinar. The number of webinar recorded viewings totaled 15,232. Topics included:

- Macroeconomy
- Grain Markets
- Women in Agriculture
- Livestock Markets
- SBA Payment Protection Program
- CARES Act / Agriculture Update
- Kansas Land Values
- More Livestock Markets
- More Grain Markets
- 2019/2020 Kansas Farm Income
- Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

In addition, 32 short videos were recorded and posted to the AgManager.info website during the same time frame in direct response to the COVID-19 situation and its impact on agriculture. To date, these 32 videos have had collective viewings of 8,569.

Department of Animal Science

Beef Cattle Response

- The current COVI-19 situation has impacted all aspects of the beef cattle industry (stocker, growing/backgrounder, cow-calf, seedstock and feedlots). The reported reduction in cattle slaughter within the packing industry has reduced available space which has forced many cattle producers to retain calves

on their operations that would have been marketed and sent to Kansas feed yards or shipped directly. Thus, areas of assistance include:

- Webinar “Troubleshooting Uncertain Times in the Beef Industry” was held May 14th. 113 direct attendees and 1408 Facebook views
- Discussing modification of feeding and management protocols with feed yard and growing/backgrounding operations, including the use of maintenance rations, limit-feeding, beta-agonist use and direct marketing of finished cattle through state/local slaughter facilities.
- Numerous producers assisted with ration formulation due to recent and unexpected shifts in commodity availability and price. This is especially true for DDGS (corn ethanol by-product) which has become either unavailable or too high priced to utilize in beef rations. Alfalfa is another ingredient that may shift upward in price as its use increases with decreased DDGS.
- With reductions in marketing feedlot cattle, extension specialists discussed how to lower cost of grain to minimize feed cost.
- Working with veterinarians to help advise producers who are planning on retaining and holding many classes of animals until the market hopefully turns around. AgManager and Beef Basis are two resources that help with the financial decisions that coincide with those decisions.
- Discussing with producers breeding programs that may maximize future revenue in the current market situation.

Swine Response:

- Continual connection and discussions with the Kansas Pork Association CEO about the swine producer situation. Together with Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Kansas Department of Agriculture we have been working on alternative longer-term housing for pigs, management and discussion on large scale euthanasia plans if it comes to this due to no locations to sell pigs.
- Animal science extension specialists responded to numerous questions and pushed out information to Kansas and other producers around the US. In addition, animal science industry specialists work closely with extension specialists.
- Developed factsheet “Slowing down growth performance of market pigs” that is being used by producers, nutritionists and consultants across the US.

Other Response Areas:

- Dairy producer assistance in diet formulation, information sharing and general management considerations during this economic hardship time.
- Numerous press releases and information sharing on food science areas of processing, storage, food safety as changes in consumer patterns occurred during COVID19.
- Sheep, Goat, Poultry consultations with producers on feeding and management practices to reduce input costs.

Department of Agronomy-

Virtual Wheat Field Day - In a twist on the typical wheat field day that Kansas farmers often attend, K-State Research and Extension will host a two-part wheat field day live on YouTube to update growers and others on the most recent crop advances and challenges while keeping producers safe from COVID-19. The format will allow for questions from the audience.

Extension Plant Pathology- Even with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic Kansas growers are still farming and demand for horticulture information and support has skyrocketed. K-State Extension Plant Pathology remains active supporting Kansas growers by contributing to the recent Agronomy/Industry Virtual Wheat Tour and the Horticulture Garden Hour programs.

Timely information on wheat disease pressure, variety selection and fungicide options is being released through eAgronomy updates and through the K-State Crop Disease Facebook page. Current information for landscape professionals is released through the K-State Turf and Ornamental blog.

The K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic lab continues to provide assistance to the agriculture and horticulture industries as well as Kansas homeowners. Commercial horticulture producers (greenhouse/high tunnels/garden centers) are under great pressure to remain productive and serve increased local demand. The

diagnostic lab has provided identification and management information on challenging diseases such as bacterial canker, Botrytis blight, and Verticillium wilt.

Horticulture Department and Horticulture Program Focus Team (PFT)

The **K-State Garden Hour** is a webinar series hosted by the Horticulture Program Focus Team. Registration has exceeded capacity both weeks (711 for Native Plants, and 999 for tomatoes) and this week the 500-seat Zoom meeting license limit was reached. Many participants are first-time KSRE stakeholders.

The team from the **Center for Rural Enterprise Engagement** has curated and created a series of resources, including a webinar, to help small- and medium-sized businesses set up e-commerce through their series **“Touchless Transactions.”** [https://rurallengement.org/touchlesstransactions/](https://rurallengagement.org/touchlesstransactions/)

Local Foods Transdisciplinary Team (TDT)

- A multi-disciplinary team featuring KSRE experts across the system created a short-term webisode series called **“Gardening 9-1-1” or #PandemicHomesteading**. The project is aimed at stakeholders who need to garden out of necessity, rather than choice. Videos feature a stakeholder with questions about how to garden with the resources on hand along with responses from a KSRE expert which does 4 things: 1) showcases how we interact with stakeholders to solve problems, 2) features our existing Extension resources, 3) addresses a current need, and 4) allows agents from several ways (Hort, FCS, Ag, etc.) to collaborate in ways they haven’t done in the past.
- Online trainings were offered to produce growers and farmers market vendors on topics including COVID, produce safety and related topics.

Youth Farm Safety Training (Hazardous Occupation Training in Agriculture - HOSTA)- adapted the program to allow for students to study and test at home as well as take the driving test with a local farmer. County/district agents facilitated the training and testing.

The Kansas AgrAbility Project - Staff utilized the Kansas Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) to assist a farmer in communicating with his seed buyers and other suppliers using an iPad. TAP provides specialized devices, including telephones to those that have trouble hearing, seeing, speaking remembering, walking, or holding a telephone. Staff also used satellite images to conduct an initial virtual walk through of a farmer's farmstead.

Great Bend Farm, Ranch and Hemp Expo Goes Virtual – Cottonwood and Walnut Creek District extension agents provided leadership to help farm show organizers plan for a virtual farm show. Participants were able to go online to view exhibits and listen to live and recorded presentations.

Sedgwick County- The Sedgwick County Horticulture Agent held “Victory Garden 101”, a series of eight classes for beginning vegetable gardeners offered both live and as recordings that had 934 registered participants from across the state

Cowley County- Extension partnered with local beef producers and the local community foundation to deliver over 8,000 pounds of Kansas beef to local food pantries.

Cherokee County- Community Food Fight- The local KSRE unit organized and conducted a county-wide competitive community food drive from May 4 – May 15th. This effort resulted in 10,280 pounds of food being collected and distributed to 8 food pantries in the county to help support the increased demand being seen at the pantries. The local Farmers Cooperative Association acknowledging the effort and need contributed an additional 2000 pounds of food.

Barber County - Local agents were key in getting locally produced and processed beef into the school lunch programs in the county. In addition, two community gardens were planted that should yield 2000+ pounds of free produce to the whole community – while observing best practices for COVID-19.

Reno County – The Reno County Horticulture Agent developed operational guidelines for their farmer's markets to keep both vendors and customers safe and still have access to fresh produce.

Hamilton County – Extension partnered with the Kansas Food Bank and other community organizations to get more resources for their local food pantry to provide more frequent and larger distributions. In addition, a breakfast/lunch program at six different locations was implemented.

Shawnee County – The local extension office coordinated free seeds and seedling distributions at community gardens and emergency organizations in Shawnee County.

Southwind District – Extension staff completed a container garden project for a low-income housing community in Chanute – without face-to-face interaction.

Harvey County – Harvey County Horticulture Agent produced short videos about starting a garden, proper irrigation, controlling bagworms and planting onions and posted on their FB page.

Wyandotte County – Extension Master Gardeners adapted their in-person annual plant sale to an online sale via the payment processing service Square, which allowed staff and volunteers to build a custom website. Orders were fulfilled with no face-to-face customer contact for 120 customers. The annual plant sale is a major fundraiser that supports horticulture education programming throughout the year.

Golden Prairie District – the current situation/challenge provided an opportunity to develop video programs about land stewardship for local producers.

Health

Family Resource Management Program Focus Team (PFT) responded by developing a social media educational effort “**Financially Speaking**” and a series of publications “**When Your Income Drops**” which provides timely tips and resources to address many of the current financial issues people are facing such as loss of income, health insurance, loan payment, job loss, economic impact payments and taxes, financial stress and much more.

Family and Child Development Program Focus Team (PFT)

- Strong families, healthy development and resilience are timely topics given the stress on relationships during the COVID-19 challenge. In response, the team launched the weekly Resilient Relationships Series that is comprised of practical content and activities that strengthen families and support resilience. Resilient Relationships series installments were supplemented with electronic resources, were re-purposed as weekly news columns and were delivered with each school-based meal that Morton county families received.
- **Suddenly in Charge-** Family and Child Development agents and specialists quickly identified and responded to the need for safe and Healthy childcare arising from Covid-19. Many teens and tweens were immediately pressed into roles of providing care for younger children while adults worked at home or continued to go to work. Suddenly in Charge targeted helping older children learn the best ways to handle what may have been new roles in taking care of younger children, whether in their own homes or those of a neighbor or friend. The team published a total of 14 fact sheets in both English and Spanish languages, along with creating Spanish and English websites. The Kansas Department of Education has also distributed the Suddenly in Charge materials to all school districts in Kansas.
- **Managing Family Stress and talking about Covid-19-** Extension specialists collaborated with the University of Maryland School of Public Health to co-brand and distribute fact sheets through the KSRE bookstore and the Child and Family Development PFT members. These included information about [managing family stress](#) during Covid-19, [talking with young children about it](#), [talking with school age children about it](#), and [talking with teens about it](#).

Nutrition, Food Safety and Health Program Focus Team (PFT)

- The Kansas Citizen's Response Survey showed a renewed interest in cooking and a need for basic cooking guides. This team is responding by providing a series entitled Cooking Basics.
- Food safety and sanitation webinars were conducted to provide local agents and community partners information and guidance on how to prepare for the re-opening of offices and retail businesses. This was a partnership with the Kansas Department of Agriculture and KSRE.
- A three-part training series was provided to food and food preservation judges. At most, we had 182 participants.

Adult Development and Aging Program Focus Team (PFT)

Developed social media infographics for local agents to share on staying connected with family and friends, especially older adults that live alone. Several agents conducted live social media events to support needs identified in the response survey.

Stress and Resilience Transdisciplinary Team (TDT)

- Providing Tuesday Health and Wellness Tidbits for KSRE faculty and staff through the Tuesday Letter. Tidbit topics included: self-care, connecting with others while social distancing, tele-health and utilizing the EAP (Employee Assistance Program), mindfulness, humor, managing family relationships/dynamics, coping strategies, etc.
- Mindful Monday Mornings was developed to provide mindfulness strategies for all audiences.
- At the request of a bank vice president in south central Kansas (with several branch locations), we provided a training/discussion for loan officers who have a large loan portfolio of ag producers (and many are producers themselves). The training/discussion provided information on recognizing the symptoms of stress, managing stress every day, coping strategies and assisting/addressing those in distress.

Meadowlark District – created a new newsletter “Simply Tasteful Food Ideas and Food Preservation.

Marshall County – An extension agent utilized zoom to discuss options with an individual who had recently lost health insurance.

Southwind and Wildcat Districts- Agents developed and offered a virtual training for individuals that were new to Medicare.

Community Vitality

Succession Transdisciplinary Team – Agents and Specialists pulled together contingency planning resources for communities which included Code Red (farm and ranch operations), Our Valuable Records, and Business Contingency Plan.

The Kansas PRIDE Program assisted communities with the following projects:

- **Direct Community Surveys:** Surveys of Kansas PRIDE communities to determine any unique needs they might have during the COVID-19 pandemic; worked to find resources to address the needs.
- **Emergency COVID Resources** – First day of the K-State Research and Extension quarantine the Kansas PRIDE Program Co-ordinators gathered information from Extension and the CDC, Small Business Administration, KansasWorks (displace workers), Transitioning to Work from Home, Being at Home with Kids, and Maintaining Mental Health and Wellness.
- **Kansas PRIDE Program Introduction:** Presented the Kansas PRIDE program overview to multiple communities via Zoom with interested parties attending individually.
- **Continuing to Meet and Share Remotely:** Recorded session for communities on YouTube on using Facebook groups and pages, online discussion forums, and online storage drives like Google Drive, OneDrive, and DropBox.
- **How-Tos: Working from Home Webinar:** Webinar for communities on working from home and keeping in contact with others during social distancing.

- **Friday Facebook Live Sessions:** Kansas PRIDE Program overview; Volunteer Recruitment and Retention; How to use Zoom and Facebook to stay engaged with community members or to hold meetings; Community Capital Framework – Political Capital overview.

First Friday E-Calls provide information to local and state economic development leaders, chamber directors, community foundations, business owners, Kansas PRIDE leaders and local coalition members. Topics included:

- The Dangers of Zoom Bombing
- Emergency Programs to Help Small Businesses and Displaced Employees during COVID-19 (Secretary Toland of Commerce, Secretary of Labor Delia Garcia, and Director of Unemployment related relevant information for community members).
- LOCAL Responses to COVID-19 (Community Foundations, Beloit Visitors Bureau, K-State Research and Extension on Food and Public Safety in reopening Kansas).
- Creating a Quality Online Presence for Sales in a Hurry (Center for Rural Enterprise Engagement).

Crowdfunding – When Traditional Fundraising is Limited: webinar (Facebook Live and YouTube) with KSU Family Studies and Human Services and K-State Research and Extension Community Vitality/Kansas PRIDE. Demonstrated several online sources for community fundraising during times of social distancing.

Huck Boyd Institute for Rural Development - developed a statewide news release with advice for businesses on re-opening and wrote and distributed several Kansas Profiles featuring positive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Northwest KS- Extension provided leadership to rally the NW Economic Development and Community Foundations to share community assistance response to COVID-19, Ellsworth and their grocery click lists, Beloit and the gift cards, Norton and the bingo cards, etc. These efforts were highlighted on the First Friday E-Calls.

Wild West District – created COVID-19 newsletters with extension resources.

Southwind District – the pandemic pushed staff into embracing online teaching methods and reaching new audiences. We have expanded the use of extension information in our district.

Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

Kansas 4-H State Office

- Transitioned youth learning events to virtual learning platforms: Discovery Days at the end of May attracting over 300 high school youth to explore K-State and grow college readiness skills; Insect Spectacular and Virtual Camping scheduled in June.
- Coordinated four task forces of KSRE agents to address
 - professional development needs of programming in a virtual environment
 - Ongoing club and county level learning opportunities in a non-face to face context
 - Summer showcase opportunities related to state level contest, workshops, and county fairs
 - Virtual 4-H Camp options include “find at home” and backyard self-directed activities, including a virtual campfire and singalong activities.
- Intentionally provided discussion and decision-making resources in partnership with the Kansas Fairs and Festivals Association regarding the process of deciding about alternative showcase options for county fairs this summer.

Coffey County- Extension agents and 4-H youth developed an appreciation video thanking all the essential workers and businesses in the county.

Pratt County – Extension agents partnered with the Pratt County 4-H Foundation to provide 4-H Take Home project kits for 4-H families.

Edwards County – Extension agents produced four videos on chick embryology for elementary students in their county.

Twin Creeks District – 4-H members in Norton, Decatur, Sheridan and Graham counties recorded their county club days presentations and posted to a private YouTube channel for judging.

McPherson County – For eight weeks, 4-H Youth Development Agents in McPherson and Central Kansas District offered Virtual 4-H to serve local youth. Their posts have been shared across the U.S. and they presented 40 lessons and 20 projects.

Phillips-Rooks District – Youth in the Animal Demonstration Extravaganza shared their projects live on Zoom with youth from five counties in Kansas and Nebraska.

Lyon County – Created the “4-H 30 for 30 challenge” during the first days of the pandemic. The challenge invited youth to report and document on social media 30 minutes of 4-H learning or service for 30 days straight! 100 youth were able to document over 100,000 minutes of learning and service.

Water

Biological & Agricultural Engineering – Extension specialists conducted webinars to dairy producers on Dairy Heat Stress, Low Profile Cross Ventilated Dairy Housing System, Designing Premix Facilities. In addition, extension was involved in a multistate initiative with Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri on Innovative Approaches to Ephemeral Gully Erosion Control on agricultural fields.

Water Quality Impacts of Livestock Operations and Grazing Management - Extension agents participated in a five-session virtual training series on key topics related to livestock operations and how they impact water quality. Upon completion, the agents planned to use the online training resources in their own online meetings, newsletters, and radio programs. Upon strong demand the planning team is now developing a June training module on water quality issues in farm ponds.