

# Sunflower Extension District #6

## March 2026

Go to [www.sunflower.ksu.edu](http://www.sunflower.ksu.edu) for more details on these programs.

### Inside Your Newsletter...

Garden Tip: Winter Months are a Good Time to Force Paperwhite Blooms ..... Horticulture Production page

Managing Body Condition for the Caving Season, Finances and the Farm course Registration Open..... Ag & Natural Resources page

New Dietary Guidelines..... Family & Consumer page



March 2026  
Newsletter



[www.sunflower.ksu.edu](http://www.sunflower.ksu.edu)

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(785) 852-4285  
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St. Francis, KS 67756  
(785) 332-3171

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## Bankers Award Winners of the District



**Sherman County Soil Conservation Award:**  
Shay Bar S Ranch, Inc



**Sherman County Windbreak Award:**  
Jeff and Anita Henderson



**Wallace County Windbreak Award:**  
Bryan and Lois Pearce



**Wallace County Soil Conservation Award:**  
Gene Walker



**Cheyenne County Windbreak Award:**  
Brian and Danielle Holzwarth



### Garden Tip: Winter months are a good time to force paperwhite blooms

Gardeners can get a head start on growing delicate-looking flower indoors



It may sound a bit aggressive, but forcing paperwhite flowers to bloom during the winter months is actually a gentle nudge to grow roots, shoots and flowering stems indoors. Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini said paperwhites are easy to force into bloom. In colder climates, paperwhite bulbs can be grown indoors for flowers during the winter months. Then, she said, the delicate-looking flower can be transplanted outdoors when temperatures warm. To force paperwhites indoors, “begin with healthy bulbs from a reputable source,” Domenghini said. “Then, store those bulbs in a cool, dry location until planting.” While still indoors, plant the bulbs in a clear, shallow dish – about three inches deep, without drainage holes, Domenghini said. Add a one-inch layer of washed gravel or decorative stones to the base. “Place the bulbs on top of the rocks and use additional gravel or stones to hold them in place,” Domenghini said. “The tops of the bulbs should remain visible. Fill the container with enough water to keep the base of the bulbs wet.” Domenghini said gardeners should keep the container in a cool, dark location initially to promote root growth. Then, move it to a south-facing window until the bulbs begin to bloom. Keep flowers in a cool location away from direct sunlight to prolong the bloom period. “Paperwhites can be expected to bloom within eight weeks of planting,” she said. Additional tips for forcing paperwhites, according to Domenghini:

- Maintain the water level at the base of the bulbs throughout the growing period.
- Paperwhites can be forced in a moist, soilless mix, as well. Use a container with drainage holes and plant the bulbs so the top third is visible.
- Paperwhite bulbs should be placed within one-inch of each other in the container.

The linear leaves of paperwhites often fall over. They can be propped up with decorative supports, or grown in a taller, glass container to hold them upright.

### Have a Gardening or Lawn Care Question?

We are happy to answer your gardening and landscape questions, stop by the office or give us a call (785-332-3171). You can also find answers and resources for the most common questions at the K-State Horticulture Information Center at: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/>

To best help with your plant questions please submit multiple pictures for accurate diagnosis to [rmelcher@ksu.edu](mailto:rmelcher@ksu.edu).

For pest or disease diagnosis:

1. One picture of the entire plant or garden area
2. One picture of a branch or affected area
3. One up close, in focus picture of any symptoms of concern (leaf spots, holes, discoloration, etc.)

For plant identification:

1. One picture of the entire plant or garden area
2. One picture of leaves or branches
3. One picture of any flowers, flower buds, or seeds visible



## Managing Body Condition For The Calving Season

Table 1. Visual method for evaluating body condition in cattle

	BCS	Physical Attribute					
		Spine	Ribs	Hooks/Pins	Tailhead	Brisket	Muscling
Thin	1	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
	2	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None/atrophy
Borderline	3	Visible	Visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	None
	4	Slightly visible	Foreribs visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
Optimum Condition	5	Not visible	Not visible	Visible	No fat	No fat	Full
	6	Not visible	Not visible	Visible	Some fat	Some fat	Full
Over-Conditioned	7	Not visible	Not visible	Slightly visible	Some fat	Fat	Full
	8	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Abundant fat	Abundant fat	Full
	9	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Extremely fat	Extremely fat	Full

Adapted from Herd and Spratt, 1986; BCS = body condition score

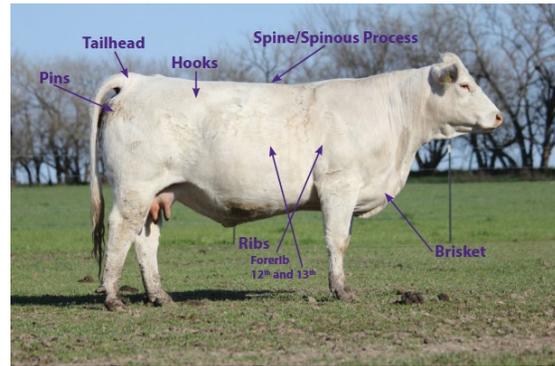


Figure 1. Key places on a live beef animal evaluated to determine body condition.

## K-State Beef Cattle Experts Discuss How To Manage Body Condition Scores For Outliers in the Herd

It's a question that many cattle producers often ponder: Is it more costly to have fat or thin cows in the herd, and how should they manage the problem? The consensus? The team agreed that thin cows are more costly due to potential calving difficulties and a longer infertility window between calving cycles, but "it depends on where we are in the production cycle," K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said. "If we are late in pregnancy, we are headed into calving because I would rather cows be a little thin," he said. Larson said thin cows in the herd produce less colostrum, which can affect the calf. The specialists note that if low body-conditioning scores are uncommon in the herd and there are cows with scores of 3 or 4, producers should bring them in for a closer look. The possibility of a health issue in thin cows is more likely than in fat cows. The experts noted that if producers are having difficulty with thin cows, it will take approximately 30-60 days to see a change, assuming a daily gain of two pounds. "You're going to take a least 30 to 60 days to effectively change them," said Jason Warner, an associate professor of animal sciences, and extension beef specialist. "Can I get a cow to gain two pounds a day? Yes, but that does take a lot of energy to be able to do that." The K-State experts encourage producers to spend extra time checking on their thin cows to ensure there are no health concerns causing the issue. Being aware of the nutritional value of rations will also help when managing thin cows.

## K-State Opens Registration For Finances and the Farm Online Course That Will Aid Producers in Many Areas of Financial Management

Kansas State University's Department of Agricultural Economics has announced plan to offer a popular online course that helps producers develop strong financial skills and make informed decisions that impact the farmer's bottom line. K-State Extension farm economist Robin Reid said the course, Finances and the Farm, has been taught since 2021, but has recently been updated "to provide a more interactive learning experience for participants." "The need to manage farm financials may be greater than ever before because of historically high input costs and lower commodity prices, creating uncertain profitability margins," Reid said. "The Finances and the Farm online class provides education for managing financial risk of the farm business; focusing on good record keeping as the foundation, using those records to develop financial statements, conducting benchmarking and performance analysis on those statements, and then using that information to make managing decisions." the cost is \$100, or \$300 if the participant wishes to receive Farm Service Agency borrower's training financial credit, which is approved for Kansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Coursework will be graded, and a certificate will be provided upon successful completion of the final exam. The course covers seven lessons:

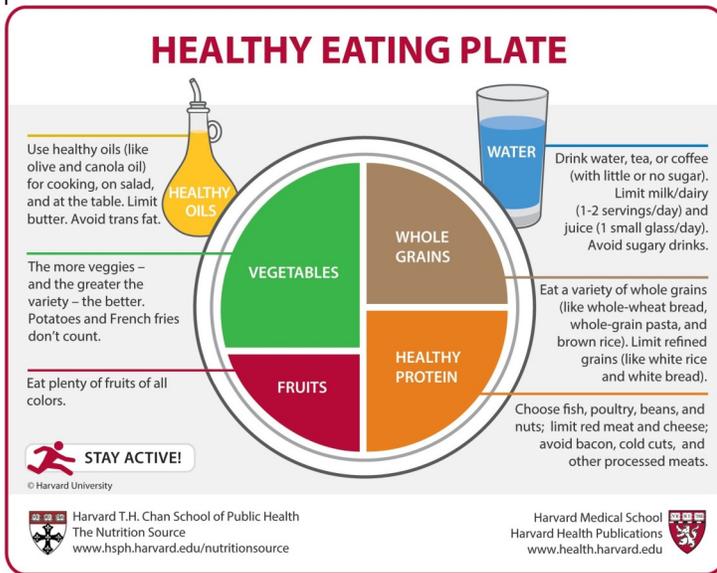
- \* Record keeping
- \* Balance sheet
- \* Income statement
- \* Enterprise budgeting
- \* Cash flow
- \* Managing family living expenses
- \* Goal setting

Reid and K-State farm analyst LaVell Winsor are the primary instructors. They said participants will better understand the structure of a balance sheet, income statement, enterprise budgets and cash flow; and learn financial management techniques for their own operation, among other lessons. Two case studies—one a row crop and beef cattle farm, and the other vegetable, egg and honeybee farm—are designed to help students check their understanding of the material and practice using financial statements. The self-paced course includes short videos, interactive reviews of content, quizzes and working with paper sheets and Excel documents. "This course is designed with the learner in mind, with the convenience of completing this course at their own pace, from their home or office," Winsor said. Participants can take up to six months to complete the materials, though Reid and Winsor urge students to get it done in 2-4 weeks. More information is available by contacting Reid by email, [robinreid@ksu.edu](mailto:robinreid@ksu.edu), or 785-532-0964.



# New Dietary Guidelines

Released: Jan. 26, 2026



In animal sources, we have eggs, poultry and seafood. In plant sources, we have peas, beans and lentils, and a combination of those throughout the day.

When it comes to meat, the emphasis is on minimizing added sugars and refined carbohydrates while enhancing flavor with herbs and spices rather than heavy sauces.

The guidelines also highlight whole dairy foods without added sugars. Dairy has a lot of good nutrients that we need, including vitamins D and A, which are fat-soluble, as well as B vitamins essential for brain and body function.

Even with full-fat dairy and higher protein intake, moderation remains key. The guidelines continue to recommend that no more than 10% of daily calories come from saturated fat, based on a standard 2,000-calorie diet.

New dietary guidelines put spotlight on gut health, protein and home cooking. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans build on familiar advice – eat more fruits and vegetables, choose whole grains and limit highly processed foods – while sharpening the focus on how Americans cook, combine and choose foods for long-term health.

The updated guidelines emphasize gut health, higher-quality protein and cooking skills that support healthier eating at home.

We are seeing many similar things as before. But they’re also pointing out more gut health. They are increasing the amount of protein. The USDA is calling for high-quality, nutrient-dense proteins, and they’re prompting people on different cooking methods.

Those methods – baking, broiling, roasting, stir-frying and grilling – reflect an emphasis for more home cooking, encouraging Americans to rely less on ready-to-eat and restaurant foods and more on meals prepared at home.

If we start decreasing the amount of ready-to-eat foods we eat, or start eating out less, then we need to increase our skills on those cooking methods. We need to pay more attention to what foods we are putting on our plates.

Protein plays a central role in the new recommendations. The guidelines call for prioritizing high-quality, nutrient-dense protein foods at every meal, drawn from both animal and plant sources.

A simple way to understand saturated fats, is to look at how foods behave at room temperature. If it’s solid at room temperature, like butter, it has a high content of saturated fat. If it’s liquid at room temperature, like olive oil, it has more unsaturated fats.

These new guidelines make reading nutrition labels an essential skill, especially for people managing conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes.

Fruits and vegetables remain a cornerstone of the guidelines, with an emphasis on variety and color to maximize vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support gut health. While fresh produce is preferred, frozen, dried or canned options can also work if they contain no added sugars and limited sodium.

Whole grains are another priority, providing fiber and essential nutrients. Consumers should look for grains that retain the bran, germ and endosperm, such as oats, quinoa, brown rice and whole wheat, and carefully read labels to ensure products truly contain whole grains.

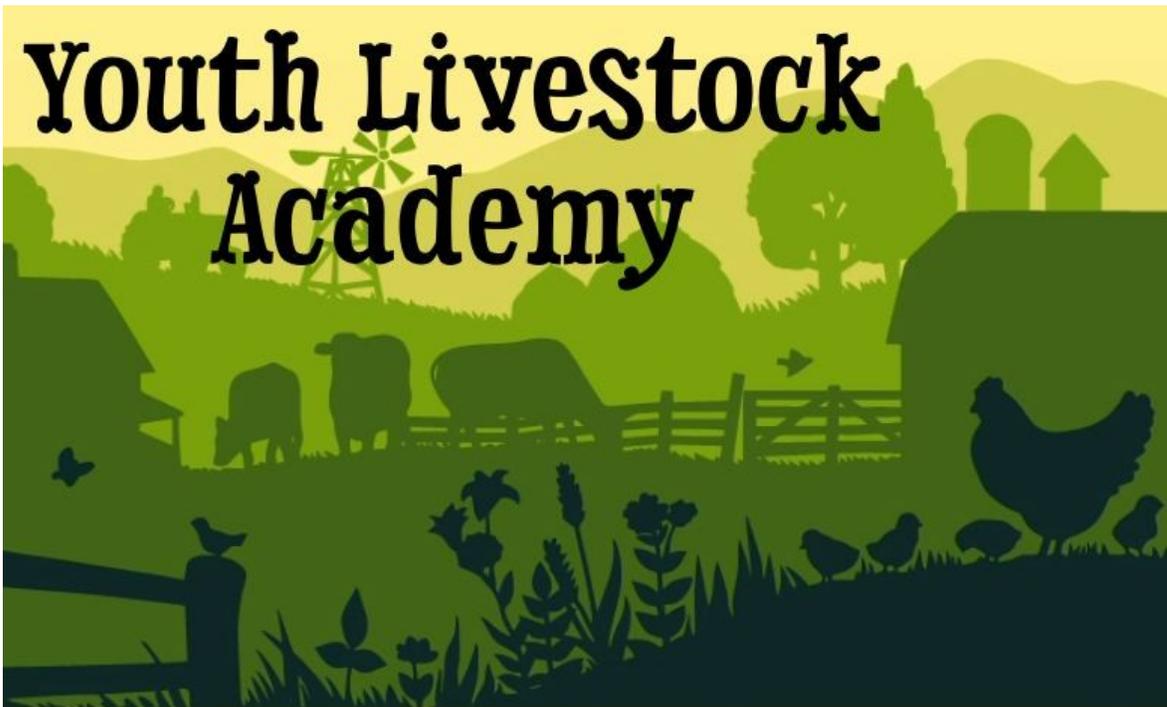
The guidelines also call for reducing highly processed foods, which often provide excess calories from fat and added sugars without enough essential nutrients.

Alcohol intake should be limited and sodium consumption should stay below 2,300 milligrams per day, with lower limits for some individuals.

The dietary guidelines serve as a foundation. They are a base, and then we need to build from there.



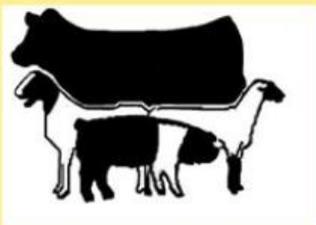
# Youth Livestock Academy



Tuesday, March 10th  
Goodland 4-H Building  
6 p.m. MT/7 p.m. CT  
Dinner provided!

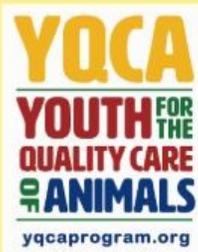
**KANSAS STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Extension  
Sunflower District



Topics to be discussed:

- Livestock Nutrition
- Livestock Management
- Veterinary/Health applications



Call 785-332-3171 to RSVP  
by 3/6/26.

Register and pay for YQCA  
certification at  
[yqcaprogram.org](http://yqcaprogram.org), Cost=\$3



Kansas State University is committed to making services, activities, and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact Rheanna Melcher at 785-332-3171 or [rmelcher@ksu.edu](mailto:rmelcher@ksu.edu).



## NW Judging Event - Super Saturday, March 21

Super Saturday is set for Saturday, March 21, in Hays at Fort Hays State University. Judging Contests at this regional 4-H experience include: Crops, Entomology, Horticulture, Life Skills, Photography, Livestock Skill-a-thon, and Livestock Judging. Most judging contests are in the morning, with livestock judging happening in the afternoon. Additionally, in the afternoon, there are some project workshops for youth to enjoy. You can pick and choose what you participate in. Registration will be announced as the event gets closer. 4-H and FFA members are encouraged to save the date!

## Pen Pal Program is Back this Spring

[Submitted by Mary Kay Munson](#)

4-H International Exchange Programs has announced that their Pen Pal Program will be back April 1 to June 1. 4-H'ers and others 9-18 as of April 1 are eligible to participate. More information on partner countries for the program will be announced as available, but the communications will be in English and pen pals are likely in countries with which 4-H conducts exchange programs. Youth who are pen pals are to commit to writing a weekly message by email or letter during April and May. There will be a \$10 registration fee to participate which will be payable online. We expect registrations will open in the next few weeks to meet their March 20 deadline. Interested persons can find more information when it becomes available on the States' 4-H website States' 4-H International Exchange Programs. In Kansas Mary Kay Munson, Kansas 4-H Exchange Coordinator, at [mkm2@ksu.edu](mailto:mkm2@ksu.edu) will have updates as they are announced.

## County Club Days

### Cheyenne County

St. Francis High School  
5:30 PM CT  
March 9, 2026

### Sherman County

Harvest E-Free Church  
2:00-5:00 PM MT  
March 22, 2026

### Wallace County

Wallace County High School  
4:00-7:00 PM MT  
March 23, 2026



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<http://www.facebook.com/sunflowerwallace>  
<https://www.facebook.com/sunflowerextensiondistrictshermancounty4h/>

**New 4-H Policy Guide:** <https://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/policy-guide/docs/Kansas%204-H%20Policy%20Handbook%202025%20FINAL.pdf>

**Cloverbud Policy Guide:** <https://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/policy-guide/docs/Policy%20Book-%20Cloverbuds%20Kansas%204-H.pdf>



# March 2026

## Sunflower District



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1. <a href="#">4-H Scholarships Due</a>  CN—Beef Weigh-In	2.	3.	4. <b>SH - Foods</b> 3:30 - 5:00 PM MT 4-H Bldg.	5.	6.	7.  Jr. Beef Day
8.  SPRING FORWARD SET YOUR CLOCK AHEAD AN HOUR	9. <b>CN—County Club Days</b>	10. Youth Livestock Academy/YQCA Training—Sherman Co 4-H Building	11. <b>SH-Sunflower Board</b> 4-H Bldg. 5:30-7:30 PM MT	12.	13.	14.
15.	16.	17. 	18.	19.	20. 	21. Super Saturday—Hays
22. <b>SH - 4-H Days &amp; Talent Night</b> Harvest E-Free Church	23. <b>WA—County Club Days</b>	24.	25.	26.	27. <b>District 4-H Club Days</b> 5:30 PM MT Harvest E-Free Church	28.
29.	30. <b>CN—4-H Scholarship Due</b>	31.				



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