



Agriculture



Agriculture plays a significant role in Washington County's economy and landscape. Most farms are family-owned, and the county is known for its strong dairy and livestock production, along with key crops like corn, soybeans, hay, and wheat. Conservation practices such as no-till farming and cover cropping are widely used to promote sustainability and improve water quality. The Extension Agriculture team ensures that feasible, science based practices are accessible to farmers, managers and workers to improve sustainability and profitability of farms.

Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator

Planning for a four-session, 2026 Focus on Forage webinar series for livestock producers, forage growers and agriculture consultants. The goal of the series is to provide timely forage management guidance to improve forage quality and meet farm productivity goals.

- Dairy and livestock producers require high quality forages to meet the animal production goals on their farms. Using a quality forage base reduces feed inputs and leads to improved animal health, milk production and growth.
- There are many opportunities for forage growers to increase forage dry matter production and quality while optimizing input costs, and this series aims to provide research based solutions to these producers.
- The Focus on Forage planning team identified topics and speakers that address the key management challenges and opportunities that exist for forage growers. Ongoing planning will result in four scheduled webinars in February 2026 that will each address a specific topic area related to forage production.

Planning for a monthly Forage and Grazing workgroup meeting where Extension educators and specialists build relationships, provide project updates and share upcoming programs and resources to improve forage and grazing programming across the state.

- Our forage and grazing work group spans several programs, as these areas are related to crop, dairy and livestock production. It was necessary to provide a space where all three programs can collaborate and share updates and challenges related to forage production and grazing across the state.
- Our response is to host a monthly meeting for the forage and grazing work group. An agenda is prepared and posted prior to the meeting and includes a local update, project updates, resource sharing and a discussion of a research update or publication.
- The meeting provides an important touch point for educators working in the forage and grazing space and allows educators to collaborate on similar projects and programs.

Positive Youth Development



4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults. 4-H involves youth in project-based education. Through project learning, youth can explore their interests (“sparks”) and master new skills. 4-H projects are meant to be hands-on to create a memorable learning experience. Since 4-H started in the early 1900s, youth have learned by doing. This hands-on process allows youth to understand not only how to do something but also why they are doing it. Beyond traditional clubs and projects, Washington County 4-H is expanding opportunities for youth to explore career pathways through immersive career exploration, connections with local industries, and innovative STEM programming. These experiences inspire curiosity, build confidence, and prepare young people for success in school, work, and life.

Kelly Dione, 4-H Program Educator

Ron Jakubisin, 4-H Program Educator

A classroom presentation to fourth grade youth in collaboration with West Bend School Counselors. The purpose of this effort is to improve problem-solving strategies, focusing on team building, consensus building, and experiential team-work while providing an opportunity for youth to learn more about 4-H and build relationships with school personnel. (Kelly Dione, Ron Jakubisin)

- Based on a Needs Assessment conducted in January/February 2025, youth are in need of intentional programming to build communication and collaboration skills. There is also a need to build awareness of opportunities 4-H can offer in Career and College readiness as well as STEM programming in the younger grades of elementary and middle school. The school partnership has created a continued trusting relationship in which the school requested 4-H to come to promote our 4-H STEM Day Camps and other 4-H club and project materials.

Planning for a Tri County Science Expedition for 4-H youth in grades 6–13 in collaboration with Washington, Ozaukee, and Fond du Lac Counties and UW–Madison. The goal is to engage participants in hands-on exploration of STEM topics including biotechnology, physics, chemistry, agriculture, geology, and college/career preparation, so that youth build confidence in scientific inquiry and discover potential career pathways in STEM fields. (Kelly Dione)

- Youth have limited access to immersive STEM experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world applications. There is a growing need to provide opportunities that spark interest in science and help youth envision future careers in STEM fields. This planning effort responds to requests from educators and families for more collaborative, hands-on STEM programming. We are developing a multi-day Tri County Science Expedition that will bring together youth from three counties for immersive STEM learning. The planning team is coordinating logistics, designing hands-on activities in biotechnology, physics, chemistry, agriculture, and geology, and engaging UW–Madison faculty and staff to support college and career readiness sessions. The program will include campus visit, lab tours, and interactive workshops to foster scientific curiosity and career exploration. The anticipated outcomes include increased youth confidence in scientific inquiry, greater awareness of STEM career pathways, and stronger connections between youth and higher education institutions. By engaging in hands-on STEM activities and interacting with professionals, youth will gain practical skills and envision future possibilities in science-related fields. This effort supports broader goals of workforce development and educational equity by expanding access to high-quality STEM programming.

Wash. Co. *Tween Connect* event was held Oct 18th. This is the first offering for 5th-7th grade 4-H members that focuses on building a countywide community of 4-H, with opportunities to socialize, team-build and explore their interests in

planning these future events. The high school-aged 4-H leaders are recruited to lead this event. This event is modeled after the high school version called Teen Connect and will be offered again in quarter 3.

Club leaders receive guidance on 4-H program and club standards through meeting requests, inquiry calls and club visits. The Educator can offer resources, tips, lesson plans, etc. that enhance their meeting experience and increase the participation and satisfaction of families and youth members. Guidance includes identifying strengths & growth areas in partnership with each club leader.

Ongoing guidance to Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board (WCLA) of Directors to increase efficiency board structure, assist with board structure changes, and provide guidance in engaging youth members in year one of the newly structured WCLA Board operations.

4-H Communications:

- Weekly Club Leader Update email blast. Features 3 (new) priorities, announcements, and/or resources for 4H volunteers serving as Club and Project Leaders to increase the capacity of volunteers to deliver 4-H club and project activities.
- A monthly newsletter to inform all Wash Co 4-H families/members in the 16 Clubs and 20 Countywide projects the r current 4-H resources, educational events and announcements which offers opportunities to increase skills and engage members in 4-H activities
- Snail Mail utilized in October to reach those identified on 4-HOnline that have not completed their membership and/or volunteer enrollment. Scenarios could include: not clicking 'submit'; to being unaware of email notifications to complete volunteer training video.

Cindy Sarkady
Area Extension Director

Kelly Dione
4-H Program Educator

Karen Girard
Support Staff

Liz Gartman
Regional Crops Educator

Ron Jakubisin
4-H Associate Educator

Cassi Worster
Marketing Specialist

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