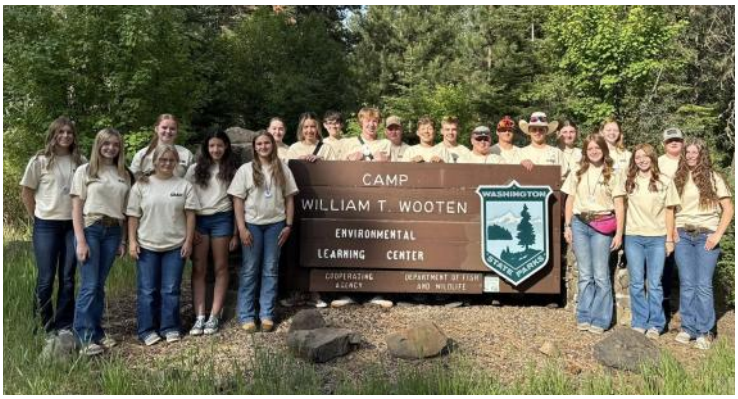
# Newsletter

*August- September 2025*




The 2025 Bi County 4-H Camp Councilors and Counciler in Training

WSU EXTENSION
Garfield County

**Welcome to the WSU Garfield County Extension Newsletter!**

This is an electronic newsletter highlighting events and topics of interest to residents of Garfield County and the surrounding area. This newsletter can also be viewed on our website: https://extension.wsu.edu/Garfield/

Do you have an event or subject you would like added to our newsletter or website? Would you like to be removed from our Extension Newsletter email list?

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# Keeping the River Highway Open

## How PNWA protects Washington growers and the Columbia-Snake River Supply Chain

Wheat Life August/September|2025 By Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

Washington's thriving wheat industry relies heavily on a critical, often unseen, transportation artery: the Columbia-Snake River System. This "river highway" is the backbone of the state's agricultural export system, efficiently moving millions of brushes of wheat from inland grain elevators to ocean ports at Vancouver, Portland, and beyond. The efficiency of barging is unparalleled; a single, four-barge tow on the river can transport the equivalent of 538 trucks, significantly reducing fuel consumption and emissions. This method is so vital that approximately 60% of Washington's wheat crop is shipped via this waterway. In 2023 alone, the Columbia-Snake River System transported an estimated 10.2 Million tons of wheat, accounting for over 56% of all US wheat exports, solidifying its status as America's largest wheat export corridor. This river superhighway is instrumental in maintaining low transportation costs, alleviating highway congestion, and ensuring the timely delivery of Northwest grain to global markets.

### Infrastructure Washington Relies On

The seamless operation of this grain superhighway is contingent upon a sophisticated and meticulously maintained system of river infrastructure. From Lewiston/Clarkston to Portland, eight dams equipped with navigation locks facilitate the movement of vessels, collectively lifting them a remarkable 730 feet in elevation. The channel from the mouth of the Columbia to Portland is dredged to a depth of 43 feet to accommodate large, ocean-going ships, while upriver from Bonneville Dam, it is maintained at a minimum depth of 14 feet to support barge traffic. A network of turning basins, jetties, and locks further ensures safe and efficient navigation.

Maintaining this complex system demands continuous effort. The US Army Corps of Engineers annually undertakes crucial tasks such as dredging sandbars, maintaining levees and dikes, and repairing or replacing lock gates. These efforts are vital to ensuring the river remains a dependable conduit for grain, goods, and general commerce.

The Pacific Northwest Warter ways Association (PNWA), and organization comprising farmers, ports, tow companies, and agricultural cooperatives, plays a pivotal role in securing federal support for these essential projects. Their advocacy efforts are credited with securing significant funding; for instance, Congress allocated approximately $120 million in 2023 for Columbia River maintenance, dredging, and dike repairs. PNWA emphasizes that even minor shoaling or a lock gate outage could necessitate draft restrictions, potentially stranding grain barges and resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenue for farmers. Therefore, sustained investment in locks dredging, and port terminals is paramount to keeping the farm-to-ship supply chain flowing. A testament to this is the rapid influx of private and public investments— hundreds of millions of dollars— into new and upgraded grain terminals at Longview, Kalama, Vancouver, and Portland following the 2010 Columbia River deepening project, underscoring the confidence placed in the river's future.

### Sustaining Salmon, supporting communities

The future of the Columbia-Snake River System is a subject of ongoing public discourse, with environmental and tribal groups advocating for robust salmon protections, including proposals for dam removal or breaching. In contrast, PNWA and many farmers champion a balanced, science-driven approach. They advocate for maintaining the existing dams and barge infrastructure while continuing to invest in effective fish recovery efforts. They emphasize that the river system is crucial for the region's agriculture, navigation, and hydropower, and that any decisions regarding its future must carefully balance both ecological objectives and the economic well-being of rural communities.

Federal agencies and regional partners have already achieved substantial progress in enhancing conditions for salmon. Modern fish ladders, juvenile bypass systems, and extensive habitat restoration initiatives have contributed to historically high survival rates for young salmon migrating downstream. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports indicate that over 90-95% of juvenile Chinook and steelhead now successfully survive passage at each dam. Furthermore, investments in flow management, riparian restoration, and the reconnection of tributary habitat have significantly, improved water quality and overall ecosystem health throughout the basin. These advancements demonstrate that salmon recovery and a functional river highway for commerce are not mutually exclusive but can, indeed, coexist.

PNWA reminds a steadfast advocate for the navigation and agricultural communities in both policy discussions and legal proceedings. Their involvement ensures that the profound economic significance of Columbia-Snake River System is thoroughly considered in all decisions about salmon recovery. In ongoing court cases and regional policy debates, PNWA brings the collective voice of farmers, ports, and waterway users to the forefront, underscoring that any proposal—including dam breaching—must fully account for the far-reaching impacts on rural economies, transportation infrastructure, and the livelihoods that depend on this vital river system.

**Economic benefits for communities**

Beyond its role in navigation, the four lower Snake River dams are a fundamental component of the region's agricultural viability. Collectively, these dams generate nearly 1,000 megawatts of carbon-free power, sufficient to power a city the size of Seattle, and they are crucial for irrigating approximately 400,000 acres in the Columbia Basin. This reliable source of water and power is a cornerstone for regional prosperity. Furthermore, these dams facilitate the barging of about 10% of all US wheat exports. Should this grain be forced to shift to trucks or rail, transportation costs could escalate by an additional $.40 to $.60 per bushel. Such an increase could severely impact profit margins, particularly in years when agricultural returns are already narrow.

Washington's wheat industry contributes nearly $1 billion annually in production value and supports close to 19,000 jobs, encompassing every stage from the field to the port. In central Washington, irrigation within the Columbia Basin alone generates over $3 billion in annual crop value and sustains more than 13,000 farm-related jobs. The Columbia-Snake River System is the engine that makes this economic activity more reliable and affordable, preserving global competitiveness and ensuring the stability of small towns across Eastern Washington. Disrupting this waterway would not only cripple the freight system, but also undermine the entire economic framework that supports the region's farms and way of life.

**Ensuring the River Stays Open**

For over 90 years, PNWA has been a consistent champion for this "river highway" and its diverse users. PNWA effectively unites farmers, barge operators, ports, and even utilities (which depend on hydropower) to foster common ground and advocate for sound policies. Their dedicated work in Congress and with federal agencies helps secure crucial funding for dredging, lock maintenance, and other vital upgrades. In the face of evolving weather patterns and dynamic global markets, the association also actively promotes long-term resilience, from modernizing existing dams to updating the Columbia River Treaty with Canada. Thanks to these sustained efforts, Washington agriculture's essential waterway remains open, efficient, and competitive.

Washinton's wheat farmers can confidently rely on a consistent and efficient route to global markets for their harvests. The Columbia-Snake River System stands as an indispensable corridor, significantly reducing transportation costs, bolstering rural employment, and seamlessly connecting the state's agricultural heartland to international buyers. As long as the barges continue their vital movement and advocates like PNWA persistently champion the system's immense value, keeping this river highway open will remain fundamental to preserving Washington's prominent role as a leading supplier in the global grain trade.

## From Field to Table: How the Grain Chain Works.

Wheat Life August/September|2025 Washington Wheat Foundation, wawheat.org

Across what country, combines are rolling, trucks are moving, and local grain cooperatives are storing up the 2025 crop in their elevators. Grain farmers have several options for marketing their crop, but most commonly, they sell it on the open market. They're paid by the bushel, with deductions — known as dockage — for lower-quality grain. Grain cooperatives provide daily pricing, allowing farmers to decide when to sell throughout the year. Once sold to the co-op, the grain is than marketed to overseas buyers, local mills, or other end users.

In Washington, nearly all of our wheat is exported to countries that can produce enough grain to meet the needs of their people. Because we are on the Pacific Coast, Washington is well positioned to serve Asian nations across the Pacific Ocean. The transportation of wheat from the harvest fields to customers in Asia is a complex, well-coordinated process that involves several modes of transportation and significant infrastructure investments.

Trucks play an indispensable role in the wheat supply chain. After the wheat is harvested, it is often transported by truck from the fields to rail or barge terminals. Trucks serve as the link between the farms and the major transportation routes, ensuring that wheat reaches the right location for further shipping.

The majority of Washington's wheat is barged from local coops in Eastern Washington and Idaho to ports and harbors in the Portland area using Marine Highway 84. This water highway uses the Columbia, Willamette, and Snake rivers to transport grain. This method is the most environmentally friendly, safe, and cost-effective way to transport grain.

Approximately 40% of Washington's wheat is transported by rail. Railroads are another key part of the transportation system, as they move wheat from farms to domestic mills or deep-sea export terminals on the Columbia River.

Once the wheat reaches export terminals, it's tested to meet each country's specific standards before being loaded onto ships for a two-to three-week journey across the ocean. Washington farmers have spent decades building trust with global buyers by consistently growing high-quality wheat. The decisions they make in the field directly impact the grain's quality to meet customer expectations.

## Preparing For and How To Manage Early Heat Waves and Unexpected Weather Patterns

The following information was gleaned from Oregon State University Extension site: (https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/flowers-shrubs-trees/heat-wave-garden-how-identify-prevent-heat-stress-plants)

Plants in your home gardens grow best between the temperatures of 59-86° F. When the environment has prolonged periods of heat above 90°, plant growth slows, the plants close up their pores to prevent further water loss, and they may have leaf curling, rolling, and/or cupping. This is especially true for corn and tomatoes. The degree of these symptoms depends on the maturity of the plant-newly sprouted, transplanted, and shallow rooted plants show more severe symptoms; wind and drought also can cause more damage.

Those plants that wilt during the hottest times of the day and revive when the day cools off are showing signs of heat stress. Peppers, squash, and cucumbers can have blossom and fruit drop related to prolonged high temperatures. Blossom end rot in tomatoes is also more common during these times.

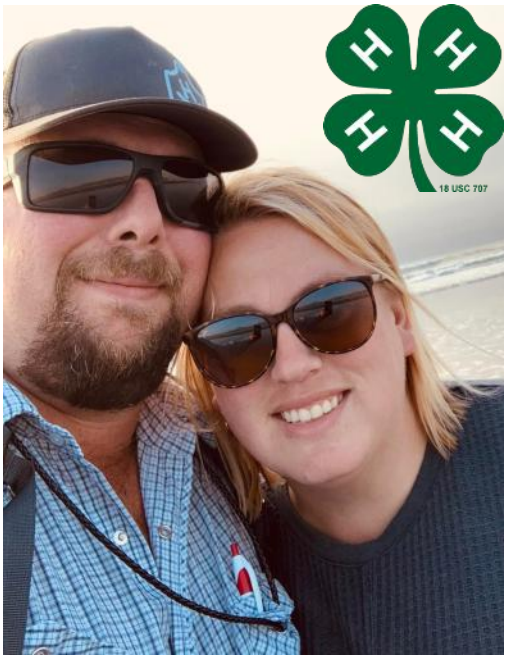
Tactics to take to help your plants through include: keep the plants evenly moist, water more often instead of weekly that may be your usual habit; provide sunshade; provide calcium, especially for tomatoes; mulching around the plants will help keep the surface roots cooler and will maintain moisture; avoid pruning during heat stress weather; and wait to fertilize until more seasonal temperatures return.

One thing you do need to keep up on is the weeding! Don't let the weeds take what moisture is available.

Happy Gardening!

And protect yourself from excess heat too!

Sunscreen, hats, and hydration are a must!

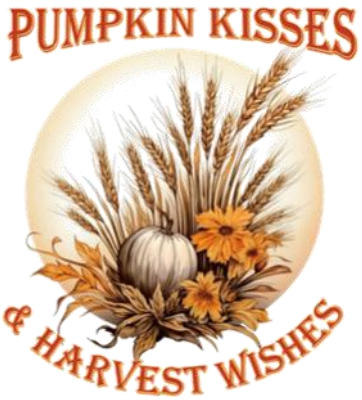


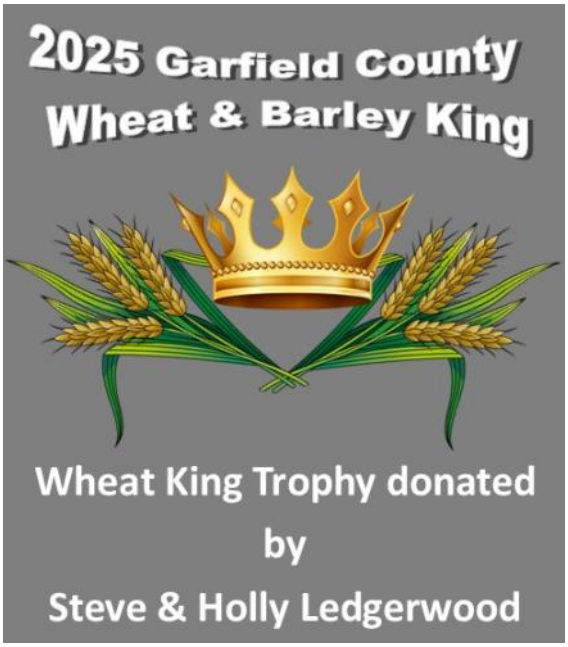
Siera Hall has been hired to be Garfield Counties new 4-H Coordinator. She is very knowledgeable in this position and I, Monica Bartlow, the WSU/Garfield County Extension Office Manager am very excited to have her as my new co-worker. I think we will work well together and become a great team. Her are few words that Siera shared about herself at an interdiction.

"Together with my family, I live in the Tucannon Valley, running a cattle operation and raising hay, embracing the agricultural lifestyle. Previously, I served as the 4-H coordinator for Columbia County for three years, fostering youth development and community engagement. After relocating to our main ranch, my children are actively involved in Pomeroy FFA, showing cattle, basketball, and swim team. The move to Garfield County aligns better with our family's lifestyle, allowing us to thrive in a supportive community. I look forward to working with the Garfield County Extension Office and the 4H program." - Siera Hall

Welcome to Garfield County Siera Hall!

# Garfield County Fair & Rodeo September 12-14, 2025



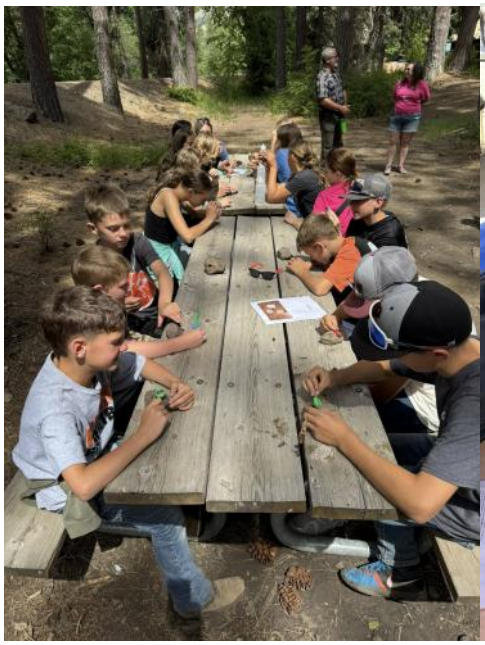
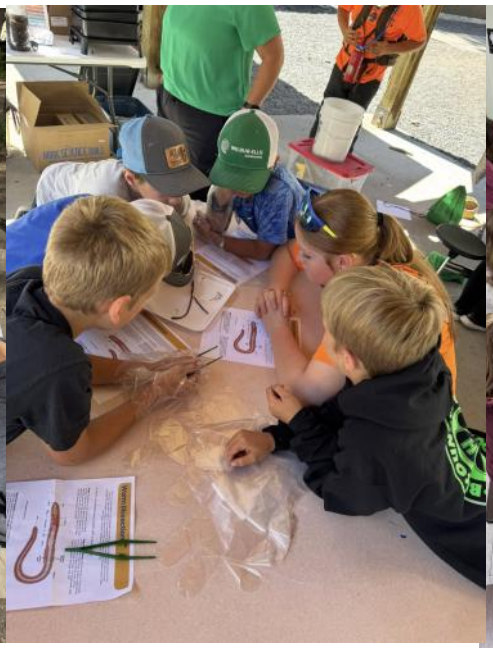
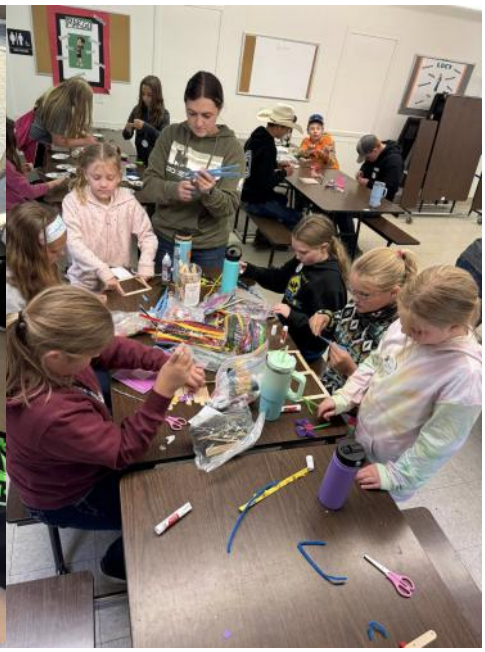




"The Purpose of the Fair is one of education, showing quality exhibits from the farm including all types of crops, livestock, poultry, etc. … The fair will help to promote a better community spirit among the town & country people of the county. To help us know more about the worth of our community & its possibilities."

We are an agricultural community and a big part of that are the grains we grow in this community but at the fair this section is disappearing, when we should be able to fill that room with entries.

Please bring your entries so that we can show the future generation, especially the town children, who may not know how proud we are of our agriculture and of our farms. We can't let this department die, besides the education and the demonstration of our community worth it provides the fair, I also fill out a report each year to turn into the state letting them know how many entries we had at the fair and when the state commissioners come to our fair Cereals is one of the departments they are checking. Help us to get good marks in this department.

# Bi County 4-H Camp

In the summer of 2025, 128 campers, 22 counselors, and many volunteers from Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties came together for Bi County 4H Camp.

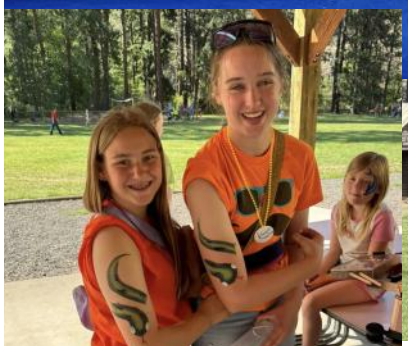
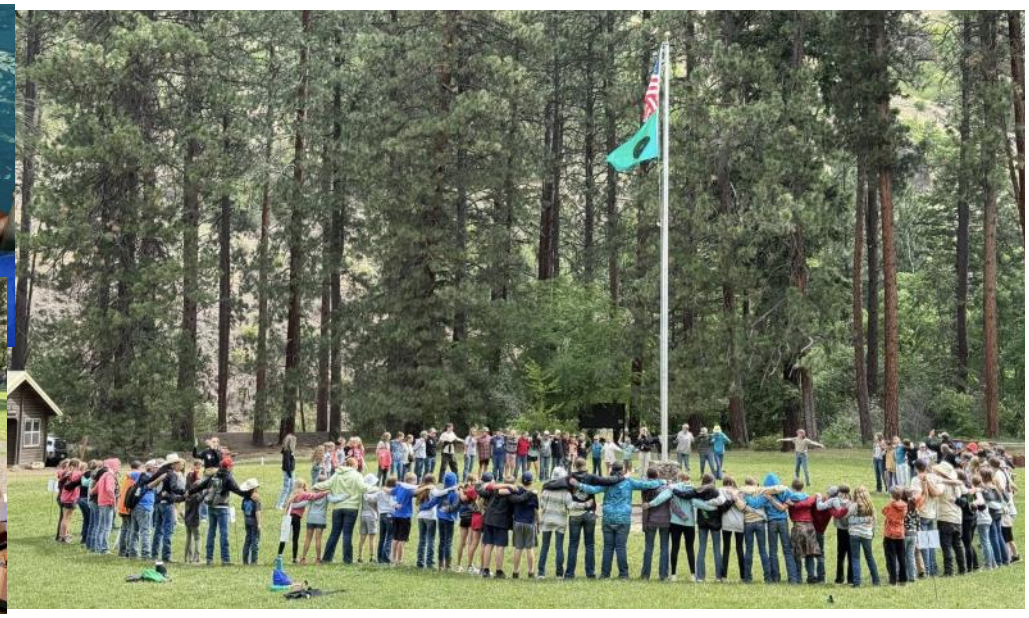
Campers took part in lots of interesting classes, including archery, canoeing, nature hikes, botany, hazmat safety, Cayle's Camp Rocks, water and ecology, meat evaluation, and worm dissection. These classes helped everyone learn new skills and have fun.

When lessons were done, campers enjoyed slip n slide kick ball, played 3 on 3 basketball, tried to dunk counselors in the dunk tank, and practiced dummy roping. There was always something fun to do.

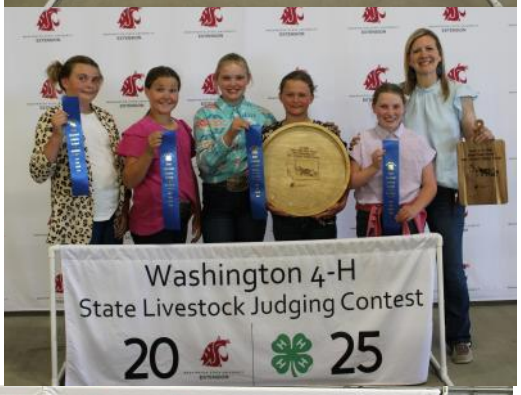
At night, everyone gathered around the campfire. The Spirit Award was given to campers who showed kindness and enthusiasm. People sang camp songs and performed funny skits, creating memories together.

Bi County 4H Camp 2025 was a week full of learning, laughter, and friendship. Campers left with new experiences, new friends, and happy memories that would last for years.

- Siera Hall

# Results from the 2025 Washington State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest


Junior Team (Kenley Tetrick, Hadley Hames, Ellie Hall, Emilee Blickenstaff, Autumn Dixon):

1st Overall (Kenley-1st, Hadley-5th, Ellie-10th)

1st Reasons/Questions (Kenley-3rd)

1st Beef (Autumn-2nd, Emilee-3rd, Ellie-5th)

1st Goats (Kenley-2nd)

2nd Swine (Hadley-1st)

2nd Sheep (Kenley-3rd)

Intermediate Team (Kendyl Tetrick, Collin Hames, Judson Hall, Ladd Baser):

1st Overall (Kendyl-4th, Collin-5th)

1st Reasons/Questions (Judson-3rd)

1st Swine (Kendyl-2nd)

1st Cattle (Judson-3rd, Collin-5th)

3rd Goats (Kendyl-3rd)

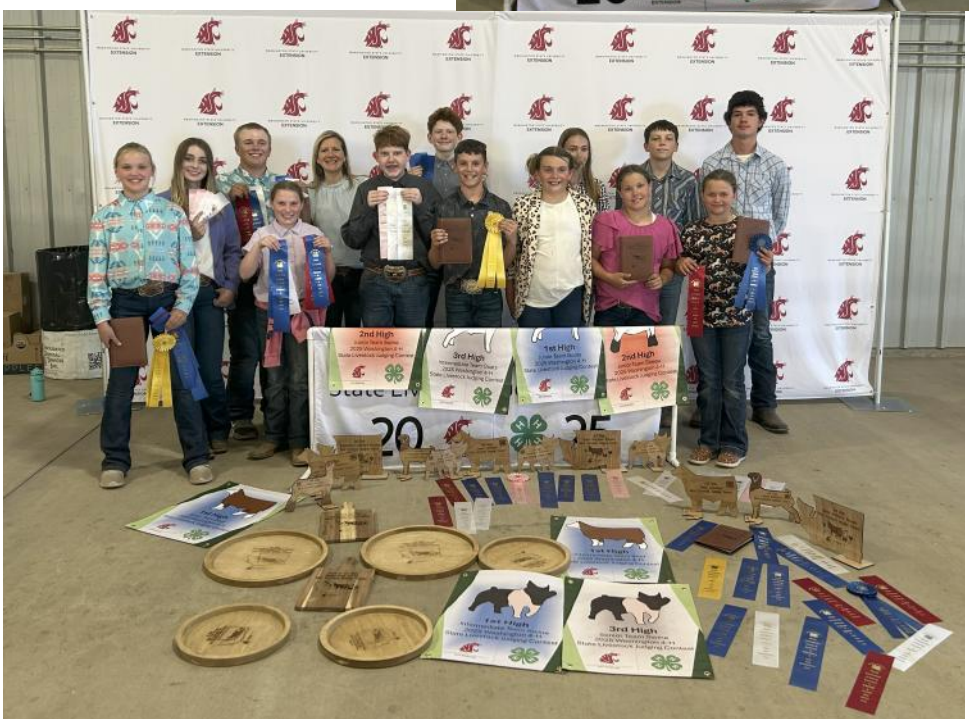
Seniors (Grayson Slaybaugh, Jaycee Cox, Tyler Dixon, Jack Baser) :

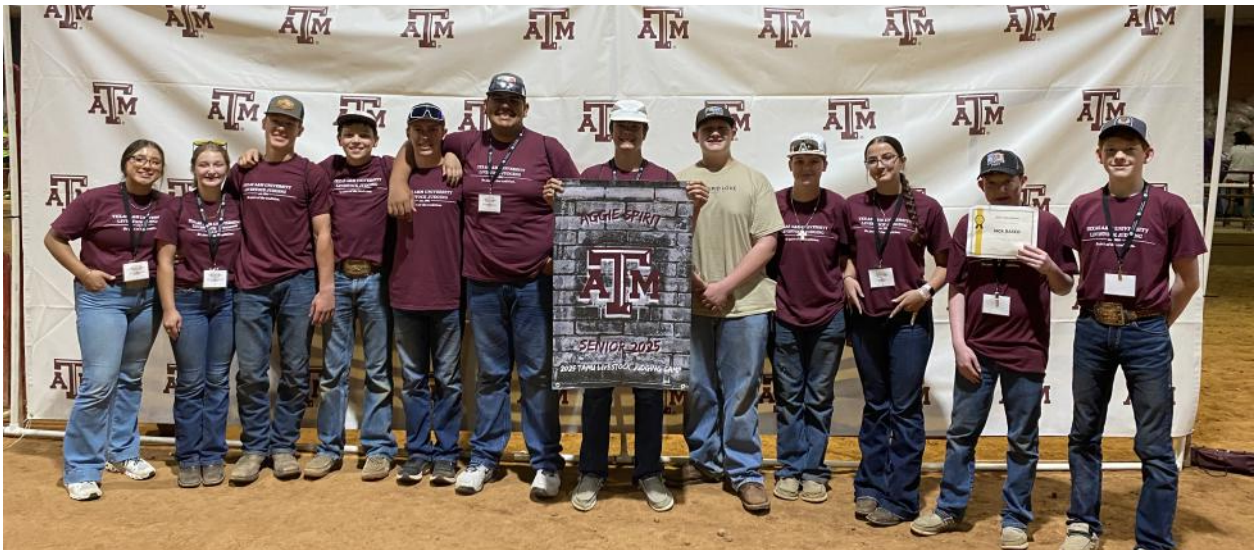
3rd Reasons (Grayson-3rd)

3rd Swine (Grayson-3rd)

4th Goats (Jaycee-4th)

7th Overall (Grayson-1st)






On June 2nd Carolina Morfin was elected as the District 6 FFA Treasurer at the District FFA Barbeque and Officer Elections. She will serve in that roll until the end of next school year.

12 FFA members traveled to the Texas A&M Livestock Judging Camp in College Station Texas on June 18th-22nd. During the camp they learned about evaluating each species and worked on their oral reasons presentations. At the end of the camp they conduct a contest and Pomeroy FFA did very well:.

In the Sr. Division:
Tyler Dixon was 10th place individual; 4th in placing classes; 7th in cattle; 8th in sheep & goats
Jack Baser was 6th in swine; Most improved in Group 2
Conrad Nelson 6th in sheep & goats
Treyton Kimble received the Aggie Spirit Award

In the Jr. Division:
Ladd Baser was 8th place individual; 7th in sheep & goats; 5th in cattle; 7th in placing classes; 5th in reasons

Carolina Morfin attended the National FFA Next Gen Agriculture Education Conference in Philadelphia. She went through career-based workshops and took agricultural tours in the greater Philadelphia area.

Colby Ledgerwood received a Silver rating for his Beef Production Proficiency Application.

Kendall Dixon will be receiving her American FFA Degree this year.

Finally, the National FFA Finalists were announced for Agriscience Fair:
Ladd Baser and Josiah Ledgerwood are National Finalists in Food Products & Processing Division 2

Jack Baser and Tyler Dixon are National Finalists in Food Products & Processing Division 4

Kendall Dixon, the Agriscience Fair Finalists, and the State Champion Ag. Issues Team will all be going to the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis Oct. 29 - Nov. 1st.

We have 42 FFA members getting their animals ready for the Garfield County Fair as well.

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## Did you know Blue-Green Algae Poses Deadly Risk to Pets During Summer Heat?

By Devin Rokyta, College of Veterinary Medicine
July 22, 2025
https://news.wsu.edu/press-release/2025/07/22/blue-green-algae-poses-deadly-risk-to-pets-during-summer-heat/

As summer temperatures take hold, toxic blue-green algae blooms can be a deadly threat to pets across the Pacific Northwest. Exposure to blue-green algae — or cyanobacteria — can kill pets in as little as 15–20 minutes. Animals can be exposed to blue-green algae and its toxins by simply contacting any affected water body, including ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, or even residential decorative ponds and neglected swimming pools.

"Just grabbing a ball or a stick from the water or even licking algae off their fur can be fatal," said Dr. Chelsea Sykes, a diagnostic toxicologist at Washington State University's Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.

Cyanobacteria are microscopic organisms that live in fresh bodies of water that usually multiply and bloom when water is warm, stagnant, and rich in nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen from sources such as fertilizer runoff. Blooms typically occur in late spring through early fall and can resemble thick, slimy green paint or pea soup on and in surface waters and eddies of running waters. Blooms, however, can have many colors. Dead fish, waterfowl, or other animals around a water source may indicate the presence of blue-green algae, but it is impossible to tell whether a given body of water has a toxic bloom without sophisticated testing. During warmer months, it is best to assume all still or slow-moving surface waters are potentially contaminated. "Unfortunately, you can't tell if a bloom is toxic just by looking at it," Sykes said. "That's why we always say, 'when in doubt, stay out.'"

Symptoms of algae poisoning in pets can develop quickly and include vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, disorientation, pale gums, skin rashes, seizures, difficulty breathing, or collapse. If a pet is showing signs of exposure, immediate veterinary care is critical. Pet owners can call their veterinarian or the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital emergency line at 509-335-0711. "Once symptoms begin, the window for treatment is very short," Sykes said. "Fast, aggressive care gives the best chance for survival." To reduce the risk of exposure, Sykes recommends avoiding any water that looks discolored or like spilled paint, preventing pets from drinking or swimming in unknown water, and rinsing them off with clean water if they do get wet. It's also important to keep animals from licking their fur afterward.

"The best protection is prevention," Sykes said. "Keep your pets leashed near open water and always be cautious. It's not worth the risk."



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