

Jody G Holthaus  
Meadowlark Extension District Agent  
Livestock-Natural Resources

#### Record Keeping Time

It's the time of year, that makes 4-H parents pull their hair out! It's 4-H record book time in our office. We've had some philosophical debates, whether they are records, diaries or awards applications, whatever you consider them, they are valuable.

Few people really enjoy keeping records, but they can be a great help when you need them. Cow/calf producers require considerable investment into their operation. Good records enable producers to make sound management decisions.

Records for cow/calf producers fall into two main categories-those about the herd, and those that pertain to the individual animal. Herd-level measurements such as pregnancy rate and weaning weight per cow exposed are critical in management decisions that affect the entire herd.

Health records are most likely vaccination records that detail when, how, what products were used. These can be helpful from year to year to remember what products were used and if any withdrawal times need to be observed.

Pasture use records, noting the number and type of animals and body weights of animals along with precipitation records, can help guide decisions on optimal stocking rates and help with developing a drought management plan.

There is no one right way to keep records, Records can be handwritten, kept in a notebook, calendar or sticky notes! There are options for data management and automated reports with electronic records. Probably the most widely used tool is the Red Book, Calving book developed by the beef specialists at the University of Idaho and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. There is an Excel versions ([www.beefusa.org/redbookworksheet.aspx](http://www.beefusa.org/redbookworksheet.aspx)) that is recommended as a backup to the paper copy. Because those can get lost.

Some producers use Google Forms to customize data collection. This is a free tool that enables you to gather production and operation data in the field using your smartphone or tablet, and then download it to your computer as a spreadsheet.

Technology may not be the answer for everyone, but it is handy for storing and reporting data. Make sure your recordkeeping, is telling you what you need to know, that you are comfortable using whatever form you choose. The more you know about key characteristics of your cows and herd, the better your management decisions and the better chance of reaching your production goals.

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*MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT AGENT NEWS*

David Hallauer  
Meadowlark Extension District Agent  
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Cindy Williams  
Meadowlark District Agent  
Foods/Nutrition/Money Management

### Tis the Season For Spending!

We are soon coming upon a season of spending with all of the holidays around the corner. Are you are battling a spending habit? If so here are some way to put that bad habit to rest and get and help stay out of debt.

1. Go Cash-only. Credit cards make it easy to overspend, but you can't use them if you don't have them with you. Leave your credit cards at home, and stick to cash or debit for all of your purchases.
2. Set long-term goals. Find yourself blowing big bucks on small purchases like coffee and vending machine snacks? Here's a simple way to crush the habit: Pick something that you really want like a vacation, add to your emergency fund or to get out of debt. Now remind yourself of this goal each time you feel tempted to blow money on a non-essential item. Then, take the money you would have blown, and put it towards your goal. Before long you will be enjoying that Along desired goal@. Who knew that breaking bad habits could be so rewarding?
3. Distinguish between needs and wants. Do you need those new shoes or do you just want them? Ask yourself this question each time you find yourself contemplating a purchase. If it's a need (and it fits within your budget), go ahead and buy them. If it's a want, spend some time weighting the impact of your purchase. What will these shoes do for you? Will they make you happy? Fill a hole in your wardrobe? Can you afford to buy them? Is there something else that you want more? Be honest about how your purchase will impact your life, and then decide if that Awant@ is really worth the asking price.
4. Shop with a list. Ever gone into a store for a few items, and emerged with bags and bags of stuff? Yeah, we all have. Fortunately, there's an easy fix for this common spending trap: shop from a list. Jot down everything that you need from the store, then only shop for the items that are on the list. Tempted by something extra? Then, make a note to add it to your shopping lists.
5. Give yourself an allowance. Look over your budget, and decide how much money you can afford to spend each week. Then, withdraw this amount from your checking account at the beginning of the week, and spend guilt free. Just remember: when the money=s gone, the spending stops---no exceptions.
6. Institute a Acooling-off@ period. Considering buying a big ticket item? If so give yourself time to decide whether you really need and can afford the object of your affection. Still wanting it after waiting 24-hours? Then, go back to the store and purchase it, if your budget will allow.
7. Find a shopping buddy. Do you have a hard time saying Ano@ to your shopping impulses? Then, find someone who can talk you out of it. Designate a friend or family member to be your AVoice of Reason@; and only shop when they can go with you. Have a cell phone? Then, go ahead and shop alone, but call your friend whenever you find yourself worked into a shopping frenzy.
8. Shop without a cart. Have you noticed how big shopping carts are getting? Shopping cards are designed to keep you shopping! Avoid this clever spending trap by only taking a cart when you have a lot to buy. Otherwise, grab a shopping basket or carry your items. You=ll be less tempted to shop when you don't have anywhere to put your selections.
9. Let someone else shop for you. Looking for an easy way to break your spending habit? Let someone else shop for you. It needs to be someone you can trust. Take a minute to look over your selections. Do you need all the items listed? If not, consider putting those items back and think about it for a while until you feel good about your selection.

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark District Agent  
Family Life

#### Freeze Pie and Pastry

Save time during the holidays by preparing pie pastry ahead and freezing for later use.

For unbaked crust, make the recipe and fit into pie pans. Place in a freezer bag for freezer storage. Or, store flat rounds of dough on freezer paper lined pieces of cardboard. Stack in freezer bags for storage.

For baked crust, make and bake as usual. Cool completely and package for freezer storage.

Nut pies, such as pecan, freeze well. Make as usual. Cool rapidly. Freeze before packaging. When preparing to serve the pie, remove from freezer and let stand at room temperature 15 minutes. Then heat in a 350°F oven about 30 minutes or until warm.