

## NOVEMBER 2025



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Deb Andres,  
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Agriculture &  
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## FOOD INSECURITY IN THE FLINT HILLS

As part of the Full Plates - Bright Futures project being implemented in partnership with K-State Extension Flint Hills, Council Grove High School, and White City High School, high school students are learning about food insecurity. Research shows that 8% of Kansas residents live with food insecurity. Students calculated what 8% would look like in their school and what actions can be taken to help families who are food insecure.

According to the USDA and trusted experts in hunger research such as Feeding America, financial security is the most effective way to end chronic hunger. Check out the article on the inside of this publication for more information about this hands-on real-world learning experience in Morris County schools.

## WELCOME TARA THOMSEN

We want to welcome our newest member to the K-State Flint Hills District staff - Tara Thomsen. Tara, her husband, Dave, and their 4 children recently moved back to the Flint Hills upon Dave's retirement from the Army. Tara is a 4-H Alumni of Morris County and enjoys family, farm life, and making meaningful memories. Tara will be working with our 4-H Youth Development and Extension programs in both Chase and Morris County. Welcome Tara - We're excited you're on our team!

## MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

For Medicare beneficiaries who are currently enrolled in a Medicare Prescription plan, you are provided the opportunity to take a close look at your plan for 2026. From October 15 thru December 7, beneficiaries can weigh the pros and cons of their existing plan against those of the 13 other plans they can choose from. Unlike a Medicare Supplement, which is typically decided on for the entirety of retirement, prescription plans can be changed annually during the open enrollment period. People elect to change for a variety of reasons - the most common being cost savings. Last year, one local resident saved an estimated \$29,544 because one of their medications had been dropped for coverage by the plan they were currently enrolled in. For free, unbiased, and informed counseling on a Medicare Prescription plan, call the Morris County Extension office at 620-767-5136 or the Chase County Senior Center at 620-273-8511 to make an appointment with Deb.

# FULL PLATES, BRIGHT FUTURES

## *Empowering Youth and Adults to Tackle Food Insecurity in Morris County*

K-State Extension Agent Deb Andres, in partnership with Live Well Morris County, secured a nearly \$29,000 Hunger Free Grant to educate youth and adults about the challenges of food insecurity in our community.

This initiative was developed in response to the 2024 Chase & Morris County Community Health Assessment, which revealed that residents see access to healthy food as a major need. As a result, Food and Nutrition was identified as one of three priority areas in the Community Health Improvement Plan.

### **What Is Full Plates, Bright Futures?**

This county-wide program is a 4-part effort focused on:

- Raising awareness about child hunger
- Educating youth and adults on food insecurity
- Providing food relief for those in need
- Promoting nutrition resources through engaging lessons and community outreach



### **Kids Feeding Kids: Students Making a Difference**

A key part of the program is Kids Feeding Kids (KFK), now active in White City and Council Grove High Schools. Inspired by Kansas City's Pete's Garden, KFK teaches students through the motto: "Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn."

In June, staff and volunteers completed training on food insecurity and food waste. Since then, they've been planning fall events where students will prepare meals for local families. To learn more, visit [kidsfeedingkids.org](https://kidsfeedingkids.org).

### **Learning the Realities of Hunger**

This fall, students are exploring the root causes of food insecurity, including the gap between minimum wage and living wage in Kansas.

Did You Know?

- Federal & Kansas minimum wage: \$7.25/hour
- Annual income at minimum wage: \$15,080 (before taxes)
- Federal poverty line: \$15,650
- Living wage in Morris County: \$20.22/hour (*Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator*)

Students are learning how income directly affects access to food—and how this issue impacts families right here in the Flint Hills.

### **Taking Action: Preparing Meals for Local Families**

After learning about food insecurity, students are stepping up to help. During the week of November 10, around 20 students at each school will prepare more than 350 nutritious, microwave-ready meals.

These meals will be distributed through local organizations to support the 8% of Morris County families experiencing food insecurity.

**Full Plates, Bright Futures** is more than a program—it's a community movement. By educating and empowering youth, and working together across organizations, Morris County is building a healthier, more hopeful future for all.

# Preparing for a Successful Calving Season

It's that time of year again to start preparing for calving season. Being prepared is the best way for producers to guarantee they will bring home the newborn calves successfully. If you have a March 1<sup>st</sup> calving herd then you are in the last month of the second trimester and will soon begin the third and final trimester in early December. Why is knowing when the third trimester starts so important? That's when the nutrient requirements of the cow or heifer significantly increase.

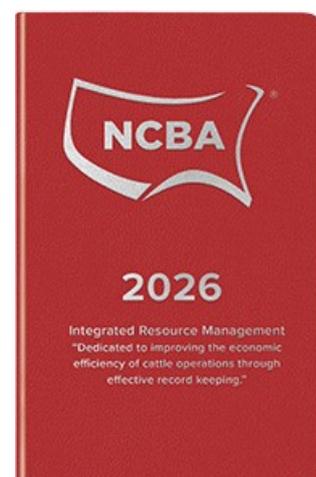
The best way to know if your herd needs a change in nutrient requirements is a method called Body Condition Score or BCS. Having cows and heifers at the appropriate body condition score is the key to a successful calving and production season.

What is body condition scoring? Body condition scores are a numerical method to determine the relative body reserves of a cow. This system uses visual characteristics to estimate the nutritional level of the animal using a range from 1 to 9. A score of 1 represents a very thin cow, and 9 an extremely over-conditioned cow. The ideal BCS for a mature cow calving is 5 and first-calf heifers require additional nutrients for continued growth, so their ideal BCS is 6. Primary areas that are observed for fat deposit or reserves include the spine, ribs, hooks and pins, tail head, and brisket.

K-State Beef Specialist Sandy Johnson states producers need to take note of the start of the third trimester because failing to do so is expensive either through higher feed costs, higher replacement rates, lower calf weights and/or poorer calf health. Test forages and adjust rations accordingly as a part of the adjustments to be monitored at this time. Either when working cows or when doing a routine check, determine the average body condition score of the group. Now is the time to be planning ahead.

The red IRM book is a handy tool to have during calving time. The book helps record calving activity, herd health, pasture usage, cattle inventory, AI breeding and sales, plus a date book and room for extra notes. This book is helpful for keeping good records not just for calving, but for overall herd management. The Extension Office has a limited number of the IRM red book available for producers. Please stop by and pick one up today!

For more details and how to evaluate body condition of beef cows see ***Guide to Body Condition Scoring of Beef Cows and Bulls (MF3274)*** and the ***Guide to BCS in Cattle (MF3230)*** both can be found at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/>.



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### Upcoming K-State Extension Flint Hills District Dates—2025

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
October 15 – December 7	Medicare Open Enrollment
November 11	Veteran's Day – Extension Offices Closed
November 12	Council Grove Area Foundation Match Day – Old Territory Ballroom 11AM – 7PM
December 24 & 25	Christmas Holidays – Extension Offices Closed

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