

Billings Chamber Ag Tour

by Ray Massie

A busload of people traveled all across the valley to get a first hand look at what agriculture means to our area in the annual [Billings Chamber](#) Ag Tour June 21.

A Rise and Shine breakfast kicked off the tour from the **Big Horn Resort** in Billings, with sausage provided by **S&T Project Meats** in Shepherd. Extension agent **Steve Lackman** gave a great presentation on the dollars and cents value of agriculture to Billings and eastern Montana. The numbers quoted from [NASS, the National Agricultural Statistical Survey](#), were simply astonishing even for those of us who know how much ag means.



The new **Western Ranch Supply** location off Zoo Drive and the freeway was the first field stop for the crew. **Rob and Keith Erickson** along with **Shayne Vandivort** and **Sara Eidman** were great hosts at the huge new facility. The new building hosts one of the largest supplies of animal health supplies along with a whole new section of clothing, footwear, and other essentials.

A quick stop at [Billings Livestock Commission](#) to hear **Bill and Jan Parker** talk about their weekend horse sale and how much money the sale means to the Billings economy. As Jan said, Billings is a major stop for these buyers multiple times a year and bring millions to the community. **Bill Cook**, operator at Billings Live, told the group nearly one half BILLION dollars in sales is rung up by the auction each year.

Next the group traveled to the studios of **KGHL Radio** and **Northern Broadcasting**, where they heard presentations from **Russell Nemetz**, Ag Director of the [Northern Ag Network](#), and from **Aaron Flint**, host of the statewide "Voices of Montana" talk show and **Taylor Brown**, NBS and KGHL owner.

The lunch stop was atop the rimrocks at historic [Yellowstone County Museum](#), where **Peter Yegen III**, **Charlie Yegen**, and **Chas. Weldon** shared the history of our area. Here on the deck at the Museum, the Chamber Ag Committee grilled steaks provided by **S&T Project meats**, and **MillerCoors** provided the refreshments.

After lunch, it was out to the Huntley Project for a visit to the [Yellowstone Valley Electric Co-op](#), where YVEC Manager **Brandon Wittman** described the exciting growth of this important rural electric system, including their recently-installed service to [Pacific Steel's](#) new automobile shredding facility in Lockwood

Next the group visited the feedlot of **Huntley Feeders** on Road 5 North, where **Ryan Roen** shared the economics involved in the cattle feeding and backgrounding industry.

Last stop of the day was at [S&T Project meats](#), seven miles east of Billings Heights, where **Shane and Tanya Flowers** and their family gave tours of their bright new retail meat shop, and free samples of their bacon, sausages, and award winning brats!

