

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



November-December, 2023

The Power of Gratitude

Thanksgiving season is a wonderful time to step back and think about the many things you appreciate in life. Reflecting on what you are grateful for and taking time to express gratitude to others is not only an aspect of the season but is also associated with improved well-being.

The word gratitude comes from the Latin word “gratia”

meaning grace, graciousness, and gratefulness. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, both tangible and intangible. Positive psychology research shows gratitude is strongly and consistently connected to greater happiness. People feel more positive emotions, appreciate good experiences, have better health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships when they have gratitude.

There are various ways people feel and express gratitude. They may apply it to the past by remembering positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings. They may apply it to the present by not taking good fortune for granted and apply it to the future by maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude. No matter what or where someone’s gratitude is currently, it can successfully be cultivated and grow.

Include your whole family in expressing gratitude this holiday season and beyond with the following ideas:

- Inspire your child to write a special note or create a card to let someone know what they mean to them. Join them and send one too!
- Drop a special treat to someone in your community.
- Design a gratitude jar by placing a slip of paper in a jar every time you think of something which makes you feel grateful. Dedicate a consistent time to set aside with your family to read the things you all are thankful for.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Take a family walk and find things in nature you appreciate. Notice the sounds, colors, smells, etc.

Source: Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School,
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>,
August 2021

Kayla Hinrichs, University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension, <https://food.unl.edu/free-resources/newsletters/food-fun-young-children/express-gratitude>

Joy Akey

Yuma County
joy.akey@colostate.edu
(970) 332-4151

Katie Seelhoff

Morgan County
katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu
(970) 542-3540

Anne Mason

Washington County
anne.mason@colostate.edu
(970) 345-2287

Stephanie Starkebaum

Phillips County
Stephanie.Starkebaum@colostate.edu
(970) 854-3616

Jaci Wagner

Logan County
jaci.wagner@colostate.edu
(970) 522-3200

McKayla Stephen

Kit Carson County
mckayla.stephen@colostate.edu
(719) 346-5571

Extension Online

<https://goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/>

<https://logan.extension.colostate.edu/>

<https://morgan.extension.colostate.edu/>

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Can you say Charcuterie three times fast?

As the holidays approach, consider creating a fun and nutritious charcuterie board to take as a tasty appetizer everyone will love. Charcuterie boards can be a fun way for families to create a dish together and can be both savory and sweet. When thinking of a charcuterie board, it is often thought to be arranged with a variety of meats, cheeses, and crackers. It is also often considered merely an appetizer for a gathering but could be created as a charcuterie breakfast board, fruit board, carb friendly, or a more traditional variety. The possibilities of ingredients to put on a charcuterie board are endless and can have all kinds of healthy and creative options.

Charcuterie boards are not only easy to assemble, but they can also be done ahead of time for those busy days. They offer a variety of options so it's easy to have something on the board or tray that appeals to most everyone. Let's face it, it's like an adult lunchable!



Tips for making a healthy charcuterie board:



1. **Choose whole grains-** When adding small bread pieces or crackers to the board, try to choose whole grains as they are packed with fiber, protein, and vitamins.
2. **Dips and Spreads-** Adding dips and spreads to a charcuterie board offers a variety of texture and flavors and allows for creativity to run wild with so many options to add for crackers, breads, fruits, or veggies. Hummus, yogurts, guacamole, or fruit jams are just a few examples of common choices.
3. **Add plenty of fruits and veggies-** There are many fruits and vegetables that pair well with meats and cheeses. Dried fruit options like figs, apricots, or raisins are a sweet addition and add color to the tray. Fresh fruit is always a great choice for added variety and sweetness. Any berry (blackberry, strawberry, or blueberries), apples, or pears are nutritious and fan favorites. Vegetable options seem endless. Carrot and celery sticks, cucumber slices, colorful bell peppers, snap peas, or broccoli and cauliflower are among the many options that would add wonderful color, texture, and a healthy variation to your board.

4. **Ah Nuts!-** Nuts are an excellent source of protein and add a crunchy and salty profile to a charcuterie board. A dried fruit and nut board could be an option for a charcuterie board of their own. Plain or salted nuts are an easy option, or you could spice it up with so many flavored nut options and seasonings available too. Almonds, pecans, cashews, or pistachios are common nuts found on charcuterie boards and offer a variety of flavor profiles and healthy fats.

5. **Meats and Cheeses-** While arguably the most thought of portion of a charcuterie board, try to choose meats that are lower in sodium. Of course, it is not always easy to find meat low in sodium and heart healthy, but offering a variety will allow guests to choose which best fits their dietary needs. Common meats found on boards are prosciutto as you can wrap it around fresh mozzarella, parmesan, or even grapes and sweet cantaloupe. Salami is also common as it is easily accessible, pairs well with brie or gouda cheeses, and can be designed into fun shapes and designs on the board. Turkey, ham, and mozzarella cubes are also very common and tasty meats and cheeses to add to a board most everyone enjoys.

6. **Don't forget the extras!-** Additional finger food snacks such as green or black olives, pickles, pickled okra, or pickled peppers help cut through the rich meats and cheeses and can be from your own canning pantry or store shelf. Adding hard-boiled egg slices is also an additional way to add delicious protein and element of color and variety.



If you can't say charcuterie board three times fast, then maybe an entertaining tray or grazing board is a better option for you! Make charcuterie boards fun; have your kids help design and create, use your imagination, try seasonal ingredients, and build a board for whatever audience you are serving as there are no hard and fast rules on what can or can't go on a board! Just remember, try to have a variety of textures, a mixture of tastes, and small bite sized items. A healthy board can wow your guests without needing to have tons of culinary skills and equipment while still being festive and eye appealing.

Holiday Spending on a Budget

It is easy to get wrapped up and overspend during the holiday season. Some studies show the average American spends around \$1,000 for the holidays. Keeping your spending under control will help you enjoy the holidays and continue your healthy financial life. Here are some planning and budgeting tips to help you shop for gifts while sticking to your budget.



1. **Plan your holiday budget.** Create a list of people you plan to purchase a gift for and decide on an amount to spend for each. If you are decorating or cooking a holiday meal, estimate the amount you will be spending. If you are traveling, calculate your expenses for fuel, airplane tickets, hotels, and meals away from home. Total your expenses and figure out how much money you need to set aside before you begin spending. Give yourself some cushion room because prices may be higher than last year. Be prepared to trim or adjust your plans as needed.
2. **Set a budget for each person.** Set a price limit for each person on your gift list and stick to it. Resist the urge to go over the amount of money so you don't blow past your overall budget. Perhaps ask your family members or co-workers to set a dollar amount for gifts or agree to participate in a gift exchange to reduce the number of gifts each individual needs to buy. You can create a fun gift trading or unwrapping game to do together.
3. **Shop around or price check gift items.** This strategy requires some planning ahead of time. Knowing the item you are shopping for helps you focus on finding the best price. Use the internet and store ads to compare prices. Look for sales by searching for coupon codes for your favorite online stores. Keep in mind some online prices are lower, but you may pay more for shipping. Savings can happen by keeping an eye out for deals every day throughout the year.
4. **Consider homemade gift items or alternative gifts.** Giving a small, thoughtful handmade gift can mean just as much or more than a purchased gift. Buying materials for handmade items can be easier on your budget. The possibilities of homemade gifts are endless. Some ideas are artwork, baked goods, or personalized certificates for a homecooked meal, free babysitting, or car washes.
5. **Keep in mind other holiday expenses.** Budgeting for holiday gifts and trips is one thing but watch out for other smaller expenses that add up. For example, postage for gifts or cards, additional food or drinks for holiday parties or gatherings, purchasing a new holiday outfit, and batteries. After the holidays, take an inventory of items you have and stock up on discounted items you need, such as tape, wrapping paper, ribbons, or paper products you can use for the next holiday season.



There is a tradeoff for each purchase you make because you are choosing what to spend your money on or not. Don't forget about your long-term financial goals. Plan your holiday spending and stick to your budget. No matter how much or how little you spend, you can enjoy the most wonderful time of the year.

Homemade Gift Ideas - <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/holidays-celebrations/gifts/g33416427/diy-christmas-gifts/>

Live Smart Colorado - <https://livesmartcolorado.colostate.edu/holiday-gifts-that-wont-break-the-bank/>

Live Smart Colorado - <https://livesmartcolorado.colostate.edu/manage-holiday-spending/>

"Give Back" Extra Halloween Candy

After Halloween most families have candy tempting them for weeks. If you are hoping to avoid those extra calories and want to teach your children about giving back, there are many places you can donate your excess candy!



Support the Troops:

- **Treats for Troops Program** – Soldiers' Angels is a nonprofit partnering with local agencies to collect extra Halloween candy and then ship it to deployed service members around the world. To find collection sites, visit: <https://soldiersangels.org/volunteer/special-campaigns/treats-for-troops/>
- **Operation Shoebox** -- Individually wrapped candies are accepted throughout the year to help boost morale overseas. Visit www.operationshoebox.com/how-you-can-help/ to get the mailing address for donations.
- **Candy for the Troops** -- Contact the nearest VA Hospital or VFW Chapter and show appreciation to the veterans who have served our country by donating excess candy.
- **Halloween Candy Buy Back** – Many businesses around the country participate in this program. Children can bring extra candy and exchange it for money, toys, coupons etc. These businesses will then donate the candy to local groups who will send the candy to our troops.

Support Unsung Heroes/ Community Members:

- **Local Police and Fire Departments** -- Give back to those working hard to keep your community safe. Share a few of your Halloween candies to say thank you.
- **Mail Carriers** -- Leave a treat for your mail carrier. It will be a nice boost during the busy holiday delivery season.
- **Teachers and Schools** -- Take the candy to your kids' teachers to use as rewards in the classroom or just as a token of appreciation.
- **Nurses** -- Show appreciation to the nurses and staff at a local hospital. Share some goodies with those caring for sick members of the community.
- **Elderly** -- Visit a nearby nursing or retirement home, or even an elderly neighbor. A goody bag filled with sweet treats will make their day.

Support Those in Need:

- **Homeless** -- Contact your local soup kitchen, shelter, food pantry or religious center. Home-cooked meals are always a priority for those in need, but candy will be a luxury they do not normally get.
- **Food Baskets** -- If you are planning to make dinner or purchase groceries for a family in need this holiday season, throw in some candy for a nice treat.
- **YWCA** -- The YWCA is the largest provider of battered women's shelters and domestic violence services in the country, helping thousands of women and children annually. Visit YWCA.org to find the nearest location and donate your extra candy to children who may not be able to enjoy the Halloween festivities this year.

Start a new family tradition this year and have your kids donate a portion of their candy to a good cause. This is a fantastic opportunity to teach them about kindness and the importance of giving back to their community.

Source: <https://www.sandiegofamily.com/things-to-do/seasonal-happenings/ways-to-give-back-halloween-candy>

Turkey Tips



Will you be planning and preparing the holiday dinner this year? Is it resulting in some anxiety and a list of questions? What kind of turkey should you buy – fresh or frozen? How big? How do you store it? Is it done? A few simple steps can ease your holiday fears and result in a delicious and safe meal for family and friends.

Plan Ahead: Plan the menu two to three weeks ahead of time. Shopping early for your meal will cut down on the last-minute stress and spread out the costs instead of having a big grocery bill all at once.

Fresh or Frozen: There is not a difference in quality between fresh or frozen. It is more a matter of what “pros” you prefer. A frozen turkey can be bought ahead of time and allow you to take advantage of special sales. Fresh turkeys provide the convenience of not having to thaw but have a shorter shelf life. Regardless of which type you choose, be sure to plan enough space in your freezer and/or refrigerator for safe storage.

When to Buy: A whole frozen turkey takes about 24 hours to thaw in the refrigerator for every 4-5 pounds. Purchase your frozen turkey as far enough in advance as necessary to safely thaw it in the refrigerator. A fresh turkey should be bought only a day or two in advance and kept refrigerated.

When is it done? Turkey is safely cooked when it reaches an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees F throughout. The only way to ensure this is to measure the temperature with a food thermometer in several places. Insert the thermometer in the innermost part of the wing, thigh, and thickest part of the breast, not touching the bone, to get an accurate temperature measurement.

Carving: It is best to let the turkey rest for about 20 minutes before carving to allow the juices to set and make carving easier. Use a clean cutting board with a well to catch the juices. Use a clean, sharp knife or an electric knife for carving.

Storing Leftovers: It is important to refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours of cooking to reduce the risk of pathogen growth that can cause foodborne illness. Cut turkey into smaller pieces and put it and other cooked items, such as stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable casseroles, etc., into shallow containers so they chill quicker. Use refrigerated leftovers within three to four days. Frozen leftovers should be used within 2 to 6 months for the best quality. Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

Who you gonna call? If it is Thanksgiving Day and you have turkey questions, the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline is staffed with food safety specialists to answer your questions from 8:00 am – 2:00 pm Eastern Time. It is also open year-round Monday through Friday from 10:00 am – 6:00 pm ET if you have questions about meat, poultry, or egg products. Call toll free at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).

Source: Article adapted from: “Thanksgiving Turkey Tips,” Lisa Franzen-Castle, PhD, RD, University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension, <https://food.unl.edu/free-resources/newsletters/healthy-bites/thanksgiving-turkey-tips-0>

Fun Fact

Cranberries are **America’s Original Superfruit.**® They are one of three commonly cultivated fruits native only to North America and are an important crop with roots deep in American history. More than 1,100 small family farmers – many of them fourth, fifth or even sixth generation – produce U.S. cranberries on 40,800 acres. Cranberries are grown across the United States with leading production states of Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington. Cranberries are a versatile, nutrient-dense fruit that can be easily incorporated into sweet and savory dishes. Check out the US Cranberry Marketing Committee website at <https://www.uscranberries.com/> if you are looking for some healthy recipes and more ways to incorporate this unique fruit.



Gifts in a Jar for the Holidays

As we start thinking about the holiday season and all the people on our gift list, we may start to feel the strain on our budgets. Then, thinking about how to keep entertained during the school break without spending lots of money can be an added stress. Therefore, if you are looking for a way to keep children entertained on a budget and cross people off your gift list, consider making food mixes. This can also be a wonderful opportunity to discuss nutritious food and food safety habits!

When decorating your jars, be creative! Use small remnants of fabric, ribbons, buttons, and beads. Depending on your surroundings, you may even be able to find pinecones, greens, or herbs to decorate your jars. If you are looking to add something a little extra, consider wrapping a candy cane or small utensil like a spatula, spoon, or potholder in the ribbon around the jar.



Food safety is important when giving and receiving homemade food gifts. Make sure to wash your hands before you start preparing any food. Start with a clean and sanitized workspace and equipment in your kitchen. Check that the containers you plan to use are food grade. If you are giving a perishable food gift, give friends and family advance notice that you will be dropping a gift off. It is also important to have a label on the food. This label should include the ingredients used to make it and a use by date. Some gifts may need directions for preparation as well.

Food mixes can be made in a mason jar or something similar. You can decorate the jar with fabric and use ribbon to attach a recipe card and make a bow.

Ideas for recipes:

- Homemade pancake/waffle mix -- <https://extension.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/December-2021-English.pdf>
- Country Chili Mix -- <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/mix-it-expand-your-gift-giving-dollar-food-mixes-jar>
- Homemade Cornbread -- <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/mix-it-expand-your-gift-giving-dollar-food-mixes-jar>
- Beverage Mixes -- <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/beverage-mixes-jar>
- No-Knead Bread Mix -- https://melissaknorris.com/wprm_print/12609
- Ginger Crackles -- <https://extension.wsu.edu/foodsafety/content/gifts-in-the-mailbox/>
- Blueberry Pound Cake -- <https://extension.wsu.edu/foodsafety/content/gifts-in-the-mailbox/>

If you are not sure food mixes are the right gift from your family, you could try doing other themed jars such as a manicure kit that includes items such as hand lotion, a nail file, nail polish and a pair of gloves. This is a great opportunity to get your children involved in the process by having them think of themes or shop for items to include in the jars.

Gifts in a jar are fun, creative gifts at a minimal cost. They can also be a great way to get your children involved and teach them about gift giving, the importance of food safety, and basic kitchen skills. Happy holiday gift giving!

Source: North Dakota State University Extension, <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/mix-it-expand-your-gift-giving-dollar-food-mixes-jar>

University of Maine Cooperative Extension,

<https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/2021/12/02/gifts-from-the-kitchen/>

Maintain Your Brain Health – November is Alzheimer’s Awareness Month



The brain is the most vital organ in the human body as it controls and coordinates our actions and reactions, enables us to think and feel, and forms memories and emotions. These are the things that define us as humans. However, many of us may need guidance on maintaining healthy cognitive function. A growing body of evidence suggests addressing certain modifiable risk factors and adopting healthy behaviors can reduce the risk of mental decline, potentially reducing the risk of dementia and protecting cognitive health. By adopting healthy lifestyle choices, we can keep our brains healthy for longer, allowing us to enjoy what we love as we age.

Dementia refers to several disorders that cause memory loss, personality changes, or some impairment. It is a non-reversible decline in mental function. Alzheimer's disease is a specific disease within the dementia definition that gradually and irreversibly destroys memory and thinking skills. While we cannot change certain things, such as our genetics and age (which is the primary factor that puts anyone at risk of developing dementia or Alzheimer's disease), research indicates what is healthy for our hearts also benefits our brains. Two-thirds of Americans have one major potential risk factor for dementia. However, by adopting healthy lifestyle choices and managing chronic health conditions, we can keep our brains healthy and reduce the risk of developing chronic memory loss.

Here are ten ways to maintain brain health:

1. **Get Restorative Sleep** -- Poor sleep can significantly impact concentration and memory. Research suggests that during sleep, abnormal proteins in the brain are cleared out, and memories are consolidated, leading to improved cognitive function and brain health overall. It is recommended adults get between seven and nine hours of sleep each night to perform at their cognitive best. If you struggle with sleep, it is important to establish healthy sleep habits or seek medical treatment if you have a diagnosed sleep disorder.
2. **Take Control of Your Diet** -- Choosing healthy foods such as fish and eating a variety of fruits and vegetables while reducing foods high in sugar, sodium, trans fat, and saturated fat can help reduce cognitive decline risk.
3. **Quit Smoking** -- Smoking increases the risk of cognitive decline. Quitting smoking can reduce the risk to levels comparable to those who have never smoked and lower the risk of heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and other smoking-related illnesses.
4. **Engage in Physical Activity** -- Regular cardiovascular exercise that increases heart rate and blood flow can improve cognitive function, reduce depression and anxiety, and promote better sleep.
5. **Stimulate Your Brain** -- Engaging in mentally stimulating activities can help develop your brain. To challenge your mind, try activities such as word puzzles, sudoku, jigsaw puzzles, or math problems. Reading, taking courses, or learning a new card game can also be beneficial. Engage in activities that require mental effort or manual dexterity, like drawing, painting, and crafting, to boost your memory and focus. These are simple and effective ways to enhance your cognitive abilities.

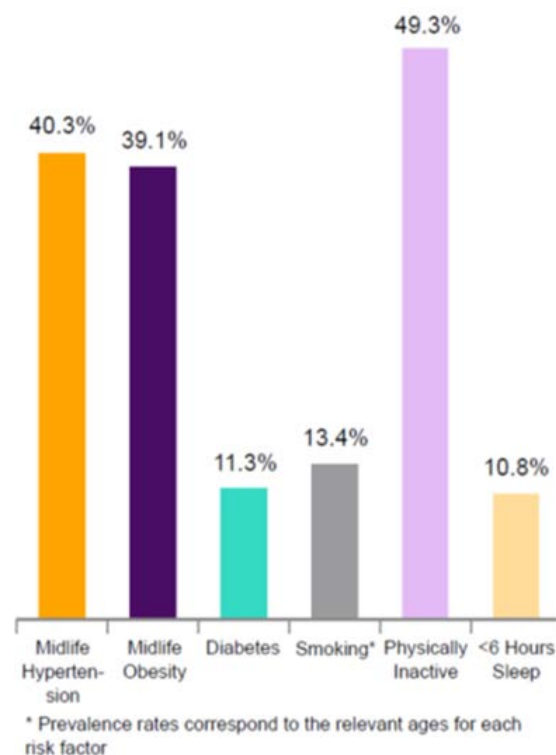
6. **Stay Socially Engaged** -- Positive relationships are as important for our health and well-being as proper nutrition and physical activity. It has been found maintaining a strong social network can lead to a longer and healthier life. In fact, it is associated with a lower risk of dementia, lower blood pressure, and higher life expectancy. Therefore, looking for opportunities to connect with your loved ones, friends, and others is important, especially if you live alone. You may consider joining church or community events, volunteering, or joining a club to remain socially active. Research shows solitary confinement can lead to brain atrophy, so social activity may have the opposite effect and strengthen the health of your brain.

7. **Improve your Blood Sugars** -- Research has shown having high blood sugar levels due to diabetes can increase the risk of several health problems, including Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, such as vascular dementia. Similar to controlling cholesterol levels or reducing blood pressure, preventing diabetes can be achieved by maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and a healthy weight. Moreover, maintaining healthy blood sugar levels can also help prevent sugar crashes, leading to brain foginess.

8. **Improve Blood Pressure and Cholesterol** -- It is important to know having high blood pressure in middle age can increase the risk of cognitive decline. Additionally, high LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels have been linked to an increased risk of dementia. Fortunately, simple lifestyle changes such as maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, managing weight, limiting alcohol and tobacco consumption, and reducing stress can help improve overall health.

9. **Manage Stress** -- Experiencing stress can have negative effects on your mood and memory and can lead to feelings of anxiety. Weekly stress reduction exercises are recommended to improve your overall sense of calm. Prolonged and intermittent stress can negatively impact the brain and has been linked to inflammation and chronic illnesses. It is important to learn how to manage stress effectively. If you feel like you need additional support, consider scheduling an appointment with a mental health provider.

10. **Protect against Hearing Loss and Social Isolation** -- It is essential to understand hearing impairment can increase the risk of developing dementia. However, it is possible to treat hearing loss. To prevent hearing problems, avoid exposure to loud noises regardless of age. If you suspect a hearing impairment, check your hearing, and do not hesitate to use a hearing aid if needed. It is worth noting that hearing aid users often wait an average of ten years before seeking help for hearing loss. This delay can make communication with loved ones more challenging, leading to social isolation and loneliness, which can increase the risk of cognitive impairment. Therefore, caring for your hearing is crucial to maintaining good health and well-being.



Sources:

<https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/global-council-on-brain-health/six-pillars-interviews/>
<https://www.alz.org/help-support/brain-health/10-ways-to-love-your-brain>
<https://www.alz.org/professionals/public-health/public-health-topics/risk-reduction>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/12-ways-to-keep-your-brain-young>

Program Highlight

A Healthier Weigh 2024 – 12-week Health & Fitness Challenge – will be taking registrations for individual and team participation through the end of the year! Registration fee \$40/person with cash prizes! Be watching for more information soon on our County Extension websites and Facebook pages. Get your teams ready before the holidays!



Upcoming Events!

- **ServSafe Managers Training**
 - Wednesday, November 8th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Logan County Extension Office. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu.
- **AgrAbility Aging in Agriculture**
 - This program will cover AgrAbility 101, emotional wellbeing and aging, and aging in agriculture. If you have questions about the program or would like to register, contact Ellis Vidmar at (970) 491-4585 or ellis.vidmar@colostate.edu.
- **Colorado Women in Ag Conference**
 - November 17 and 18 at the Island Grove Event Center, Greeley, CO. Whether you're a woman running a large farm or a small agribusiness, this two-day conference is for you! Network with other women in agriculture and participate in workshops and seminars and enjoy numerous key speakers. For more information and to register visit: ColoradoWomenInAg.weld.gov.
- **A Healthier Weigh**
 - Weigh in's for Logan, Morgan and Yuma counties will be the week of January 2nd.
 - Weigh in's for Kit Carson, Phillips and Washington counties will be the week of January 8th.
 - Please contact your local Extension Agent for more details.
- **Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.**



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVnN5X513c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

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