

## Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore County

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### UNMC, Nebraska Extension offer tractor safety course to teens across Nebraska

Members of the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health will provide a tractor safety course in May and June of 2020 at 11 sites across Nebraska in partnership with Nebraska Extension. The course provides extensive training on tractor and all-terrain vehicle safety with a variety of hands-on activities. Instilling an attitude of 'making safety a priority' and respect for agricultural equipment are primary goals of the course.

Teens 14 or 15 years of age who work on farms, or others who are interested in learning about safe farming practices, are encouraged to register for the Nebraska Extension Tractor Safety & Hazardous Occupations Course. Anyone under age 14 is not eligible to take the class.

Federal law prohibits children under 16 years of age from using certain equipment on a farm unless their parents or legal guardians own the farm. However, certification received through the course grants an exemption to the law allowing 14- and 15-year-olds to drive a tractor and to do field work with certain mechanized equipment.

Susan Harris-Broomfield, University of Nebraska Extension Educator reports that a common cause of agricultural-related injuries and deaths in Nebraska is overturned tractors and ATVs. She emphasized that this course is designed to train students how to avoid these incidents as well as many other hazards on the farm and ranch.

Cost of the course is \$60 and includes educational materials, instruction, supplies, and lunch. The first day of class will cover the required elements of the National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program, hands-on participation, concluding with a written test which students must pass to attend the second day of training.

The second day of training will include a driving test and equipment operation and ATV safety lessons. Students must demonstrate competence in hitching and unhitching equipment and driving a tractor and trailer through a standardized course. Instructors will also offer education about safe behaviors and laws for ATVs, utility-task vehicles (UTVs), and other off-road vehicles (ORVs).

Instructors for the course are members of the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health: Aaron Yoder, Ph.D., Ellen Duysen, MPH; UNMC graduate student Alyssa Damke; and Nebraska Extension educators Troy Ingram, Randy Saner, Chandra Giles, and John Thomas.

Classes begin at 8 a.m. or 9 a.m., depending on location, and end times vary depending on the number of participants. If classes do not fill to the minimum of 10 participants, an option will be offered to do Day 1 training online and Day 2 in person.

Dates, training site locations, and site coordinator phone numbers are below:

- May 21 & 22 – Weeping Water, Fairgrounds, (402) 267-2205
- May 26 & 27 – Ord, Fairgrounds (308) 728-5071;
- May 28 & 29 – Wayne, Fairgrounds (402) 375-3310
- June 1 & 2 – O'Neill, Plains Equipment, (402) 336-2760
- June 3 (first day is online) – Gordon, Fairgrounds, (308) 327-2312
- June 4 & 5 – Ainsworth, Evangelical Free, (402) 387-2213
- June 9 & 10 – Geneva, Fairgrounds, (402) 759-3712
- June 11 & 12 – North Platte, West Central Research, Extension and Education Center, (308) 532-2683
- June 16 & 17 – Kearney, Buffalo County Extension Office (308) 236-1235



- June 18 & 19 – Hastings, Adams County Extension Office (402) 461-7209
- June 29 & 30 – Gering, Legacy Museum (308) 632-1480.

For more information or to register, contact the appropriate Extension office above. The registration form is located at [kearney.unl.edu](https://kearney.unl.edu).

## EXTENSION PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

Nebraska Extension is fully committed to the health and well-being of Nebraskans. In a disease situation like COVID-19, the principle of social distancing is one of the main methods that can be used to help reduce the spread of the disease.

Chancellor Ronnie Green has issued guidance that all UNL faculty and staff will move to ‘remote’ modes. To be consistent with that guidance, Nebraska Extension will, whenever possible, provide Extension programs remotely (video or teleconferencing) but will not provide in-person Extension programs, at least until May 9. We recognize that this practice may create some level of disruption relative to the important information we provide to Nebraskans. In addition to our ‘remote’ course offerings, we encourage Nebraskans to visit [extension.unl.edu](https://extension.unl.edu) to access a wide array of online information.

While our extension offices are closed to the public, we are still here to serve you. Contact us via phone or email. For Fillmore County, call 402-759-3712; for Clay County, call 402-762-3644, or email me ([brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu](mailto:brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu)) and I’ll do my best to find you an answer; keep in mind that changes occur constantly, so at the time of writing this article, this is our status.