

## Column Title: "Homestead: A Buzzword with Roots—and a Future"

By Lonnie Mengarelli- Extension Agent

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I have been the Crops and Natural Resources agent now for going on 16 months, and I have been to 15 plus farms where families are leaving the “city life” behind to try to live the self-sustainable farm life. As most of you have probably heard the term “homestead” or “homesteading” in American vocabulary—not as a dusty relic of pioneer days, but as a modern buzzword symbolizing a movement toward self-sufficiency, sustainability, and reconnection with the land.

What was once a necessity for survival on the frontier is now a lifestyle choice for many who crave something simpler, something real. From urban backyard chicken coops to rural mini-farms, people are planting, preserving, and planning in ways that echo their ancestors—albeit with a little more Wi-Fi.

The idea of homesteading is no longer just about acreage and off-grid living. It’s about intentional living, understanding where your food comes from, and having the skills to provide for yourself, even in small ways. And that’s where programs like *Back to the Land: Traditions & Innovations in Small-Scale Farming* step in to help.

Offered by the Southwind Extension District in partnership with Kansas State University, this free educational series is more than a class—it’s a call to cultivate resilience, knowledge, and community. Starting October 1<sup>st</sup> through December 10th at the Fort Scott Community College Ag Building, the 7 stand-alone programs all about farming basics covers a wide range of hands-on, practical topics designed to help anyone—regardless of experience—get back to the basics.

Want to plan a more productive garden? There’s a session for that. Thinking about raising chickens or goats? We’ve got you covered. Curious about preserving your harvest, or even processing your own deer? They’re diving into it all—with experienced agents and specialists leading the way.

What makes this series special is its accessibility. It’s not just for the already-committed homesteader with a five-acre spread and a root cellar, the 1,000-acre farmer, or the backyard garden enthusiast. It’s for the curious, the cautious, the DIY dreamers who want to dip their toe into self-reliant living. It’s for the family who wants to teach their kids where eggs come from, the retiree eyeing a new backyard project, or the young couple trying to stretch their grocery budget with a fall garden.

There’s a reason homesteading has made its way back into the headlines and hashtags. In uncertain times, people are rediscovering the value of real skills, real food, and real community.

The *Back to the Land* series embraces both the tradition and the innovation that make modern homesteading possible—and rewarding.

- October 1 – Plot Perfect: Garden Planning for Abundant Harvests
- October 8 – Pest, Predators, and Protection
- October 15- Backyard to Barnyard: Small Farm Poultry Essentials
- October 29 – Deep Roots: Soil and Forage Strategies for Resilient Farms
- November 5 – Homestead Herds: Practical Livestock for Everyday Farmers
- November 12 – Pantry Power: Food Preservation for Self-Reliant Living
- December 10 – Harvest and Butcher: A Whitetail Processing Program

Sessions start at 6:00 p.m. each Wednesday, and the final program on December 10th will be held at the Bourbon County Fairgrounds. You can attend one or all—no cost, just a willingness to learn.

To register (or RSVP for the meal count), call 620-223-3720.

The modern homestead may look different than it did a hundred years ago—but the heart of it hasn't changed. It's still about making something meaningful from the land, however big or small your patch may be.

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