

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

Red Rover Pet Boarding

Keeping pets safe and happy while you have a good time

Story and photos by

Charlie Denison
Contributing Writer

Three years ago, Lewistown native Sarah Kolar took a risk by opening Red Rover Pet Boarding — a kennel located on Glengary Road that offers a wide variety of services for pets.

“This has been tremendously rewarding,” said Kolar, who spent years as a medical technician before branching out as a business owner.

Although she enjoyed being a med tech, this new direction suits her, she said, and it fills a niche in the community.

“When I was at the hospital, people would tell me they had their dog at home and didn’t know who could take care of their dog,” Kolar said. “Their pet was a paramount concern.”

Hearing this broke Kolar’s heart, so she took it upon herself to offer a place for pets.

Such a move wasn’t too out of the question for her, as she had the experience to back it up.

“All through college I worked as a vet tech and a kennel tech,” she said. “I’m pretty experienced handling all kinds of dogs.”

Doggie Day Care

After six months of operation, Kolar realized there was more she could do with the business than just kennel dogs — hence doggie day care.

“Doggie Day Care is quite popular,” Kolar said. “We go to town Monday through Friday in our dog bus — or Odyssey van — and we pick up dogs between 8:30 and 9 a.m. For an extra cost, dog handler Kyra Mikat will train the dogs.”

“It can get chaotic, but it’s a lot of



Sarah Kolar and one of her regulars pose for a picture.

fun,” Mikat added. “I’ve gained a lot of experience working with a lot of dogs, and have learned how to tell when a fight is about to break out.”

Dogs go home from Doggie Day Care around 4:30 to 5 p.m.

Kolar said she is thrilled to see people take advantage of the service regularly.

“It’s a good service because — if you live in town and you work all day — your dog is alone, and you are going to have some problems with that animal when you get home,” Kolar said. “The dogs like it, too. They think it’s fun.”

Groomer on board

As of September, Kolar also has a dog groomer: Annalysa Wareham.

“I went out to interview Sarah about watching my dogs while I was out of town. She showed me the space she had

for grooming and talked about how she wanted to learn more about how to do it, and things just evolved from there,” Wareham said.

Originally from Silverton, Oregon, Wareham used to run Lepooch, a dog grooming business. She moved to Lewistown in June and is glad to offer this service for the community.

“I’m here at Red Rover every Tuesday, and I’m happy to help people out with dog grooming needs,” she said. “I take care of all the basics: a bath, a brush out, a nail trim or something else. I can do any type of clip.”

Kolar said she’s enjoyed working with Wareham and is excited to continue this partnership.

“It’s great,” Kolar said. “We now have a fully equipped grooming salon.”

Quality time with the animals

Kolar said she often doesn’t feel like she’s at work.

“I get the customers, I do the Facebook page, I take a lot of pictures, but I also get a lot of time to hang out with the dogs,” she said. “Most dogs want to be social and play. They want to be with people. I rarely have problems with them — they just want to get along and have fun.”

Playing with the dogs doesn’t get old, Kolar said, nor does having the opportunity to help people feel comfortable leaving town without their canine companion.

“I’ve had people tell me they hadn’t left town in five years because they don’t know what to do with their dog,” Kolar said. “That’s why I tell them: you only live once. Leave your dog with me. It’ll be OK. Go have a good time.”

Kolar has 11 kennels available,

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

New metering system

Fergus Electric Cooperative is working with the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) on the design and development of a new metering system. Our current meter-reading system was originally installed beginning in 2005, and has become obsolete and the manufacturer is not guaranteeing it will be supported beyond December 31, 2020. Given how technology changes so rapidly, I am satisfied that the cooperative's old "turtle" metering system will have lasted for 15 years by the time it is replaced.

Beginning this summer, test meters and relays to communicate the meter reading to the office will be installed in part of the Hilger substation area. After the meters in the initial area around Hilger are installed, a series of testing will take place to make sure that the meters are being read and that the readings are relayed to the office. Office staff will then work with our software company, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) to generate the power bills and verify them for accuracy.

Later this fall and into 2020, the co-op plans to replace every meter and install relays for communicating across our entire service area. This is a big task for the co-op to complete, and we will likely be hiring contract help to assist us in successfully completing the meter installation for the entire system close to the date when our current system will no longer be supported.

We are working with NISC, to implement an Outage Management System (OMS) once the new meters are installed. The long-term goal is to install the OMS software program, which will alert the office immediately when the power goes off to a substation, an individual line and even an individual meter. We see this benefit as a significant improvement for both the member and the co-op. If the power should go out to a remote stock well, cabin or even to homes whose occupants are away at work during the

day or on vacation, the co-op will know immediately, and the power can be restored in a more timely manner.

With our current system, we rely on members to call when the power is off, which works well for large power outages, but not as well for individual meters. Sometimes we don't know for several days that an individual meter is out of power. Since we are continually looking for ways to improve service to our membership, we are excited by this aspect of a new metering system!

I will be providing additional updates about our new metering system in future *Manager's Messages*. The new metering system has many features and capabilities that will benefit the co-op and members alike. As always, I encourage you to continue to read the *Fergus Features* section in your monthly *Rural Montana* magazine to receive additional information and updates on the meter installation, as well as other happenings at the co-op.

Owning and installing solar panels or wind turbines (net metering)

Fergus Electric offers net metering to members of the co-op. When an account is net metered, the electricity produced by solar panels or wind turbines is used to offset electricity used by the member's house and outbuildings.

Fergus Electric currently has 24 members with net-metered accounts; 22 of them are for solar and two are for wind turbines. If asked during a conversation about net metering, which renewable energy I recommend, I would say solar panels, because they are simple and have no or few moving parts. Wind turbines have bearings and blades that gradually wear out from the turbulence and force of the wind.

The main reason I am writing about net metering today is to tell the members that it is very important to contact our engineers before purchasing and installing solar panels or wind turbines on your electric system that is served by the co-op. I cannot stress enough that safety is of the utmost importance for our membership, line crews and the general public! It is important to make sure that electricity generated from solar panels does not backfeed into the co-op's distribution lines. Power backfeeding into a distribution line is hazardous to line crews working on the lines, and if a power line is down due to a storm, then backfeeding is dangerous to the homeowner, the general public, livestock and wildlife. Secondly, the co-op has a limit on the size of net metering it will agree to be installed, so if you do decide to install solar panels to lower your electricity usage, please be sure to call 406-538-3465 and talk to engineers Guy Johnson, Melanie Foran or Monte Obert. They will be happy to answer your questions and provide you with the information you need before you invest in net metering.

Nominating committee seeks candidates

Fergus Electric annual meeting set for June 6

In accordance with Section 4.3 of Fergus Electric Cooperative's bylaws, the committee for selecting board candidates has been appointed and will meet this month.

In addition to candidates selected by the committee, any 15 or more members acting together from District 1 or District 6 may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Such nominations are to be posted where the committee list is posted. No other method of nominating candidates for directors is permitted.

Directors serve a term of three (3) years, and are elected by ballot at the

annual meeting of the membership.

At least two (2) candidates from District 1 (Rural Lewistown) and District 6 (Ryegate, Harlowton areas) will be nominated. Candidates must have their principal residence in the district from which they are selected.

Committee members are: District 1 – Scott Damby, 538-6133, Jayson Shobe, 535-5864, and Keith Geary, 366-1891; District 6 – Leslie Cavill, 568-2275, Jed Evjene, 537-4405, and Leon Lammers, 473-2280.

If you are interested in running for a position on the board, please contact one of the committees' members.

Red Rover

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but they book up quickly, so she recommends calling at least a week in advance. This steady business is largely thanks to return customers, who Kolar said account for around 60 percent of her business.

Kenneling, however, is just one aspect of Red Rover. Kolar is here to help with any and all pet needs.

“We are here to talk to you and help you find a solution to make your animal easier to live with, whether it’s a puppy or an older dog,” Kolar said. “We also want you to know you can leave your pet with us, and your pet will be safe and happy.”

Dogs spend most of their time outdoors at Red Rover, and, if they are social dogs, they spend that time playing with others.

Prices are reasonable, and discounts apply for extended stays. All dogs must be current on rabies, distemper and bordetella shots. Cats must be current on rabies and distemper vaccines. Kolar provides beds, dishes and some treats, but she does recommend people bring food for their pets and any prescribed medications.

All dogs are welcome.

“We take all kinds,” Kolar said, “from tiny dogs to big dogs. We also take cats and exotic pets, including birds.”

“We’ll take any kind of non-livestock pet,” Kolar added.



From left: dog handler Kyra Mikat, her dog, Morse, Red Rover owner Sarah Kolar and janitor Bella Martell stand by the Red Rover sign in front of the dog kennel. The business continues to rise in popularity.

Red Rover Pet Boarding Location Directions and Details –

Red Rover Pet Boarding is located at 24 McMillan Road. From Lewistown, turn left onto Glengary Road and you’ll see it on the right as you approach McMillan.

- Hours: 8-11 a.m. and 2-6 p.m., seven days a week
- Phone number: (406) 538-3142
- Website: www.redroverboarding.com

Red Rover Pet Boarding can also be found on Facebook: www.facebook.com/pg/Red.Rover24/

Lineman Scholarship Offered

Individuals interested in a career as an electrical lineman can apply for a \$6,000 scholarship offered by Fergus Electric Cooperative. The scholarship application is available at the co-op, on the co-op’s website — www.ferguselectric.coop — and via a link from the co-op’s Facebook page. Completed applications must be postmarked and returned to Fergus Electric no later than Friday, March 29, 2019. The successful applicant will be notified by April 30, 2019. This offer is open to students, and to men and women seeking a new career.



***Fergus Electric
Cooperative
will be closed
Presidents’ Day,
February 18***



Fellow Fergus Electric retirees extended their best wishes to Vangie McConnell during her retirement party held January 2, 2019. Pictured left to right: Tom Simons, former mechanic; Mike Stanley, former assistant manager; Vangie McConnell, former benefits administrator/communications; and Steve Balster, former general manager and former board director.

— Photo courtesy of Scott Sweeney

Identify Account Number*

Win a \$32.50 credit

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

Account 395315
Account 350603
Account 363900
Account 395579

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

*Numbers are drawn monthly.

Generator Safety

GENERATOR SAFETY

Standby electric generators can provide you with an extra sense of security in our unpredictable weather and occasional outages. We understand a generator can be a convenient source of power around your home or business. We ask that for the safety of you and our personnel, the generator be installed and used safely.

To protect yourself and your family, read and follow the safety instructions provided by the manufacturer. Before purchasing a generator, please consider how you'll be using it. That will help you buy a generator that is sized correctly for the application you need. Then, you'll need to know how and where to install it properly. Please notify the FEC office at 406-538-3465 if you have a generator installed on your premises. This will be noted on your account for the safety of our linemen in outage situations.

BACKFEEDING — A DANGEROUS CONDITION

Improperly connecting a generator or installing without the proper switch can produce "backfeed." This will produce a dangerous current, which can critically injure you or others. Backfeed into a power line from a generator can produce enough current to create "hot" power lines. This could severely injure or kill a lineman who expects the lines to be de-energized in an outage situation.

DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE

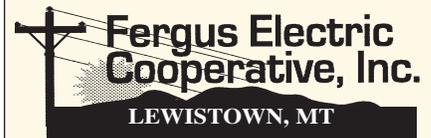
When using a generator, be sure to locate the generator outdoors, so poisonous carbon monoxide gas is exhausted. Never operate a generator in an enclosed building, especially a building which is attached or part of the home. Make sure it is properly vented and the generator has enough air to operate properly.

GENERATOR FUEL

Make sure the generator fuel is stored properly. If gasoline or diesel, make sure it is stored in approved containers and out of reach of children. Do not refuel when generator is hot or running. Use only fresh fuel or fuel that has been treated to extend its useful life.

OTHER SAFETY REMINDERS

- Always check the unit thoroughly each season before you fire it up.
- Never attempt to repair a generator, only a qualified serviceman should perform repairs.
- Don't remove or tamper with safety devices; they are there to protect you and your property.
- Many engine parts get very hot during operation; severe burns may result if touched.
- Keep children away from generators at all times.
- Always properly disconnect from your utility service before starting your backup generator.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala406-366-3374
Bret Ophus406-366-7523
Guy Johnson406-366-9170
Scott Sweeney406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)406-366-3465
David Dover406-366-1975
Melanie Foran406-462-5650

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Dale Rikala Operations Supervisor

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Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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428-2202

District 5: Terry Frost, Sec./Treas.,

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District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., President,

Geysler, 735-4476

Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.