

F E R G U S

FEATURES

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



Greg Carlson, DVM, and his staff at Horizon Vet Clinic are very pleased with the new and improved facility, which opened January 4. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON

HORIZON VET

VETERINARY CLINIC UNDERGOES MAJOR EXPANSION

Story by CHARLIE DENISON | contributing writer

CONSTRUCTION may have begun as recently as last April, but for Greg Carlson, DVM, the Horizon Vet Clinic expansion has been a dream for years, and that dream is finally a reality.

It's still a work in progress, but it's already refreshing, as it has functionally doubled the space of the previous facility.

"One of the biggest goals was to separate things out," said Greg, a Lewistown native. "We've done that:

everything in the middle of the clinic is small animal. Cows are on the south side and horses are on the north side. Before, my cattle chute was in the same room as my horse stocks."

"We've got three exam rooms we can send people to, and, as far as traffic flow is concerned, you can get anywhere in this building without any obstacles," Greg said. "There's room to work."

With a horse surgery operating

room, refrigerated rooms, kennels with easy access, a small animal isolation room, a calf isolation room and much more, Greg said he and his seven staff members consider the new-look Horizon Vet Clinic a blessing.

"It's more organized," Greg said, "simpler and still offers plenty of room for additions."

See HORIZON, page 7



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

I hope this message finds you well and looking forward to springtime. Weather conditions this winter ran the gamut from a fierce, record-breaking windstorm to nearly 60-degree temperatures to a snowstorm followed by a week of sub-zero temperatures. The last few months of winter have certainly impacted Fergus Electric Cooperative.

The extreme windstorm in January broke 21 power poles with outages affecting 1,982 Fergus Electric meters. Throughout the event, every Fergus Electric employee stepped up to ensure that the power was safely and quickly restored, and that our communications to the membership were reliable and up to date.

During large outages, please look for updates on the Fergus Electric Facebook page. Our employees do a fine job of identifying individual outages and estimating when we expect to have power restored. As we worked to recover from the storm, we noticed that many members experienced property damage from those brutal winds.

As you recognize and clean up building damage, always be mindful of broken and downed power lines. Treat all wires as energized, and call Fergus Electric to notify us of the problem.

AMI installation, line patrol, and tree-trimming progress

We continue to make progress on our AMI project. We have completed the AMI installation in Straw, Glen-garry and Winifred. We are now moving into the Roy, Lavina and Heath areas. We are also patrolling our overhead power lines in the Heath and Roy areas, identifying and recording maintenance and vegetation issues.

Winter weather ran the gamut



The windstorm in January broke 21 power poles and had outages affecting 1,982 Fergus Electric meters. | **FERGUS ELECTRIC PHOTO**

The town of Winifred is up next for tree trimming and afterwards CJZ Tree Services will move to the town of Winnett. We hope to see you out and about as we complete our work across the system.

Nominating committees to hold meetings in March

The nominating committees planned to meet in February, however, due to the frigid temperatures early in the month, the meetings were pushed to March. The list of 2021 nominating committees' members will be printed in the Roundup, Stanford and Lewistown newspapers. Members interested in running for a position on the board, who have their principal residence in District 3, 5 or 7, are encouraged to call a nominating committee member in your district.

Credit for solar-generated power on February bill

Members who purchased solar panels as part of our Phase 2 solar project will see your first month of credit from solar-generated power appear on your February billing statement. We are excited to see the amount of energy the panels generate increase as our sunny days grow longer. We still have panels for sale, so if you are interested in participating in this program, please contact our engineering department.

Annual enrollment of budget billing is in April

Speaking of bills, April is the enrollment month for budget billing. Budget billing allows members to have consistent monthly electric bills by spreading your annual usage evenly throughout the year. To enroll in budget billing, please call the office at 538-3465.

Spring forward on March 14

We expect to have a busy start to our construction season when the ground thaws. If your project plans for 2021 involve Fergus Electric, please call us soon to start the process. Our engineers were busy in 2020, and we anticipate 2021 to be even busier. As the days become longer, we will soon transition back to our summer hours schedule.

Beginning Monday, March 15, our office hours will be Monday – Thursday, 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. We will maintain this schedule until November 8, at which time we will return to a Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. schedule. RM

One of the biggest perks of the new facility, Greg said, is the easy entry access it provides for horses and cattle. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON



HORIZON

Continued from page 5

The old facility (next door to the new one on US-87) was originally a shop that former Horizon owner Scott Damby, DVM, converted into a clinic.

“It worked fine for one or two vets,” said Greg, who bought Horizon in 2005. “We just outgrew it.”

Greg explained that the expansion, which was a long time coming, “immensely increases the quality of care they are able to provide.”

“Let’s say someone wants a well-

“

It’s nice just having a separate exam room. I can go in and shut the door and converse without 10 other people around.

– **GREG CARLSON, DVM,**
Owner of Horizon Veterinary Clinic

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For more information or to schedule an appointment call Horizon Vet at (406) 538-6134.

ness check on their dog,” he said. “It’s nice just having a separate exam room. I can go in and shut the door and converse without 10 other people around. In the old clinic, there were a lot of times where I’d have to stick my head out the door and say, ‘hey, you guys be quiet for a minute.’ That’s not the case anymore, and that matters. It makes it easier to do a good job.”

Horizon officially opened the doors to the new clinic January 4. They had hoped to open earlier, but there were some setbacks.

“It wasn’t until June that construction really got started,” Greg said. “At first I was thinking Thanksgiving would be a reasonable time to open the doors on the new facility. We didn’t quite make that.”

Greg and his crew outgrew the previous facility years ago, so he was certainly anxious for the new clinic to open, but they stayed patient. When it did finally open, Greg said it was immediately worth the wait, a sentiment shared by staff and customers.

“The new clinic is great,” said Office Manager Roszelle Neill. “There’s no comparison.”

“There really isn’t,” Greg added. “It’s hard to imagine going back to that. Instead of asking someone to get out of the way, you have to ask, ‘hey, where’s Ashley?’”



Greg Carlson stands by the new cattle chute in the cattle section of the new clinic. “This is the biggest, baddest chute they make,” he said. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON

See HORIZON, next page

HORIZON

Continued from previous page

However not everyone was excited about the opening, as Greg's eldest daughter, Raya, needed time for the move to really sink in.

"Initially I wasn't super thrilled," she said. "My siblings and I grew up in the old clinic, and there are a lot of memories associated with it. But once we saw the plans for the new clinic and once things really started coming together, the improvement was obvious. As much as we all loved the old clinic, this one is so much better."

Alice, the Carlson's camel, however, still has reservations.

"She is not happy," Greg said, referencing that she still resides in front of the old location. "She misses the attention."

Soon, however, Greg said Alice will be moved closer to the new location.

"There's still a lot to be done," Greg added, "including, at some point, we'd like to have a grand opening. That's important to the crew, and I believe it's important to the community."

In the meantime, however, Greg and his fellow vets are accepting new clients and are excited to continue serving central Montana. RM

Budget billing enrollment is just around the corner

APRIL is the enrollment month for budget billing. Budget billing doesn't reduce your overall power bill; it just spreads the cost out over a 12-month period.

To qualify for the co-op's budget billing program, your account must be billed under a residential rate class, must have been active at that location for the past 12 months, and must be paid in full before converting to budget billing.

Once your residential account is set up as a budget billing account, to remain enrolled in the budget billing program, each month you must pay the full budget amount due by the due date. An account with an unpaid balance for two months will automatically be removed from the budget billing program.

You can always pay extra during warmer months so that you build up a cash cushion to use during the colder months. You can also enroll in auto pay and know that your electric account will be paid on time, each month.

In addition to April being the only

month for enrollment, it is also the "true-up" month for members already enrolled in budget billing. This means whether you have a credit or a balance due; your electric billing account will be adjusted accordingly.

We encourage members enrolled in budget billing to monitor their monthly usage and look at the current charges.

Compare last year's usage to the same month's usage in the current year. If there is a significant difference, is there an explanation? If you cannot determine why there is a change in your usage, call the office at 406-538-3465, and we can look at your daily usage history to help identify when your meter began showing more usage. This often helps members determine the cause, i.e., a worn-out refrigerator or possibly a heater that has been left turned on, or maybe due to the pandemic family members been home a lot more recently.

April is just weeks away. If you are interested in enrolling in the budget billing program, now is the time to call (406) 538-3465 and sign up. RM

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 48655 ● Account 396453
Account 394951 ● Account 396272
Account 319584 ● Account 396237**

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

James Cockayne of Lavina was last month's winner!

**Numbers are drawn monthly.*



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 Rikala	406-366-3374
Bret Ophus	406-366-7523
Scott Olson	406-366-5822
Carson Sweeney	406-366-0971
Bret Nellermoe (Roundup)	406-939-0636
Melanie Foran	406-462-5650
Dan Balster	406-366-0975

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