



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Roger Stockton, Kansas State University agronomist, visited with local farmers at a wheat tour plot 10 miles south of Levant this morning. Stockton and Thomas County extension agent Dennis Chandler outlined the effects of a hot, dry summer, extremely wet fall and a cold winter on the wheat.

Test plot reveals challenges for wheat producers locally

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

Dennis Chandler said growing wheat this year has been “challenging.” The Thomas County extension agent, along with agronomist Roger Stockton and agricultural economist Dan O’Brian, both from Kansas State University, spoke to a group of area farmers at the K-State extension plot, about 10 miles south of Levant this morning.

O’Brian spoke briefly, telling the group that wheat futures were up a little. July Kansas City wheat closed Friday at \$3.35-3.38.

“At least there is a 3 in the front,” he quipped.

O’Brian told farmers what most of them already knew, that Kansas farmers, wheat and corn, dryland and irrigators, are depending on high yields and high prices for a decent profit margin.

Stockton said the dry summer combined with the wet fall to keep farmers out of the fields until late fall.

Stockton told farmers the only factor in yield they can

directly control is the number of plants per acre.

“For every month late, you need to plant 25 percent more seed,” he said.

Stockton also said using seed with at least 57 pound test weight would pay dividends. “You’ll see a 4-10 bushel increase between 57-60 pound seed,” he said.

Brown described the plot to farmers. It was planted on Oct. 2 and had five inches of rain prior in the fall and 4 1/2 in the spring. “We also had the snow,” he said.

The only serious disease stress this year was stripe rust, a Pacific Northwest disease. “Our records back to 1918 don’t say anything about it,” he said.

As a result, Kansas wheat has very little resistance to it. “Jaegger has some resistance, and some others tolerate it,” he said.

Extreme weather has also had its effect. An April freeze with wind killed some emerging heads, but Stockton said the wheat seemed to be recovering from that.

Stockton seemed to be philosophical about the whole thing, “These are the problems this year.”

High speed chases keep lawmen on the go Sunday

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

Law enforcement officials were involved in two high speed chases on Sunday — a local woman responding to an emergency situation for Citizens Medical Center and an earlier incident involving a stolen vehicle from Idaho. Both were arrested and jailed, authorities said.

In the second chase on Sunday involving Margaret Staats, 35, a local woman, who was traveling west on U.S. Highway 24 from Menlo at around 10:38 p.m. According to Jones, deputies clocked her vehicle east of Colby at 85 mph in a 65 mph speed zone.

“The deputy (Jim Engle) tried to stop her by using his warning lights, but she just didn’t yield to the officer,” Jones said.

At times, Jones said, the vehicle reached speeds in excess of 90 mph. In total, according to Jones, Deputy Engle chased the vehicle for six or seven miles and all attempts to make the vehicle stop failed.

As the car approached the edge of Colby near the Stop-2-Shop Total sta-

tion, Colby police officers assisted the deputy by placing stop sticks out to deflate the tires.

After the vehicle was stopped, Jones said that Staats said she was called in by the hospital on an emergency ambulance call with Stratton, Colo. However, she was arrested on charges of eluding authorities and speeding.

“In order for this to have been legal,” Jones said, “a person would need to approach the board of Thomas County Commissioners and ask for a license permitting them to carry a red light on their vehicle — otherwise, the authorities must act on speeding vehicles — regardless of the reason.”

In this situation, Jones said it would have made matters much less complicated had Staats stopped and explained to the officer what was going on. “She might still have gotten a speeding ticket,” he said, “but the incident wouldn’t have escalated as far as it did.”

The first chase occurred at 8:15 a.m., said Jones, after Deputy Ken Patton saw a vehicle that matched the description of the one involved in a gas skip at

a Goodland station earlier.

Jones said, in addition to the gas skip, the vehicle, a 1983 white Buick, was also reported stolen from Canyon County, Idaho and the suspect was 27-year-old Angel Horne of, Roanoke, Va. “Patton pulled the car over at mile marker 57 in the eastbound lane of I-70,” Jones said.

In Patton’s report, the driver put his hands on his head and asked if he were being arrested.

When the deputy told Horne he was under arrest, the man took off and for the next three to four miles tried to elude capture, Jones said. “In doing so, he tried to run Deputy Patton off the road twice by hitting the patrol car.”

After hitting the patrol car the second time, Patton pulled his revolver and shot out the right front tire, causing the Buick to stop near the Mingo interchange at mile marker 61, Jones said.

“This time, the suspect did not resist arrest,” Jones said, “and he’s currently being held in jail on charges of eluding authorities, felony fleeing the scene, gas theft and charges in Idaho.”

Corn prediction questioned

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

Area farmers and agriculture agents said the projections by Kansas State University agriculture economist Bill Tierney are premature, to say the least.

In an AP story on Friday, Tierney predicted a bumper corn crop, the largest ever recorded in the state.

“Only an ag economist would make corn predictions in the spring,” said

Mike Brown, who farms about 800 acres of corn south of Levant.

Roger Stockton, agronomist for K-State, said, “There’s a lot of summer left to be making those kinds of predictions.” Even with a good harvest, making a profit might be hard this year, especially for irrigated land.

Dan O’Brian, K-State agricultural economist for northwest Kansas, said increases in gas and nitrogen fertilizer

prices were putting additional pressure on the market.

“It’s going to be a challenge to make money on irrigated corn,” he said. O’Brian’s figures actually showed a loss with \$1.86 corn at 180 bushels an acre. “The gas and nitrogen prices we used have abated a little,” he said.

Thomas County extension agent Dennis Chandler summed it up, “It’s just too early to tell.”

Airport matter on city agenda

Approval of an airport management agreement will top the list of old business on the Colby City Council agenda Tuesday, at 7 p.m., at City Hall.

Mayor Warren Hixson directed airport board chairman Paul Steele at the last council meeting, May 22, to come back with a proposal that met the budget after the board requested an increase of \$400 per month immediately and another \$130 in June of 2002 for a fixed base operator.

City manager Carolyn Armstrong told the board in the agenda that she hoped to have a final proposal by their meeting.

First ‘Picnic in the Park’ of 2001 on tap Thursday

By TOM (TD) DREILING
Free Press Publisher

Thursday will be the first of eight *Picnic(s) in the Park* stretching through July 26.

The picnics, featuring local musical talent, are a popular noontime attraction at Fike Park and this year are being jointly sponsored by the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, the Colby Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Colby Free Press.

Bring a lunch, lawn chair or blanket and join your friends, neighbors and businesspeople who take time to enjoy this outdoor activity.

Thursday’s initial picnic will feature Larry Booth. On June 14, Shawna Eberle will be in the featured entertainer, with Sappa Strings (Wayne & Millie Lauritsen) on June 21, the McLemore Family on June 28, the Jeff Wagoner Family on July 5 and Shannon Myers on July 12.

Entertainment for July 19 and 26 will be announced later.

Investigators probe possible price-fixing in Hoisington clean up

HOISINGTON (AP) — Barton County is investigating possible price-fixing and fraudulent clean-up contracts connected to the tornado that destroyed much of Hoisington.

In a copyright story Sunday, the Wichita Eagle said Barton County officials are checking alleged improprieties at the burn pit used to dispose of debris after the tornado, which hit April 21. Some alleged problems include:

—Contractors who originally signed on as volunteers later submitted bills for thousands of dollars in government emergency funds. Contracts may have been written after much of the work was done and backdated so they would be eligible for federal reimbursement.

—A Barton County official says she has verified that a private contractor — the brother of the County Commission’s chairman — billed the county for labor that was actually per-

formed by county employees.

—A demolition contractor said he raised his fee after a county official in charge of the site met with him and other contractors at a bar and told them to make their rates the same.

FEMA spokesman David Teska said he is aware of the alleged improprieties and is waiting for Barton County’s investigation.

“We certainly want to find out about fraud or any collusion to commit fraud,” he said. The agency might take further action “if we get any tangible evidence of collusion or fraud.”

Brothers Roger and Kirby Krier are at the center of the controversy. Roger Krier is a former reserve deputy sheriff who was stripped of his badge for his activities after the disaster.

Kirby Krier is chairman of the Barton County Commission and the chief liaison between the disposal operation and the other commissioners.

Kirby Krier is believed to have run the burn pit, while Roger Krier’s company was one of the chief bulldozer operators at the pit.

The bill from Roger Krier’s company, Krier Dozer Services Inc., has drawn the most intense scrutiny. Krier submitted bills as high as \$19,675 for bulldozer work immediately after the tornado; he filed two subsequent bills for the same work that dropped to \$11,465.

But witnesses told the Eagle that Krier rarely worked at the burn pit, and that a county worker operated his bulldozer — work that was later allegedly billed to the county.

At the same time the work was being performed at the burn pit, Krier was also handling one of the biggest commercial contracts in the wake of the tornado, the demolition and removal of Hoisington’s supermarket. The owner of the supermarket has said Roger

Krier was working there from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the first three weeks after the tornado.

And Duane Alapai, a Wichita city worker sent to Hoisington to help at the burn pit, said Krier “was hardly ever out there.”

“He left his machine there, but he wasn’t running it. The county guy was using it,” Alapai said.

County Commissioner Patty Linsner-Hansen, who represents the Hoisington area, said the county public works department confirmed to her that a county employee operated Krier’s bulldozer.

Roger Krier’s bill did not differentiate between the hours when he operated his equipment and the time when county employees allegedly ran it.

County records indicate that Krier Dozer has twice changed its bill to the county, dropping it from \$19,675 down to \$11,465 after deleting charges in-

cluding one for Roger Krier’s services as “coordinator.”

Roger Krier was stripped of his job as an unpaid reserve sheriff’s deputy after allegations that he ordered volunteer contractors to shut down their equipment and leave Hoisington.

The newspaper said Kirby Krier did not return phone messages seeking comment on his actions in the tornado cleanup. And it said Roger Krier declined to comment.

Linsner-Hansen said she has also asked the county to investigate the \$85 per hour charged by all five companies that had bulldozers at the burn pit. The owner of one of the companies said it was not a coincidence.

Bobcat Backhoe of Hoisington filed a bill on April 29 for \$68.50 an hour, its regular rate. On May 8, the bill was refiled for the \$85 rate.

The company’s owner, Rob Goreham, said he was told to change

his price during an informal meeting at a tavern. Goreham said the operators were told that they should all charge the same rates so their bills wouldn’t raise questions from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is reimbursing the county for expenses resulting from the disaster.

Last week, he withdrew his bill for \$1,700, telling the county to consider his time and equipment use a donation.

Abe Prosser of Prosser Dirt Construction of Claflin, said he was not involved in any discussions on what to charge for work at the burn pit.

Linsner-Hansen said she is concerned that the bills violated FEMA rules. She said FEMA told her it would pay for work at the burn pit only if the county had committed to paying for it soon after the tornado.

And contracts made more than 72 hours after the tornado would have to be competitively bid, FEMA told her.

Briefly

Weather: Turning warmer

A turn to warmer weather is on the horizon for the Colby area, if the forecast issued this morning by the National Weather Service can be taken to heart. Here is what it says:

Tonight, mostly cloudy, low around 50, a 40 percent chance for thunderstorms and north winds 10-20 mph and gusty; Tuesday, partly sunny, high around 70 and east winds 5-15 mph; Tuesday night, mostly cloudy, a slight chance (20 percent) for thunderstorms and a low around 50; Wednesday through Friday, low in the 50s and the high in the 80s. There was 0.05 inches of rain over the weekend, and that coupled with the 0.03 inches on Friday gives Colby 0.08 inches for the month to date. The weekend temperatures:

highs, 85 on Friday, 73 on Saturday and 68 on Sunday; lows, 45 on Saturday, 49 on Sunday and 47 this morning. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 66 degrees. The records for June 4: 98 in 1958 and 38 in 1916. (*The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.*)

School board meeting today

The Colby School Board will meet in the boardroom of the administration building, 210 N. Range, at 7 p.m. Monday night. Items on the agenda include approval of the Northwest Kansas Technical College advisory board representative, Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce

dues, school lunch, breakfast and special milk programs, along with out-of-district attendance and transportation. The board will also discuss supplemental contracts for the next school year.

College considers Internet bids

The Colby College Board of Trustees are meeting today at 5 p.m. in the board room at Thomas Hall administration building.

Items to be discussed or approved include bids for Internet access, Bedker Memorial Complex mural, student-trustee dinner comments, swim club request and negotiations.

Craft fair expanding

The Colby Girl Scouts are once again organizing the October Craft-a-Ganza craft fair. Crafters and antique dealers can call Barnum at 462-6503

Group needs officers

Colby Secondary Parent Teacher Student Association still need officers for the year 2001-2002. Call 462-7188.

Free compost available

The Thomas County landfill has compost to give away free to whoever will come and get it. If there are any questions, call Larry Jumper, landfill director, at 462-8139.

