

# Harvest produces surprises

By PATTY DECKER

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Farmers and experts alike have been pleasantly surprised with the higher than average test weights on this year's wheat crop.

"In Sheridan and Gove Counties," said Brian Olson, multi-county extension agronomist with Kansas-State University, "producers have been cutting their best wheat first and are getting 60 lbs. per bushel and 50 bushels per acre." Olson said that he was expecting to see maybe 56 to 57 lbs. test weight, but hitting 60 lbs. is much better than expected considering the dry temperatures.

"We've been seeing some nice, thick and plump kernels in the fields and not as much shriveled up as many would have thought due to the lack of moisture," he said.

In addition, Olson predicts that Gove County will be seeing a better yield overall than Thomas County.

However, he said that he believes Norton, Decatur, Sheridan, Gove, Trego and Thomas will be down about 10 bushels from county averages for wheat. In Colby, the county



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

The wheat harvest is now in full swing in northwest Kansas and Tuesday evening crews were busy combining east of Gem on the field of Maxine Neville. Condition of the crop varies from location-to-location.

average is anywhere from 35 to 40 bushels, which would mean average bushels per acre this year would be hovering in the 25 bushel per acre

range. "I hope that I am wrong about this," he said Tuesday, "but we all know wheat has nine lives and just when we think its gone — that resilient

The harvest also brought to an end the Colby Free Press/area businesses *Harvest Countdown* contest. Who won? Please see page 3 for details.

crop might surprise us again."

Safety concerns are always something that farmers and the general public should be aware of during the har-

vest season, he said.

"Motorists need to be cautious when coming up behind combines and other machinery," he said.

# Bush looks to Arabs to help reform Palestinian Authority

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush is looking for support from Arab leaders in his unprecedented campaign to remove Yasser Arafat and overhaul the Palestinian Authority.

But his spokesman said Tuesday that Bush also was very worried about Israel's future unless a Palestinian state is created.

"The president has planted the seeds for peace and now it's up to the parties to nurture those seeds and grow them,"

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said as Bush flew to Arizona to inspect wildfire damage.

The speech Monday, however, demanded far more of the Palestinians than of Israel, including the ouster of Arafat.

The incentive, Bush made clear in a

historic speech Monday, is propelling the Palestinian people to "a life of hope for your children" in a state committed to democracy and the rule of law.

That state, Bush said hopefully, could stand alongside Israel in three years' time, with an open society and a thriving economy.

Bush is depending on soundings American diplomats have taken in the Arab world.

Determined to see a Palestinian state and Israel driven off the West Bank and out of Gaza, Arab leaders are said to be quietly backing reform.

But the Arabs appear to have a different agenda. Egypt and Jordan, considered closest to the United States, are putting their emphasis, now at least, on urging the Bush administration to re-

verse the drive Israel has undertaken against Arafat and the Palestinians on the West Bank in response to recent suicide attacks.

This the administration refuses to do. Again on Monday, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher supported Israel's right to defend itself although he urged the Israeli government to consider the consequences of its actions. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pledged to widen his military offensive against Palestinian extremists to the Gaza Strip.

Both Arafat and Sharon welcomed the president's remarks, finding favorable elements.

Arafat said the speech represented "a serious effort to push the peace process forward," while Sharon's office said

"genuine reforms and a new leadership" could clear the way to a diplomatic settlement.

Former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who headed the commission that developed the peacemaking plan the administration has been following, suggested replacement of Arafat could backfire.

"There's a risk that someone from Hamas or Islamic Jihad could succeed Arafat, which would make it much, much worse than the current situation," Mitchell said on NBC's "Today."

Secretary of State Colin Powell, on the other hand, said he was confident there were people in the Palestinian community "who are responsible, who are committed to peace, who are against terror."

"We hope these leaders will emerge," Powell said on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

The Arab American Institute said the Arab community was gravely disappointed by Bush's laying out "stark ultimatums" for the Palestinians. The group said Bush had totally ignored the "desperate reality" brought about by Israel's occupation.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, welcomed what he said was a presidential call for "hard compromises" by both Israel and the Palestinians.

"Israel should refrain from actions which will jeopardize the long-term prospects of peace," he said in a statement.

## Briefly

### Rain sneaks in after dark

More 90s can be expected in the Colby region through early next week, reports the National Weather Service in its daily forecast issued at 11:15 this morning. And a little bit of rain also feel Tuesday night. The 90s will prevail through next Tuesday at least, with overnight lows through the period in the 60s. Thunderstorm/shower chances range from 30 to 40 percent through the weekend, with winds generally out of the south 10-20 mph, but stronger in the area of the thunderstorms. Colby's high Tuesday was 98 and the overnight low this morning was a very comfortable 61. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 84 degrees. Colby received 0.14 inches of precipitation during Tuesday night's thunderstorm, bringing the total for the month to 1.42 inches. Willie Engelhardt at Mingo reported 0.11 inches in last night's thunderstorm. The records for June 26: 108 in 1936 and 42 in 1958. td. (*The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.*)

### Car hits pedestrian in Colby

Early Tuesday, shortly after 6 a.m., a pedestrian walking on Willow Road in front of the Holiday Inn Express was struck by the vehicle driven by Dale A. Wolf of Colby, according to the Colby Police Department. Nancy Craig of Lawrenceburg, La. was walking on the right-hand side of the road with a friend when she was struck by the car. Craig was taken by ambulance to Citizens Medical Center where she was treated for a broken leg. Wolf was not hurt in the accident, police said.

### Trash schedule changes

The City of Colby Sanitation Department will not be operating on Thursday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day, said Gerry Bieker, public works director. Thursday's residential grass will be picked up on Friday, July 5, along with the regular residential solid waste route. For questions, call 462-4410.

### Wall of Support offered

The Thomas County Fair is offering the community a place to come together as family and celebrate what is best about living in Northwest Kansas, said Mark Miller, fair board president. "The objective of the Thomas County Fair Wall of Support is to generate financial and community support for the Fair in a way that will also benefit donors.

For those interested, call either Mark Miller at 462-6347 or Mark Anderson at 687-3731.

### Free fans available

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross has allotted money to purchase fans for those in need, said Molly Oliver, disaster chair. The fans are free and need not be returned, she said. For those interested, call the Red Cross office at (785) 462-7161 or call board members Dave Evert (785) 694-2633 or Duane Unger (785) 462-6177. In the event that no one is available at the office, Oliver said to leave a message and a Red Cross representative will contact you.

### Recycling center takes phone books

The Thomas County Recycling Center is taking old telephone books at its collection site, 720 E. College Dr. in Colby. Those wanting to drop off the books should use the magazine bins, coordinators said.

### Queen applications sought

Applications are being sought for the Thomas County Rodeo Queen and Princess pageant, said Trudy Wildeman, coordinator. The pageant will be held Friday, July 26, and anyone interested in an application form is asked to contact Wildeman at (785) 462-2848. The saddle, which will be awarded to the 2002 Rodeo Queen, is now on display at "OutWest," located in the Southwind Plaza.

### Rexford readies for July event

Rexford PRIDE will be holding its Farmers/Flea Market on Saturday July 6. The annual citywide garage sale will also be held at the same time. Lunch will be available. The Farmers/Flea Markets are held on the first Saturday of each month. June's was termed a success by organizers with nine vendors present. Anyone interested in participating as a vendor or needing additional information should contact Peg Greenwood at (785) 687-3925.

### Football sign-up urged

There is still room on the rosters, so any 5th or 6th graders interested in playing Federation Football (similar to Pop Warner) this fall need to contact the following: 5th grade — Chris Erickson at 462-3890 after 5 p.m.; 6th grade — Brian Wolf at 443-2407. Team size is limited to 22 players per team, so interested players are encouraged to sign-up as soon as possible.

# Eighteen Hays children getting rabies shots

HAYS (AP) — Eighteen children began a series of rabies shots Tuesday after they were exposed to a rabid kitten, which caught the disease after fighting with a skunk.

The children, ranging from toddlers to older teenagers, played with the kitten during the last two weeks, Health Administrator Butch Schlyer told the Ellis County Commission on Monday.

Schlyer said the kitten, which was owned by a rural Ellis County family,

fought with a skunk around June 7 but didn't appear to have been bitten. A veterinarian told the family to watch the kitten, and it became ill a few days later. The kitten was taken to Kansas State University, where tests found it did have rabies, most likely caused by the skunk. The skunk was not captured.

Although it is impossible to know if all the children were exposed, most parents chose to have their children start the vaccination series, he said.

# Shooting rampage suspect arrested in Birmingham

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — A convicted killer charged with capital murder in the shootings of five people earlier this month was arrested Tuesday night in Alabama, the FBI said.

Darrell L. Stallings, 32, was arrested around 7:30 p.m. in Birmingham, Ala. after he scuffled with FBI agents who waited for him at the Greyhound bus stop where he planned to change buses and continue on to Charlotte, N.C., FBI spokesman Jeff Lanza said.

Authorities also apprehended Stallings' girlfriend, 18-year-old Patrice Hickmon, unharmed. Hickmon disappeared after the shootings, and it was not immediately known whether she had been held against her will, Lanza said. An investigation led authorities to believe Stallings was in Greenville, Miss., and had gotten onto a bus headed to Charlotte, N.C. An undercover FBI agent and a sheriff's deputy boarded the bus in Meridian, Miss., but waited to arrest Stallings to

protect other passengers, Lanza said.

The law enforcement officers remained on the bus through several stops until Stallings and Hickmon got off in Birmingham, Ala. where the FBI and Birmingham police were waiting.

Stallings, who was paroled in August after serving 12 years for two second-degree murder convictions in Wyandotte County, is now charged with five counts of capital murder, attempted first-degree murder, criminal discharge of a firearm and possession of a firearm as a felon. A judge set bond at \$2.5 million.

A second defendant, Errik Harris, 26, is charged with four counts of capital murder, attempted first-degree murder and criminal discharge of a firearm.

Harris and Stallings are accused of killing Melvin Montague, 34; Samantha Sigler, 24; Destiny Wiles, 23; and Trina Jennings, 26, who was seven months pregnant.

# WorldCom gets close to bankruptcy

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — WorldCom Inc. spiraled toward the brink of bankruptcy after the long-distance giant reported that it disguised \$3.8 billion in expenses in what appears to be one of the largest cases of accounting fraud ever.

With the stunning revelation, WorldCom became the latest in a line of companies to be struck by accounting scandals that have shaken public faith in corporate America.

WorldCom, the nation's No. 2 long-distance carrier, said Tuesday that more than \$3 billion of expenses in 2001 and \$797 million in the first quarter of 2002 were wrongly listed on company books as capital expenses, thus not reflected in its earnings results.

That means the company may have actually lost millions of dollars when it reported profits. The Clinton, Miss.-based company said it will restate earnings for all of 2001 and the first quarter of 2002.

"Our senior management team is shocked by these discoveries," said CEO John Sidgmore, who was appointed in April to replace Bernard Ebbers amid questions about the company's growth and finances.

WorldCom also announced Tuesday that its chief financial officer, Scott Sullivan, has been fired. In addition, the company said it would lay off 17,000 workers beginning Friday.

The news could be the final blow to WorldCom, which is reeling from a low stock price, a crumbling telecommunications market and an ongoing Securities and Exchange Commission investigation.

"Clearly, it means ... that the company has made a few giant leaps toward bankruptcy," said John C. Hodulik, an analyst for UBS Warburg.

WorldCom's sudden fall comes at a time when the nation is dealing with a rash of corporate scandals that have rattled Wall Street and created a flood of shareholder lawsuits.

Enron Corp. collapsed last year in what was the biggest bankruptcy in the nation's history amid revelations that it kept millions of dollars in losses off the books through shady accounting practices. Scandals followed at several other big-name companies, including Tyco International Ltd., Global Crossing and Adelphia Communications, which filed for bankruptcy Tuesday.

The accounting firm that audited WorldCom's financial statements during 2001 and the first quarter of 2002 was Arthur Andersen LLP, which was convicted of obstruction of justice for shredding documents as Enron tumbled.

Andersen said its work for WorldCom was in compliance with SEC standards.

"It is of great concern that important information about line costs was withheld from Andersen auditors by the chief financial officer of WorldCom. The WorldCom CFO did not tell Andersen about the line cost transfers nor did he consult with Andersen about the accounting treatment," Chicago-based Andersen said.

The SEC said in a statement late Tuesday that WorldCom's disclosures "confirm that accounting improprieties of unprecedented magnitude have been committed in the public markets."

The agency said it has ordered WorldCom to file "under oath, a detailed report of the circumstances and specifics" of the accounting problems.

The Washington Post, citing unnamed sources, reported today that the Justice Department had begun a criminal investigation.

WorldCom, second to only AT&T in the long-distance market, grew from a small long-distance company into a telecommunications force through more than 60 acquisitions in the past 15 years. The growth was stopped in 2000 when federal and European regulators blocked WorldCom's proposed \$129-billion merger with Sprint Corp., citing competition concerns.

Still, WorldCom's stock was one of the better performers of the late 1990s. The stock traded as high as \$15 in January of this year, but has stumbled ever since over concerns about the company's \$32 billion in debt, slowing revenues and the SEC investigation.

