

‘Signs’ gets two thumbs up from critic and daughter

A masterfully done film is the new Mel Gibson movie “Signs.” My daughter Krista and I went to see this movie Saturday evening at the Colby Cinema & Arcade.

From the opening music and credits, all the way through to its ending, this movie was simply great. Emotions and reactions from the crowd ranged from laughter to intense suspense.

All throughout the movie there were tidbits of humor offered by the cast, and just when you think it’s safe to laugh, they hit you with a scary scene. At least I thought they were scary, Krista just sat there and smiled.

If you like the alien invasion type movies complete with their take over the world scenarios, then you’ll most definitely want to see this movie. I’ve said it before; I have never seen a movie where Gibson to play a part of a Priest, and a very

Jeff Owen

• Owen’s Review

convincing role he has. Most everybody has questioned his or her faith from time to time.

I know I have! Somehow, we seem to return to our faith when times get hard or we find that the crisis demands more from us than we can handle ourselves.

Gibson responds in this movie like most of us would in real life, I believe.

I highly encourage you to go and see “Signs.” You’ll be glad to have paid the price of admission afterwards.

I asked Krista what rating she’d give “Signs.” Krista said it deserved a five out of five. I agree, so I give “Signs” five out of five crop circle “signs.” I’ll see you at the movies!

Sherman County’s dryland corn lost, expert says

By RACHELL MISCALL

The Goodland Daily News

GOODLAND — No amount of rain can save the dryland corn, Sherman County crop specialists say, and even irrigated plants that are watered every day are starting to die.

And it’s not just the corn that’s in danger.

Extreme drought and scorching heat are damaging and killing all of the fall crops, as Sherman County ended July more than three inches below the normal rainfall level for the month and almost 9 inches below normal for the year.

Mike Lammers, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Goodland, said it was the third driest July in history and if the dry spell continues, it could be one of the driest years on record.

“We’re really, really getting dry,” he said.

David Snyder, grain merchandiser at Frontier Equity Exchange, said it’s safe to say all of the dryland corn is dead or severely damaged from drought and hot weather. He said he hasn’t taken a

close look at the irrigated corn, but has heard it’s suffering, too.

Snyder said all you have to do is look at a dryland corn field to know something is wrong. The plants are only about knee high, brown and shriveled. “What you see is what you got,” he said.

It’s pretty much the same story for all of the fall crops, Snyder said, adding that the summer harvest was disappointing, and the fall picking likely will be, too.

Fall crops include corn, sunflowers, milo, pinto beans, soybeans, millet and alfalfa, and are usually harvested around mid-September or later.

“It’s going to be a pretty slim year all the way around,” Snyder said.

Dana Belshe, the Sherman County agriculture extension agent, agreed.

He said the dryland corn has no yield potential left, and the hot, dry weather is starting to kill the irrigated corn.

Belshe said some irrigated plants aren’t getting enough water to survive because the heat is causing moisture to evaporate off the ground and plants quicker than the farmer can put it on.

“They’re losing more moisture than they can put on in a rotation of circle,” he said.

Several farmers have stopped watering part of each field, Belshe said, so they can devote more water to a smaller area.

Dean Graber, an independent crop consultant, said there is no irrigation system that can keep up with the current evaporation and transpiration rate. Some farmers have abandoned part of their corn crop, he said, and have been pumping as much water as they are allowed, but it’s still not enough.

“I don’t even want to go to work,” he said. “I don’t want to go out in the field and look at it.”

Graber said it’s the driest year he’s seen since 1976.

Belshe said the irrigated corn is having to draw its moisture from water that’s been stored in the ground. But the water reserves are going fast, he said, because previous dry years have reduced the amount of moisture in the soil.

“I usually check soil moisture down to four feet,” Graber said. “This year I’m lucky if I can get the stick in the ground.”

The crop’s future was unsure from the beginning, Belshe said, because much of the corn was planted in water-depleted soil.

Some irrigated corn was planted in ground with decent water reserves, he noted, and those plants are struggling, but are managing to hang on. He said there is a lot of variety in the condition of the irrigated crop.

Belshe said farmers are deciding what to do with their burned-up crop.

Some are thinking about cutting it for feed, he said, but they may not even be able to give it to cattle.

The weak, damaged plants aren’t able to filter out nitrates — a chemical in fertilizer — they pick up in the soil, Belshe said, and the chemical can harm livestock.

He said nitrates can cause cattle to abort their babies.

Belshe said alfalfa hay will likely be in higher demand this year because there will be a shortage of feed, but that irrigated crop is not growing well, either.

Graber said the part of the corn crop that isn’t killed by drought could be sucked dry by spider mites. He said the mites, which suck the moisture out of plants, love hot, dry weather, and could pose a serious problem this year. “The hotter it is,” he said, “the faster they go.”

Farmers with mite problems have to decide whether it’s worth spending the money to spray chemicals to kill the bugs, Graber said.

He said some are spraying, hoping at least part of their crop will produce decent yields.

Graber said the weather is causing the fragile blooms on the pinto bean plants to fall off.

“They’re small and tender,” he said, “and the wind knocks them right off. The plants look healthy, but when you get close you notice there are hardly any beans on them.”

Snyder said many farmers will have only one option this fall harvest, and that is to collect on their insurance.

“The thing to do is go talk to your crop insurance adjuster,” he said.

Candidate Wilson’s theme: ‘more efficiency, not waste’

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

Lonnie Wilson, a self-employed farmer from Colby, is running against Ron Evans, incumbent District #1 county commissioner, in Tuesday’s Republican primary.

“I’m a conservative,” Wilson said. “I

want to see more efficiency, not waste.”

He said, “I think taxes are a definite concern, I don’t think they should be raised.”



Lonnie Wilson

Wilson is concerned with the no-fund warrants that apply to the county landfill. “I think they ought to focus more on recycling,” he said, “instead of just digging more pits.”

He would also like to see the county shop run a little better. “With the amount of equipment and personnel

they have, they should be a lot more efficient.” Wilson said that the little things ought to be what matter. “When you have a concern, it shouldn’t fall through the cracks.”

Wilson is a life-long resident of Thomas County, and he and his wife Lori have six children.

Prairie dogs remain fair game for hunting in Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Some people might think of prairie dogs as cuddly little critters who look like they might make nice pets.

But to Beverly Atkins, there’s nothing cute about what the animals do to her family’s ranch.

Many ranchers see prairie dogs as expensive intruders that destroy their land, mowing down acres of grass needed for cattle and creating bumps and holes in once-flat pastures.

“If Lewis and Clark would have looked rather than listened, they would not have been called prairie dogs.”

“They would have been called prairie rats,” Atkins said, referring to the

19th-century explorers who came across the creatures.

“Any pasture they get into, they completely destroy.”

Nebraska ranchers were relieved in July when state officials declined to classify the black-tailed prairie dog as a species in need of conservation. Such a designation would have meant restrictions on when the animals could be hunted on public land.

While killing prairie dogs on private land and most state land would still have been allowed, landowners worried that prairie dogs would multiply on small pockets of public land and spread into private property.

Conservationists have vowed to continue fighting for the designation.

“It’s not done. This was just round one,” said Tyler Sutton, president of the Conservation Alliance of the Great Plains. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants Nebraska and 10 other states to enact their own conservation plans to keep the animals off the federal list of threatened species.

But it appears unlikely Nebraska will do so soon.

In addition to refusing additional protections for prairie dogs, the state Game and Parks Commission adopted a resolution not to conduct future studies or develop a prairie dog conserva-

tion plan. Commissioner Connie Lapaseotes, who introduced the resolution, said there’s no conclusive evidence that the animals need conservation. Lapaseotes said the cost of pursuing the issue is too high, considering the state’s ongoing budget crisis.

Meanwhile, several conservation groups are requesting a meeting with Fish and Wildlife Service officials to discuss Nebraska’s decision and whether it may be a violation of federal species protection laws. The groups also are not ruling out a lawsuit.

“It’s certainly an option, but it’s only a last resort,” said Sutton, a Lincoln attorney.

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