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Pheasant numbers are up as hunters flock to Colby area

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The pheasant season opening Saturday should be a good one.

Hunters can begin their quest a half hour before sunrise and continue until a half hour before sunset.

Matt Bain, area wildlife biologist with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, said bird numbers are up



Matt Bain

because of this year's wet spring.

"It should be a real good season," he said. "It'll probably be the best season we've had in a couple of years." A wet, mild spring contributed to the growth of vegetation needed for cover, which is ideal pheasant habitat, he said.

Bain said that extra growth of weedy plants and wheat helped.

He explained that with more cover, nests are better protected and more birds survive to maturity. The cover provides shelter from the elements and shields birds from predators, he said.

"These nests are more success-

ful," Bain said, adding the average pheasant clutch size is 12 eggs.

The bag limit on pheasants is four roosters per day and Bain said hunters can expect the same regulations as usual.

However, he did say quail season opens a week later in this area instead of on the same day as pheasant season.

"They don't open at the same time out here," he said.

Bain said opening day has been hot and dry the past several years. The forecast for this year's opening day promises cooler temperatures.

"It's going to be a nice change,"

he said. "This is almost ideal. It's what the hunter should be looking for in a good day to hunt."

Bain said hot, dry conditions make for poor hunting because birds run more and dogs can't hold scent as well.

He also said more birds should bring in more people.

Bain said people are reporting seeing more birds than in the past several years. He said it's always hard to tell what the population looks like until the fall crops are harvested.

Hunters aren't the only ones expected to have a good weekend.

Several motels are already heavily booked for the first week-end of the pheasant season.

The Comfort Inn, Days Inn and Holiday Inn Express have many rooms already reserved by hunters.

Becky Riges, front desk clerk at the Comfort Inn, said there are many rooms reserved for the week-end and there are few single rooms available.

Most of the rooms are booked for Friday and Saturday. "We're pretty full," she said.

More than half of the rooms at the Days Inn are booked.

"We've only got 20 rooms left,"

said Hannah Guard, assistant manager. She added the hotel only has 45 rooms.

Martha Brewer, general manager of the Colby Holiday Inn Express, said they expect to have a busy weekend and it should be better than last year.

Quality Inn is also booked very heavily and only has a few rooms left.

DeAnn Barton, manager of the Welk-Um Inn and Bonnie Ward, desk clerk at the Best Western Crown Motel in Colby, said things are slow at the moment but they expect business to pick up.

Vet-tech popular college program

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Students in the veterinary technology program at Colby Community College do more than take notes.

They get hands-on experience that allow them to work in the veterinary industry.

"It's a two-year vocational program," said program director Dr. Boyd Walker. He said the program is separate from the school's pre-veterinary curriculum, which prepares students for vet school. Becoming a veterinarian takes seven to eight years while the vet tech program takes much less time.

The vet tech program teaches students in two years the skills they need to work for a veterinarian. Walker said students with a vet tech degree can be part of the veterinary industry, including

working for a veterinary practice.

Vet techs free up a veterinarian to do more of the things they're trained to do. Walker said vets are finding out how valuable the technicians are and how much they enhance a practice. "It makes a vet more efficient," he said.

Veterinarians diagnose, prescribe and do surgery. Vet techs fill in those gaps. There are 28 freshmen and 17 sophomores in the program at Colby College. Walker said they're at the maximum capacity the school can handle.

The college program here was founded in 1969. "We're one of the older programs in the United States," he said.

Students have the chance to learn in a well-equipped environment. Walker said there's small animal surgery and students have access to good equipment and instruments, including two X-ray machines.

They also learn in a practice-like atmosphere, Walker said.

They get exposure to large animals through the college's beef and horse farms and work with smaller animals like dogs and cats.

Walker said the college is a USDA-registered research facility. Animals are used for teaching, not research, he said.

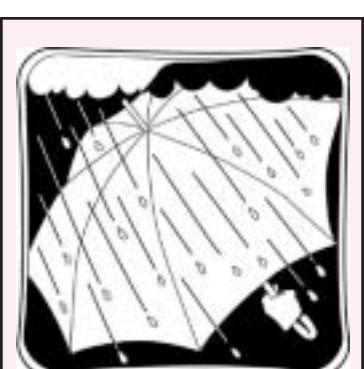
The dogs and cats used in the program spend a year helping students learn how to X-ray a patient or clean teeth. Walker said after a year is up, the animals are adopted out.

He made a comparison between animal and human medicine. Walker said human medicine is very specialized — doctors work with nurses, anesthetics, X-ray technicians and other specialists. Veterinary medicine is more generalized. "A vet has a vet tech to replace all those as well as a dental hygienist," he said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sarah Waldman and Natalie Petz, students in the veterinary technology program at Colby Community College, help X-ray a dog during a sophomore X-ray technology class. There are 45 students enrolled in the program, which takes two years to complete.



Rain, snow a possibility

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie forecast

Tonight...mostly cloudy, patchy fog, lows in the upper 20s, southeast winds 10-20 mph.

Saturday...cloudy, a 30 percent chance for rain or snow showers, highs in the lower 40s, southeast winds 15-20 mph.

Saturday night...cloudy, lows around 30, south winds 5-15 mph.

Sunday...cloudy, 30 percent chance for showers, high sin the upper 40s, south winds 5-10 mph.

Sunday night...partly cloudy, lows in the lower 30s.

Monday...partly cloudy to cloudy, highs in the lower 50s.

Tuesday...cloudy, a 30 percent chance for showers, highs in the lower 50s.

By the numbers:

Thursday's high, 37
Low this morning, 22
Records for Nov. 7, 84 in 1980 and 10 in 1938
Year ago today, 74 and 28
24-hour precipitation to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
Month's precipitation, 0.13
Year's precipitation to date, 14.39
2002's precipitation to date, 12.54
Soil temperature, 42

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Via telephone conference Attorneys for three doctors confer with Judge Burr

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A Goodland physician requested a change of venue and amendment to his original lawsuit against two Colby doctors during a telephone conference call Wednesday.

District Court Judge Jack Burr heard arguments from Dr. Duncan Davis through his attorney, Larry G. Michel of Salina, with Mike O'Neal of Hutchinson representing Drs. Victor Hildyard and Raymond Ketting being sued for defamation by Davis.

Burr denied Davis' request for a change of venue, but did allow him to add punitive damages to his lawsuit. In his remarks, Burr said on Thursday that the argument for change of venue could be addressed later as the case moves closer to a trial date.

In filing his initial lawsuit, Davis

believes that both Ketting and Hildyard engaged in a course of conduct designed to drive him out of Colby by using slander to destroy his reputation.

O'Neal said on Thursday that when the court granted the motion to amend, adding punitive damages, that it was also announced that it was very unlikely the judge would allow a claim to be made at the time of trial.

Michel filed the request for a change of venue based on Davis' belief that he cannot get a fair trial in Thomas County.

His reasons included that Hildyard has practiced medicine in Thomas County for a number of years and has been the doctor for many people in the county or their family members. Another reason in the motion filed late in October, Davis said there has been extensive

controversy in the Colby community regarding Hildyard, which has divided the community and resulted in a number of doctors, administrators and board members being involved in the dispute.

Davis said he believes that too many members of the Colby community have aligned themselves with Hildyard or they otherwise have strong and preconceived opinions regarding him.

Citing reasons for the addition of punitive damages in the case, Davis said because of Drs. Ketting and Hildyard's defamation against him, he has incurred economic loss, including lost income and non-economic damages, which includes embarrassment and humiliation.

However, O'Neal said that he would be filing a summary judgment for Hildyard and Ketting within the next 45 days.

"A summary judgment," he said, "is a mechanism for resolving the case by the judge as a matter of law."

He said he would argue that based on the uncontroverted material facts established during discovery, that they are entitled to dismissal of the case as a matter of law because Davis cannot prove a claim of defamation.

"You cannot recover for defamation on privileged statements made in peer review protected meetings that are not open to the public," O'Neal said. "Particularly when quality of health care is being discussed."

O'Neal's point is that if doctors were not allowed to discuss these type of issues then quality of care concerns would never be brought up to anyone's attention and the public would be left in the dark.

Punitive damages can be recov-

ered if Davis can show that both Ketting and Hildyard acted with willful or wanton conduct, fraud or malice.

In the motion, Davis spoke of two other doctors that were alleged to have been "run out of town" by Hildyard. In addition, Davis said that during a medical staff meeting, Dr. Hildyard inferred that he (Davis) could not get a license in any other state. Dr. Ketting is alleged to have said that there were four or five lawsuits pending in Goodland against Davis and that they were "exhuming the bodies of his patients."

Other facts for punitive damages included a statement from Kelly Focke, a medical assistant and EMT, who said that Hildyard told her and others in an EMT meeting that Davis could not practice in Colorado.

Another helicopter goes down in Iraq, killing six soldiers

TIKRIT, Iraq (AP) — An Army helicopter went down today into a riverbank near Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, killing six U.S. soldiers, the military said. Two Americans also were killed in two days in the northern city of Mosul, raising concerns that the insurgency was spreading north.

It was not immediately clear whether the chopper was brought down by hostile fire or a mechanical failure, a spokeswoman said. An officer who asked not to be identified said it may have been hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

"Six soldiers were on board and all of them were killed," said Maj.

Josslyn Aberle, a spokeswoman for the 4th Infantry Division based in Tikrit. They were all from the 101st Airborne Division, she said.

Guerrillas attacked a convoy in the eastern part of Mosul, 250 miles north of Baghdad, with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire Friday morning. The military said

one U.S. soldier died and six others were wounded in the clash. Three others were injured later in the day when a roadside bomb exploded near the downtown Mosul Hotel, which is now used as a military barracks, the military said. A military statement released today said that a soldier died the day before near

Mosul when a homemade bomb exploded.

The latest confirmed U.S. military fatalities bring to at least 31 the number of American troops killed in action in the first week of November. Two U.S. civilian contractors working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also died in attacks.

Briefly Commissioners to meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet in regular session at 9 a.m. Monday at the courthouse. Items on the agenda include an extension update from agents D'Ette Scholtz and Doug Musick, the monthly landfill report from supervisor Larry Jumper, and Rovohl Township will present its 2004 budget at 1 p.m. The budget will be published in the *Colby Free Press* on Wednesday.

Fair board schedules meeting

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. on Thursday at the Thomas County 4-H Building at the fairgrounds. Agenda items include buildings and grounds, the carnival and Thomas County Amusement Association, rodeo, demolition derby, 2004 fair race, the fair book, advertising and the grounds-keeper position.

Thanksgiving service planned

A special Thomas County Community Thanksgiving Ser-

vice will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 24 at the Berean Church, 1000 S. Franklin Ave. in Colby. All are invited to attend this special giving of thanks, hosted by area pastors with special music from "Power Praise Kids" and drama from "True Nation Takers." Refreshments will be offered after the service. The event is sponsored by the Thomas County Ministerial Association.

Sweet Adelines plan guest night

The Sweet Adelines will have a guest night at their regular weekly rehearsal starting at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the United Methodist Church in Colby. The purpose of the guest night is to invite others to get better acquainted with the Sweet Adeline singers or for those interested in joining the group, said Sharee Fromholtz, one of the members.

Promotion meeting Tuesday

The Colby Promotion Committee, which is an arm of the Colby Chamber of Commerce, will meet on Tuesday at 7:30

a.m. in the basement of the Sunflower Bank Building to discuss ideas for why Colby is a great place to live, work, visit and shop. These meetings, said Jada Tubbs, executive director of the Chamber, reflect a community-wide effort and are open to everyone who owns a business, not just those in the retail sector of the city. If interested in helping or offering suggestions, Tubbs said she urges you to attend. For questions, call 460-3401.

Donations accepted for fire victims

A residential fire last week caused major smoke damage to the home of Willie and Melinda Enfield at 655 W. Walnut in Colby. Ever since the incident, many people have asked Melinda's mother, Linda Dible, if there was anything they could do to help the family. Dible said that for those wanting to offer a monetary gift to the family, donations can be made in their name through Farmers and Merchants Bank in Colby. For those wanting to help the family by offering time or with inquiries, call Tim Morris, Berean Church, 465-7460.

