



COLBY FREE PRESS

Wheat harvest could be average, expert says

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Recent rains has helped the wheat crop in Thomas County but whether it can salvage the dryland wheat that remains has yet to be seen, said Roger Stockton, Northwest Research-Extension Center soil and crop specialist.

“The dryland does need rain for the most part,” Stockton said. “The condition is all over the board.”

He said wheat in all 12 northwest Kansas counties suffered freeze damage to some extent, adding it was unknown whether the samples were representative of spots or entire fields. Stockton estimated 50-60 percent of the crop did suffer freeze damage.

“Other than that, things aren’t too bad,” he said.

Irrigated wheat, Stockton said, seems to be doing much better.

“It was in better shape to begin with,” he said.

Freeze damage in the irrigated crop will be a field to field situation.

He said the wheat heads on dryland are projected at average to small and irrigated should have “good-sized heads.”

Stockton said some farmers have just taken a loss on their fields from Colby on west to the state line. Such fields are being tilled under or sprayed with herbicide to get rid of the wheat.

He expects the dryland wheat that

“The dryland does need rain for the most part . . . the condition is all over the board.”

Roger Stockton,
soil, crop specialist

does get harvested could yield about 25 bushels per acre and irrigated wheat twice that.

Rob Aiken, a crop research specialist with the extension center, said winter kill is evident by a lighter colored plant head, which shows up as white or yellow seeds which don’t fill in.

He said a plant will try to compensate with larger seeds on the part of the head that isn’t damaged but it is hard to make up the difference.

Also, Aiken said the problem in dryland wheat is uniformity.

Across a field, the crop might be up but could be in different stages of development or lack uniform coverage.

According to the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service, 195,000 acres of wheat were planted in Thomas County and 165,700 of those acres were harvested in 2002. In 2003, 217,000 acres were planted and 210,300 acres were harvested.



(Left) Rob Aiken, a crop research specialist with the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, showed the condition of dryland wheat in a test plot at the center in March. At the same spot today (right), he pointed out freeze damage to one plant and said



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

the wheat has come up but lacks uniform coverage and is in different stages of development. He said freeze damage and crop uniformity are two of the problems that will affect yields during harvest this year.

Man found dead in Thomas County jail earlier today

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A 46-year-old Caucasian man was found dead in his cell today at the Thomas County jail, said Tom Jones, sheriff.

The man’s name and many of the particulars surrounding the incident are still under investigation, Jones said.

However, he did say the man was arrested Tuesday at 4:45 p.m. on serious felony charges.

The man was discovered dead at 12:15 a.m. when the deputy who

just came on duty was making rounds and saw him lying on the floor.

Jones said his deputy saw the man approximately 30 minutes prior to his death and had no indication anything was wrong.

“In a situation like this,” Jones said, “the proper protocol is to have a neutral third party handle the investigation.”

In this case, he said, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation sent one of their agents from a nearby office to handle the incident, adding that no

“In a situation like this, the proper protocol is to have a neutral third party handle the investigation.”

Thomas Jones,
Thomas County Sheriff

local agent was called.

The coroner and the KBI agreed that the body should be sent to Topeka for an autopsy in determining

the cause of death, Jones said.

“We have no idea of the man’s medical history,” he said, and as for his criminal record, the man had

minor crimes, but nothing as serious as what he was arrested for Tuesday.”

Jones did not want to say what the specific charges were until the man’s name is released.

Although the deceased was in Colby at the time of his arrest, Jones said he didn’t actually have a street address, but rather was living in a grain bin.

The last time something even remotely similar to this was almost 15 years ago and in that case a man had committed suicide in the jail, Jones

said.

It is the first time; however, in Jones’ nearly 20-year career as a sheriff that someone died in jail.

“The KBI is still in the preliminary phase of this investigation,” he said.

Names of those working on the case were unavailable today pending completion of the incident and autopsy results.

“It appears that this is leaning toward a natural death,” Jones said today, “but we won’t know for sure until the report is completed.”



On the warm side

Colby-Oakley-Hoxie
Tonight...Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the mid 50s. South winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the northeast after midnight.
Thursday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph.
Thursday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 50s. North winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the southeast around 10 mph after midnight.
Friday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s. Southeast winds 10 to 20 mph with gusts to around 35 mph.
Friday night and Saturday...Partly cloudy. Breezy. Slight chance of thunderstorms in the evening then slight chance of thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 80s. Lows in the lower 60s. Chance of thunderstorms 20 percent.
The numbers
Tuesday’s high, 71
Low this morning, 50
Records for May 26, 98 in 1967 and 26 in 1901
Year ago today, 68 and 53
Precipitation past 48 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.28
May total, 0.95
Soil temperature, 70
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.

State board makes plea on school funding

TOPEKA (AP)— State Board of Education members are urging legislators to make one more attempt this week to pass a school finance plan, hoping that additional funding will stave off cuts in schools’ staff and programs.

However, board members said Tuesday prospects for action appeared unlikely.

“We ask that you please give serious consideration to our request. We are counting on you!” the state board wrote in a letter signed by Chairwoman Janet Waugh, of Kansas City, and approved on an 8-2 vote at the board’s meeting earlier this month.

On Tuesday, Waugh said during an interview, “For the sake of our children, I hope they do something.”

Legislators adjourned the business portion of their session on May 8, authorizing \$2.77 billion state aid for the state’s 302 school districts.

They have a brief adjournment ceremony scheduled for Thursday, giving them one more chance to act.

When legislators adjourned earlier this month, the House and Senate remained far apart. The House had approved a \$155 million package, financed with increased sales and income taxes, while the Senate had passed a \$72 million plan, borrowing funds from the state’s highway program and employee pension account.

Waugh said any additional funding would help schools, particularly those with high numbers of poor and minority students who require additional services to become proficient on state tests.

“I think that’s so sad, because we hurt children,” Waugh said, adding that districts have cut budgets and are now “gnawing at the bone.”

However, House Speaker Doug Mays said he does not expect any action Thursday.

Briefly

Fair board special meeting set

The Thomas County Fair Board will hold a special meeting at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the 4-H Building at the fairgrounds to discuss equipment bids. The meeting is open to the public.

Landfill closed for holiday

The Thomas County Landfill will be closed Sunday, May 30 and Monday, May 31 for the Memorial Day holiday. The landfill will be open its regular hours Saturday and the rest of the week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Meal delivery available

The Senior Progress Center in Colby delivers meals to the homebound. If you have a physical or social disability and are certified by the Homestead Nutrition project qualified assessor, you will be eligible. Call Donna at 460-2901 or you may call the Homestead director at 1-800-432-7422.

Monument reunion Sunday

The Monument Alumni School Reunion will be Sunday with a potluck dinner at 1 p.m. at the Monument School. All graduates and their families, teachers and those who attended Monument School are encouraged to come and renew old friendships, organizer said.

West Nile tips issued

The Thomas County Health Department is reminding everyone to be aware of the West Nile Virus and mosquito population through prevention efforts. For example, when outdoors officials said to use a repellent with DEET and extra clothing. *Off* brand bug spray has proven to be the best repellent and it comes in all strengths for children and adults, said Juanita Dewey, administrator at Thomas County Health. She also suggests that standing water in yards should be removed since this is a breeding ground for mosquitos and people should avoid wearing perfumes or fragrant lotions or powders to attract mosquitoes. Don’t burn any fragrant

candles outdoors, but rather use citronella or candles made for mosquito control.

Vendors wanted for Chautauqua

Food vendors are needed in June during Chautauqua, said Leilani Thomas, one of the committee members. Any groups or organizations looking for a fundraising event might want to consider this opportunity during the week of June 11 through June 15. Food service is needed each evening from 5 to 7 p.m. with beverages and sandwiches offered. Other volunteers are also needed. To see how to help during this event, call the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643 or write to 350 S. Range #10.

Municipal pool opens Saturday

The Colby pool will be open for the first day of the season Saturday to kick of the Memorial Day weekend. The pool hours will be 1-6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 2-8 p.m. Sunday, said pool Manager Lane Carpenter s

Strikers settle in



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

SBC employees Chuck Brown and Larry Eberle picketed Monday in Colby during a four-day strike. Employees were striking for better health coverage and to keep jobs in the United States. The strike was settled Tuesday.

