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Disease attacking area wheat

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkanas.com

Stripe rust is attacking the wheat flag leaf in northwest Kansas, says Jeanne Falk, an area agronomist with Kansas State University Research and Extension in Colby, and there is more pressure on area fields this year than in the past.

“Wheat loves cool, damp weather at the stage it’s in now, and stripe rust likes and thrives in the same kinds of conditions,” she said. “Fungicides can be applied, but it’s best to do it before the flowering stage, which is already past.”

“About 30 days prior to harvest, there is a bigger window of time, so most farmers are having to wait to attack the disease then. However, there has been lots of spraying done already.”

Falk said the rust first appeared in low levels about three weeks ago, when it seemed to be incubating in the leaves, and then showed up big with one 90-degree day.

“It sort of just came out with a burst,” she said.

Crop experts had anticipated some stripe rust, but didn’t expect it to produce this kind of pressure,

she said. Crop advisors talked about it a field day on April 14, she said, and the Extension offices sent out information, but she thought it didn’t really hit home until it actually showed up.

“It’s important to keep the plant healthy as long as we can,” said Falk, “since 70 percent of the nutrients to product the kernel is in the flag leaf. When the wheat is lush, like it is now, and the weather is cool and damp, the canopy doesn’t have a chance to dry out.”

Falk said that last year, the rust got a good start in Texas, but when it got to the Oklahoma Panhandle, it met with a drought and fizzled out. This year, though, the wheat is good all the way north, and the disease has now worked its way into the panhandle of Nebraska.

“The wheat is in the beginning of forming a soft berry now,” she said, “and it looks like we’ve had all the right conditions this year. We have phenomenal wheat, but it is more shallow rooted this year because of all the moisture, and it isn’t pulling from the deep moisture.”

“What we don’t want is any drought stress to curl the leaves, so we could use a little rain now and then to fill and finish the head.”



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

From the looks of all the lush wheat fields around Thomas County, the crop has every appearance that the 2011 harvest will be a record setter. Ideal conditions of cool, damp weather, followed by warm days, and a measurable shower of rain at the right

time has put a smile on every farmer’s face. Despite diseases such as stripe rust, a Kansas State University Research Station agronomist has described this year’s crop as phenomenal at this stage.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Teachers from Colby and as far away as Emporia gathered around their computers in the Colby High School commons before a Thursday-morning speaker at the iConnect, iLearn conference.

Teachers discuss technology at four-day summer conference

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkanas.com

More than a hundred teachers, toting laptops, iPods and all manner of new technology, came to Colby this week to learn how to adapt that technology to the classroom.

iConnect, iLearn is a four-day conference with the first two days in Colby.

Theresa Morgan, Colby Middle School teacher and one of the conference’s organizers, said the conference attracted more than 100 teachers to Colby from as far away as Emporia. Some teachers also connected over the Internet to watch and listen to their sessions. Morgan said that was a new feature this year, and since the conference organizers weren’t sure whether or not it would be reliable, they didn’t charge teachers to connect

virtually.

The teachers who attended in person traveled to Salina today for the second half of the conference.

Teachers receive two credit hours toward the re-certification requirements for the four-day conference.

Morgan said the conference organizers were trying to be paperless this year, with all of the session materials posted online for teachers to download.

Diana Wieland, Colby’s curriculum director, held sessions on using practical technology in the classroom such as pens that record audio. Colby Middle School band instructor Stacey Williams held a session on using computers in music classes and how techniques she learned could be adapted to any classroom. Other sessions included sub-

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School district may not have to make more cuts

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkanas.com

The Kansas legislature made their budget decisions last month, wrapping up the 2010 session by approving a one-cent sales tax designed to raise about \$300 million.

This will keep education and some social programs from having to endure further cuts for the time being and add some money back in for the state’s transportation system.

So what does this mean for area school districts? The base amount the state doles out per student is remaining at \$4,012. Colby Superintendent Terrel Harrison said it had been \$4,218 at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. Parkinson’s mid-year budget cuts had reduced it to \$4,012.

Harrison said the district had cut more than \$330,000 over the course of this school year to compensate for the reductions, and a total of \$677,000 for next year. Harrison said these cuts are already

in place; recent ones include shortening the school year, closing the grade school kitchen and using existing administrators to cover the vacant high school principal position. The district is also combining some clubs and activities – in order to have fewer coaches – and waiting to hire assistant coaches until sport enrollment numbers are in.

The district also offered an early retirement package. Harrison said the district will save money by not hiring for positions left vacant. They hired back several of the retiring teachers, who will be able to draw their Kansas Public Employees Retirement System benefits in addition to their salary, but will lose tenure rights. Harrison said the teachers hired back would have been very difficult to replace and some would have required multiple teachers to replace them.

However, all is not settled. The sales tax increase will only prevent further cuts if state revenue remains the same or increases. Remaining at the status quo

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Scholar talks air waves at session

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkanas.com

Tonia Compton, member of the “Chautauqua, Hard Times in America in the Thirties” group, told listeners at Pioneer Memorial Library on Thursday afternoon that radio waves were first intended to be used to benefit shipping with ship-to-ship communication.

She said when the Titanic sunk in 1912, the ship’s radio operator sent out distress calls, but most ships didn’t have 24-hour operators, and the messages were picked up by ham operators. Some sent out false messages to other ships at sea saying that rescue was on the way, which brought about the Radio Act of 1912, stating the air waves belong to the government.

“Radio is credited with making radio a part of American culture,” Compton said, “and by 1924 there were 500 radio broadcast stations across America and three million radios.”

She noted that by 1940, 80 percent of American homes had radios.

She noted that radio generated debate that it caused people to stop thinking for themselves, kind of like what a lot of people think about the Internet today.

“But,” she said, “it became a democratizing force, because everyone heard the same thing. Same newscasts, same political speeches, same sports. National Broadcast System was the one and only broadcasting service until Columbia Broadcast System came on board two years later.

Compton told that the Hinden-

burg disaster changed the way reporters were trained for on-the-scene reporting, after a reporter at the scene of the disaster broke down in raw emotion.

She played an excerpt of a speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt who, she said, loved radio because he didn’t have any filters such as reporters or Republican editors between him and the public.

Among the many things brought through early radio was the popularization of country music, evangelists, and soap operas.

“Americans have a much more shared culture because of radio,” Compton said. “They may have been disconnected geographically, but what brought them together first was radio in the 1930’s.”

Briefly

Pancake feed, tours Saturday

The Colby Fire Department will give citizens another chance to check out the new fire station – now about a year old – with an open house and pancake breakfast from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. Firefighters will give tours, show off their equipment and cook pancakes and sausage. Donations will be accepted. For information, call Chief Bob McLemore at 460-4454.

Alumni Chorus begins practice

Colby High grads are invited to join the CHS Alumni Chorus, which will rehearse at 7:30 Wednesday and June 16 and 17 at the United Methodist Church. Out-of-town alumni coming in for the five-year reunion can join in at 5 p.m. Friday, June 18, and 9 a.m. Saturday, June 19, to be ready for a performance at the assembly later that morning. For information, call director Jan Wolf at (785) 460-3535.

Firemen plan to test hydrants

The Colby Fire Department started testing fire hydrants Tuesday, beginning with Hill Street. Assistant Chief Sean Hankin said the testing will take about a month, and the work may disrupt some water lines near the hydrants. For information, call Hankin at the Colby Fire Department, 460-4454.

Singles dance set for Saturday

The Colby singles and couples dance will be from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Golf Course clubhouse, 1085 E Golf Course Dr. Craig Stevens will provide the music. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 269-7057.

Picnic, music Wednesday

Colby’s Picnic in the Park lunch-and-concert series continues at noon Wednesday at Fike Park with

entertainment by the Bugbee Sisters. For information, call the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643.

Bible school coming Monday

The Colby Berean Church will hold a Vacation Bible School from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. each day from Monday to Friday next week at the church, 1000 S. Franklin Ave. This year’s theme is “Route 254.” The school will include Bible stories, crafts and games all fitting the road-trip theme. For information, call the church at 460-2763.

Signup open for food program

Sign up for the Prairie Land Food is open through Friday, June 11, at State Farm Insurance, 905 E. Fourth Street in Colby. Delivery will be at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 26, at the Sacred Heart School

gym, 1150 W. Sixth St. For information, call Gene Griffin at (785) 460-3579.

Flyers plan fun day, lunch at field

The Colby RC Flyers will hold their annual fun fly from dawn to dusk Saturday and Sunday, June 12 and 13, at the club’s field seven miles north of Colby on K-25. Flying events and prize drawings will be held each day. Lunch will be served. For information, call Dave Backus at 460-6941 or Nick Nichols at 460-6357.



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