

Prairie Dog youth hunt goes well

The special youth hunt went well this weekend. Prairie Dog State Park Manager Steve Mathes said the weather was perfect for the hunt and the kids had fun. The 12 kids who participated

shot two pheasants and flushed around 100 birds. The Longspur Pheasants Forever Chapter furnished rolls and juice, both before and after the hunt. The youth hunt is designed

to encourage and recruit young hunters and should offer a quality experience with a better than average chance of success. For more information on youth hunts, call the park office at (785) 877-2953.

Pruning trees in late winter has benefits

Pruning trees early — in fact, by March — is typical only of fruit tree growers. Even so, shade, ornamental and even woodlot tree owners could find real advantages in adopting a late-winter deadline, said Kansas State University horticulturist Ward Upham. "In most years, the deciduous trees around here are fully dormant by January. So, judicious trimming then won't hurt them so long as temperatures are above 20 degrees," said Upham, the Master Gardener program coordinator for K-State Research and Extension. In turn, the chore will be done before gardeners and farmers alike have to face the pressures of getting the growing season started, he said. And, when the trees awaken from dormancy, they'll be immersed in a spring environment, which fosters most plants' best growth and fastest

wound recovery of the year. For appearances alone, early pruning also helps "bleeder" trees weep less sap from fresh-cut wounds. Freezing temperatures (32 to 20 degrees F) help limit sap's flow without causing internal wood damage, Upham said. "Bleeder trees can leak amazingly large amounts of sap from warm-season cuts. Apparently, this causes no long-term damage. Still, it can look like considerable damage, and it's not too pretty," he added. Tree species vary in how easily and heavily they lose sap, Upham said. Central U.S. trees most apt to look like abused victims after a warm-weather pruning include any of the maples: amur, hedge, Norway, silver, sugar. Some other plant types, such as the grape vine, can also bleed, but additional trees that tend to flow with wound sap are the black walnut, pecan, birch,

mulberry and Osage orange (also called hedge tree). "One reason most fruit tree growers prune so early is that they need trees with the strongest structure possible for holding heavy fruit. Pruning while the trees are bare simply provides the clearest picture of which weak, rubbing or badly attached branches to remove," the horticulturist said. "Besides, this timing still gives fruit growers time to apply dormant oil sprays without wasting any on branches bound for the woodpile."

Fertilizer could be in short supply

MANHATTAN — Supplies of nitrogen fertilizers, as well as phosphorus and potassium fertilizers, are tight throughout the United States, making this the time to plan ahead, a Kansas State University agronomist said. In fact, it is currently difficult to buy fertilizer nitrogen for winter wheat topdressing and/or this spring's row crops unless the supply has already been lined up - regardless of what the posted prices are, said Dale Leikam, K-State Research and Extension nutrient management specialist. "The tight supply situation applies to all the main nitrogen fertilizer sources - UAN solution, urea, and ammonia - as well as other phosphorus and potassium fertilizers. Fertilizer prices are continuing to increase and supplies will likely remain very tight for the foreseeable future," Leikam said. "Therefore, producers should keep in close contact

with their supplier in order to line up their anticipated fertilizer needs. Waiting until it is time to apply crop nutrients to make arrangements for fertilizer needs could leave producers on the outside looking in." The sharp increase in price and accompanying fertilizer N shortage is not a sudden development, the agronomist explained. Unprecedented market forces have markedly changed the fertilizer industry over the past decade which has set the stage for the current supply/demand imbalance and resulting high prices, he said. "Over the past decade, much of our fertilizer nitrogen manufacturing capacity has shut down in the U.S. as a result of sharp increases and fluctuations in natural gas costs, lower-cost foreign competition, domestic environmental regulations, and so forth. In most cases, the domestic fertilizer manufacturing plants

that have ceased operations will likely never come back on line despite the current higher fertilizer nitrogen prices," Leikam said. As a result, more and more nitrogen fertilizer is now imported from countries in the Middle East, South America, the former Soviet Union, and other low-cost natural gas areas, he said. "More than 50 percent of U.S. fertilizer nitrogen supply is imported annually - and our dependence on foreign imports continues to increase. Also, global demand for this supply of fertilizer nitrogen continues to increase, especially in countries such as China and India with rapidly expanding economies," Leikam said. Producers can do little about this situation except to keep in constant contact with their local fertilizer supplier and commit to needed products as soon they know what their needs are, the

Crop, livestock producers can get help at meeting

LARNED — High Plains Farm Credit in Larned will host an informational meeting from 1 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 5 in its board room, 605 Main in Larned, for crop and livestock producers on Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite (AGR-Lite) and other risk management programs. The meeting is one in a series being held in Kansas and Colorado, sponsored by Kansas State University's Department of Agricultural Economics and K-State Research and Extension, Colorado State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency, and Farm Credit Associations of Kansas. Topics include an update from

the US Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency; an introduction to AGR-Lite, its coverage, how coverage is established and claims calculated, and issues with AGR-Lite. Each meeting will also include examples and discussion time for questions and answers. Similar meetings scheduled in the western Kansas area include Feb. 8, 1 to 4 p.m., Ness City, Historic Bank Building, 102 W. Main; and Feb. 20, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Colby, Community Building, 285 E. 5th. For more information, contact Crop Insurance Specialist Curt Schmidtberger at (785) 625-2110.

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