



# COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

## Harvest good in other parts of state

**SALINA (AP)** — A dismal winter wheat harvest across most of Kansas appears to have spared farmers in north-central Kansas this season.

Cutting now under way in those fields so far has bolstered the government forecast earlier this month that the harvest in north-central Kansas will be 3 percent larger than it was a year ago. Statewide, the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service has projected wheat production to be down 23 percent compared with a year ago.

Among those few Kansas farmers reaping a good harvest is Saline County farmer Rudy Redden. His fields averaged 50 bushels an acre, including one 30-acre field that yielded 85 bushels per acre.

"We're really blessed," Redden said.

Carl Garten, Extension director in the district, said while there was some poor wheat in Saline County that yielded only 20 bushels per acre, the average yield was probably going to be around 40.

The latest government forecast, based on conditions just as the harvest was starting in Kansas, shows major declines in most of the state's biggest wheat-growing areas. Overall, the state's wheat crop now being harvested is expected to be 77 percent of the size of the crop a year earlier.

The forecast had a few bright spots, primarily in north-central Kansas. KASS also said at the time that production across the eastern third of the state also was up, but that area does not grow much wheat compared with the rest of Kansas.

The outlook elsewhere in Kansas was more dismal, as has been borne out by the poor yields reported

across most of the state now that harvest is more than half complete.

Texas and Oklahoma also have had a poor winter wheat harvest, driving up the price of the crop.

"You want to be that farmer located where we get some moisture, that person in the right spot and everybody else isn't," Garten said. "If you're that one, you're going to be able to pay your bills."

At Cargill Ag Horizons grain elevator west of Salina, sales leader Aaron Borcharding said north-central Kansas fared better than western and even south-central Kansas.

"It was better than anticipated," he said. "Overall it's probably going to be close to an average crop for this particular area."

On Tuesday, the Kansas Department of Commerce's harvest offices reported cutting may soon start as far northwest as Goodland. The St. Francis area in western Kansas has started cutting.

The Garden City area, which took in 1.5 million bushels Monday, is about half finished with harvest, according to its harvest office. Yields have been running 15 to 25 bushels per acre, with test weights between 58 and 60 pounds per bushel. It reports a surplus of 20 combines and equipment in the area.

Around Great Bend, an estimated 85 percent to 90 percent of the crop has now been cut.

The Liberal harvest office was reporting Tuesday some pretty grim yields. In Haskell County, yields ranged from zero to 55 bushels per acre. In southern Morton County, yields were reported at 1 to 25 bushels per acre. In Seward County, farmers were getting 18 to 30 bushels per acre.

## Japan to lift beef ban

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan agreed today to lift a ban on U.S. beef imports, pending inspections of U.S. meat processing plants to dispel concerns over BSE disease, the Agriculture Ministry said.

The breakthrough resolves a thorny, long-running trade dispute between the allies, and gives U.S. ranchers access to what was once their most lucrative export market.

"Japan agreed to resume U.S. beef imports on the condition that we find no further problems during onsite inspections," said Agriculture Ministry official Hiroaki Ogura.

U.S. Ambassador Thomas Schieffer welcomed the conditional

agreement, saying he was hopeful the outcome would lead to an import resumption.

American beef shipments to Japan were halted in January after Japanese officials found a veal shipment that contained backbone, which Asian countries consider at risk for BSE disease. The cuts are eaten in the United States and other countries, but Japan's rules are stricter.

Opposition party leaders and consumer groups criticized today's decision as hasty.

The Japan Consumers Union said it was reached for political reasons without regard for food safety or consumer health.

## Ham radio operators to turn dials in Colby

**By Patty Decker**  
Free Press Editor

Colby's Trojan Amateur Radio Club will participate in a nationwide Field Day at 1 p.m., Saturday and continuing through 1 p.m., Sunday at the Colby Municipal Airport.

The purpose of the event is to raise awareness about ham radio operators and how their networks can save lives in emergency situations when traditional forms of communication fail or become overloaded.

"In the Colby area, the club will be demonstrating the capabilities of the ham radio operators and how they can provide critical communications in emergencies worldwide," said Bruce Frahm, Trojan Amateur Radio Club president.

The club is always looking for people who might want to consider

getting their own Federal Communication Commission radio license before the next disaster strikes.

"I am pleased that four Colbyites have recently earned their technician ham radio licenses," said Jim Engel, Thomas County Emergency Management director and club member.

"This expands our pool of weather spotters and emergency communications people as well," he said.

During the 24-hour long event, Colby's ham radio operators will be connected with other operators throughout the United States and world.

"Using only emergency power supplies, ham operators will construct emergency stations in parks, shopping malls, schools and back yards around the country," Frahm said.

"Our slogan — 'Ham radio



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A combine cutting wheat in a field west of Colby Tuesday signaled the beginning of wheat harvest in the area. Some farmers began cutting early this week, and expect harvest to be over by the beginning of next week.

## Wheat yields lower than last year

**By Tisha Cox**  
Colby Free Press

Wheat harvest 2006 has begun in northwest Kansas despite farmers expecting lower yields because of dry conditions or damage from storms.

Area agronomist Brian Olson, with the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, said a lot of test cutting was done Thursday and Friday.

Recent rain has been a boon for fall crops, but it wasn't enough to help the wheat crop, and in some cases, did more harm than good.

"There was definitely storm damage, mainly hail," Olson said. Wheat was laid flat, especially in Sheridan County.

"The corn should be back but the wheat is gone."

He said the moisture also decreased some wheat test weights.

In fields that weren't damaged, there will be wheat to harvest, but not as much as last year. Olson said dryland wheat yields will average between 15-20 bushels an acre.

Slightly better projections would be 20-30 bushels per acre.

"It's not even close to being average," Olson said. "There are always exceptions to the rule, but in general, it will be below average."

In what is considered good years, dryland wheat is about 40 bushels an acre. Irrigated wheat

## Custom cutters need customers

**By Tisha Cox**  
Colby Free Press

The Colby wheat office is up and running.

Run by retired Colby Community College psychology instructor Roger Hale, the office is at the Oasis Travel Center at Colby's exit 53 on Interstate 70. This is Hale's 34th year to run the office.

Hale matches custom cutters looking for work with local farmers who need their wheat cut. The office opened last week and said there have been very few custom cutters.

"Fuel prices are keeping many

custom cutters from coming to the area, and wheat conditions aren't to the point yet where the cutters will come. The wheat isn't quite ready," Hale said.

Knowing there is work to do brings the custom cutters.

"There are some here," Hale said. "But they don't want to pull in here unless they have a job."

Between the six to eight crews that arrived for harvest and the cutters who already live in the area, Hale said there will be enough crews to get the wheat in.

"I don't think there's a problem," Hale said. "I don't worry about that."

measures between 50 and 60 bushels an acre.

On irrigated wheat, he said the yields should be decent on fields that weren't infected with wheat streak.

More than two and a half inches of rain this month will help fall crops.

"It's been a blessing," Olson said.

At the extension center, he was seeing signs of stress on dryland corn, but with rain, the crop has the

moisture it needs for two or three weeks. Crops will also benefit from not getting many hot, windy days.

Olson said for wheat, hot weather helps this time of year because it ripens the plant, but wind decreases the amount of moisture in the head and can cause it to shatter. That means a loss of bushels.

He added not every county has bleak prospects for wheat harvest. Better yields are projected north and east through Rawlins and

Decatur counties.

Farmer Randy Regier, who has most of his wheat in south Thomas County, started cutting Monday. The majority of his wheat is dryland but he also has some irrigated wheat.

His test weights have been averaging about 60 pounds per bushel, the wheat quality has been decent. His first cuttings have been about 30 bushels an acre.

Regier said that will probably change as harvest goes on.

"I know we're going to cut wheat that's not that good, but we're hoping for some better," he said. His irrigated wheat won't be ready to cut for about a week.

John Schroeder of Colby has wheat spread across Thomas and Logan counties.

Mostly dryland, he said they destroyed two-thirds of their acreage before harvest because it wasn't worth cutting. The other third he started cutting Monday was yielding five to 10 bushels an acre.

Bill Miller of Colby said he has harvested some of his wheat and for others over the past couple of days. He said the wheat yield has ranged from 11 to 25 bushels an acre. One quarter yielded 30 bushels an acre. The wheat he harvested was near Levant and Rexford. His own dryland wheat was infected with wheat mosaic disease and suffered damage from freezing and drought.



FILE PHOTO

Bruce Frahm operated a ham radio during the annual Trojan Amateur Radio Club of Northwest Kansas' field day last year.

works when other systems don't," is more than just words to the hams as they prove they can send messages in many forms without the use of phone systems, Internet or any other infrastructure that can be compromised in a crisis," he said.

More than 30,000 amateur radio operators in the United States took part in last year's annual event.

Allen Pitts of Newington, Conn., who is with the national Amateur

Radio Club, said, over the past year the news has been full of reports of ham radio operators providing critical communications in emergencies worldwide.

During Hurricane Katrina, the only way people could communicate was with ham radio.

Everyone is encouraged to attend the event. For questions, call Frahm at 462-7388 or Mike Albers, 460-3678.

## Long-time college art instructor resigns

**By Patty Decker**  
Free Press Editor

After 17 years as Colby Community College's art instructor, Cathy Gordon's resignation was approved Monday by the college board.

Gordon's letter did not state when her resignation is effective. In her letter, Gordon wrote her plans are to move to Iowa to teach at a community college.

In addition to art, she also taught computer graphics, art history and art appreciation. For a short time, Gordon was the division chair for arts and industry at the college. The position is now chaired by Bob Selby.

Among her other accomplishments, Gordon served as the Max Pickerill Lecture Series chair for two years and chaired the assessment committee for two years.

As the assessment committee chair Gordon and her team were re-

**“ This is a big part of the college's accreditation process.”**

Debbie Schwanke,  
public information officer

sponsible for reviewing the learning outcomes of the college.

"This is a big part of the college's accreditation process," said Debbie Schwanke, director of public information.

Gordon's work as the lecture series chair included researching topics and scheduling related speakers for students and the community.

Along with Gordon's resignation Marge Miller, receptionist, plans to retire Sept. 30 after more than six years at the college.

"I worked with a good team," Miller told the board Monday.