Kansas corn shriveling in heat

WICHITA (AP) — Farmer Steve Baccus plans to cut most of his dryland corn for silage, trying to salvage what he can as triple-digit temperatures and drought decimate corn fields across the state.

Baccus said his fields are among the last dryland fields in Ottawa County still standing. Most of his neighbors already have chopped theirs for silage. His own no-till practices let his fields hang on to moisture a little longer than most — until finally succumbing as well to the scorching temperatures.

Corn under irrigation systems in the county also has shown signs of "tipping," meaning the corn plant is drawing moisture out of its kernels to survive. Smaller kernels hurt yields. "Even irrigation systems are not able to keep up in this situation, with these kinds of winds," said Baccus, who also serves as Kansas Farm Bureau president.

On Monday, the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service reported that 32 percent of the state's corn was in poor to very poor condition. The remaining corn is not faring well, either. About 34 percent was listed in fair condition. Only 29 percent was said to be in good condition, with 5 percent in excellent shape, KASS reported.

The agency listed silage cutting as a major farm activity across Kansas this past week.

At the Baccus farm, an insurance adjuster already has been out. He estimated the drought-stressed fields would yield between 17 and 34 bushels an acre — far short of the normal yields of 80 to 110 bushels an acre.

Baccus plans to chop three of his five corn fields for silage. He figured he will be lucky to get $80 per acre for his silage corn. His crop would have otherwise brought as much as $235 an acre had it made it to harvest.

It is far too late for rains to help the corn, but there is still hope for soybeans and sorghum if the state gets timely moisture, Baccus said.

Farmers also need moisture to plant their winter wheat crop next month.

"We are in the sixth year of a drought in western Kansas and eastern Colorado," he said. "These guys have been putting up with this kind of weather for five or six years. And it is serious problem."

With each succeeding crop loss, insurance coverage goes down at the same time premium costs go up, Baccus said.

The latest crop weather report also shows deteriorating conditions for the state's other major crops. About 30 percent of the sorghum was in poor to very poor condition, while 35 percent was reported in fair condition. The agency rated 31 percent as good and 4 percent as excellent.

Soybeans fared slightly better. KASS reported 17 percent of the state's soybean crop in poor to very poor condition, with 45 percent in fair condition. The remaining crop was listed as 34 percent good and 4 percent excellent.

It is not just crops that are shriveling under the unrelenting heat.

Pastures are so dry in western Kansas that there often is no grass left for cattle to eat, forcing ranchers to move or liquidate their herds, Baccus said. KASS said Monday that 53 percent of the state's ranges and pastures were in poor to very poor condition. Another 35 percent was reported as fair, while 12 percent remained in good condition.

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On the Net:

Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Kansas/index.asp

Grant to benefit basement work

Jeff Friesen

● Pioneer Memorial Library Director

In 2000, the Foundation Center Cooperating Collection was established in Pioneer Memorial Library.

Our Cooperating Collection has been a huge help in allowing the people of northwest Kansas find ways to turn ideas into reality. If there is a project that you think could improve our community, then our collection of resources can help you find the funding to make that project happen.

To date, there are only five other Cooperating Collections in existence around the state. If you are reading this article then you have an added advantage of being in close proximity to a set of resources that can literally change your world.

Learning to efficiently search the Cooperating Collection can be one of the biggest challenges facing a grant seeker.

Fortunately, Dr. Don Udell has volunteered to be at Pioneer Memorial Library from 6 to 8 p.m. next Wednesday to give an overview and answer any questions that the public may have on the Cooperating Collection.

Ask anybody that has gone to a Dr. Udell workshop and you will understand how valuable resource both Dr. Udell and the Cooperating Collection have been to Northwest Kansas.

As proof of the value of our Cooperating Collection, the library is proud to announce we have recently received a $10,000 challenge grant from the Kerr Foundation. This grant is being applied towards our goal of renovating the basement of the library.

As the programs of the library continue to grow, the basement has been identified as a prime area of the library to expand our operations. To date, over half of the total amount needed has been raised.

By meeting the Kerr challenge grant we will be that much closer to our overall goal. If you have questions or would like to donate towards this project please contact the library at 460-4470. Big things are happening at the library and we hope that you to will join in the fun.

Have a great week.

Pioneer Memorial Library is located at 375 W. Fourth St. and open seven days a week. Summer hours are as follows: Monday through Wednesday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Thursday, 9 .m. - 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. For information contact the Library at 460-4470 or visit our Web site at www.colbylibrary.com.

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