

# State to hold ferret meeting in Oakley

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

More talk about putting black-footed ferrets in Logan County will highlight a public forum Tuesday at the 4-H building in Oakley. The 4-H building is located at 200 Kaler Ave. in Oakley.

Since July, the Kansas Ecological Office of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service located in Manhattan has considered a five year experiment using ferrets to reduce the number of prairie dogs in Logan County.

Mike LeValley, service field supervisor, who in July said Kansas was at one time a major place of residence for ferrets, will attend the forum.

From 1 to 7:30 p.m., LeValley and other experts in the field of prairie dogs and ferrets will provide information about the ferret. Among the informational displays will be a live black-footed ferret on loan

from the Hutchinson Zoo.

Anyone attending the forum will be able to ask the experts questions; however, questions must be presented in writing. Written questions can be taken to the meeting or submitted on prepared forms which will be made available.

The Wildlife Service will make available to the public a limited number of copies of a 23-page draft copy of an environmental assessment outlining its ferret proposal and its potential effects.

Despite various landowners willing to accept the government's ferret reintroduction offer, Logan County Commissioners Doug Mackley, Nick Scott and Carl Urich at their July 17 meeting voted against the proposal.

One entity opposing ferrets being placed in Logan County is the Logan County Farm Bureau.

Logan County Farm Bureau President Lynn Kirkham said he opposes ferret reintroduction into

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Lynn Kirkham,  
President Logan County  
Farm Bureau

the county and is encouraging landowners to attend the forum.

“If ferrets are introduced into Logan County it's likely landowners won't be able to control prairie dogs on their land,” Kirkham said.

“We are encouraging landowners to go to the meeting to see what the state plan is and why Logan County was picked as an area to do this.”

Kirkham, who owns land in both Logan and Wallace Counties, also opposes grass buffers as a way to control prairie dogs. Logan County landowners Larry and Betty Haverfield are supporters of grass buffers and at the Oct. 13 Logan County commissioner meeting submitted a formal plan to use grass buffer zones versus chemicals to control prairie dogs. That plan was unanimously vetoed.

Kirkham said if western Kansas is declared a habitat for the black-footed ferret, it could have drastic effects on our western Kansas economy, including lower land values, decreased crop and livestock production.

“Grass buffer zones don't work,” Kirkham said. “Prairie dogs don't stay in one place and they don't stay out of grass.”

## 95 years and studying

HAYS (AP) — Like most students at Fort Hays State University, Nola Ochs plans to spend some time reading and studying during this week's fall break.

But she'll take time out on Wednesday to celebrate her 95th birthday.

Ochs is living at Wooster Hall on campus while pursuing her general studies degree at the university. She has about 15 hours to take next semester to get her degree.

If she does it, Ochs will be the Guinness Book of World Records' oldest college graduate.

But it will also be the culmination of a lifetime of learning. She started at Fort Hays in 1930, when it was known as Kansas State Teacher's College.

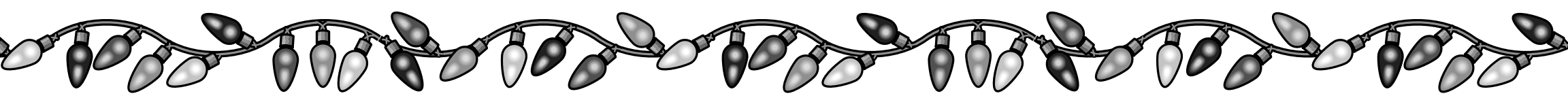
Then in the 1970s, in her 60s, she took classes part time at Dodge City Community College,

and eventually St. Mary of the Plains in Dodge City. She took some virtual classes earlier at Fort Hays before deciding to attend classes this semester.

On Friday, the last day before fall break, her family and fellow classmates threw her an impromptu birthday party during her Biblical Studies class. Her son, Alan Ochs, flew in from Jetmore for the occasion. Her granddaughter, Alexandra Ochs, didn't have to travel as far — she's in the same class as her grandmother.

After the party, Alan Ochs took his mother home for Thanksgiving break.

Asked for some words of wisdom, Ochs simply said, “I give thanks to the Lord and try to live day by day. I try to do whatever is pleasing to Him. That's what I want to do.”



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