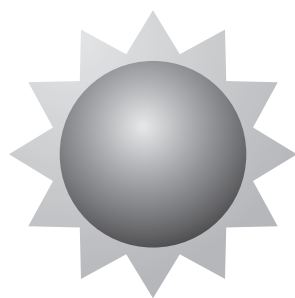


Weather Corner



National Weather Service

Tonight: A chance of thunderstorms before 4 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 55. Breezy, with a south wind 10 to 20 mph becoming north. Chance of precipitation is 50 percent.

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 80. Northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Saturday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 58. West wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south.

Sunday: Isolated thunderstorms after 1 p.m. Partly cloudy, with a high near 92. West wind between 10 and 15 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.

Sunday Night: Isolated thunderstorms before 1 a.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 62. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 94.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 63.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 95.

Tuesday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 63.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny and hot, with a high near 97.

Wednesday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 65.

Thursday: Partly cloudy, with a high near 93.

Thursday: High, 76; Low 51
Precip: Thursday Trace

Month: 3.80 inches

Year: 16.84 inches

Normal: 13.76 inches

(K-State Experiment Station)

Sunrise and Sunset

Saturday 6:44 a.m. 8:56 p.m.

Sunday 6:45 a.m. 8:55 p.m.

Monday 6:46 a.m. 8:54 p.m.

(U.S. Naval Observatory)

Colby Water Use

Thursday 1,477,000 gal.
(Colby Public Works)

The Colby Free Press

Please recycle this newspaper

Slow tornado season frustrates weather scientists

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — This has been an unusually mild year in Tornado Alley, which is good news, of course, for the people who live here, but a little frustrating to scientists who planned to chase twisters as part of a \$10 million research project.

"You're out there to do the experiment and you're geared up every day and ready. And when there isn't anything happening, that is frustrating," said Don Burgess, a scientist at the University of Oklahoma. But he was quick to add that he is pleased the relative quiet has meant fewer injuries and less damage.

Nationwide, there were 826 tornadoes this year through June 30, compared with an average of 934 for the same period during the previous three years, according to the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Okla. Most twist-

ers strike in Tornado Alley, which generally extends from Texas and Oklahoma to Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota.

During a remarkable 17-day lull from mid-May through early June, there were no tornado watches issued anywhere in the United States. And that is typically the height of the season in Tornado Alley.

"It was very, very unusual," said Joe Schaefer, director of the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, which, like the Severe Storms lab, operates under the National Weather Service.

Meteorologists are attributing the relative calm not to anything dire, like global warming, but to the shifts in the jet stream that happen from time to time. When the jet stream runs south to north in the spring over the central states, there are usually plenty of torna-

does. When it's more west to east, as it is this year, tornadoes are less common.

The serenity has proved exasperating for people like Burgess and other researchers working on Vortex2, a project funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to study tornadoes in May and June. Except for one twister in Wyoming, the researchers were left with little to examine.

The relative calm follows a horrific 2008, when 1,304 tornadoes and 121 deaths were recorded by the end of June. In all of last year, there were 1,691 tornadoes and 126 deaths.

Organizers of Vortex2 had hoped that a close-up look at killer storms this year by more than 100 scientists and assistants from various universities and the gov-

ernment would help them forecast storms more accurately and increase warning times.

"There weren't any tornadoes to find," said Harold Brooks, a research meteorologist with the Severe Storms Laboratory.

And when tornadoes did form, only a couple of funnel clouds would appear at a time, not the dozens that can materialize.

"No long tracks, massive killer tornadoes," Schaefer said. "They've been coming in onesies and twosies."

Even in this quiet year, there have been devastating storms. The

worst tornado hit the night of Feb. 10 in Lone Grove, Okla., killing eight people in a mobile home park. Also in February, one person died when a twister destroyed a church and mobile homes in Hickory Grove, Ga. Through the end of June, tornadoes had killed 21 people nationwide.

"If we get rid of the February outbreak, it's been a fairly good year," Schaefer said.

Organizers of Vortex2, or Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Tornadoes Experiment, note that it is two-year project and said they will give it a try next spring.

Sunflowers a big business for Colby processing plant

From "PLANT," Page 1

seed so growers will receive a premium.

"The confectionery seed differs from the oil seed in looks, and western Kansas grows the nicest-looking seeds," said Olson, "the seeds are black with a very pretty little white stripe on them."

Olson said the Colby plant exports 70 to 75 percent of their commodity to abroad.

"Spain is a big buyer of sunflower," Olson said, "and the Spanish eat them one at a time. They think we're crazy to take a mouthful all at one time," she said. Also Germany is a big buyer, but they use them mostly for baking, but the biggest industry for sunflowers is the snack food industry."

The Colby plant is considered an in-shell plant, although they also hull and sell some kernels. Some kernels are shipped to the roasting plant in Fargo.

About 20 percent of their sales goes to David's in Fresno, Calif., and the rest is put in containers here and shipped mainly to the Mississippi river or to the east coast, for overseas distribution.

"Most often, when you buy a package of David's sunflower seeds, there is a very good chance they came from the Colby plant," said Charles Plumisto, the receiving supervisor, who has been with the company here for 17 years.

The seeds are sold by size, and are sized by number. When the seeds come into the receiving facility, they are put through screens with holes to separate and grade the seeds. The largest seeds go to the in-shell market, medium sized are hulled for the kernel market, and the small ones are used for bird and pet seed. The Spanish market prefers large seeds.

Red River has been processing sunflower seed for the snack and baking industry for the past 20 years, and began five years ago making sun butter from the sunflower kernel. The kernel is a very low trans-fat food source, which makes sun butter a good alternative to peanut butter. Their Sun-Gold Foods plant is in Horace, N.D. near the Fargo plant.

"Some school districts are taking foods with peanuts from their menus and replacing it with sun butter," Olson said. Adverse reaction to sunflowers is a rarity," she said.

A plant that is free of any trace of peanuts or tree nuts is called a "free" plant. The Colby plant qualifies for that designation.

Olson said there is a wide window of planting time for sunflowers, from the end of May to July 10, with the optimum planting time being June 1 to June 10.

The growing season is normally 120 days, depending on summer temperatures and moisture, and harvest ideally occurs in late October and into November.

The sunflower is mature when the head turns from green to yellow and then the bracts turn brown, which is 30 to 45 days after bloom. When the plant is in the bud stage, it follows the sun, and when it is in total flower, the head, or flower, faces east.

Red River is one of the largest sunflower processors in the United States and processes up to two million pounds a week.

The local facility has off site storage in Thomas County, Grainfield and Hugoton, plus some storage areas in Colorado.

Adequate air movement is essential for storage. When seeds are stored at high moisture, they can self combust and sit and smolder.

"Red River has a tight stipulation on quality of product that comes into the plant," said Olson. The growers know that and adhere to good practices that will protect their investment."

Olson said this area is not prone to disease, such as the mold, sclerotinia. However, there was one incidence of it several years ago. The mold attaches itself to the seed, and turns it to a rock-like mass that is not recognizable as a seed. Insects like the head moth can be a problem, but timely spraying reduces damage to a minimum. Rust is one of our area's main disease concerns that can also be controlled by timely spraying.

The facility receives seeds from growers in southwest Kansas, Colorado, and as far south as Mission, Texas, with trucks pulling into the plant every day during the year.

When a truck comes into the plant, it is vacuum probed several times for a composite sample of the entire load. The sample is brought into the lab for analysis of size, weight, moisture content, insect damage, and a dark roast sample, which takes place in hot oil.

The Colby facility is a computerized plant with four floors of machinery and equipment. It is a self-sufficient plant, in that everything that comes in, is sold and goes out, including the hulls.

Red River employs 20 to 25 people for a two-shift work day. In harvest season and busy times, they run a third shift.

Plant manager is Brad Thompson who has been with the company for 20 years. Dee Olson, who has been with the company 18 years, is administrator.

Ammonia tank robbed near Levant

From "AMMONIA," Page 1

cookers (another name for illicit meth producers) make the thefts in the middle of the night and the amount they steal is small enough that farmers don't notice.

The rate of meth dealing in the county tends to go in spurts. Finley said it can pick up when cook-

ers move into the town or when known meth dealers are released from jail and begin production again. He said illicit meth production is something the county has to deal with on a year-round basis.

Cersovsky said farmers who have seen anhydrous ammonia thefts should contact the sheriff's office at (785) 460-4570.



Are you looking for a good job?

The Colby Free Press is looking for a full-time advertising executive to sell advertising on Nor'West Newspapers. The work week would be 40 hours with occasional evening and weekend duties. Computer skills with Excel, Photoshop, InDesign, and Acrobat helpful but not necessary. Must have good communication skills, and excellent customer service skills with attention to detail. Send a letter and resume to Steve Haynes, publisher, at 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kansas, 67701 or s.haynes@nwkansas.com. This could be the job you've been looking for. EOE M/F/H



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Johanna L. McCullagh, MD Dr. McCullagh completed her medical education at The University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City, KS. She completed her fellowship in Nephrology and Hypertension and residency in Internal Medicine both at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

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