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Almost time for planting winter wheat

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Farmers across Thomas County are getting ready to plant winter wheat as soon as the fields dry out.

Wheat needs moisture in the soil only about one to two inches down, said Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman.

“You don’t want it to be too wet,” he said. “That can lead to compaction of the soil.”

Milliman estimated that most planting would begin next week. The National Weather Service in Goodland is predicting some moisture, mostly in foggy mornings until Friday, with a sunny, hot weekend perfect for getting the fields in shape.

This year’s wheat crop was very good in Thomas County despite a harvest that began late and dragged on for weeks. Milliman said the county averaged 50 to 65 bushels per acre, while some fields yielded as much as 80. The past average for the area is 35 bushels

per acre, he said, adding that the area also saw very little insect or disease damage.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that prices for wheat at the Kansas City, Mo., market have been steadily dropping since February 2007, when the price was \$12.29 per bushel. The price was \$9.19 in June 2008 and \$8.64 in July, compared to \$6.63 and \$5.58 in June and July this year. As of the close of market yesterday, the wheat price quoted by Hi-Plains Co-op was just \$3.77 per bushel.

While other crops in the area are often planted in no-till fields, wheat is more often planted in conventional-till fields. Unlike many other crops in the area, Milliman said, wheat doesn’t do as well when planted into old wheat stubble. New wheat can contract diseases from the old stalks, and a tilled field can have more options with fertilizer.

Some farmers do rotate crops, he said, sometimes leaving the old stubble there, but few plant back-to-back wheat without tilling.



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

A crew from a Selden custom harvesting firm was cutting “wet” corn between Selden and Rexford on Tuesday. The men said the grain, with a moisture content around 30 percent, was bound for feedlots, and looked “pretty good” for dryland corn.

Corn looks good despite hail

By Kevin Bottrell
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If not for the rainstorms and generally wet climate over the past several weeks, the area’s corn harvest might already be well underway.

Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said the corn was about two weeks behind in maturity from previous years. The beginning of the main harvest is still about two and a half to three weeks away, he said, putting it around the Oct. 1.

Because of the wet weather, the area will need to dry out before the main harvest can take place, Milliman said, but some farmers are currently harvesting wet corn, with about 30 percent water content, which will become cattle feed. Corn needs to dry to about 14 percent for elevator storage.

Many fields were damaged by a succession of hailstorms in June. Milliman said some of the damaged corn were harvested at the time for silage, while some farmers will save the damaged fields for the last and try to salvage some good corn from them. Some fields were a total loss, he said, while others may make a crop.

While Milliman said the undamaged corn looks very good, it is too early to know what yields will be. The Kansas Department of Agriculture is projecting that yields will average 132 bushels per acre in northwest Kansas, a total of about 84 million bushels, and increase of 18 percent over last year. About 660,000 acres of corn were planted in the region this year, the state agency said.

The corn price at the end of business Tuesday, as quoted by Hi Plains Co-op, was \$3 per bushel.



Several fields in Selden area have been cut for feed grain, but the bulk of the corn harvest will have to wait until the kernels dry down to about 14 percent moisture.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 22.7 million acres of corn were planted in Kansas this year, and is forecasting that yields will be up about 7 percent from last year.

State senator to seek election as attorney general

TOPEKA (AP) — Kansas Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt says he’s running for attorney general in 2010.

The announcement Wednesday was a change in plans for the Independence Republican. In July he appointed a treasurer for a possible campaign for secretary of state.

But Schmidt said in a statement

that he’s had a strong interest as a legislator in public safety issues.

He’s the second person to announce plans to seek the Republican nomination. Ralph DeZago, city prosecutor in Junction City, announced in July.

Incumbent Democratic Attorney General Steve Six is expected to run next year as well.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

This farm equipment, which includes tractors, a combine and planters, was recovered from a property north of Colby. The Kansas Bureau of Investigation has said the equipment has been reported stolen from Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

\$1 million in farm equipment recovered from rural property

By Kevin Bottrell
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In an investigation that has made headlines around Kansas, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies have recovered more than \$1 million in stolen farm equipment from a property about four miles north of Colby.

The son of a former sheriff was jailed as officers seized the implements and hauled them to town. The equipment was locked up at the city shop. Lawmen in as many as four states were trying to track down all the thefts.

Robert Blecha, director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, said in a statement Tuesday that the Thomas County Sheriff’s Office began the investigation after a check on a John Deere 7820 tractor during a traffic stop Thursday afternoon found it had been reported stolen from Colorado.

Search warrants were issued and a search of a property north of Colby turned up more than \$1.3

million in allegedly stolen farm equipment, including a combine, grain cart and several tractors. Blecha said the equipment was reported stolen from Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Matthew Jones, a farmer in rural Thomas County was arrested and booked into the county jail Thursday afternoon in connection with the stolen property. Jones was later re-arrested on warrants from Wichita and Sherman counties in Kansas and Keith County, Neb., on Saturday. He was released later that day. Jones is the son of former Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones. Jones’ wife, Karen Jones, was also booked the same day and released on Saturday.

Officers reportedly were acting on a tip when they stopped and checked the stolen tractor.

Sheriff Rod Taylor said he couldn’t comment on the case, referring all questions to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Bridget Patton, public affairs specialist at the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Kansas City Office

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Briefly

Help needed to plan benefit

An organizational meeting to plan a benefit for the Ben Hopper family will be at 7 p.m. Thursday at TNT Auction, 200 N. Franklin Ave. Ben’s wife, Rusti, died on Sept. 8 and the family needs help with medical and funeral expenses. Volunteers are needed to help with the soup dinner and auction. For information, call Sharon Woofter at (785) 269-7180.

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for “Coffee with the Coaches” at 9 a.m. this Saturday and every Saturday after home and away football games at the Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue. For information, call Eagles’ Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Museum to hold art workshops

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will hold the third annual Sunflower Art Affair, a collection of art workshops for high-school age students and adults, from 1-5 p.m. Saturday at the museum. Workshops will include watercolor, chalk pastel drawings, quilt block-paper piecing, decoupage and hand-sewn wool pincushions. Registration deadline is next Wednesday, and space is limited to 10 people per workshop. There will be a small materials fee for each session. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

Red Cross offers two classes

The American Red Cross plans a first-aid class from 9 a.m. to noon and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation class from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Thomas County Office Complex. Anyone can sign up for one

or both. Registration is required by Thursday. There will be a \$45 materials fee. To register or for questions, call Sherry White at 462-7161.

College to dedicate building

Colby Community College plans a dedication ceremony for the Pierre C. Henry Allied Health Building at 5 p.m. Monday on the south side of the building. The naming honors Henry’s generosity and support of education. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Church offers Bible study

The Colby Wesleyan Church will hold Beth Moore’s Bible study, “Stepping Up: A Journey through the Psalms of Ascent,” from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. every Wednesday beginning next week at the Pioneer Memorial Library. A second group will meet

from 9 to 11 a.m. every Thursday beginning Sept. 24 at the church, 320 W Pine. For information or to register, call Joy Rothfuss at 443-5170.

Parade set for Recovery Month

The Central Kansas Foundation and the Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center will hold a Recovery Month Event at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 26. The event will begin with a parade, and a barbecue will follow at Fike Park. There will be cash prizes for parade entries. For information or to enter in the parade, call the center at 460-8177 or the foundation at 460-5885.



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