



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Cow dogs to highlight day

Charlie Trayer, a nationally recognized cow-dog trainer, will give a demonstration featuring his dogs from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesday at the Colby Community College farm as part of Stockman's Day activities.

The day will begin at 9 a.m. at the college agricultural center, featuring demonstrations by industry leaders and university specialists.

"In addition to the demonstrations, there will be a student poster display in the beef barn," said Dr. Marcy Ward, beef program director. "Tours will be provided to view the latest in feed efficiency technology, and bull and horse previews will be available all morning."

A free lunch will be served, then a sale of performance-tested bulls and college-trained quarter horses will begin at 1 p.m. in the beef barn, including spring- and fall-born Angus, South Devon,

Gelbvieh, Salers, Balancer, Hereford and Polled Hereford bulls. Replacement heifer prospects also will be on the auction list.

Trayer, a long-time cattleman who runs 1,500 yearlings in the Kansas Flint Hills, claims to have developed a breed of dog that best suits his needs.

"Trayer has fine-tuned traits of his Hangin' Tree cow dogs into intense, hard-working, intelligent dogs," Ward said. "I encourage everyone to come watch these amazing dogs."

Participants are invited to watch the clinic or bring their dog for personalized training next Thursday. Cost is \$30 to observe or \$125 to enroll a dog.

Information is available on the web at colbyccag.com or at (785) 460-5465. The agricultural center is three miles east of Colby on U.S. 24 and one mile north. For questions, call Ward at 462-5060.

Good food, good conversation



Chamber of Commerce manager Holly Whitaker (left) talked Wednesday with Economic Development Director Christy Rocca, Chamber Ambassador Janet Harper and Anita Porter during a Chamber "Business After 5" event at the Bank.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Governors hope to save 'pink slime' plant, jobs

By Josh Funk

AP Business Writer

OMAHA — The main producer of "pink slime" and the politicians defending the company will have a hard time persuading consumers and grocery stores to accept the product, even if the processed beef trimmings are as safe as the industry insists.

Three governors and two lieutenant governors planned to tour Beef Prod-

ucts Inc.'s plant in South Sioux City, Neb., this afternoon to show their support for the company and the several thousand jobs it creates in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota and Texas.

State leaders who plan to tour the plant — including Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy and South Dakota Lt. Gov. Matt Michels — all agree

with the industry view that pink slime has been unfairly maligned and mislabeled.

"Our states proudly produce food for the country and the world — and we do so with the highest commitment toward product safety," the governors said in a joint statement. "Lean, finely textured beef is a safe, nutritious product that is backed by sound science."

Beef Products, the main producer

of the cheap lean beef made from fatty bits of meat left over from other cuts, has drawn extra scrutiny because of concerns about the ammonium hydroxide it treats meat with to slightly change the acidity of the beef and kill bacteria. The company suspended operations at plants in Texas, Kansas and Iowa this week, affecting 650 jobs, but it defends its product as safe.

While the official name is lean finely textured beef, critics dub it

"pink slime" and say it's an unappealing example of industrialized food production. That term was coined by a federal microbiologist who was grossed out by it, but the product meets federal food safety standards and has been used for years.

Larry Smith, with the Institute for Crisis Management public relations firm, said he's not sure the makers of

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Brownback



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Undersheriff Marc Finley waited to congratulate his K-9 service dog, Honcho, for returning after retrieving a hidden, drug-laced tube during an exercise last week.



Undersheriff gets national selection

By Christina Beringer

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The Thomas County undersheriff has been selected to attend the FBI National Academy law-enforcement training program in Quantico, Va.

Marc Finley, a 10-year veteran of the sheriff's office and a former Marine, says he is excited about the honor.

The National Academy is a 10-week course for leaders of the law-enforcement business, said Bridget Patton, a spokeswoman for the bureau's Kansas City division.

"Marc has been selected for this awesome program that en-

compasses representatives from throughout the entire United States," she said. "Not only does the academy involve the FBI, but leaders and managers of state and local police, sheriff's departments, military police, federal law enforcement and international partners will be present, too."

"There will only be about 250 officers in his class, so it is really quite an honor to attend."

Finley said students may choose from a list of available college-level classes, along with mandatory classes.

"There are a lot of options," he said, "but I chose classes that

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Drought in Southwest leaves aquifers way down

HUTCHINSON (AP) — Dry weather in Kansas last year led to intense declines in groundwater levels around the state, the Kansas Geological Survey reports.

The Ogallala Aquifer in southwest Kansas usually sees annual declines, but its drop in 2011 was one of the worst in decades, *The Hutchinson News* reported (bit.ly/H0wwLu). The agency said the aquifer in that region dropped an average 3.78 feet in 2011, compared to about 3 feet in 2010 and 1.39 feet in 2009.

The drought that plagued the southwest last year was the worst in generations. Much of Kansas received 25 to 50 percent of nor-

mal precipitation, with rain shutting off in the fall of 2010.

"The growing season was probably the worst since the 1930s," said survey water-data manager Brownie Wilson. "It was just awful."

In central and south-central Kansas, where groundwater levels usually show gains or only modest declines, the water table in the Equus Beds aquifer decreased an average 3.17 feet, and Big Bend district No. 5 dropped an average 3 feet. The Big Bend region just west of the Equus Beds had an increase of more than 4 feet from 2007 to 2010 before this year's decline.

This followed modest declines of .26 and .7 of a foot the past two years in the Equus Beds and, from 1996 through 2011, the district experienced an increase of .4 of a foot.

"Last year was probably a record year of pumping and a record drought," said Tim Boese, manager of the Equus Beds district.

Big Bend district Manager Wes Essmiller, however, said he was surprised that the water-table drops weren't worse.

Farmers in his district took out 1,056 emergency permits through the Kansas Department of Agriculture to over pump in 2011 — the most of any district.

Chinese firm surpasses Exxon

By Chris Kahn

AP Energy Writer

NEW YORK — A big shift is happening in Big Oil: an American giant now ranks behind a Chinese upstart.

Exxon Mobil is no longer the world's biggest publicly traded producer of oil. For the first time, that distinction belongs to a 13-year-old Chinese company called PetroChina. The Beijing company was created by the Chinese government to secure more oil for that nation's booming economy.

PetroChina announced today that it pumped 2.4 million barrels a day last year, surpassing Exxon by 100,000. The company has grown rapidly over the last decade by squeezing more from China's aging

oil fields and outspending Western companies to acquire more petroleum reserves in places like Canada, Iraq and Qatar. It's motivated by a need to lock up as much oil as possible.

The company's output increased 3.3 percent in 2011 while Exxon's fell 5 percent. Exxon's oil production also fell behind Rosneft, the Russian energy company.

PetroChina's rise highlights a fundamental difference in how the largest petroleum companies plan to supply the world as new deposits become tougher to find and more expensive to produce.

Every major oil company has aggressively pursued new finds to replace their current wells. But an-

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Leaders hope House will pass map

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican leaders are hoping the Kansas House approves a congressional redistricting bill after a previous measure failed.

The bill up for a final vote Thursday splits Topeka between two congressional districts. The entire city currently is in the 2nd District of eastern Kansas, and the

bill would move part of it into the 1st District of western and central Kansas.

Topeka-area legislators oppose the bill, arguing it's not necessary to divide the city to even out the populations of the state's four U.S. House districts.

But last week, the House rejected a proposal to keep all of

Topeka in the 2nd District while dramatically redrawing district lines in south-central and south-east Kansas.

The Senate has passed a different plan, and the two would have to agree on a compromise.

