



Other Viewpoints

As occupations go, it's a risky business

The current heat and drought in America's heartland is taxing to everyone, but no one feels the effects of this kind of weather more than farmers.

As the number of farmers has declined in the United States, fewer people understand the financial risks farmers take every year and the devastating impact weather like we're having this year can have on a farming operation. In tight economic times, it becomes easier to criticize federal farm policies such as crop insurance, without really understanding that many of those programs are what ensures that Americans have a reliable, affordable supply of food.

Recent news reports offer a reminder of the impact of one variable over which farmers have no control: the weather. The Midwest corn crop is close to a total loss and soybeans are shriveling in the sun. Cattlemen are being forced to sell their cattle sooner than they want because there isn't enough grass in the pastures to sustain them. In many cases, those forced sales are more than a one-year setback.

An Associated Press story in last Wednesday's *Journal-World* explained how it will take years for pastures to recover from the drought and for farmers to rebuild cow-calf herds. The story focused on one Kansas rancher who had carefully bred cattle for years to build a strong herd, much of which he now must sell off. He can rebuild his herd by buying cattle, but it will take far longer to replace the genetic breeding that went into his current herd.

Crop prices are high, but most farmers will have no fall crops to sell. Federal crop insurance payments will be enough to repay their production loans and allow them to plant again next year but probably not enough to cover many other expenses such as fuel and machinery costs.

There almost certainly are ways to improve crop insurance programs and make them less costly for taxpayers, but revisions to those programs need to recognize the ways farming differs from many other businesses. Farmers can be required to pay a higher percentage of their crop insurance premiums, but that cost must be passed on in the price of food or farmers will be driven out of business because they can't make a profit. Farmers can respond somewhat to market demands, but no amount of better business management can prevent the kind of devastation that Mother Nature is visiting on farmers this year.

An important part – perhaps the most important part – of U.S. farm policy is to help American farmers stay in business so they can provide the food and fiber on which the nation depends. A year like this offers a strong reminder of the risks of farming, as well as the critical role farmers play.

– *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

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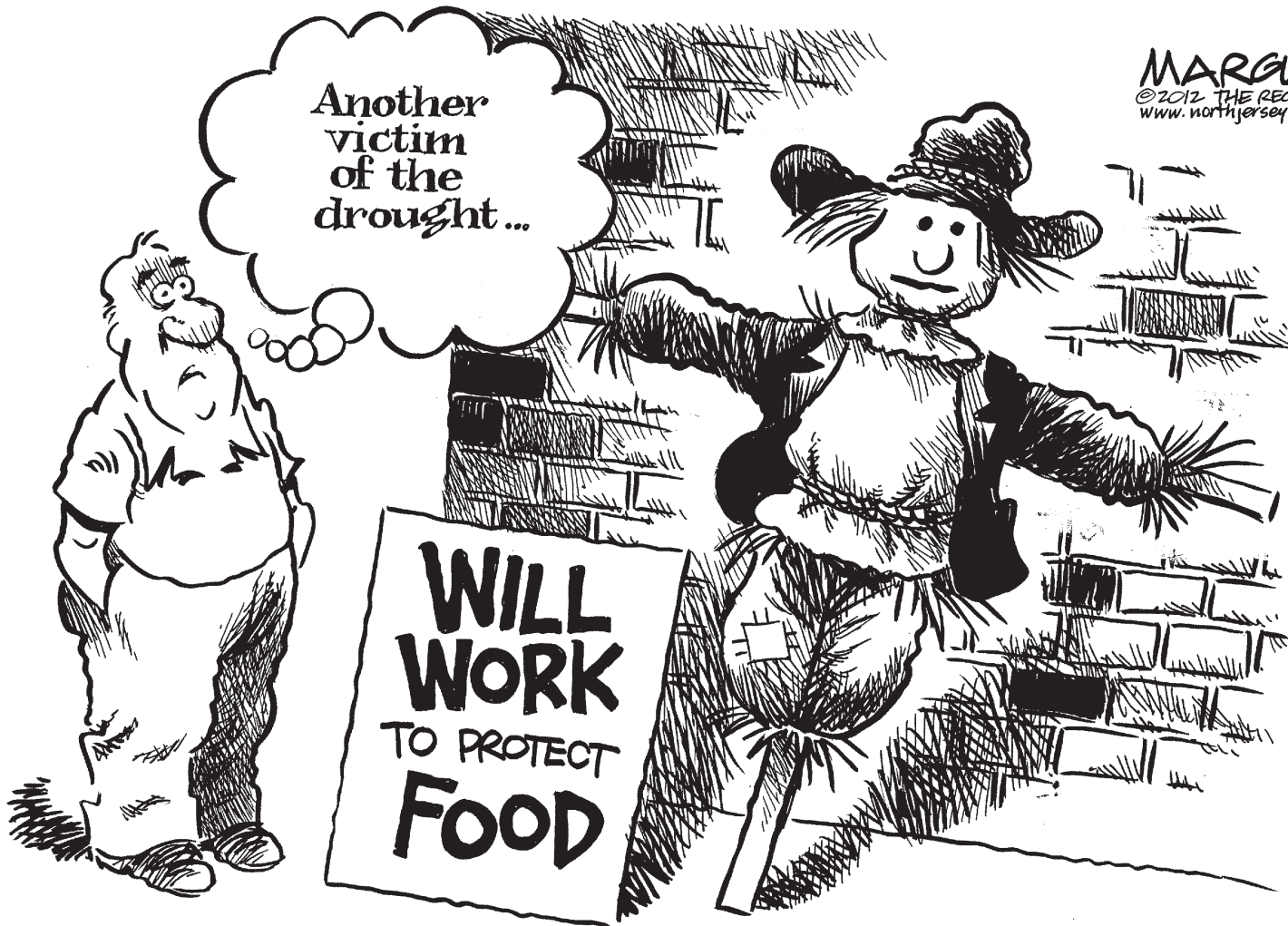
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Bird feeder draws strange customers

I love feeding the birds.

I enjoy watching them get the seed out of my feeders. I'm not so crazy about the mess they make of the yard underneath, but that's just part of the deal.

I started feeding birds when we lived in Colorado. Everyone put up hummingbird feeders each summer, and so did we.

After moving back to Kansas, I gave up on feeding the birds. We just didn't have enough hummingbirds to make it worth my while.

Then when we started going back to Colorado on vacations and had a place to stay that wasn't a motel room, I started putting out hummingbird feeders again.

It's fun to watch these bright little bundles of feathers land on their perches and poke their impossibly long snouts into the feeder for a beakful of sugar water.

With hummingbirds, though, it seems they spend more time defending their territory than eating. It's still fun to watch them buzz around.

Then a year or so ago, I decided to feed the hundreds of other birds that swarm around in the summer. I got a shepherd's crook, a pair of tube feeders and 10 pounds of wild bird seed.

It took a couple of days for the birds to find the food. When they did, they came in droves. My next purchase was a bird book to identify the species.

Now, I have a pair of tube feeders at home in Oberlin, which I have to refill about every



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

other day during the summer, and a set of tube feeders and three hummingbird feeders in Colorado, which I have to fill almost daily when I'm out there.

The hummingbirds must be suffering from the drought as much as the rest of us, because they aren't even fighting over territory much this year. They're just lining up like street people at the soup kitchen. All three feeders are abuzz with birds almost all day long.

The seed feeders have also had their share of birds, but there have been other problems out at the shepherd's crook.

Two years ago, Steve's sister was staying here and she called to say that a doe and her fawns were feasting on the seeds.

Sure enough, when we got out to Colorado, the first day the birds found the feeders and ate about half the seed. The next morning, they were empty.

We refilled and watched. The birds came again and so did the deer.

She licked at both feeders until they were empty. When we walked out into the yard and

shooed her off, she'd move away a short distance, give us a dirty look and come back as soon as we went back inside.

I soon started bringing in the feeders at night.

Last year, it was the same thing. The feeders had to come in each night.

This year, I got some new feeders with rims around the bottom to catch the dropped seeds.

The deer has yet to find my new feeders and seeds. We did see her out eating the neighbors' flowers one morning, however.

This year, it's a chipmunk or a golden-mantled ground squirrel or something like that. Whatever, it is, the little devil hops across the yard, shimmies up the narrow pole, hops over onto the rim of the feeder and starts stuffing himself.

I guess I'll have to go back to tube feeders without a seed catcher on the bottom. That will mean more seeds on the ground, but at least, the chipmunk will have an easier time of getting his lunch.

Maybe, I should just give up, and get a book on mammals so I can identify what's out in my yard eating the bird seed.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Proposed treaty threatens sovereignty

For the past two centuries, Americans have enjoyed liberties unparalleled in the world, guaranteed by the United States Constitution – including the fundamental right to keep and bear arms. Today, our freedoms and our country's sovereignty are in danger of being undermined by the United Nations.

In October of 2009, at the U.N. General Assembly, the Obama administration voted for the United States to participate in negotiating an Arms Trade Treaty – a reversal of the Bush and Clinton administrations' positions. Supporters of the treaty claim it is intended to establish "common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms," including tanks, helicopters and missiles. However, by threatening to include civilian firearms within its scope, the Arms Trade Treaty could restrict the lawful private ownership of firearms in our country.

Proposals being considered by the committee would adversely impact all American gun owners. For example, there have been regular calls for bans on the civilian ownership of guns Americans use to hunt, target shoot and defend themselves. By requiring firearms to be accounted for throughout their life span, the treaty could lead to mandatory nationwide gun registration. Still other proposals could require the marking and tracking of all ammunition.

This week, the U.N. conference on the treaty is taking place in New York City to finalize the treaty for adoption, which must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. The chairman of the conference, Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritán of Argentina, has released what is known as the "Chairman's Draft Paper," which includes the wishes of the 193 U.N. member states engaged in the treaty negotiations.

Based on the process to date, I am con-



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

- Moran's Memo

cerned this treaty will infringe upon the Second Amendment rights of American gun owners and will be used by other countries that do not share our freedoms to wrongly place the burden of controlling international crime and terrorism on law-abiding American citizens.

Given these serious concerns, I led 50 of my colleagues this week in sending a message to the Obama administration: a U.N. Arms Trade Treaty that does not protect ownership of civilian firearms will fail in the Senate. On Thursday, we notified President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton of our intent to oppose ratification of a treaty that in any way restricts Americans' Second Amendment rights. Our opposition is strong enough to block the treaty from passage, as treaties submitted to the U.S. Senate require two-thirds approval to be ratified. In notifying the Obama administration, we outlined several concerns:

First, while the draft paper nominally applies only to international arms transfers, it defines such transfers as including transport across nations. It requires member states to monitor and control arms in transit, and to enforce domestically the obligations of the treaty by prohibiting the unauthorized "transfer of arms from any location."

Such a treaty would be difficult to enforce and would pose dangers to all U.S. businesses and individuals involved in any aspect of the

firearms industry, from manufacturers to dealers to consumers.

Second, the draft paper requires nations to "maintain records of all imports and shipments of arms that transit their territory," including the identity of individual buyers. This information would then be reported to a U.N.-based firearms registry. At stake is our country's autonomy and the rights of American citizens protected under the Constitution.

Third, the draft paper requires that nations "shall take all appropriate measures necessary to prevent the diversion of imported arms into the illicit market or to unintended end users." America leads the world in export standards to ensure arms are transferred for legitimate purposes, and its citizens should not be punished by the treaty. There is no disagreement that sales and transfers to criminals and terrorists are unacceptable, but law-abiding Americans should not be held responsible for international crime and acts of terrorism. Instead, the responsibility should be on U.N. member states that have not enforced existing laws and have failed to block illegal trafficking of arms.

It is critical to reinforce that our country's sovereignty and firearm freedoms must not be infringed upon by an international organization made up of many countries with little respect for gun rights. I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure an Arms Trade Treaty that falls short of this standard and undermines the Constitutional rights of American gun owners is dead on arrival in the Senate.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans' Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

