

That's one big wheel



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Two railroad workers greased fittings on the drive wheels of a Union Pacific steam locomotive when it stopped for water Thursday in Oakley. The scheduled 2 p.m. stop was two hours late because the train was sidetracked in Grinnell while an east-bound coal train passed. Despite the delay, a crowd of over a hundred was waiting to see the train, which is on its way to California as a part of a celebration of Union Pacific's 150th anniversary. The train travels at a top speed of 49 miles an hour and steams through 12 gallons of water each mile.

Horticulture event to be inside

Kansas State University's Agriculture Research Center at Hays will hold its 2012 Evening Horticulture Event on Thursday, Aug. 30. A change this year is that the whole event will be held in the research center's air-conditioned auditorium due to this summer's hot, dry weather. The center is located at 1232 240th Ave. in Hays.

Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the auditorium. The program will run from 6 to 9 p.m. Presentation topics will include:

- Prairie Star annual flower trials.

- Turfgrass issues.
- Tomato and pepper performance trials.
- Insect issues – lawn and garden.

A garden photography exhibit is included and K-State Research and Extension specialists will be on hand to discuss horticulture topics on an informal basis.

Information about the event is available by contacting Joe Becker at (785) 625-3425 Ex. 222 or jbecker@ksu.edu.

Wheat planting: dust it in or wait?

Soils are generally very dry in much of Kansas, which presents an all-too-familiar dilemma to wheat farmers, said Jim Shroyer, K-State Research and Extension crop production specialist.

"Wheat producers faced with very dry soils basically have three main options, and these haven't changed over the years. Do I 'dust in' the seed and hope for rain, plant deeper than normal to place the seed into moisture, or just hold off and wait for rain before planting?" Shroyer said. "There are pros and cons to each option."

Dusting in the wheat at the normal seeding depth and normal planting date is probably the best option, Shroyer said. The seed will remain viable in the soil until it gets enough moisture, he said.

Before planting, growers should look at the long-term forecast and try to estimate how long the dry conditions will persist, he added. This will help determine the best seeding rate to use.

"If it looks like there's a good chance the dry weather will continue until at least the back end of the optimum range of planting dates, producers should treat the fields as if they were planting later than the optimum time. Rather than cutting back on seeding rates and fertilizer to save money on a lost cause, producers should increase seeding rates, consider using a fungicide seed treatment, and consider using a starter fertilizer," the K-State agronomist said.

"The idea is to make sure the wheat gets off to a good start and will have enough heads to have good yield potential, assuming it will eventually rain and the crop will emerge late," he said. "Wheat that emerges in November almost always has fewer fall tillers than wheat that emerges in September or October."

There are some risks to dusting-in wheat, he cautions. For one thing, a hard rain could crust over the soil or wash soil off planting ridges and into the seed furrows, causing emergence problems.

Probably the worst-case scenario

would be if a light rain occurs and the seed gets just enough moisture to germinate but not enough for the seedlings to emerge through the soil or to survive long if dry conditions return, he added. This could result in a loss of the stand.

Another option would be to plant deeper-than-normal into moisture during the optimal planting time, if possible, Shroyer said. This option can work if the variety to be planted has a long coleoptile, the producer is using a hoe drill, and there is good moisture in reach.

"The advantage of this option is that the crop may come up and make a stand during the optimum time in the fall. This would keep the soil from blowing. Also, the ridges created by hoe drills also help keep the soil from blowing," he said.

The main risk of this option is poor emergence, he said. Deep-planted wheat normally has be-

low-normal emergence, so a higher seeding rate should be used.

"Generally speaking, it's best to plant no deeper than three inches with most varieties," he said.

Finally, producers might simply decide to wait for rain and then plant, the tagronomist said.

"Under the right conditions, this would result in good stands, assuming the producer uses a high seeding rate and a starter fertilizer, if appropriate. If it remains dry ... the producer would then have the option of just ... planting spring crop next year instead," he said.

The risk of this option is the weather may turn rainy and stay wet later this fall, preventing the producer from planting at all while those who "dusted" their wheat in have a good stand, he said.

Crop insurance considerations and deadlines will play a role in these decisions, Shroyer added.

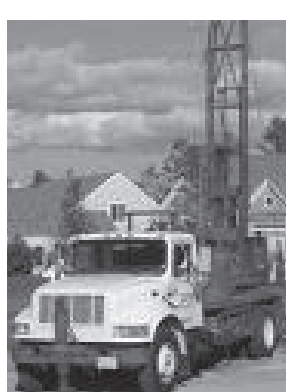
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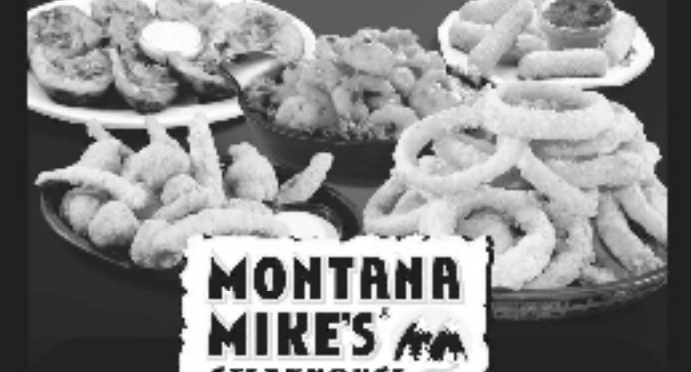
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