

weather report

72°
at noon

Today

Sunset, 4:32 p.m.

Tomorrow

Sunrise, 6:32 a.m.

Sunset, 4:32 p.m.

Midday Conditions

Soil Temperature 54 degrees

Humidity 17 percent

Sky sunny

Winds calm

Barometer 30.15 inches and falling

Record High 79° (1963)

Record Low 5° (1955)

Last 24 Hours*

High 71°

Low 31°

Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: clear, low near 30, north winds 5 to 15 mph.

Tuesday: sunny, high near 75, light winds.

Extended Forecast

Wednesday: dry, low near 30, high in the 70s.

Thursday: dry, low near 30, high in the 60s.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$2.11 bushel

Posted county price — \$2.06

Loan deficiency payment — 39¢

Corn — \$1.55 bushel

Posted county price — \$1.58

Loan deficiency pmt. — 41¢

Milo — \$2.14 hundredweight

Soybeans — \$3.86 bushel

Posted county price — \$3.86

Loan deficiency payment — 1.03¢

Millet — \$3.80 hundredweight

Sunflowers

Oil current crop — \$5.75 cwt.

Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.97

Confection current — \$9 cwt.

Pinto beans — \$15 (new crop)

(Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and Prairie Pea and Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

Alarms sound before crash

NEWPORT, R.I. — The pilot and co-pilot of EgyptAir Flight 990 were fixing something that got “progressively worse” and alarms sounded in the cockpit, a source close to the investigation told the Associated Press.

During the first 28 minutes of tape from the cockpit voice recorder, the pilot and co-pilot engaged in what appears to be routine exchanges, at times talking “like pals,” the source said. Then something went wrong.

A preliminary review of the tape provides no apparent evidence of an intruder in the cockpit or of any fighting among the crew, the source said. The New York-to-Cairo jetliner crashed off Massachusetts’ Nantucket Island on Oct. 31, killing all 217 people on board.

Federal officials say it is still unclear whether a mechanical problem or criminal act caused EgyptAir Flight 990 to crash.

Pheasants plentiful; very few problems

By Charlie Baker
The Goodland Daily News

A hot, dry, dusty weekend turned out to be better for hunters than many people expected, with plenty of birds being taken and troubles at a minimum.

Wildlife Conservation Officer Jim Robinson said he saw a lot more hunters than he expected.

“With the hot, dry conditions,” he said, “and the fact that there have been so few birds the last few years, I really didn’t expect to see that many hunters this weekend.”

Robinson said that he not only saw a lot of hunters, he saw a lot of happy hunters.

“They were getting up on birds,” he said. “They might not have been getting their limit, but they were getting some birds.”

Robinson said the hot weather may have even helped the hunters in some ways.

“It may have been that the hot weather had the birds nested in cover,” he said, “and it was easier to get up on the birds.”

He said it was a pretty calm opening weekend, with only one call for trespassing. He said he caught a few hunters without licenses, and a few who did not leave evidence of sex on their birds, but overall, the hunters were following the laws.

He said there was one minor accident. A man blocking, or standing at the end of a field as hunters advanced toward him, was hit by two shotgun pellets, one in his cheek, and one in his hand. There was also a small fire reported.

Robinson said he expects the hunting to slow down until the area gets some moisture.

“I heard a lot of complaints about (hunters) being tired,” he said, “and it was really hard on the dogs.”

Bruce Entwistle, meteorologist for



Goodland’s Abel Ontiveroz (center) was the guide for this group of Colorado hunters for opening weekend. Joe Raisch, (left) Parker, Colo., has been hunting with Ontiveroz for the last seven years. He said this was

the best hunting he has seen for the last several years. The group said they bagged about 40 birds over the weekend.

Photo by Charlie Baker/The Goodland Daily News

the National Weather Service, said there is no promise of any precipitation in the forecast, and the weather is expected to stay warm.

“The next prayer of precipitation is late on next Monday,” he said.

Entwistle said the forecast for the weekend is for above normal temps.

“It should not be as warm as it was last weekend,” he said, “but it will be 5 to 10 degrees above normal.”

For this time of year, normal highs

are about 50. Forecasts are for highs in the 70s early in the week, dipping into the 60s Thursday and Friday and a little cooler into the weekend.

Sales tax gap between Sherman and Thomas closing

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Daily News

The latest figures from the Kansas Department of Revenue for state sales tax collections show Sherman County continues to move closer to Thomas County, still the top county in north-west Kansas.

Thomas County showed an increase of just under 1 percent in July over the previous year, while Sherman County showed an increase of 5.4 percent.

While Thomas County had total state sales tax collections of \$366,871, Sherman County was only about \$25,000 behind at \$341,899. In 1998, Thomas County had collections of \$363,460 compared to Sherman County with \$324,450.

Sherman County has been moving

closer to the Thomas County level over the past two years. Ron Harding, executive director of the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce, said the figures continue to improve and he feels they will remain up in the next few months.

The state figures do not reflect the closings of either Jubilee Foods or Gibson’s in Goodland, which happened in August and September. However, Harding said he doesn’t really feel either closing will create a significant dip in sales for the area.

“While we do not like to see these stores close, their customers will go to other stores and we will not see a big drop in sales,” Harding said. “The grocery closing affected Colby as well as Goodland and the net effect of this will

be even, but we won’t really see the figures until later this year.”

Looking at the county sales tax figures for September, Sherman County continues to see a flattening as the collections, while ahead of last year at this time, are not increasing more than the additional one-quarter of 1 percent which was added in October 1998.

“We are not showing a comparison percentage for the Sherman County sales tax collections because the figures need to be the same level to allow a true comparison,” said Steven Brunkan of the Kansas Department of Revenue. He expects the comparison to show up again with the October figures, which will be published in December.

Sherman County had sales tax col-

lections of \$98,273 in September 1998, and \$116,769 in September 1999. Figuring the difference the one-quarter of 1 percent increase should have made in sales tax collections for September 1999, the total should have been \$122,841.

This would show a 4.9 percent drop in county collections for September or a decrease in collections of about \$6,000.

Thomas County showed a similar 4.9 percent drop in county sales tax collections in September, dropping from \$97,054 in 1998 to \$92,275 in 1999.

Sherman County collects 1.5 percent in county sales tax, which is split between the City of Goodland, Sherman County and the Town of Kanorado. Thomas County collects 1 percent in

sales tax for the county.

Looking around the nearby counties, Cheyenne County showed a 6.3 percent increase in state sales tax collections in July, up \$3,300 over 1998. However, county sales tax collections in September were down 4.3 percent for a drop of \$1,400.

Decatur County reported a drop of 15 percent in state sales tax collections in July, a decline of over \$7,600 from July 1998. The county sales tax figures for September showed a 5.3 percent drop in collections a drop of about \$1,000.

Wallace County’s state sales tax collections were down by 3 percent in July, a drop of \$1,100 from July 1998. Wallace County does not have a county sales tax.

Numbers of ill citizens raises fears in Scott County

By Roxana Hegeman
Associated Press Writer

SCOTT CITY (AP)—Robert Mulch’s grandparents settled in Scott City in 1919. Nowadays, he farms their old homestead.

Last year, Mulch, the town’s municipal judge, lost his wife, Glenda, to a rare form of connective tissue disease. After years of being sick, she asked doctors to allow her to die.

“She had a lot of pain. It required all types of narcotics to keep her comfortable,” Mulch said of his wife, 49.

He thinks something in Scott County was responsible for her death. Indeed, a growing fear has gripped this quiet western Kansas county of 5,000. People are getting sick, and dying, in alarming numbers, of an array of cancers and neurological diseases.

While no exact figures are available, among those sounding the alarm is the town doctor, Blair Gill, who has been treating the local populace for the past five years.

Gill has watched more than a dozen people die from pancreatic cancer, and another five patients were diagnosed with kidney cancer. Recently, two more developed a rare brain tumor, he says.

“When you get something not common clustering, it starts raising eyebrows,” Gill says. “I’m not from western Kansas, but there seems to be an awful lot of chemicals put on the fields and also a lot of chemicals used in the cattle feeding business.”

So deep-seated is the concern that residents have raised about \$50,000 to convince medical researchers to study whether a disease cluster does indeed exist here, and, if so, to find out what could be causing it.

Mulch gave \$3,000, the memorial fund he received for Glenda’s death. He said she was concerned about all the illness she saw among so many of her friends.

“My wife liked other people,” he said. “She wanted to see them healthy.”

Their quest was answered. In January, a team from the Kansas State University and the University of Kansas Medical Center will

examine health statistics in Scott County and surrounding counties.

“They have thought of this carefully,” said Leonard Bloomquist, director of the Kansas State sociology lab and one of the researchers. “I think they have good reasons to be concerned, and they impressed me very much in the way they are going about this.”

Bloomquist says they are not sure why the diseases appear more pronounced in that region than others.

Residents have many different suspicions — from aerial spraying of pesticides to the huge feedlots just outside town — about what might be making them sick. They are hoping the study will give them some answers.

Even among some who are sick, there is a reluctance to blame the farming economy, which sustains their beloved town.

Lucy Bontrager, a 46-year-old Scott City farm wife, was diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago. Her grandmother and mother also had the disease.

“I can’t blame Scott County. That is my livelihood,” she said. “I live close to a feedlot. I can’t tell my neighbor he gave me cancer.”

Officials at the Kansas Livestock Association said they were unaware of the health study, or of any unusual problems in Scott City.

“Our members would like to be the first to know if there was any linkage,” said Rich McKee, executive secretary of the group’s feedlot division.

Decades ago, buffalo freely roamed these remote Kansas plains. After they were settled, vast herds of the majestic animals were driven over nearby Suicide Bluff to their deaths below.

Today, more than 4,000 buffalo are packed in huge feedlots just outside of Scott City. There are 31 feedlots total in the county, which also fatten cattle, sheep and hogs. On any given day, at least 200,000 cattle are being fed in this sparse rural county of about 5,000 people.

State permits already allow as many as 372,249 animals packed into existing facilities here. Scott County’s 32nd feedlot application is pending government approval. Elsewhere in the county,

thousands of acres have been plowed up to plant wheat and milo, and huge sprinkler systems and farm chemicals have been brought in to boost production. Enormous mounds of unsold milo piled on the ground around town attest to their success, and to the world-wide glut of low-priced grain.

Merchon Jones, 49, of nearby Dighton, used to live in Scott City when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The woman who lived across the street from her also got MS, as did the woman who lived in the house behind her. All three, in the same age group, living within a half block of each other, were registered nurses.

Within a 50-mile area around her Dighton home, Mrs. Jones has counted 16 people who suffer from MS. The disease appears particularly prevalent in a 23-mile-long swath, bounded by K-4 and K-156, extending from Scott City to Ness City, she says.

“For the population, we have too many people with MS,” she says.

Bob McCandless, a 72-year-old former farmer who was also diagnosed with MS, now makes a daily trek to the hospital for chemotherapy to treat his prostate cancer. He wonders if those times he came in from the fields drenched in farm chemicals years ago may have caused his illnesses now.

His 73-year-old wife, Treva, ticks off the names of the members of her women’s study club that have developed various cancers. By the time she is finished — and others have joined in to add another name or two — she realizes that at least 10 out of the 30 women in her club, or their spouses, have cancer.

Residents tell of three people — a teacher, a cattle buyer and a handyman — who have come down with Lou Gehrig’s disease.

Water tests have mostly come back within allowable limits for contaminants. And the peaceful atmosphere of a safe, rural community where people still raise vegetable gardens belies underlying health hazards.

“You would think this would be a healthy place to live ... but apparently this is not,” said county health nurse Karen Gribben.