

weather report

37°

at noon

Today

• Sunset, 5:25 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 6:35 a.m.

• Sunset, 5:26 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temperature 39 degrees
- Humidity 54 percent
- Sky cloudy
- Winds east 14 mph
- Barometer 29.78 inches and falling
- Record High 81° (1970)
- Record Low -15° (1993)

Last 24 Hours*

High 53°
Low 20°
Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Cloudy; 60 percent chance of snow; 1-2 inches total; low 15-20; winds north 15-25 mph. Tomorrow: Partly sunny; high mid 30s; winds northwest 10-20 mph; low 15.

Extended Forecast

Saturday through Monday. Saturday: dry; high 40-45; low 15. Sunday: dry; high 45-50; low 20. Monday: dry; high mid 50s; low mid 20s. (National Weather Service)
Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$2.33 bushel
Posted county price — \$2.26
Loan deficiency payment — 19¢
Corn — \$1.77 bushel
Posted county price — \$1.89
Loan deficiency payment — 10¢
Milo — \$2.73 hundredweight
Soybeans — \$4.28 bushel
Posted county price — \$4.36
Loan deficiency payment — 53¢
Millet — \$3.80 hundredweight
Sunflowers
Oil current crop — \$5.75 cwt.
Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.80
Confection current — \$13/\$8 cwt.
Pinto beans — \$12 (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.

Polls show

Bush slipping

WASHINGTON (AP)—Democratic front-runner Al Gore is finding the national polls friendlier these days while Republican front-runner George W. Bush, caught in a tough fight for his party's nomination, is still on top but slipping.

Bush retains a healthy lead over Sen. John McCain in the Republican presidential race, but his lead over Gore in a head-to-head matchup has virtually disappeared, say two national polls.

Bush, governor of Texas, leads McCain, an Arizona senator, 58 percent to 31 percent in a CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll and led McCain by 20 points in a CBS-New York Times poll.

In the Democratic race, Gore led Bill Bradley by about 40 points in both polls, a strong position Gore has had in many polls since beating Bradley in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Goodland, Lamar caught in federal Catch-22

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

Technically the decision announced Monday to cut air service to Goodland and Lamar, Colo. does not eliminate the possibility of either city having air service again, but under the present Essential Air Service Program the two cities cannot receive subsidies in excess of \$200 per passenger.

"Technically both cities are still 'guaranteed' air service under the 1978 law establishing the program, but there is a conflict in the law which also says that the federal government cannot pay over \$200 in subsidy," said Dennis Devany, chief of the Essential Air Service Program.

"I have been resisting pulling the trigger on Goodland for several years," he said, "but we finally had to bite the bullet."

Under the 1978 law any city which had scheduled air service on Oct. 24, 1978 was an eligible Emergency Air Service community, and was guaranteed at least a minimum level of air service.

Devany said that while both Goodland and Lamar were still listed as eligible EAS communities the decision to terminate the contract with Great Lakes Aviation was done because it was costing twice what the subsidy allowed.

"I don't like doing this," he said, "but we cannot continue to spend this amount of money over what has been authorized by Congress."

"If they ever take that \$200 cap off then I think we will be able to return service to several rural communities which are in the same boat as Goodland," he said.

Goodland City Manager Ron

Pickman said this morning that he was working on gathering figures to present to the Federal Department of Transportation to ask that they reconsider the decision.

"I think there are several things which were not included in what was reported," Pickman said. "I have already contacted Congressman Jim Moran's office to inform them about the manner in which the decision was made without giving our people an opportunity to defend or dispute the decision."

Pickman said he was in Lamar Wednesday talking to City Administrator Jeff Anderson who showed him a letter similar to the one received by Goodland.

A large portion of the increased cost of handling the passengers over the past few years has been caused by the increased safety regulations which small

commuter airlines are having to meet, Devany said. "When the bar was raised with the commuter safety rule, the costs of operating planes over 10-passengers became much higher," he said. "Essentially that change said all planes which carry over 10 passengers must meet the same safety requirements as those flying the larger planes."

"Also we are now seeing the pressure which the hub airlines can place on the small carriers who become partners such as Great Lakes and Mess were under United," Devany said. "It seemed like the way to go in the 80s and early 90s when everyone was scrambling for air service, but now the majors like United and Northwest are putting the squeeze on the little guys. I guess there is a trade off in this somewhere."

"It seems that the major carriers feel-

ing now is that even if the small airlines disappear the customers will drive to the major hub and fly on their planes," he said.

Devany did not have much encouraging to say about the possibility of either Goodland or Lamar getting air service returned in the near future. However, he did say there was a new program being considered by Congress to assist small rural communities to establish a level of air service.

"The program is part of the Air Transportation Improvement Act which is currently in conference committee," he said. "It would allow communities to bring a proposal about air service to the Department of Transportation, and if accepted the funding would be 75 percent from the federal government and 25 percent from the local government or governments involved."

High-Plains Ag Expo packs them in



About 40 exhibitors had booths set up. The 2000 Hi-Plains Ag Expo was from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. today at the Max Jones Fieldhouse in Goodland. A large crowd was spending time at the various booths and also listening to the various speakers who were talking about the future of agriculture, and new developments in farming practices. The Ag Expo was sponsored by KLOE/KKCI/KWGB, the National Sunflower Association and the Northwest Kansas Corn Growers Association.

Photos by Janet Craft / The Goodland Daily News



Dry winter means more cattle going to feedlots early

By Roxana Hegeman

Associated Press Writer

WICHITA (AP) — Dry weather means Kansas ranchers who saw strong cattle prices and bought lightweight cattle with the hope of grazing the animals on winter wheat pastures have had to send much of the herd to feedlots.

"Cattle were brought in to western Kansas with hopes of wheat pastures that never materialized," said Steve Hessman, hay reporter for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's office in Dodge City. "Those cattle then ended up in feedlots."

In January, 2.29 million head of cattle were in feedlots across the state, compared to just 2.11 million for the same month a year ago, according to Kansas Agricultural Statistics.

Industry observers expect the February feedlot count, to be released Friday by the USDA, to also be high.

"The lack of wheat pasture has had an impact on the industry this winter," said Todd Domer, spokesman for the Kansas Livestock Association. "Fortunately, the costs of grain in feedlots is pretty economical at this point, so it probably hasn't been a big economic loss for producers in that situation."

So far, the dry winter has had a minimal impact for livestock producers in

Kansas, said James Mintert, an agricultural economist at Kansas State University.

"Wheat grazing is not as predominant an activity in Kansas as it is in Oklahoma," he said. "It has had an impact on wheat grazing, but that is not unusual. There are a lot of years when wheat grazing in Kansas isn't very good."

It is uncertain how widespread the practice of wheat grazing is in Kansas, since no government agency keeps track of such things for this state. But many wheat farmers with livestock operations graze their winter wheat over the fall and winter months, taking the cattle off in time — typically by early March in Kansas — to still harvest a good wheat crop.

"The winter impact of dry conditions will be different than it will be during the grazing season, and obviously we came into winter somewhat dry," Domer said.

Kansas cattlemen are coping with it because they are used to feeding cattle during the winter, he said.

"If by late April and May it is still dry, then you are going to see a huge impact on the industry," Domer said.

As the parched winter continues, wheat farmers are not the only ones

worried about their crop. Days after a late January storm blanketed Kansas with snow, KAS said winter wheat conditions continued to decline. The most recent Jan. 31 report rated 23 percent of the state's wheat crop as either poor or very poor.

Meanwhile, the dry conditions around the region — coupled with higher feedlot numbers — have cut into surplus hay supplies in the state. Large semi-load lots of Kansas hay have been shipped as far as West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky, Hessman said.

Last week, southwest Kansas used 14,171 tons of ground alfalfa, up from 10,260 tons for the same time a year ago, Hessman said. And in south-central Kansas usage was 5,254 tons, compared to 4,278 tons the same week a year ago.

Hay prices — averaging \$65.50 per ton for all hay in 1999 — have been down from the \$72.50 per ton paid a year earlier. But demand has pushed prices up in recent weeks as the dry weather drags on.

In southwest Kansas, the price for grinding hay went up \$10 a ton in the last few weeks, and up between \$5 and \$7 a ton in central Kansas, Hessman said.

"I don't think we are going to run out

of hay — I think there is enough hay," said Gary Mills, director of the USDA's Livestock Grain and Hay Market News office in Dodge City.

Production of hay in Kansas was mostly good last year, he said. The only exception was southeast Kansas, where last year's wet spring drowned many of alfalfa fields.

"For the most part, we've had excellent production tonnage wise," Mills said. "We might have been short qual-

ity wise because of the wet weather ... Up until September we had plenty of rain, and then it just quit."

More immediately, the forecast calls for a break in the weather system that brought record warmth to Kansas gives way to cold, wet conditions for the rest of the week.

The National Weather Service said snow is likely Thursday night in north-central and western Kansas with rain south-central and southeast.

Souvenirs found in Liberty Bell 7

HUTCHINSON (AP) — Five silver certificates, meticulously hidden 38 years ago aboard the Liberty Bell 7, were discovered by museum restorers working on the recovered space capsule.

The Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center planned to announce the find today, the latest in a series of surprises found in the Mercury space capsule. The capsule was pulled from the Atlantic this summer.

One certificate bears the faint signature of astronaut Gus Grissom. Another has four signatures from members of the launch group. A third showed unrecognized traces of a signature. The other two bills were unsigned.

All the 1957-dated silver certificates,

similar in appearance to modern dollar bills, were found rolled up individually and placed end-to-end in a tube placed inside a wiring harness located below the hatch opening, said Karen Siebert, spokeswoman for the aerospace museum.

"We believe it was put in the spacecraft as a souvenir by someone other than Gus. If he would have taken a dollar bill with him as a souvenir he would probably have put it into his suit," she said.

Restorers had expected to find hidden souvenirs after being flooded with phone calls and e-mails following their initial discovery of 52 dimes scattered on the floor of the spacecraft, she said.