

# Tour reflects crop condition

WHEAT, from Page 1

Stockton as he walked from plot to plot, talking about the pros and cons of each wheat variety.

Colors in the fields ranged from light green to dark orange and the plants were between about 8 to more than 18 inches tall.

K-State provides the wheat varieties, Shields said, adding that he has been growing test plots for the university for 19 years. This year, he said, each plot is 28 feet wide and 600 feet long and the wheat was planted on Oct. 1 and 2.

Shields said one of his favorite varieties this year is called "Jagger." The wheat managed to survive late freezes, he said.

Over the years, Stockton said, Jagger has lost its resistance to a certain type of disease, but that didn't matter this year.

"It was dry enough this year there was no disease," he said. "Dry weather

overcomes a lot of things."

Shields said he promotes Nebraska hard, red winter varieties such as "Millennium," "Niobrara" and "Wesley" because they are drought tolerant. He said he also likes "Stanton," which was developed at K-State.

Another handout Belshe had showed Stanton was Shields' highest yielding variety last year, producing 44.7 bushels per acre. Shields said in the past some varieties have produced up to 70 bushels per acre.

Stockton shared advice about different varieties.

He said "Dumas" would make a good irrigated crop, Jagger can be planted late in the season, "Longhorn" produces a good grazing wheat, "Ogallala" is excellent for milling and baking and farmers should never plant "Tam 107" again.

Stockton also handed out some farming suggestions.

He said farmers shouldn't be afraid of planting more seeds in each square

foot because that will increase their chances for a successful crop.

"If you get a rain at the right time," he said, "you'll make a lot of money."

Hard, white winter varieties are in demand in the world market, he said, adding that he hopes more Kansas farmers start growing that wheat in the future.

Stockton also said no-till farming can save money and prevent soil erosion, adding that he's received a \$25,000 grant from the Kansas Wheat Commission to put no-till test plots in the 18 northwest Kansas counties he serves.

Goodland will have an 8-acre no-till wheat plot south of the sunflower plant, he said, adding that Goodland Greenline is letting him borrow an all terrain vehicle to spray chemicals on the field.

Belshe helped end the tour by reminding the audience that he still had handouts available with tips for harvesting short, thin wheat.



Roger Stockton, Kansas State University Research and Extension crop production specialist in Colby, talked about different varieties of wheat during the annual wheat plot tour Thursday morning.

Photo by Rachel Miscal/The Goodland Daily News

# Is pluot more plum or apricot?

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — What do you get when you cross a smooth-skinned, sweet, purple plum with a fuzzy, tart, yellow apricot?

Anything from a pluot to an aprium. But there is also a battle over whether the pluot is more like a plum or more like an apricot. The dispute is heading to a laboratory for DNA testing and the result could cost growers \$1 million in fees to market the product.

The fruit was born as an accident of nature, a gift from the birds and bees. It was replicated by Floyd Zaiger, president of Zaiger Genetics, who owns the trademark.

"You would find (a hybrid) in an orchard where a bird would drop a seed in the wild," Zaiger said. "It was very rare, so we knew it could be done, but it took a long time to find out how to do it."

Today, there are 19 varieties of pluots, ranging from deep purple to red with gold speckles to reddish-orange and yellow. Zaiger's crossbreeding trademarks also include the aprium, which is more apricot than plum.

With new hybrids emerging, fruit marketing organizations are wondering whether to include the pluot in their efforts.

Plum, peach and nectarine growers are required to pay fees to the California Tree Fruit Agreement for promotion, research and inspection. The organization represents 1,500 growers.

Pluot growers don't have to pay those fees because it's not clear what fruit it is.

Preliminary DNA tests found some pluot varieties were indistinguishable from the traditional plum varieties.

If that finding stands after further testing, pluots would be designated as plums and growers would pay 20 cents for each 28-pound box.

Even if the pluot isn't found to be a plum, some growers say they'll create a new marketing group for the fruit.

Approximately 5 million boxes of pluots will be harvested this year, a number that would mean \$1 million in fees to the California Tree Fruit Agreement. Some pluot growers are voluntarily paying fees to the agreement this year for inspection services.

Growers, meanwhile, have had no problem selling the small, tasty fruit, which depending on the variety can cost as little as \$6 for 28 pounds or as much as 50 cents for a single pluot.

In Kingsburg, just south of Fresno, one grower has trademarked a blotchy variety as a dinosaur egg, despite its diminutive size.

# Tips for harvesting short, thin wheat

Hot, dry weather has caused wheat in Sherman County to be shorter and thinner this year, which means it will be harder to cut and gather during harvest.

Dana Belshe, Sherman County agriculture extension agent, gave people who attended the annual wheat plot tour on Thursday a handout with tips for harvesting short, thin wheat.

It says a thin crop means gathering will be difficult and shorter plants mean the combine header will need to be operated closer to the ground.

Here are a few harvest tips:

• **Cutter bar angle.** Tilt the cutter bar or header up so that the skid plates are exposed and the header can be operated closer to the ground without gathering

dirt into the header. For common combinations of feeder house length and tire size, the best adjustment is often near the upper end of its range.

• **Accumulators.** Check the gas charge of the header accumulator. A properly charged accumulator allows more effective use of the header skid plates when harvesting short crops.

• **Header lateral leveling.** Level the header from side to side before harvest. Check tire inflation pressure before leveling.

• **Pickup reel adjustment.** Tine pitch should be adjusted to hold the crop against the cutter bar then sweep it into the cross auger. In extreme short, thin wheat, it may be necessary to cover times with plywood or other material to make a solid bat.

• **Knife condition.** Thin crops require a clean cut for best feeding, so pay attention to knives and cutter bar condition. Make sure that you have spare knife sections available in the field.

• **Ground speed.** With a thin crop there will be a tendency to operate faster in an effort to keep the machine full. However, driving too fast will result in poor cutter bar performance and increase header losses. Driving too fast will drag the crop under the cutter bar before it can be cut.

• **Operator's manual.** There is no better place to find information about combine and header adjustment than the operator's manual. If you cannot find your manual, check with your local dealer.

# Cooler weather, lighter wind helps crews fighting wildfire

By Jennifer Hamilton

*Associated Press Writer*  
LAKE GEORGE, Colo. — Aided by cooler weather and calmer wind, weary fire crews expected to make more progress today on an out-of-control wildfire burning on 100,000 acres in Colorado.

The improved outlook came just days after flames up to 80 feet high raced through tinder-dry trees, forcing crews to pull back as the northeast edge of the blaze raced toward small mountain towns 35 miles southwest of Denver.

With that threat reduced, Douglas County lifted voluntary evacuations Thursday from several small communities between the fire and Denver's

suburbs.

The fire was 15 percent contained this morning, but more than 5,400 people remained out of their homes because of mandatory evacuations. On Thursday, it was just 5 percent contained.

Crews continued to dig fire lines along the southern edge to keep flames from spreading, and hundreds of additional firefighters were arriving to help the more than 1,700 already fighting the blaze.

"We're putting firefighters all around this fire to start trying to extinguish those hot spots and get this thing under control," Colorado State forester Jim Hubbard said Thursday.

Colorado is in the middle of one of

its worst droughts in years, resulting in bone-dry trees and brush—the perfect fuel for wind-driven flames.

The fire, 20 miles long and 14 miles wide, winds from the foothills dotted with small mountain towns to near Denver's outlying suburbs. It has charred about 156 square miles, leaving blackened forest floors and skeletal trees.

Twenty-two homes have been destroyed.

"It's like you lose somebody in the family," said John Ocken, 56, whose home three miles north of Lake George was lost. "We've had a lot of great times up there, but that's the chance you take."

For the second straight night, wor-

ried homeowners packed a high school gym in Woodland Park to hear the latest from fire officials.

Martin assured them that saving homes and lives was his team's top concern.

"We still have crews in there working to save structures," he said. "The subdivisions are our priority."

The military has activated four modified C-130 planes to help aircraft dropping slurry and water on the fires. Two Army battalions and a Marine battalion, totaling more than 1,500 soldiers, have also been activated.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also granted \$20 million to Colorado on Thursday to defray firefighting costs.

The fire is one of at least seven burning in the state, including an 11,892-acre blaze that was 30 percent contained near Glenwood Springs, about 150 miles west of Denver.

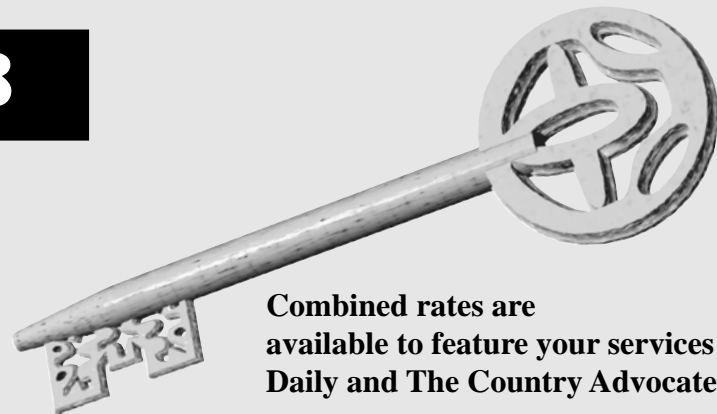
In northeastern New Mexico, about 1,200 firefighters were working to slow a wildfire on the Philmont Scout Ranch and Carson National Forest. The blaze, which began early this month, has charred 91,000 acres and was 25 percent contained Thursday.

Another fire broke out Thursday four miles northeast of Pecos and had grown to 1,165 acres by evening. "It's very active—running, spotting, torching, crowning in the ponderosa pine," said Dolores Maese, a spokeswoman for the Santa Fe National Forest.

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