

Farmers learn about native sunflowers

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three times with three inches of water each time.

"Look at the corn in the area," said Kansas agent Roger Stockton from Colby. "What would it look like with nine inches of irrigation? It's history. It's already been cut down for feed."

Stockton said the corn crop couldn't get enough water, and it dies out in the heat. Sunflowers, on the other hand, are adapted to Kansas weather, he said.

"This is a native plant," he said. "We have wild varieties living in ditches. This is a plant that can survive."

Even sunflowers planted on unirrigated land are doing better than other crops, Stockton said.

"It isn't looking really great now, but if we had gotten one and a half inches of rain, even two weeks ago, it would have produced enough to cover the costs," he said. "As it is, there were still some seeds produced. Name another crop that has as much potential on dry land as sunflowers do."

Sunflowers are one of the most efficient crops at getting water out of the soil, Stockton said, which is important in times of drought.

"I'm guessing we have three or four years before Topeka tells us how to use the water out of the aquifer," he said.

"Has someone from Topeka coming out to tell you how to do something ever made you happy? It's not going to happen."

There are not enough farmers producing sunflowers, Stockton said, and there is demand for the crop.

"We can grow something people are standing in line to buy," he said. "Producers haven't been in that position in a long time. We are missing an economic opportunity we need to take a serious look at."

The experts talked about insecticides, herbicides and crop rotation.

There are five types of insects sunflower farmers have to watch out for, Meyer said. He described how to look out for them, when to spray and how much of them isn't going to really hurt the crop.

Rotation is important, he said. Sunflowers should only be planted on a plot every three years, Meyer said, mostly to avoid pests.



A camera operator from a Kansas City, Mo., public access television channel showed up to catch the action at the Sunflower Celebration this morning. Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

"If you switch it up every year, you change the environment," he said. "If the pests don't have the right environment, they won't survive."

A farmer wanted to know if he had never planted sunflowers before, would he still have pests?

Meyer said yes, because the sunflower is a native plant, so the insects are native, too. The bugs might not be a problem for a few years, though, when they will become entrenched.

The farmers had gathered in Good-

land this morning, and toured a nearby site, because Goodland is considered one of two sunflower market centers in the country, Hoelting said.

Roy Aicher, a researcher from Kansas State, said a lot of people have been working on how to produce the best product possible, and that this gathering was important so farmers would know what was going on.

"This is a big day for Goodland," he said.

The public television crew inter-

viewed John Golden, a farm owner and former state legislator and city commissioner, who talked about the history of the crop and its importance to western Kansas.

"This is a crop we can grow efficiently, because it is adapted for the climate, and which gives us a sound economic base," Golden said. "It does wonders for us economically, and the farmers who grow it should be encouraged and supported."

Mrs. Kansas forced to miss national pageant

OTTAWA (AP) — Vicky McCurdy was supposed to represent Kansas this week at the Mrs. International Pageant — but she couldn't find anyone to watch her two children.

And because McCurdy couldn't afford to take them with her to Pigeon Forge, Tenn., she said state pageant officials made her give up her title of Mrs.

Kansas International.

"If I can't find anyone to watch my kids, I can't go," McCurdy said. "I don't believe it is a reasonable request. I didn't think it was worthy of an organization that touts family values."

McCurdy, 32, of Ottawa, was chosen Mrs. Kansas International in March. She was asked to step down,

she said Thursday, after she told pageant organizers she could not afford to take Ivy, 8, and Conner, 6, with her and couldn't find child care.

McCurdy also said she was told she would be sued by the Mrs. International organization for breach of contract if she didn't attend the national pageant.



Barbara Johnson, with the K-State small business environmental assistance program, talked Thursday with Lloyd Koel, an instructor in the truck and tractor diesel mechanics program at the technical college, about disposing of hazardous waste. Johnson and another associate from K-State took a tour of the college after giving a training session. Photo by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News

College ready for classes

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erly dispose of hazardous waste.

Hoffman said Alan Keeler, a loss prevention specialist with the Kansas Association of School Boards, taught about ergonomics, which is the science of helping people adapt to their working environment.

Keeler's goal, Hoffman said, is to stop people from having to file workmen's compensation claims by teaching them how to prevent injuries at work. Among other things, he said, instructors learned how to lift properly to stop back injuries and how to type to avoid carpal tunnel syndrome.

Sherry Davis and Barbara Johnson, with the Kansas State University small business environmental assistance program, taught how to properly dispose of hazardous waste to comply with state and federal regulations.

After the session, Davis and Johnson took a tour of the auto body, automotive technology, truck and tractor diesel and other departments, talking to instructors about how to safely store and get rid of fuel, paint and other hazardous materials.

Hoffman said Jimmy Stevenson, the college's information technology specialist, showed staff how to safely use computers, including making sure information isn't lost or stolen.

The workshop will end today, he said, with a talk from a county health

department nurse about blood borne pathogens, which are disease-causing microorganisms carried in blood.

Ken Clouse, college president, said the nurse will teach instructors how to clean up body fluids and dispose of blood or bloody cloths without catching something. With the threat of A.I.D.S., sexually transmitted diseases and other diseases, he said, it's important for staff and students to know how to protect themselves.

Clouse said the fun part will come this afternoon.

Administrators and staff will do team-building exercises after the training session, he said, and then head to Sugar Hills Country Club for a game of golf. On Thursday night, Clouse said, staff and their family were invited to a barbecue on campus.

The workshop isn't the only thing the college has done to prepare for the first day of classes on Monday, Clouse said, noting classrooms and buildings have been getting a makeover all summer.

A new coat of water-proof material is being put on three metal roofs, he said, new carpet has been laid in several buildings, concrete ramps have been put in to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and some landscaping will be done in September or October. He said the college has bought more than 60 new computers and is planning to make other improvements this year.

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