

# Second case of West Nile confirmed here

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has confirmed the 10th case of human case of West Nile virus meningitis or encephalitis in the state this year, and the second confirmed case in Sherman County.

The state has had one West Nile death.

The latest case involves an 83-year-old individual with West Nile virus meningitis from Sherman County. The person, who first experienced symptoms Aug. 1, is out of

the hospital and in rehabilitation.

Symptoms of West Nile virus are usually mild including headache, low grade fever, and muscle aches, but in rare cases can result in serious illness. Symptoms of severe cases (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis) include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Experts say one in 150 persons infected will develop a more severe form of disease.

The state health department recommends people take precautions:

- Use insect repellent containing DEET (according to label directions).
- Limit outdoor activities during dawn/dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear protective clothing when outdoors whenever practical.
- Eliminate any stagnant pools of water on your property.
- Repair screens or other areas of your home where mosquitoes might

enter.

Evidence of West Nile virus in animals or mosquitoes has been found across the state this year. The state has been monitoring birds, mosquitoes, and horses for the presence of West Nile virus since May.

It was first confirmed this year in a mosquito pool collected May 28 in Crawford County. West Nile virus was first discovered in Kansas last summer.

Previous human cases of the virus this year include: 93 year old in

Butler County, meningitis, onset of symptoms Aug. 10 (death); 41 year old in Cloud County, meningitis, onset Aug. 8; 79 year old in Pratt County, encephalitis, onset Aug. 4; 53 year old in Decatur County, meningitis, onset July 30; 62 year old in Seward County, meningitis, onset July 20; 54 year old in Gray County, meningitis, onset July 22; 2 year old in Ford County, meningitis, onset of symptoms July 29; 65 year old in Sherman County, encephalitis, ascending paralysis, onset July 20;

and 38 year old in Gray County, meningitis, onset July 20.

West Nile virus is primarily considered a disease of birds. It can be transmitted to humans when a mosquito bites an infected bird and then bites a human. Usually West Nile virus only causes mild disease in humans, but in rare cases the virus may cause swelling of the brain (encephalitis) or the covering of the brain (meningitis), causing paralysis or even death.

# County eases budget cut to help buy new fire truck

By Tom Betz

*The Goodland Star-News*  
Sherman County commissioners want to keep property taxes down, but not at the expense of adequate fire protection.

After much discussion Friday, the commissioners decided to cut the fire budget a little and urged the district board to consider lease-purchasing new trucks rather than buying them.

The commissioners will meet on Friday for the last meeting of the month, and plan to review the final budget figures to see how it stacks up. With the cuts already proposed and those for the fire district, the commissioners were hoping to keep the tax increase below 10 mills, but now it could be as high as 10 or 11.

However, with changes in property valuations, the 10 percent cut in the solid waste fee and a decrease in the school district levy that may not mean a large increase in taxes. People in the city will not see any of the increase for the rural fire district because they pay for city fire protection.

Marvin Duell, head of the rural fire district board, and Fire Chief Kenneth Griffith discussed the cost of replacing the three main rural fire trucks with the commissioners Thursday.

The commissioners had asked to meet with the fire district to discuss their budget request for next year to see if it could be trimmed some from the 5.88 mills they requested. This would be a 3 mill increase from last year.

The commissioners suggested the fire board could look at using lease/purchase to replace the trucks, which would spread the cost out and lower the taxes needed.

Duell said the fire board was trying to get into an every-other-year rotation on replacing equipment, and that with the 10 pieces of equipment they presently have it would take 20 years to finish.

He said the main concern is the three large pumper trucks, which all date from the mid 70s. They are stationed in Kanorado, Brewster and Goodland.

The one in Brewster is in line to be replaced this year at a cost of

about \$135,000, Griffith said.

The budget for next year calls for setting aside \$135,000 for capital reserve to allow a second truck to be purchased, and the plan is to be able to purchase the third one in two years.

Griffith said the smaller trucks cost about \$85,000 and they expect to be able to replace them on a two-year rotation as well. He said the smaller trucks are not used as much on rural fires as they had been in the past because of a lack of water.

"These trucks have smaller tanks," he said, "and we used to pull water out of any nearby pond, but with the drought there are no ponds to get water from."

Another problem of the older trucks is that the tanks are all steel, and they will have to spend about \$15,000 to fix the one in Kanorado which has sprung a leak, Griffith told the commissioners.

"I know we need the equipment," Duell said.

"How do we pay for it?" Commissioner Kevin Rasure asked.

"We need to keep the mill levy within reason," said Commissioner Mitch Tiede.

"We think you could use the lease/purchase option to help," Rasure said. "The interest rates are very reasonable at this time."

Griffith said the new truck for Brewster should be done in about five months. It is being special built to their specifications, and he said the company told him they have a backlog of orders right now. He said the chassis has been ordered.

"We could replace the Ford in Goodland next year if the budget stays up," Griffith said.

Rasure said the county is paying less than 4 percent interest on the motor grader lease/purchases, and that the last one from Western State Bank was 3.9 percent.

"That would give you a few more options," Tiede said. "Keeping the old trucks is not always a good answer because of the high repair costs of the older equipment."

Rasure said that the fire district budget has really remained pretty constant over the past three years, but that the carryover is almost gone.

"Do we reduce budget or stay where they are," Rasure said. "The mill levy goes up, but the same budget."

"What can we do about it; we need fire protections," Tiede said. "It is an essential service."

"Is it possible to consolidate with the city," Commissioner Chuck Thomas asked.

"We have had that suggested before," Griffith said, "but we cannot find any cost savings. You need the same amount of manpower, the same amount of equipment and the same training."

They agreed that a single building could provide some savings on utilities.

"I figured out on my property that the increase for the fire district would be about \$28 more per year," he said, "and I think that is pretty cheap fire protection."

The budget request was for \$208,000, and would be about 1 mill higher than two years ago. The fire district had 4.98 mills in 2001.

The last truck to be replaced was in 1992, Griffith said.

"I think we should leave it like it is," Tiede said, "give you some options."

"We realize money is tight, and I think we could cut down to 5 mills," Griffith said.

"Of course we would like to have everything," Duell added.

The cut would reduce the budget by \$28,695 and leave the fire district with \$190,000.

"I am not arguing that you don't need to replace the equipment," Rasure said, "but we are cutting everything a little."

"We have cut all the others some and better cut yours a little," Tiede agreed.

Duell and Griffith agreed to cut the fire district budget to 5 mills, and spent some time going over the line items to see where it could be taken out.

The commissioners met with Terry Ballard, county assessor, to talk about the cuts they had proposed in his budget at their meeting on Tuesday. Ballard asked to be allowed to decide where to make the cuts, and the commissioners said that would be fine.

On a related matter the commissioners reversed their decision to cut six funds by 10 percent because it did not make that much of a difference in the total. The funds affected are the historical society, programs for the elderly, the county fair, cemetery, city/county recreation and the library.

## School bells a' ringing




Levi House, 3, ran into West Elementary School for the first day of school Monday morning. He is a student in Nona Mason's early childhood education class.

Photo by Shannon Davidson/The Goodland Star-News.

## corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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# Regional summit at Elks Wednesday

SUMMIT, from Page 1

The speeches are part of a week-long trip Sen. Roberts is making through western Kansas during the congressional recess.

The regional Prosperity Summit will begin at 9 a.m. at the Goodland Elks Lodge with leaders gathering from the 18 counties of the region.

Larry McCants, president of the First National Bank of Goodland, is the chairman. With the help of the Docking Institute of Fort Hays State University the group will develop a list of regional strategies for economic development.


There were two mini-summits

last week in Colby and Hays to form the basis for the discussion Wednesday.

The priorities from the region will be taken to the statewide Prosperity Summit to be held on Oct. 1 in Wichita.

Lt. Gov. John Moore, secretary of the state Department of Commerce and Housing, is chairman of the Kansas Prosperity Summit.

The department is helping fund and facilitate the seven regional and statewide summits. McCants said the goal is to develop a statewide economic policy that is based on what people want and serves the interest of all regions.



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## student of the week



**Name:** Matthew J. Hurst  
**Parents:** Arthur and Cindy Hurst  
**Grade:** Senior  
**Age:** 17

**We've nominated this student because:** Matthew is serving as one of our drum majors and has been an excellent example of student leadership. He has been holding all students accountable for their part in the group.

**Student Comment:** Like most students, I enjoy talking with friends and some teachers. My favorite

subject would be music. I would remember my teachers after graduation.

**Activities involved in at school:** Band, jazz band, musical, X-Pressos, American Field Service and tennis

**My choice of movies, books, and games :** Movies are S.W.A.T. and Dumb and Dumber. Books are the Bible, Book of Mormon and Fallen Angels. Games are Hide and Seek and Capture the Flag.

**After I leave Goodland High School I intend to:** Go on a mission for two years and then start an education at BYU in Provo, Utah. Then I don't know.

**And 10 years from now, I think I'll be:** Settled down with a wife and a few kids and still going strong in my church in Colorado.

**Favorite Quote:** "Gratitude is a sign of intelligence."

- Gordon B. Hinckley -



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