

Wheat crop doesn't look good so far

Experts say drought has severely hurt plants

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**
Farmers, elevator men and crop experts don't have much good to say about this year's wheat crop.

The county has been in a drought for the last four or five years, and each year it seems that crop production decreases a little more. At harvest time last year, it seemed like things were looking up, but with the lack of rain after planting season and little snow over the winter, the wheat isn't where it should be.

A lot of people were hoping that the wheat crop this year would be as good as it was last year, said Brian Olson, Kansas State University area extension agronomist, but we didn't get any rain in October to help establish the wheat.

The previous year, he said, the area got three inches of rain which got the wheat going. The area needed that again this past year. With a two- to three-inch rain right after planting, said Mr. Olson, the crop would have been able to survive.

The wheat is up, he said, but it is highly variable. Some of it may produce decent wheat, but most of the plants only have one head. Mr. Olson said there is no way to determine what the yields will be with

only one head on the plants.

The area still has bare ground, too, where wheat was planted last fall but never came up.

Last spring, said Mr. Olson, the area got good weather for the crop. It stayed cool through the filling season. If that happens again this year, it could help the yield, but still won't compensate for one head per plant.

Recently, the area got some rain. He said that helps, but then it was 80 degrees and windy for several days. That just sucks the moisture right out of the ground, he said.

Every year, Mr. Olson said, the college supports wheat test plots with area farmers. This year, said Mr. Olson, only the conventional plot came up at the May farm west of town. A no-till plot didn't make it. In Norton County, he said the university won't have a plot. In Quinter there is only one kind, but Trego and Sheridan counties have the conventional and no-till plots.

Earlier, said Mr. Olson, he talked with farmers about their options, whether to over seed the wheat or plant spring barley. Now the option is whether to keep the crop or terminate it and plant soybeans or something else for fall.

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Youngsters tested on numbers, colors for kindergarten

Oberlin Elementary School is getting ready to prepare next year's kindergartners and their parents for a good start.

On Thursday and Friday, 21 kids were screened for kindergarten next year. Diana Steinmetz, developmental kindergarten teacher, said the kids all took a readiness test with the help of School Nurse Ruth Wolfram, Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin and Jana Hutton, who does speech work with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center.

Mrs. Steinmetz said each of the kids was tested on cognitive, communication, both listening, and speaking, social, emotional, gross motor and fine motor and personal/social skills.

Students have to be 5 before entering school, she said. Each one was tested on being able to recognize nine colors on blocks, how far they can count, matching shapes, identification of shapes, matching numbers with the correct number of

objects, recognition of letters, hopping, skipping and daily living skills. Mrs. Steinmetz said each child was asked their address and how old they are.

She said she also does some general observations, including whether the child can fold, cut, color, identify similarities, printing, directions, positions, quantities, measurements and amounts.

The information is then scored on a scale and used to decide if they will be ready for kindergarten next year.

On Friday, April 23, the parents come to the school for kindergarten round-up and parents and kids meet with teacher Carol Brown in the kindergarten room.

A performance grid for each student will be shown which tells parents the areas that were assessed and highlights where each one didn't get all the points. Mrs. Steinmetz said Mrs. Brown will give parents an idea of what to practice on over the

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AT A TACO DINNER for the Sunflower Cinema last Thursday night, Carol and Bill Duncan (above) worked their way through the line while filling their plates. Duane

Dorshorst (below), a theater board member, helped serve the meal, which was sponsored by the Royal Neighbors.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Neighbors give to theater fund drive during taco dinner

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**
The Royal Neighbors' taco dinner Thursday night raised \$1,153 for the Sunflower Cinema before a matching \$1,000 contribution by the national Royal Neighbors was added.

Jennifer Auxier, a member of the theater board, said about 150 people signed the book when they came in the door for the dinner, but with families only having one person sign and by the number of tortillas the group went through, she estimated 250 people were served.

Ms. Auxier said the theater board was responsible for purchasing the food and cooking it. She said they bought everything at Raye's Grocery, where the staff did an "awesome" job of getting the supplies in.

She said they purchased and cooked 60 pounds of hamburger. The board wanted to be sure that they wouldn't run out of food. They used all of it except maybe three pounds.

Royal Neighbor member made pies and cakes, along with theater board members and volunteers. The Royals Neighbors then matched anything up to \$1,000

A preliminary count showed the event brought in \$1,047. Ms. Auxier said that didn't include a donation from the Golden Age Center of \$35, which is what the theater board paid to use the center. By Monday the official count was \$1,153. Ms. Auxier said the money has to be recorded, then it will be matched up to the \$1,000.

Hansen's Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning has given the theater an air conditioning condenser, she said. Part of the money raised will be used to install it.

Ms. Auxier said the theater has two air conditioning units, one for the auditorium and one for the lobby. The condenser to the unit in the lobby is broken and is beyond repair. Their No. 1 priority is to get the condenser in and the unit fixed, she said, since chocolate is stored in the concession stand in the lobby.

Next, the board would like to purchase a used pretzel warmer and replace the sound system.

Ms. Auxier said they plan to stay open through the summer, unlike in recent years past. The only concern with staying open through the summer, she said, is having the volunteers to help. She said anyone who wants to work can call her at 475-



2824. Currently the theater is showing "The Passion of the Christ," which started on Friday night and will run through Saturday with nightly showings at 7 p.m. Ms. Auxier said the theater will be closed for Easter Sunday.

Weather training scheduled

With severe weather season starting, the National Weather Service will hold a storm spotter training class in Oberlin at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 19, at the high school.

David Floyd, warning coordination meteorologist for the weather station in Goodland, said every time they hold the training sessions to remind people that the service needs trained spotters under every storm. He said the service has great tools, including modern radar, but they can't show if there is wind damage, what size the hail is or if a tornado is on the ground.

At the class, Mr. Floyd said, they will discuss reporting procedures, storm layouts, different clouds and how to anticipate what a storm will do. Mr. Floyd said they will also talk about what controls a storm, its be-

Waving palms



HANDING OUT PALMS, Gaylord Shields was a popular man with youngsters before services at St. John's Lutheran Church on Sunday. Nashon Copeland was one of the kids to get a frond.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Speedway opens with race next week

Get out the sunglasses and sunscreen, because opening day at the Oberlin Speedway is just around the corner.

Promoter Paula Bolt said the first race will be at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 17. Other races are scheduled for Sunday, April 25; Sunday, May 9; Sunday, May 23; Sunday, Aug. 8; Saturday, Aug. 28 and Sunday, Sept. 19. All of the races start at 6 p.m. except for the two in August which start at 7 p.m., said Mrs. Bolt. Last October, she said, all promoters from the area got together to go over rule changes and work on schedules. The idea is so the race tracks in the area don't have races running on top of each other, she said.

Then the Decatur County Fair Board and International Motor Contest Association have to approve the schedule.

The 3/8 of a mile track opened last season after several years of it being

in the works.

Mrs. Bolt said most things will stay as they were last season. The grandstands will open up two hours before the race with ticket prices for adults being \$8, kids age 6 to 11, \$4 and kids 5 and under, free.

The pits will open three hours in advance and will cost \$20. There will also be a \$20 one time fee for racers.

The group is trying to work on changing the location of the announcer's stand, also called the crow's nest. Mrs. Bolt said the stand isn't very stable and it blocks most of the back stretch of the track for people watching from the grandstands.

The idea, said Mrs. Bolt, is to put an announcer's stand on the grandstand side of the track. The old one would then be moved to the horse corral.

Mrs. Bolt said they will have a

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* Storm class coming

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 havior and where a tornado likely will form.

Mr. Floyd said the class isn't strictly for storm spotters. It is open to everyone who is interested in weather. It is free and open to every age range.

The training won't get too technical, he said. They have tried to take the technical stuff out so that people can understand. Mr. Floyd said those attending don't have to have a background in weather.

The training will last 2 1/2 hours, with most of it done with pictures and videos. He said everyone is invited to take part in the training.

Mr. Floyd said they do the training this time of year since the severe weather season normally starts in late April to early May. He said it is a good time for people to brush up on their storm-spotting skills.

The peak months for severe weather are May, June and July, he said, but the area can have severe weather as late as October.

* School skills tested

(Continued from Page 1A)
 summer.
 Parents will have the final say on whether their child will go to developmental kindergarten or kindergarten, she added.

At the roundup, Mrs. Wolfram will go over what immunizations the students may need and the parents can let her know of any special needs the child has, such as asthma or allergies. Ms. Hutton will give her speech report to the parents.

Mrs. Steinmetz said she has 12 students in developmental kindergarten this year. Those students didn't take part in the screening but will go to kindergarten next year. With the kids who went through the screening process, that would mean 333 kids for the two classes next year.



Students celebrate April Fools

ON APRIL FOOL'S DAY, Cindy Sattler, (above) who teaches second grade, wore bunny ears while she read to her students, including Ben Glading. Students of all ages wore their clothes backwards, wore pajamas or did their hair a little crazy for the day. Kyle Huntley (left) wore small rubber bands in his hair to make it stand up in all directions.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

* Wheat crop needs a drink

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 The yields now depend on the stands, he said. If a field got established early, there may be some yield, but if it didn't, farmers won't see the numbers come harvest.

At Norcat Grain, Rodney O'Hare said the crop doesn't look very promising. There are a few fields that look decent, but 80 to 90 percent of the wheat is hurting real bad.

The wheat is getting a funny blue shade to it, he said, meaning that the plants are stressed because of the drought. On Thursday, he said, it was probably 65 to 70 degrees in

Norcat and the wind was blowing. The weather is just taking the moisture out of the ground.

Mr. O'Hare said wheat, weeds and grass this year may get four inches tall and then put out a seed stalk because Mother Nature is saying that it is time. Normally, the plants get knee high or better before that happens.

He said that on Thursday morning, he had three farmers in his office and each of them was hoping to get the crop insurance adjuster out in the near future and talk with them about tearing up the wheat and getting soybeans or milo in the ground.

County road crew pulls in road sides

The Decatur County commissioners heard last Tuesday that the road and bridge crew had been pulling in the sides of the roads all over the county.

Road and Bridge Director Tim Stallman said the crew has pulled the edges in on the Kanona and Jennings roads and parts of the creek, and Rexford and Swede roads. He said they have also done some work in Center Township.

The crew recently finished a bridge project by the Ivis Hanson farm, south of Kanona, and will now move to a bridge job near the former Jennings Lake.

Mr. Stallman said the gravel trucks are currently spot graveling Cook Township.

Recently, Mr. Stallman, said he and Kirk Ulery went to the surplus property agency in Topeka and purchased tools and parts for the county. They also picked up a couple loads of steel for a good price.

While there, he said, he bought a coffee cart and a bag of paper clips for the courthouse. The prisoners at the jail are splitting the huge bag of paper clips into smaller bags, he said.

LaVern Burtis, maintenance supervisor at the Good Samaritan Cen-

ter, said he has two companies, one from Colby and one from McCook, who would like to bid on replacing the roof at the center. He said the new roof would have a pitch in it, which would solve the leaking problem.

The commissioners agreed that representatives from the companies would each have time at the next meeting to make proposals, but the bids need to be sealed and be opened by the commissioners.

Mr. Burtis said he would call the companies.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Talked about attending the Kansas County Commissioners Association conference in Salina for \$125 plus a pre-conference fee of \$99. Commissioners Patricia Glenn and Doyle Brown are unable to attend, while Ralph Unger said he didn't know yet.

- Heard the county tax sale will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday, May 4. There are two lots in Kanona, one in Jennings and several mineral rights.

- Discussed an e-mail from Jack Coffman, a freelance writer, who wants to interview Mr. Unger next week. Mr. Unger will be unavailable and suggested someone at the city offices for the interview.

Alumni help campaign

Kansas State University alumni and friends from Decatur County helped the world's largest all-volunteer telephone campaign for higher education mark its 25th anniversary by raising more than \$1.36 million.

During 23 calling sessions, 1,596 student callers received 20,217

pledges worth \$1,361,657 to provide scholarships and educational benefits in the nine academic colleges.

Dubbed "The Original Lord of the R-R-Rings," Telefund 2004 received 18 pledges worth \$745 from Decatur County.

* Races to start

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 race at the end of fair week on Sunday, Aug. 8 and added that they are working with a company who may be contributing money to make it a bigger race.

The track is open to all bombers, IMCA modified, IMCA hobby stock, IMCA stock cars and cruisers. She said throughout the season there may be some classic modified and the mini trucks from McCook.

She said they always need volunteers to work on race day and still have one day open for the concession stand if anyone is interested.

Mrs. Bolt said she looks forward to everyone coming to the races and having a great time.

Well tests offered

The Northwest Local Environmental Protection Group has offered water screening tests for private well owners concerned with the safety of their drinking water supply for the past 12 years.

Those who have specific concerns, such as pesticides, or other chemical contamination, may receive a list of certified labs which do specific tests for a fee.

Contact one of their offices at (785) 462-8636 in Colby; (785) 421-2769 in Hill City, or the local health department at (785) 475-8118.

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