

A different type of dip



ON MAIN STREET last Wednesday, Sarah Ruf helped lifeguards. The three girls took the opportunity to make a little money painting. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

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Extension Lines


By Brian Olson
Extension Agronomist

Pastures need care during droughts

Pastures around the area are showing signs of different management practices. Some stockmen have decided to take their cattle off early, reduce stocking pressure, or grazing pastures in rotation a reduced rate, which is good. Others decided to keep stocking rates well above capacity. In these pastures, ground cover has been reduced to the point that you can see more ground than grass, which is scary. Native pastures can be overgrazed for a short time, and as long as there is rain and an end to the overgrazing, they will come back with little damage. The problem is, with the exception of last spring, that for three to four years the area has received little rain. Frasses in native pastures have been unable to rebuild nutrient reserves needed in the crown and roots for healthy growth. Plants are less vigorous and more easily succumb to stress. Stockmen need to manage their pastures now in order to avoid major damage in later years. Unlike row crops, pastures do not respond and improve with rain. Instead, less desirable annual weeds will likely invade native pastures when moisture is available, inhibiting grasses from forming a good cover. Overgrazing can cause an increase in less desirable grasses as well. As

dry conditions continue, palatable grasses are constantly overgrazed by hungry cattle. This provides an advantage to the less palatable grasses, which allows them to spread and prosper. Because of the drought, there has been much drought-stressed corn and grain sorghum, along with some freeze-damaged wheat, baled in the area. However, if stockmen need forage, the K-State Research and Extension-Kansas Farm Bureau Hay and Forage Message Board is available. There have been a few improvements, such as sorting needs and available forage by areas. This message board allows producers who have forage to contact those who need it. A link to the Hay and Forage Message Board is at the web site: <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/agronomy-block2/>, along with a paper from Paul Ohlenbusch, former K-State grazing land specialist, "Pasture Management Before, During, and After the Drought" which is located under the Production and Pest icon. Brian Olson is Kansas State University extension agronomist for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties. E-mail bolson@oznet.ksu.edu if you have any questions or would like to see a newspaper article on a specific crop production topic. For more information, contact the county extension office, 475-8121.

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