



WITH A FACE MASK ON to ward off grain dust, Jack Brown (above) helped (below) weigh trucks and figured out what the loads weighed before she unload wheat at the Decatur Co-op on Thursday afternoon. Marci Metcalf returned the paperwork to the driver.

Co-op keeps up with harvest

Trucks rolled in, wheat was tested, weighed and unloaded and then drivers hurried back to the field.

By Friday afternoon, harvest was in full swing in Decatur County and the Decatur Co-op elevator at the south end of Main Street was starting to roll.

In past years, said General Manager Karol Evans, there were lines of trucks waiting to get in, but with a small crop this year, it isn't like that. Still, the trucks roll in.

At the west end of the elevator, he said, there is a stop sign set up. That is the first step in the unloading process. Mr. Evans said he has several high school and college students who are set up to do the testing. The kids take turns climbing on top of the trucks and getting a test sample of the wheat.

The truck then pulls onto the scale and the driver hands over the paperwork to another student, who holds onto it. The co-op has two scales, he said.

From there, said Mr. Evans, the trucks are sent to one of the dumping stations. In normal years, there are five to six stations, but this year they are using just two. There are two legs that dump 6,000 bushels an hour and two legs with 9,000 bushels an hour. He said they have faster dumps than most elevators.

The closest to the office is for smaller trucks that drive into the elevator and dump. The other, down the road to the east, is set up for semis.

A semi pulls in and starts to lift the trailer, dumping grain out the back into a pit in the ground.

Technically, said Mr. Evans, they can unload 18 semis in the condo storage and 12 to the concrete elevator in an hour.

Once the truck is emptied, it circles back around and comes back to the scale for an empty weight. Subtract that from the full weight, and you know how much grain was dumped. Mr. Evans said a student will figure out the load, fill out the paperwork and return it to the driver.

The wheat is then aired and treated in the bins for moisture, he said. It still belongs to the customers until it is sold. Then again, said

Mr. Evans, the co-op belongs to its farmer members.

Mr. Evans said in most years, the young people employed at the elevator will form a painting crew or do other work, but because of the drought this year, they will probably only be working for harvest.

Although the first load of the year came in Friday, June 11, rain the next week stopped harvest for days.

As of Friday afternoon, he said, the Oberlin elevator had taken in 166,000 bushels. He said this year's harvest is probably only going to be 20 to 30 percent of normal. In all the co-op's branches as of Friday afternoon, just 393,630 bushels had been dumped.

Last year, Mr. Evans said, all the branches took in 3.6 million bushels while Oberlin was just short of 1 million bushels.

The manager said he has been in the business for 31 years and this is

probably the worst harvest he has seen since 1981, when everything froze.

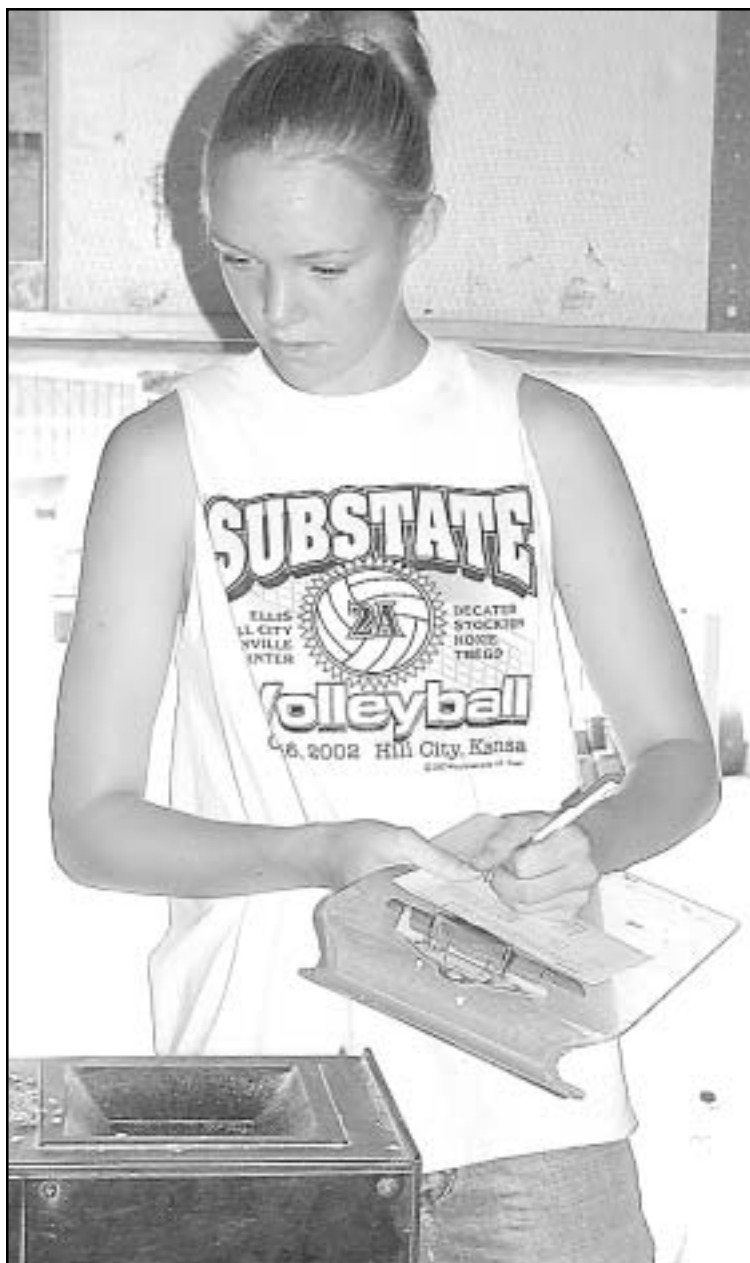
Yields are bad, he said, and only once in awhile has there been any close to normal.

It seems that crops coming in from south of town have been the worst and to the northwest it seems to be better, he added.

Mr. Evans said moisture has been a lot different this year. Normally it is 12 to 13 percent, but this year the elevator has been getting 8 to 9 percent moisture with the wheat very dry.

He said dry wheat seems to look dirty sometimes because it gets dusty and is light.

Mr. Evans said last Wednesday and Thursday, the elevator was pretty busy, then on Friday it slowed down. He said if it doesn't rain again, he guessed that harvest would be over by mid-week.



AT THE CONDO STORAGE elevator, a large semi from Wasson Farms (above) dumped while another truck pulled up to unload. Lydia Karnopp (right) worked at the test station, the first step before unloading at the elevator.