

Guard uses helicopters to feed cattle

By PAT SCHIEFEN
The Goodland Star-News

As the sun was coming up Saturday, the air a chilly 10 degrees, the crews of two National Guard Blackhawk helicopters at Goodland's Renner Field were getting ice off rotors so they could go feed cattle in Cheyenne County.

The two 'copters would carry big round bales weighing at least 1,000 pounds each from the field where they'd been cut to animals stranded by last month's blizzard.

The 'copters could only carry one bale at a time. Crews pounded a metal pole with a sharp point through the bale, then hooked it through a sling attached to the bottom of the helicopter.

Each aircraft had a crew of four, the pilot and co-pilot in front, with one person by a side window and one in the back. Sgt. Steve Moore from Topeka was at the side window of one. He had the coldest job. When the helicopter landed, he looked out the open door and gave the pilot a measure of how far he was from hazards and the ground.

Sgt. Moore got out when the first bale reached its destination and remained on the ground as six more were delivered. He said he got home this fall from a tour in Iraq. People have stopped him and given him hugs when he is in uniform, he said, thanking him for his service.

The other cold job was getting the



pole into the bale at the field so it could be moved. The bales were stacked where they were cut but the farmer could not get into the fields to move them. The Guard moved seven bales closer to the cattle in 2

1/2 hours, with one guardsman and the farmer in the field getting the bales ready.

Sgt. Moore said he was really glad to be helping people at home. "Everyone had been very friend-

ly," he said.

Customers from the Butterfly Cafe thanked the crew when they went by.

Sgt. Moore said the 'copters have heaters behind the pilots because



HELICOPTER crew members (above) worked to de-ice the blades so the bird could take off in the morning. Sgt. Steve Moore (left) unhooked the sling so the 'copter could lift off and pull free.

— Staff photos by Pat Schiefen

they are medivacs units; otherwise they would not.

Just one ranch family needed help in Cheyenne County.

"Dan and Chris Leibbrandt had requested the help," said regional Emergency Manager Gary Rogers. "I had a couple of requests from Rawlins County but the farmers were finally able to get feed in."

The Leibbrandts had 250 head that needed to be fed, he added.

Reporters were allowed to ride along, but had to sign a release. Another reporter who was supposed to go, from *The Kansas City Star*, did not show.

The two Blackhawks were at the Goodland airport from Wednesday to Saturday to feed animals in Wallace and Cheyenne counties.

The 'copters are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Company, in Salina and Topeka.

Chief Warrant Officer Jim Rostine from Salina, the pilot, said the helicopters and crews were what was left of their units in Kansas.

The guardsmen who were left in Kansas were the old guys and the young ones back from Iraq, he said. Some of the 'copters saw service in Vietnam, he said, as well as the older guys.

Gov. Sebelius tours western Kansas blizzard zone

Headed in to tour the blizzard zone last Wednesday, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and her entourage had to divert to Goodland because the state plane couldn't land in Colby.

The governor, who came to tour western Kansas after declaring it a disaster because of the snow, was accompanied by Congressman Jerry Moran, Adjutant General Tod Bunting and Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Adrian Polansky.

The good news from the storm is the moisture, Rep. Moran said.

Meeting the governor there was a delegation from the Sherman County Farm Bureau. Her group drove to Colby in a van provided by the Goodland National Guard Armory and escorted by the Kansas Highway Patrol.

In Colby, the governor met with officials and residents at the National Guard Armory. She continued to Ulysses by airplane. During the storm, Sebelius declared 39 counties in western Kansas disaster areas.

Sebelius talked with Thomas County Emergency Management Director Jim Engel about the conditions in the county and surrounding area.

Mr. Engel said the road situation there was good, and there had been no major accidents, but Rawlins and Logan counties were still having problems.

"We've got it good compared to some counties," he said.

Co-ops plan merger vote

Stockholders of Goodland's Frontier Equity Co-op will be voting on a merger with Oakley-based CO-AG Inc. next month.

Both Frontier and CO-AG are farmer-owned cooperatives of roughly equal size. Frontier did around \$46 million dollars in business in the past year and CO-AG did \$43 million.

Frontier came into being when Goodland Co-op bought out the Brewster and Bird City co-ops in the 1990s, said Brian Linin, chief financial officer. The Atwood petroleum co-op became part of Frontier in July.

CO-AG was formed in 1994 with the merger of co-ops in Grinnell, Menlo and Rexford.

CO-AG approached Frontier in October to look at working together, said Brad Ray, head of information technology for the Oakley-based firm. They had an interim manager and knew he did not intend to stay.

An informational meeting for Frontier Equity members will be at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Goodland Elks Lodge, 1523 Arcade. CO-AG's meeting will be at 6 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 29, at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center, 703 W. Second, Oakley.

Voting will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at the Elks Lodge in Goodland and at the service center in Oakley. It will take a two-thirds majority of members voting for the merger to pass.

Now that people have been taken care of, he added, livestock are the concern. Some stockmen can't get to their herds because of the snow, and in some cases, they haven't been fed in up to five days. The National Guard was getting ready Wednesday to do what it could to get feed to

the animals.

"We're looking at a five-county area," Mr. Engel added.

Anyone needing help with livestock, including forage, generators or burial, should contact their county emergency manager, he said, and the message will be for-

warded on to the state.

"The state has been a tremendous help with the National Guard," he added.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong thanked Sebelius for the use of the armory, where the city is housing three fire trucks after the roof at

the firehouse collapsed under the weight of snow Sunday.

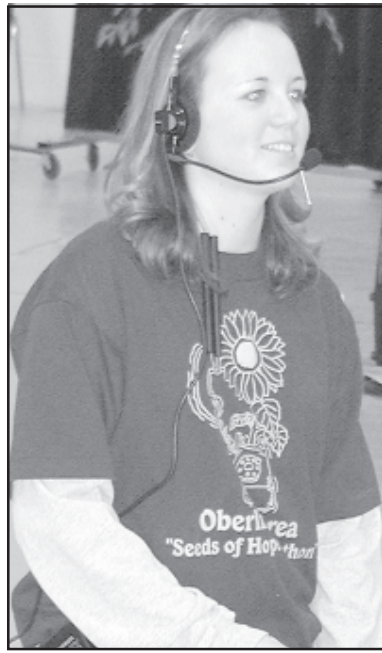
She told the governor ice and rain contributed to the collapse. The incident caused no problems with the department's ability to respond to emergencies. Goodland and Oakley were ready to lend a hand to Colby

if needed.

Sebelius wanted to know about the power situation and if there were enough crews available to restore power. Mr. Engel said Midwest Energy did a good job restoring power.

The governor said federal assistance will be available.

The 'Seeds of Hope' Telethon needs YOUR Help Saturday, Feb. 3 1-10 p.m. at The Gateway, Oberlin or on Local Access Channel 7 Making a difference in Decatur County!



Join me at the Telethon!

Seeds of Hope is THE annual fund-raiser for many of Oberlin and Decatur County's charities and nonprofit organizations. Most of these groups have no other public fund raisers. Seeds of Hope is their "United Campaign."

That's what makes Seeds of Hope so important to the whole community. Hundreds of hours of volunteer effort are being invested because these organizations are the lifeblood of our county. They depend on the money raised in the Telethon to get them through the year.

If you can help or donate items for the auction, call Jack Benton at 475-3174. And most importantly, Seeds of Hope needs your donation, no matter how large or

small. You can call in during the Telethon, 475-3753 and 475-2901, or Kimberly Davis or Kristi Smith at 475-3510, or use the coupon below and mail in your donation.

Every dollar counts for Decatur County, so send yours in today!

Don't forget to watch "Seeds of Hope" on the Oberlin Community Access Channel 7, from 1 to 10 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 3.

Come on up to The Gateway to watch, sample the BBQ Beef, ham and cheese sandwiches, chips, pie and chili soup and make your donation in person.



Oberlin Area

"Seeds of Hope Telethon"

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