

Wheat could suffer from lack of air

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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It's hard to tell if the wheat crop has been damaged by the ice which hit the area before the snow storm at the end of the year, experts say, and no one will know for sure until the crop comes out of dormancy.

Brian Olson, multi-county agronomist with Kansas State University Research and Extension, said no doubt everyone is grate-

ful for the moisture. The area needed it, he said, and people are glad to have it, but there could be a few problems with the wheat because of the ice under the snow. In some places, not all, said Mr. Olson, ice started to fall before Christmas, then up to two feet of snow covered the fields the next week.

Ice, he said, cuts off oxygen to the wheat and can produce an environment without oxygen. If that happens, there can be a build-

up of toxic acid that can injure the wheat.

Farmers will probably wait and see what happens this spring, he said. If the wheat is damaged, said Mr. Olson, it might green up and then start to go backwards or it might not green up at all. If farmers don't want to wait, they can dig up a few plants and bring them in the house and see what happens. Mr. Olson said he thinks most will wait.

If there isn't any ice on the plants, then it

is less likely to have a problem come spring.

"Ice is just really good at sealing things off and preventing oxygen," said Mr. Olson.

The ice can affect any cool-season grasses, including bluegrass and fescue in lawns, he said, so anything that went into dormancy for the winter could have a problem when things start to warm up. Summer perennial grasses like buffalo should be fine, he said.

There is no doubt, said Mr. Olson, that the moisture is great for the summer crops and the pastures. If there isn't damage from the ice, he said, to get optimum yields it would be great to have 70- to 80-degree days into the early part of May. In recent years, he said, it has reached 90 to 95 degrees in early spring, which damages the crops.

At this point, he said, farmers are just going to have to wait to see what happens.

Grant will pay for upgrade to 911 system

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Decatur County commissioners signed assurances for a state grant for an Enhanced 911 emergency calling system last Tuesday with the understanding that no one is allowed to spend any of the money without their approval.

Chief Dispatcher Jeanne Pachner said the \$198,994 grant will pay for new computers and phones for the dispatch office, as well as a mapping system for the county.

The system will show the location of calls from land lines or mobile phones on a map, she said, allowing dispatchers to direct help right to the scene.

She said the county hasn't received any of the money yet since the paperwork needed to be signed. Basically, the assurances say that the county will take full responsibility for spending the money and having the work done, she said.

The new system, said Ms. Pachner, will show the location of newer phones, those equipped with a Global Positioning System chip.

If someone calls in from a cell phone now, she said, the system doesn't even show the number. The new system will not only show the cell number, but pinpoint where the person is calling from on a map.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch noted the papers were set up for Decatur County Emergency Communications, but there is no agency by that name. Ms. Pachner said that is how the dispatch office is known in the state system.

The money will come from the Governors Grant Program, she said, and all of the funding is through the state.

Is the county going to take bids?

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Signed the assurances for a state grant for an Enhanced 911 calling system for the dispatch office. Story at left.

- Talked with members of the Golden Age Center about the next step in getting the building repaired or replaced after a state grant was denied. Story at right.

- Signed a request for the Community Development Block Grant money for a new ambulance, which should be here by the end of the month. Story to come.

- Talked with the mayor of Jennings about emergency supplies the city requested after the 2005 blizzard but still hasn't received. Story on Page 3A.



MONDAY AFTERNOON at the Golden Age Center, Aleen Van Vleet (left) and Kleva Dryden played cards with friends. The center is used by card players, the senior meal site and an exercise class during the week. — Herald staff photo by Kim Davis

Seniors ask what's next for Golden Age

Mr. Hirsch asked. Ms. Pachner said they took bids before the grant process, and he said the commissioners need to see those.

He asked how much money is the county going to have to spend.

Ms. Pachner said one of the bids came in lower than what it should have been. She said after she got the bid and filled out the grant paperwork with the bid amount, the company called back and said the work would actually be about \$10,000 more. Ms. Pachner said that money could come out of the county's 911 fund, collected from a special fee on (See ENHANCED on Page 8A)

Members of the Golden Age Center asked Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday what they should do after a request for a Community Block Development Grant was denied.

Board members from the senior center talked with commissioners Tuesday about the next step. The request for a Northwest Kansas Planning Community Development Block Grant through the state was denied, actually being ranked last in priority of all requests, according

to the grant authorities. Commissioner Stan McEvoy said the commissioners are as disappointed as the center members.

The commissioners have been looking at options about the senior center for years, he said, since the roof leaks and is unrepairable.

Helen Gee, who runs the meal site at the center, said she wanted to know what the county is going to do about the building. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is supposed to come soon and

do an inspection, she said, and she doesn't want the meal site to be fined because of the leaks.

Dorothy Moore, center director, said she is concerned about mold. She asked if there is another location that the center could use.

Maybe there is a building downtown, said Myrna Jones. It won't have the parking the seniors need, though, said Mrs. Gee.

Commissioner Doyle Brown asked if they had another building in mind. Mrs. Gee said the only thing

she could think about would be the American Legion Hall. She said the center's steam table could be moved there.

Dewaine Stapp said that would be something to think about if the center is condemned. Or mold starts to grow, said Mrs. Gee.

If they need a kitchen, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, there aren't many options except the Legion or The Gateway.

Is the county under any legal obligation? (See GRANT on Page 8A)

Couple who met in funeral home married 57 years

By **MARY LOU OLSON**

The courtship of John and Muriel Ready began after he moved to Larned in the fall of 1947 to take a job at the Beckwith Mortuary.

"Muriel had a friend who told her, 'I just met the man for you!'" Mr. Ready recalled.

When Muriel asked her why, she said, "You just wait until you see him!"

Since Muriel was a good friend of one of the owners, she said she "just happened" to go by and got her first peek at John.

"Not many people can say that they met in a funeral home," she said with a smile.

John said he remembers standing at the mortuary to watch her walk by on her way home from work. She had on her signature high heels, matching colorful outfits which she made herself.

The couple had a more formal introduction later, he said, and he asked her out soon after that. On their first date, he added, he was late leaving work at the funeral home.

"I picked her up in the mortuary flower car and decided that if she could take this first date in stride," he said, "she was the right woman for me. We had a date every night for the next three weeks and dated two years."



ENJOYING A RIDE in the family buggy with Muriel Conard, who became Muriel Ready, (above right) were Audrey and Ethel Conard. The family lived on a farm near Larned. John Ready and Muriel (right) were married in 1949.

"Just about the time I decided he wasn't going to ever ask me to get married," Mrs. Ready recalled, "he popped the question. I was never sure, and he doesn't remember, what made him finally take the leap, but it came as a surprise to me. "My first words were, 'Are you kidding?'"

Three weeks later, they were married in a small ceremony the morning of Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1949, in the Methodist Church parsonage in Larned. Her parents had a dinner for them and her

mother baked and decorated the cake. Because John's family lived in Minnesota, none of them could attend.

They started out on their honeymoon right after dinner and intended to go to Wichita, but due to the weather and bad roads, they stopped in Hutchinson. Since it was Christmas, there was hardly anyone around the hotel, John said, so they ate Chinese food that night in the only restaurant that was open.

Their daughter Esther was born



in 1952 and they began to think about owning their own funeral home. When an opportunity came up to be a partner with Charlie Corcoran in Oberlin, they became (See COUPLE on Page 8A)

Moran discusses farm bill

With the Farm Bill up for renewal this year, one Decatur County farmer asked for some details when Congressman Jerry Moran stopped here earlier this month.

Patrick Shirley, who farms near Norcatour, and Rep. Moran talked for several minutes on the 2007 Farm Bill and what it means for this region during a Farm Bureau-sponsored coffee hour at the courthouse Feb. 2.

Where do you see the farm program going? asked Mr. Shirley. The next farm bill, Rep. Moran said, would look similar to the one now. Change will be evolutionary, not revolutionary.

He said he thought he would be more critical of the Bush administration's proposal on the Farm Bill than he is. The proposed bill shows that commodity programs will stay the same as they are now throughout the whole bill, but he questions whether the bill sets aside enough money.

Generally, said Mr. Shirley, he has been satisfied with the current bill. His biggest complaint is that it is using antiquated crop bases and (See MORAN on Page 8A)