

FARMERS WORRY ABOUT repopulation of the blackfooted ferret because it feeds on prairie dogs, which they say tend to overrun protected land and get into neighboring - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Counties argue ferret program

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP sdecamp@nwkansas.com

The two new county commissioners dove right into work at their first meeting, first taking the oath of office, then agreeing to keep incumbent Commissioner Stan McEvoy

as chairman of the board.

Commissioners Sid Metcalf and Brad Marcuson sat on either side of Mr. McEvoy on Jan. 15 as the three casually voted to make Mr. Metcalf the vice-chairman over the noise of the festivities for outgoing Commissioners Ralph Unger and Gene Gallentine in the hall outside.

And the first order of business? Why, the black-footed ferret, of

"There is an effort underway," Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said sighing, "to save the black-footed ferret. And the only area we have in Kansas with them is in Logan County."

Mr. Huntley explained that a landowner in Logan made an agreement with the U.S. Department of Fish and Game to set aside anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 acres of his own land for the ferrets. The agreement is part of a plan to get enough land for about 1,000 wild ferrets today to become 3,000 before lifting them from the endangered species list.

The commissioners decided to sign and send a letter of opposition to the Safe Harbor Agreement, which is being proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, an alliance of western states including Kansas.

The concern, the commissioners said in the letter, is for the rights of landowners who live near a site Ferrets feed on prairie dogs, which policy. tend to reproduce a lot faster than

their predators, commissioners said, and consequently end up infesting not just the land where the ferrets are released, but surrounding farmland

The letter asked those crafting the proposal to consider making it so that if prairie dogs do encroach on neighboring land, that owner can then ask the county to take care of the problem, and the county, in turn, would then bill the landowner who is reintroducing the ferrets.

The letter said specifically that the commissioners would like for those seeking help in the fight against prairie dogs be able to appeal to their county government, as opposed to a federal agency.

Mr. Huntley said that the reason Decatur County should be concerned is that it will be under the same rules as Logan County, should the measure go through, and should someone decide to put ferrets on his or her land here. Once the federal government comes in to do something like this, he said, neither the state nor the county would have any say in what happens to the land.

"This agreement lets them put a finger in the pie," said Mr. Huntley, 'and lets them go a step further. I have no problem with the blackfooted ferret, but I don't want the federal government involved."

In other business, commission-

- Appointed Sheryl Unger to the Health Advisory Board, which fills that board.
- Approved a motion to pay \$1,500 to the Kansas County Association Multi-line Pool (KCAMP) for liability insurance for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic where the ferrets would be released. Development Corp. on the county's

Free screenings for cancer available

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP

sdecamp@nwkansas.com The Kansas Department of Health and Environment offers free, regular screenings for both cervical and

breast cancer to uninsured low-in-

come women in Decatur County.

To see if you qualify for the free screenings, said Rita Davenport, clinical nurse manager for the Early Detection Works program in Topeka, run by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment under a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Women should call the centers' toll-free number, (877) 275-5302, where they will be asked about their income and size of their family. If you qualify as low income, you can call the Decatur County Health Department to make an appointment at

The centers say breast cancer is the most common in women, and the second leading type of cancer that results in death. In contrast, cervical cancer is now considered a "preventable" disease, highly curable when found early.

(785) 475-8118, she said.

"The program serves women from ages 40 to 64," Ms. Davenport said, "who have no insurance and (qualify as low income). For example, a single person living alone can make up to \$23,925 a year. For a family of four, the maximum is \$48,375, and a family of eight can make up to \$80,875....

Women under 40, she added, also may qualify if they meet income guidelines and have had an abnormal paptest. Every participant needs to re-qualify every year.

Ms. Davenport said that women should be aware that the guidelines for screening cervical cancer (via a "pap test") in particular have changed.

"If a woman is under 21, she shouldn't have pap tests," she said. "For ages 21 to 65, they should receive pap tests every three years. That's if they just do paps alone. If they co-test with a human papillomavirus test, and it comes back normal, then it's every five years."

The virus is a common sexually transmitted disease which may have no symptoms. It is known to cause

cervical cancer. Ms. Davenport said that once a woman is 65 or older, if all of her previous tests have been normal, or if she has had a hysterectomy, than there is no need for her to keep getting them.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women over age 20 have a clinical breast exam and a mammogram X-ray every year and do a self examination every month. An annual mammogram and clinical exam are free for women over age 40 enrolled in the program.

An additional measure you can take to prevent cervical cancer is the Gardasil vaccination against the human papillomavirus (also known as HPV), the leading cause of cervical cancer. This is also available through the health department. Most insurance covers it, said Karen Eskew, office manager for the department, but if you're paying out of pocket it costs a total of \$426 – \$142 for each of the three shots required. The vaccine is recommended for all ages and both sexes, she said.

Worried about lung cancer? The best prevention is to stop smoking. There's a state program called KanQuit. If you call the toll-free number at (800) 784-8669, you'll be paired with a "Quit Coach" who will help you through the process, the program's website says.

County bridges catch a break on regulations

actually going to help a little.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman told county commissioners at their meeting last Tuesday that the definition of what constitutes a bridge in Kansas has changed, affecting many bridges in Decatur County.

A bridge is now a bridge – and therefore required to have a yearly inspection - only if the in-The county, Mr. Stallman said, has been paying

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feet or longer on their outside width. That has pulled somewhere from six to eight bridges off the list, he said, and the county's inspector is now reviewing other bridges to see if there are more that no longer need inspections. The inspections generally cost about \$85 per

bridge every two years. Mr. Stallman said that there are at least two side width of it measures 20 feet or more, he said. bridges that he plans on working on this year, one just north of the Traer Cemetery and the last year.

inspection fees for those bridges that measure 20 other about eight miles east and 5 1/2 miles north of Oberlin.

In other business, the commissioners:

 Appointed Dori Pauls of Pauls Funeral Home to the High Plains Mental Health board.

· Approved a motion to appoint Michael Zollinger to replace the late Lawrence Jennings as the Pleasant Valley clerk.

• Heard from weed-control director Gaylen Huntley that recycling increased by two tons

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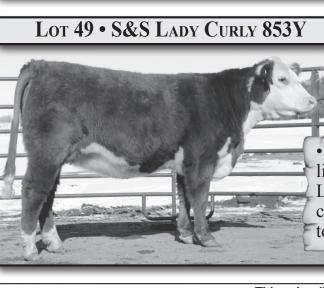
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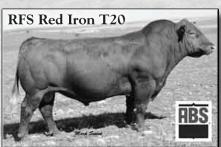
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