

Wheat is just barely holding on

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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After two hard freezes followed by two quick increases in temperature, this year's wheat is going to be hard-pressed to make much of a yield, a K-State expert says, but if there's one thing you can count on with wheat, it's its unpredictability: Almost anything can happen between now and harvest.

This was the message from Kansas State University Extension crop specialist Jim Shroyer, who along with range-management specialist Walt Fick, came to talk with area ranchers and farmers Monday about the status of Kansas wheat and pastures.

"Boy I tell you what - this is one of those more interesting times," Shroyer said. "I'll tell you, (these temperatures) really lit it up."

He was referring to the freeze burn on wheat, which he said usually takes on a brown color, but this time is coming on almost as a bright orange, as if the plants had been chemically burned. He said this may be due to all of the stresses

on the plant this year, most of all rapid swings in temperatures that the wheat just couldn't cope with. If a third freeze comes along, or even a swift, intense spike in heat, he added, it may not cope at all. (And with a forecast for lows around 24 this week and then highs in the 80s by the weekend, that could happen.)

Farmer Mike Coleman asked Shroyer what to expect from wheat that didn't start to come up until spring.

"If you plant in the fall," Mr. Shroyer said, "and it doesn't come up until after the new year, you can count on a 40 to 60 percent loss," he said, "but wheat has the uncanny ability to yield just enough so that you can't claim your insurance."

"Really, I can't say how big of a loss there will be for you, because it really depends on the field. It's very variable."

Mr. Coleman asked if the wheat that has only come up within the last 30 days would grow to full height. Mr. Shroyer said that it will (See FROST on Page 8A)

Drought may be lessening

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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As of last week, Decatur County was exceptional - but not the way we want it to be.

According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, Decatur is part of the 16 percent of the state that is suffering from exceptional drought conditions, which on the agency's U.S. Drought Monitor ranks as the worst type of drought.

So far this year, the county has had about 12.11 inches of moisture, said Walt Fick, a Kansas State University specialist in range management who came to speak to worried farmers and ranchers Monday at The Gateway.

That is 55 percent less than what we had by this time last year - 24.49 inches.

The good news is that the drought

is starting to tone itself down in Kansas, even dropping into "abnormally dry" (the lowest measurement on the drought monitor) territory in the East. As you move west, he said, the conditions worsen, until you reach that 16 percent Decatur County is now a part of. But just three months ago, 34 percent of Kansas had exceptional drought conditions, more than twice as much as today. Seven months ago, 51 percent of the state was under the exceptional rating.

Drought, Mr. Fick said, is defined as less than 75 percent of an area's average annual amount of precipitation. The most severe droughts that the High Plains have seen, he said, were from the years 1932 to 1939 and from 1952 to 1956 - and this is important, because an area can have a year or even two of drought (See RECOVERY on Page 8A)

Investors bring tax plan to council

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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The effort to implement a tax-rebate program for new business and home construction, as well as renovation of existing businesses and homes, took another step forward Thursday when a group of motel investors spearheading the effort presented it to the City Council and received an encouraging, if tentative, reaction.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, as it's called, is based on giving a 100 percent property-tax rebate to new businesses their first year, and decreasing that rebate by 10 percent every year thereafter,

said supporter and motel investor Mike McKenna. For existing businesses, the rebate would only be given based on the increased valuation of the property due to renovations.

The idea was presented to county commissioners two weeks ago by the key players in the effort to build a new motel in town: potential investor Mr. McKenna, Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. Marketing Director Connie Grafel and Former Chairman of the agency, Greg Lohofener.

"We've already talked to commissioners about the program," (See CITY on Page 8)



Poofy dresses and colors galore decorate bricks

THE THEME OF this year's Decatur Community High prom was "Our Garden Paradise," and while the decorations certainly fit that title, few were more stunning than the ladies and gents who promenaded down Main Street before the dinner and dance. Near the top of the list, in matching white and purple, were Matt Glading and Cassidy Shields (above right). Behind them followed John Carlisle and Jacque Hager. Before the dance got into full swing, Darbi Rouse (right) posed for a solo shot by professional photographer Amanda Sowers. Ashley Witt (below, right) had more than one suitor leading her onto the dance floor, while Lara Zodrow and Kyle Breth kept the color trend going with their lime-green shades.

- Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCamp and Cynthia Haynes



IMAGES LIKE Lady Liberty are among many that could be featured in a laser light show at this year's Fourth of July celebration.

New plan for July 4 to include laser light show

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Remember last Fourth of July? Neither do the firemen's wives.

That's why the group has decided that this Independence Day, drought or no, there's going to be a fun, safe way to celebrate the nation's birthday.

Teresa Diederich, a member of the group and one of the lead planners of the Firemen's Ball, presented the women's ideas Thursday to the City Council. Highlighting the biggest part of the plan with a video clip of a 30-minute laser light show that could take the place of fireworks.

The show, which would be put together and presented by DayStar Lasers International of California, would be tailored just for Oberlin, Mrs. Diederich said. The songs to accompany the images would all be picked out beforehand and 25 of the images that would appear could be customized for Decatur County with landmarks like the Pioneer Statue or Elephant Rock.

A past show the company has done can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLaL-7Ri818, and is also available on *The Oberlin Herald's* Facebook page.

Mike Dempewolf, a firefighter

who usually coordinates the fireworks show every year, said it's getting harder every year for him to find enough people to put on the show.

"There's not enough money to do both," he said in answers to inquiries on Facebook. "I'm going to let my license expire. Besides, it's too hard to get people to help shoot them."

And it's not just lasers that the ladies have up their sleeves.

"We're looking at having a festival with a parade in the morning," Mrs. Diederich added. "We'll have kids decorating the streets with red, white and blue chalk, afternoon pool

games, a park cookout that night, booths with treats and games, face painting, a car and bike show, a patriotic talent show and rubber duck races. It's all about having a little bit of old-fashioned fun."

Also slated is an appearance by Uncle Sam and the crowning of a Mr. and Miss Firecracker from the county's nursing homes. Mrs. Diederich said that she has been working with Whitney Francis, the activities coordinator at the Good (See JULY 4 on Page 8)

