

HEARTLAND

Agriculture: Backbone of the Plains

Photograph submitted by: Cary Linton from Dalton, NE



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WHAT'S INSIDE

Planning Ahead.....	3
Agriculture runs in the veins.....	4
Meeting the demand.....	6
Where the buffalo roam.....	8
WIFE: Roots trace back to Sidney.....	11
Preparing the cow herd for cold weather.....	15

THANK YOU

Thank you to all that submitted photographs for the Heartland 2017 Photo Contest!
We really enjoyed seeing all of the contest entries.

PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



Cary Linton from Dalton, NE
Titled: "End of a long day"

"Captured just before midnight 7-19-2015 on our family farm during wheat harvest. (Lone Willow Farm Inc.)" - Cary

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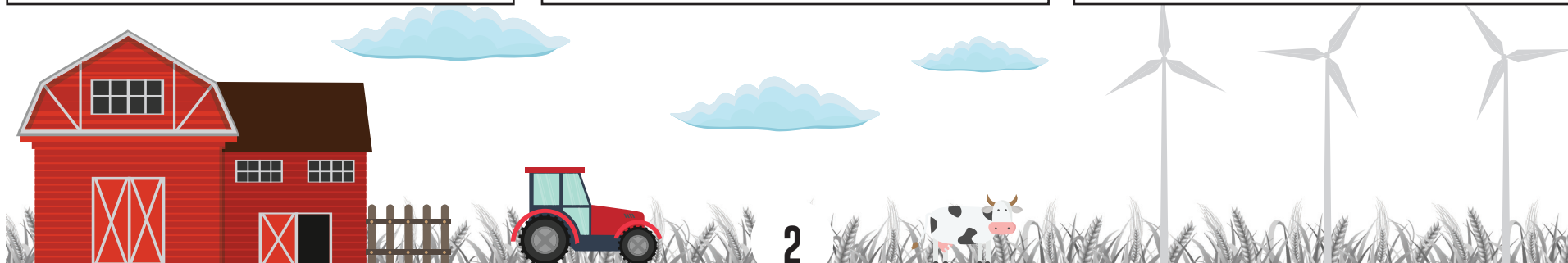
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Planning ahead

Nebraska farmers face stressful loan renewal season

Jessica Groskopf
UNL Extension

More than 77 percent of Nebraska producers are concerned that they may not be able to obtain operating capital in 2017, according to the 2016 Farm Financial Health Survey conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Agricultural Economics.

Nebraska Extension is increasing its efforts to help producers, who rely on annual operating notes to finance day-to-day needs such as seed, chemicals, fertilizer, feed and utilities.

"Demand is on the rise for operating loans, which is leading to some difficult conversations between producers and their bankers," said Jessica Groskopf, assistant extension educator with Nebraska Extension.

Low commodity prices have resulted in the fourth consecutive year of declining net farm income, or the return that farmers and ranchers get for their input of labor, management and capital. The decline has forced producers to use cash reserves to service debt and to pay for non-farm expenses such as family liv-

ing that now exceed earnings. This reduces the operation's ability to make debt payments, which makes it more difficult for banks to approve operating loans.

So what can farmers and ranchers do to ensure a smooth farm loan renewal season? Starting the process as soon as possible is critical, Groskopf said.

"Producers need to talk to their loan officer early," she said. "Some banks will work through your options with you if you are low on capital, which is why you need to start the conversation early."

If a producer's operating loan is turned down, their next steps will likely involve trying to find another lender, restructuring debt and making changes to their operations.

Nebraska Extension is ramping up efforts to support the state's producers through this process. In addition to its normal support team, more than 20 extension professionals across the state have been trained on financial literacy. These professionals are available to help producers on an on-demand basis or through workshops.

The Quicken Record-Keeping Workshop is designed to help producers use the commercial software for farms and ranches. The tool can be flexible for ag and non-ag business enterprises and separates family living expenses.

Additionally, financial health check workshops focus on financial documents. Extension educators will go through a balance sheet, cash flow and income statement and show producers what ratios a banker will be looking at on those documents.

"The financial health check
SEE PLANNING ON PAGE 14



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Agriculture runs in the veins

Aleta Pearson

Western Nebraska Observer

Steve Yung may not know what the future of organic farming looks like for him, but the love of the agricultural lifestyle runs strong through his veins.

He is one of the fourth generation descendants of Gottlieb and Ida Yung who homesteaded nine miles south of Kimball in 1909.

Gottlieb Yung, of German descent, came to Nebraska from Iowa after hearing of the sections of land available for farming and ranching on the golden prairie. He and his wife, Ida, had three sons and a daughter. They worked the land with horses and lived in a dugout for the first several years after moving onto their land. Gottlieb eventually built several buildings on the homestead, all of which were built

by hand, including one structure of self-made bricks.

He farmed 60 of the 320 acres and ran cattle on the remaining land. Gottlieb was a political leader of the community, serving as a Kimball County Commissioner from 1923-1927. There are no less than half a dozen of his decedents still living and farming in the area.

One son of Gottlieb and Ida was George Yung. George married a woman named Naomi, and in 1932 purchased a farm just a few miles from his parents where he settled into the farming and ranching life just as his parents had.

As soon as he was able, he retired his horses and purchased the first of two John Deere D tractors in 1933.

SEE VEINS ON PAGE 5



STEVE YUNG

The setting sun marks the end of another day at the Yung operation, which specializes in organic grains.



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Veins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The tractors are still sitting on the original homestead. Although the use of chemical fertilizers was introduced in the 1940s George refrained from adopting the new method and continued as his father had taught him. The young couple eventually had two sons and a daughter.

Dale Yung is the youngest son of George and Ida. He married Martha Updegrove in 1964 and worked the family farm with his father until George retired around 1974. Dale and Martha also had two sons and a daughter while living on the family homestead seven miles south and four miles west of Kimball.

Dale farmed and had cattle just as his father and his grandfather had, but in addition to farming his own land, he began farming for other landowners for a percentage, working approximately 2,000 acres each season.

Conventional farming, with synthetic chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, had become commonplace by then,

however, Dale was resistant to change and continued to farm as his family had for the past several generations.

According to the family, and confirmed by the USDA Organic Integrity database, Tri-State Farms, LLC has been certified organic since August 1, 2000.

Three years ago Steve Yung, the youngest son of Dale and Martha, returned to the area to take over operations at the family farm so that Dale could retire. Although Dale, his father and grandfather farmed wheat, Steve has diversified, mostly for the beneficial aspects of crop rotation.

Proper crop rotation has proven to build better soil, control pests and keep up and even increase crop production.

During Steve's first year back to farming, he planted only wheat and millet as his father, and had an exceptional crop which sold out at a good price.

Steve planted pinto beans and kamut during his second year of farming, in 2015,

in addition to wheat and millet. Although the pinto beans didn't fair as well as he hoped, they did well enough that he would try them again the next year. His first year of growing kamut was pretty bad but he thought it was worth the risk and tried again the next year.

Steve expanded his crop diversity in 2016, planting 145 acres of corn, 145 acres of oats and peas together, 30 acres of kamut, some pinto beans and an experimental 25 acres of black lentils in addition to nearly 1,000 acres of wheat.

Although the corn grew well and would have been an excellent crop, it was almost a complete loss due to high winds last September. The experimental black lentils started out well in the wet spring, but due to the hot and dry summer, they did not grow to maturity. The oats and peas did well and will be repeated again in 2017. Steve's luck at pinto beans failed again and he has decided not to attempt them again at this time.

This year, Steve plans to repeat the oats and peas, corn, kamut, wheat and possibly add milo in addition to wheat. He is still considering whether or not to leave five of the 25 acres of black lentils to reseed themselves for this year as it will depend on what the field looks like in the spring.

Unfortunately, 480 acres of farmland that Steve and his father have been working for years, is in the process of being sold. Although it is currently unknown whether or not Steve will be allowed to farm the land, he has little hope that he will get that opportunity, as the company purchasing the land is a commercial farming operation. Not only is this unfortunate for Steve, but that will be 480 acres of organic farmland that could possibly be lost to conventional farming practices.

For Steve, organic farming, although a healthier option for both humans, animals and the planet, is becoming increasingly more difficult. It has also proven more difficult to make a living growing organic as

SEE VEINS ON PAGE 13

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Meeting the demand

WNCC to offer Applied Agriculture Technologies

Dan Fox

Sidney Sun-Telegraph

In response to a demand for job-ready workers in the agricultural field, Western Nebraska Community College will roll out a new Applied Agriculture Technologies program in the fall semester.

Jason Stratman, WNCC dean of instruction and workforce development, said in recent years the college started seeing a need for practical, "hands-on" training in the area.

In WNCC's proposal to the state, in which the need for

the program was outlined, data collected by Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. indicated 68 annual job openings in the agricultural fields. An estimated 66 additional new jobs are expected to be created by 2020 within WNCC's 17,000 square-mile service area.

To help formulate the program's two-semester, 30 credit curriculum, an advisory committee containing a number of local and multi-state businesses was formed. According to Applied Agriculture Faculty Lex Larsen,

this advisory committee was stocked with local producers who helped consult the faculty on qualities and outcomes that they would want from students exiting the program.

"The advantages would be [to] hopefully get the candidates shaped to be a good fit and get a job immediately out of the program, and be able to get on the ground running with their new organizations," Lex said.

Stratman said the college will focus on training entry-level skills and knowledge, covering things like the

numerous regulations faced by workers in the agricultural industry, water system management, machinery, terminology and pest control, to name a few. Some information will relate to the field in general, and some will focus on agriculture in the western Nebraska area more specifically.

"Agriculture looks so different in so many different places," Stratman said.

Prior to this program, Stratman said WNCC had transfer agreements where it would teach general education

requirements, then transfer students to a university or technical institute.

"So those are great, but those are ones where you basically prep a student to move out of the area," Stratman said. "Seeing the local workforce training and their needs...it really prompted us to start looking at that a lot closer."

The courses will be offered starting in the fall. The new program will be based primarily out of the college's Scottsbluff campus, but some of the

SEE TECHNOLOGIES ON PAGE 7

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Technologies

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

instructor's time will be expected to be held off-site.

The studies will be as hands-on as possible, according to Larsen.

"I believe it is a lot easier to learn through doing, especially with agriculture stuff," Larsen said. "It's one thing to learn it in a school setting, but then to actually go out and apply it, it's like you have to re-learn it again and do it once to get confidence."

Larsen said the program is open to anyone looking to pursue a future in agriculture, even nontraditional students, or people trying to shift careers.

"There's so many opportunities for ag, if you want to work at it," Larsen said. "There's no reason for anyone to be unemployed. I don't know of any companies around here that are overstaffed. There's a work shortage everywhere, everyone needs more help."



Heartland Photo Contest

CARLA LUTZ
Carla Lutz entered this interesting perspective of a sunflower field southwest of Sidney as part of the Heartland Photo Contest.

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Where Buffalo Roam

Tonya Copeland
Western Nebraska Observer

Tens of millions of buffalo once roamed the plains, grazing on the native grasses with just one predator – the Native American hunter.

In the 1800s the buffalo population was reduced to just hundreds, endangering the survival of the of North America's most iconic beast.

Now, through conservation efforts, the buffalo population has risen to nearly 500,000 and are listed as near threatened. Many of these wild animals are currently raised on ranches, like the Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company, for their meat.

Since 1999 the Forepaugh family has owned and operated the Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company in Banner County on the land once called the Monkey Ranch.

Once again Buffalo can be seen roaming the grasslands of the Nebraska panhandle as the herd at Rocky Hollow continues to grow.

“These buffalo get to live like buffalo. They are treated with reverence and respect. It's so cool to be part of that legacy and continuing that heritage,” Rick Forepaugh said. “Every day I'm out there with the biggest land mammal in North America. I owe this life to my parents.”

Rick and his wife Lindsay now operate the ranch on their own, but the ranch began with a dream his father had in 1989.

“I remember going to the Colorado ranch and seeing the first (of our) two animals. The third animal (my parents) bought is still out here. She is 22,” he said.

Buffalo live and breed into their 20s, and they begin breeding at two years of age. Their gestation is nine months, and they give birth to just one – expected in April and early May.

At the high point of the season, the ranch will be home to 400 - 450 animals on the land they own and the adjoining land that they lease – totaling just under 3,000 acres.

All of the livestock raised at Rocky Hollow, currently 150 animals, as they recently sold approximately 60 yearlings, are done so as naturally as possible. Both Rick and Lindsay have taken many classes and attended seminars geared toward holistic management.

“We try to holistically manage these animals,” Forepaugh said. “We don't give them antibiotics, like cows get.

ROCKY HOLLOW BUFFALO COMPANY

HEARTLAND AGRICULTURE: BACKBONE OF THE PLAINS

We don't give them chemical baths, we give them what nature gave them – which is diatomaceous earth. That is a natural fly protectant. The only shot we give them is what we are required to give them.”

Forepaugh said the worst thing that he can do is to overfeed the herd in the winter.

“This is the first winter since the drought that I have had to feed them, and we are just supplementing the grass that is out there,” he said. “It's pretty cool that these guys are self managing.”

The animals are also amazing for rebuilding prairie, according to Forepaugh. “I would put our pasture quality up against any cattle pasture, any given time of the year, just because of the symbiotic relationship the buffalo have with the grassland.”

He manages by not allowing the animal to eat the grass down to the crown. Additionally, buffalo are able to eat yucca, while cattle cannot.

“The buffalo eat it in the winter,” Forepaugh said. “They have figured out, through time, that they can root it up and eat the root. The root has 16 percent protein. We don't have yucca anymore, because they have taken care of it.”

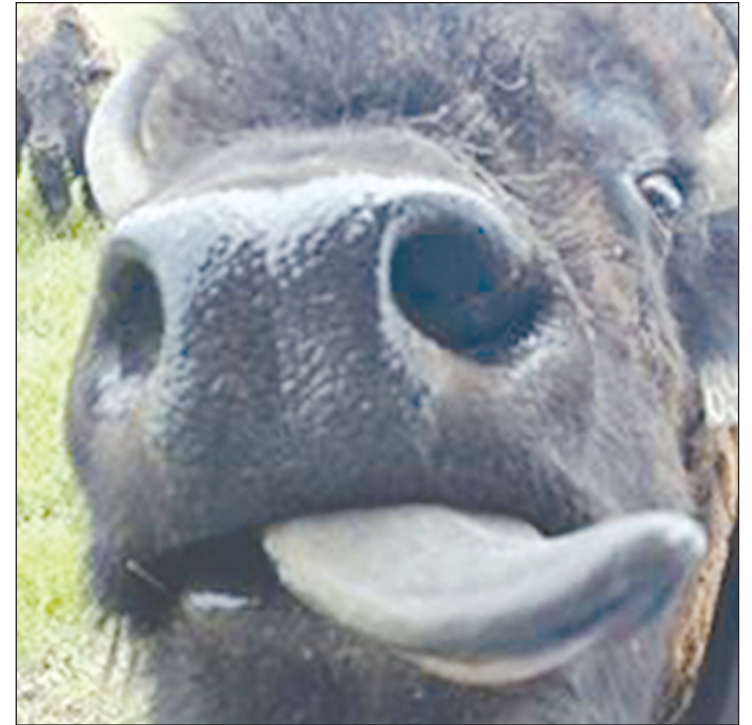
Because the buffalo are wild, Forepaugh has to remain vigilant when working with his herd, especially when he is working on his own. In addition to his own safety, Forepaugh maintains the safety of his herd. His other largest concern – good fence.

“There is not a fence out there that will hold them, if one of them wants to get through, it will get through,” Forepaugh said.

Additionally, buffalo operate with a herd mentality. If one gets anxious, all the animals react. If one gets out, it is likely that the others will follow, according to Forepaugh.

“It's not uncommon, in the industry, where people will lose an entire herd. The herd will get out and there is no way to get them back and before you know it, they are miles away,” he said. “I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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Buffalo

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

spend a lot of time taking care of the fence.”

If one should get through the fence, the only way to get it back in is through a good life back inside the fence.

“If they are not content, they don't have the grass, they can't get to water, they are going,” he said.

The differences between buffalo and other livestock are innumerable, according to Forepaugh, and the differences come through in the end product as well if the animal is solely grass fed like the buffalo Forepaugh manages.

Buffalo, when solely grass fed instead of grain finished, provides a far leaner meat than beef that is high in Omega 3 fatty acids. Buffalo, like all meat is high in protein, high in iron and vitamins.

While the Forepaugh's have hosted dozens of tourists at the ranch for guided tours, they hope to continue

educating the community in the future. They use Facebook to market their ranch, posting fun photos and video of live births, roundups and other major events.

They have had several schools out to the ranch to learn about the animal and the industry and they are now listed on the Tripadvisor website as a top ten destination in this area.

“The hill up here is a perfect amphitheater, for the community to come out and watch because it overlooks everything,” Forepaugh said. “So, I think in a couple of years, with a couple of modifications on the corral, I will invite the community out to sit up on the hill and watch (the roundup).”

For more information regarding the buffalo raised at Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company, contact Forepaugh at 4pawbuffalo@gmail.com or visit them on Facebook.

Nutrition

	Fat (grams)	Calories (kcal)	Cholesterol (mg)	Iron (mg)	Vitamin B12 (mcg)
Bison	2.42	143	82	3.42	2.86
Beef (choice)	10.15	219	86	2.99	2.65
Beef (select)	8.09	201	86	2.99	2.64
Pork	9.66	212	86	1.1	0.75
Chicken (skinless)	7.41	190	89	1.21	0.33
Sockeye Salmon	10.97	216	87	0.55	5.80

Source: USDA

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WIFE: Roots trace back to Sidney

Amanda Tafolla-Sutton
Sidney Sun-Telegraph

Women Involved in Farm Economics or WIFE, is an organization that spans multiple states, however it's origins can be traced back to Sidney.

WIFE originated in Sidney on Dec. 6, 1976, for the purpose of promoting prosperity in agriculture.

The group was born from a conversation over a game of bridge, when founders Marilyn (Mickey) Spiker and Fran Grant were discussing their husbands' discouragement of putting in hard work, yet receiving prices for grain and livestock below the cost of production.

WIFE Nebraska President, Pam Potthoff said Spiker and Grant decided to put a plan in motion, organizing the first meeting of what was to become WIFE, whose delegations of woman from across the country create policies and discuss current topics affecting agriculture.

The first charter members that joined Grant and Spiker were Joan O'Connell, Evelyn Flessner, Jan Rauner, Rose McKay, Debbie McKay, Ruth Tobler and Pat Von Seggern.

Potthoff said in the beginning stages of WIFE, a reporter for the *Sidney Sun-Telegraph* played a pivotal role in the groups growth.

Potthoff said the reporter interviewed the nine chapter members and wrote an "impressive" article encouraging women to attend an organizational meeting. Seventy women from three states (Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming) attended

the meeting following the article.

WIFE then began organizing chapters in eastern Nebraska, Kansas, Wyoming, Texas, Arizona, Montana and Washington.

Potthoff said WIFE makes it a habit not to share the number of members it currently has, because it's "not about the quantity its about the quality."

Members of WIFE make a yearly pilgrimage to Washington D.C., where they lobby for issues that are impact agriculture, Potthoff said.

The first action of WIFE was a massive letter-writing campaign to express preference for a new Secretary of Agriculture.

Potthoff said Jimmy Carter had just been elected President of the United States, and the ladies hoped the letter would have some impact about the choice. After that, influencing the direction of agricultural policy by writing letters and phoning elected officials became a major mode of action for the organization.

WIFE resolved to promote agriculture in a dignified, energetic, law-abiding course of action, however that did not stop them from selecting the motto "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" accompanied by a logo of a woman carrying a pitchfork, said Potthoff.

Many areas of concern WIFE faced in 1977 are still hanging around today. Federal water policies infringing on state water and personal property rights is one of them.

"Today we are fighting the new rules of Waters of the United States

(WOTUS) trying to classify all waters as under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency," Potthoff said.

In 1977, WIFE fought the coal slurry line, and the organization monitors oil pipelines today.


Beef imports were an issue in the early stages of WIFE, and still are today. The group was a strong supporter of country of origin labeling, said Potthoff.

In February of 2016, muscle cut beef and pork, and ground beef and pork were amended to be removed from the Country of Origin Labeling requirements in order to bring the United States into compliance with

its international trade obligations.


Potthoff said, this action has had a major impact on farmers and agriculture prices.

"In 1977 it took women stepping out of their comfort zones to charge forward in desperation to tell the story of agricultures plight. With tough times once more knocking on the doors of agriculture producers, now is the time to tell the story of agriculture and hopefully, to keep agriculture profitable," Potthoff said. Members of WIFE continue to lobby for the women and issues facing agriculture today, the organization is currently turning it's focus to the 2018 farm bill.



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Heartland Photo Contest

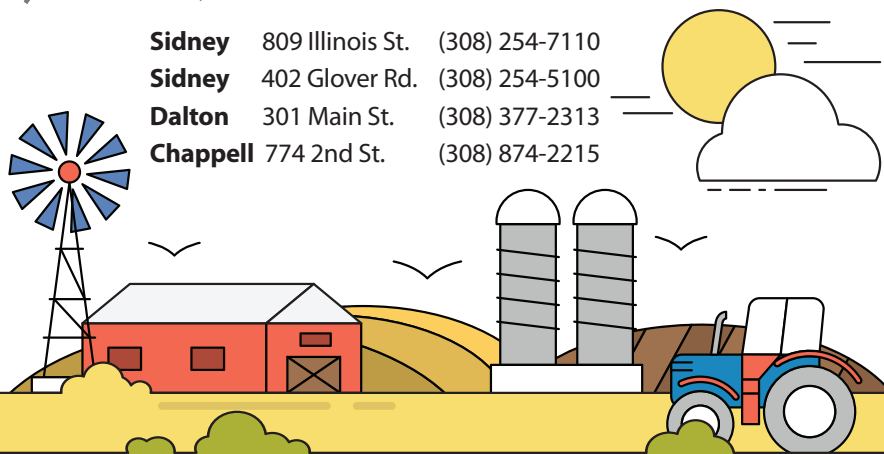
CARLA LUTZ

One of the submissions for the Heartland Photo Contest was submitted by Carla Lutz. It depicts the bluffs southwest of Sidney, taken from the Sidney trail.



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Veins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

more farmers make the switch from conventional practices.

Two years ago, the price of organic wheat was \$18 a bushel and in 2016 it was \$12, but it has been known to drop to nearly \$7.

Conventional wheat is currently at approximately \$3 a bushel and traditionally tops out around \$6 a bushel, however conventional wheat can be sold to nearly all elevators in the country, making the cost of transportation minimal.

Although prices of organic wheat is much higher than conventionally grown wheat, finding a place to sell the organic grain is becoming more difficult every year due to an increase in the number of people farming organic, and yet no new organic elevators have been built to accommodate the growing organic producers.

Currently, there are no elevators able to take organic wheat within a hundred mile radius of Kimball.

This means that if Steve can harvest and deliver the wheat before his competitors do, the closest place he can sell it is in Denver, Colorado.

Although he had a decent crop last year, Steve still has nearly his entire crop that he was unable to sell and he still has wheat from two years ago that he cannot sell.

He quit growing organic millet for this same reason, as there is only one place to sell it and that company already has more than it can handle and probably cannot take more anytime in the near future.

Organic farming has been in the Yung families, and Steve's, blood for more than a hundred years, but due to the unique marketing, sales and delivery concerns of organics in this part of the country, Steve's future, and dream to continue the family farm, is unknown.

"If I have a bad year this year, I won't be able to afford to do it again (next year)," Steve said.



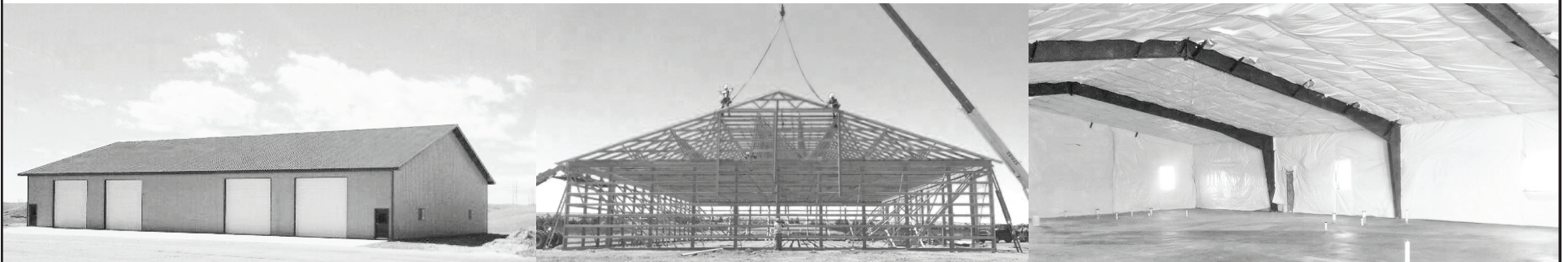
Storm clouds build as the Yungs race to get their crop out of the field.

CHRISTINA YUNG



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Planning CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

workshops can help producers identify potential weaknesses on their statements, which allows them to create a proactive plan and control the conversation with their banker," Groskopf said.

For producers in need of immediate assistance, the State of Nebraska has a dedicated farm/ranch hotline. Producers can call 1-800-464-0258 to find financial, legal and counseling services and referrals.

Producers across the nation are facing this issue, but the impact will be greater in Nebraska, according to Groskopf.

"With Nebraska's economy highly dependent on agriculture, we're going to see this reflect on our state budget and on main street in our hometowns," she said.

For more information on how Nebraska Extension can help producers through farm loan renewal season, contact Groskopf at jgroskopf2@unl.edu or 308-632-1247. Resources can also be found at <http://cropwatch.unl.edu> and <http://beef.unl.edu>.

HEARTLAND PHOTO CONTEST



JASON NELKE
The Heartland Photo Contest drew a number of submissions depicting local agriculture. 'New Winter Wheat' was submitted by Jason Nelke of a new crop growing near Lodgepole.

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Preparing the cow herd for cold weather

Aaron Berger
UNL Extension

Winter weather is upon us. Dr. Rick Rasby recently addressed the impact of cold stress to beef cows in the December issue of the BeefWatch Newsletter. In that article, he discussed the factors that influence cold stress and ways to mitigate that stress.

Moisture, high winds and cold temperatures all increase a cow's energy requirements.

Cows in a body condition score (BCS 5 to 6) are better able to withstand adverse weather conditions than cows that are thin (BCS of 3-4).

The wind chill factor is real. When cows can get out of the wind, it can drastically reduce

the impact of cold weather when windy conditions are associated with it.

The lower critical temperature of a beef cow is the lowest temperature a cow can be exposed to before she needs to have changes metabolically to cope with cold stress. The lower critical temperature for beef cows is influenced by hair coat condition (dry or wet/muddy), body condition (thin, moderate, fleshy) and hair coat description, consisting of summer, fall, or winter.

As hair coat changes from summer to winter, BCS changes from thin to fleshy and hair coat changes from wet to dry, the lower critical temperature decreases which means cows

can withstand harsher conditions without an increase in energy needs. Magnitude of coldness is equal to Lower Critical Temperature - Wind Chill Index. Energy requirements increase about 1 percent for each degree of cold stress. As an example, cows that have a heavy winter hair coat that is dry and are in condition score of 5 have a lower critical temperature of 19°F.

Meeting the Energy Needs of Cows under Cold Stress

Let's say cows have been eating about 24 pounds of hay per day. If next week's temperature is going to average 5°F and the wind is going to average 15 mph, then the wind chill index is -10° F. At

those environmental conditions, energy needs of the cow herd increases by about 30 percent. If the total digestible nutrients (TDN), which is energy requirements of the cows, are 12 pounds of TDN per head per day, then cows will need 30 percent more energy. This is an increase of 3.5 pounds of TDN per head per day. Increasing the total ration to 15.5 pounds of TDN per head per day would be needed. If grass hay is 57 percent TDN, that's an increase of about 6 pounds per head per day on a dry matter basis. If the hay is 88 percent dry matter that would mean each cow needs to receive an additional 7 pounds per head per day, or they would need to

eat 31 pounds of hay per day to meet their energy needs. If cows are wasting 10 percent of the hay then 34-35 pounds would need to be fed.

If cold stress conditions are going to be brief and cattle are in a body condition of 5 or 6, then changes to a cow's rations to meet these requirements may not be needed. Cattle can use energy reserves (fat) to meet this energy need. However, if these conditions are expected to occur for an extended period of time, then ration adjustments will be needed or cow body condition will slip. Please contact me if you have questions about developing or adjusting rations for cold weather.

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