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McKenzie & Williams County Fires

See page 2

Photo courtesy of North Dakota Department of Emergency Services.

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McKenzie & Williams County Wildfires Impact Producers, Families

By Katelyn Sponheim

Since Oct. 5, McKenzie and Williams County have battled fire, some only being fully contained in the last few days. Watford City, Mandaree, Ray, Arnegard, Tioga, and surrounding areas now face the devastation left behind on the over 22,000 scorched acres. Two men, Ed Coppersmith and Nicolaas van Eeden, lost their lives working to save livestock. Tioga and Ray producers were hit the hardest, some losing the majority of their herd. The livestock that were lost are yet to be totaled, and more will be added in the coming month due to pneumonia and other smoke-related illnesses. Family farms, homes, equipment, vehicles, fence lines, and power poles were lost along with pastures, fall crops, forest service habitat, and valuable topsoil.

On Oct. 3, the Governor Burgum declared a statewide fire emergency, and many rightly feared the high wind warnings would accelerate any sparks damage path. They did just that, and the wind-fueled flames jumped highways and natural barriers to spread at catastrophic pace. Karolin Jappe, McKenzie County's Emergency Manager, has 11 volunteer fire departments on call for the region, and all came together to save lives, land and property. An all-call was sent out when the Arnegard fire started, and if not for the response to that call to every department, the fire would have without a doubt reached Watford City. She could not praise the "amazing local fire departments and great responders who are one big happy family"; Watford City, Keene, and Mandaree's fire departments gave the fires their full attention. Sidney, Fairview, Billings County, Williston, West Dunn, Grassy Butte, Alexander, Arnegard, Twin Valley departments came to add their support as well. There were also community efforts to help those chased from their homes by the fires. Johnson's Christian Academy took in and fed 35 people displaced by the Bear Den fire and was not alone in opening their doors in their neighbor's time of need.

How these areas now respond to the damage is less of a weeks-to-months' timeline, and more of a 3-5 year one. The ferocious wind and flames together ruined years of topsail development, herd growth and the fragile Badlands ecosystem. The long-term recovery for ranchers, farmers, forest service, and all affected will hopefully be aided by a coming assessment from the Governor's office for a presidential disaster declaration and aid. The challenging terrain of the Badlands was physically and financially draining for the departments involved, and for the first time in state history, air efforts were required to quell the blaze. Fire bombers, their bellies full of water scooped from Lake Sakakawea, dispersed their loads on the Bear Den fire.

The North Dakota Stockman's Foundation has created the "Out of the Ashes" Wildlife Disaster Relief Program, specifically to aid cattle producers that were impacted by the fire. They and the North Dakota Stockman's Association have gifted \$50,000 to the program, and hope others will be willing to aid them in raising financial support for ranchers. The money raised will be distributed through an application and nomination process; applications will be available later this month.

More information can be found at www.ndstockmen.org. A fire relief benefit is planned at the Tioga Community Center Nov. 16, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. All money raised through the live and silent auction will go to the families hit hardest by the fires, including Nicolaas Van Eeden's pregnant wife and Ed Coppersmith's girlfriend



Fire fighters work to contain the Bear Den Fire on Oct. 9. (Photo courtesy of North Dakota Department of Emergency Services.)

and sons. Daryl Holte lost his entire farm and was only able to save two vehicles. Jeffery Moe's family lost their home, barn, and animals. And the Karg children's newly built home is now unlivable. If you'd like to donate, contact Kelci Hanson at 701-641-2097.

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2024 Keith Steinbeisser Memorial Livestock Judging Contest



Novice Individual Winners (L to R): - 3. Oliver Becker and 1st - Mya Verschoot. Not pictured: 2 - Peyton Denowh.



Senior Individual Winners (L to R): 1. Layne Meek, 2. Rylan Ziles, 3. Kiptyn Frasch.



Adult 1st Place Sierra Osborne, Plentywood



Novice 1st Place Team (L to R): Malory Van Every, Aspen Nagle, Gunner Forbes and Oliver Becker.



Senior 1st Place Team: Miles City (L to R): Rylan Ziles, Evie Peila, Molly Webb, and Kiptyn Frasch.



Junior Individual Winners (L to R): 1. Kinsey Nagle, 2. Beau Becker, 3. Mabel Donnelly



Junior 1st Place Team (L to R): Beau Becker, Kinsey Nagle, Kenzley Van Every, and MaKena Balducke.



FFA Individual Winners (L to R): 1. April McCabe, 2. Autumn McCabe, 3. Lindsey Johnson.



FFA 1st Place Team: Plentywood (L to R): April McCabe, Miley Dixon, Lindsey Johnson, and Autumn McCabe.

2024 Keith Steinbeisser Memorial Livestock Judging Contest Results

Richland County 4-H held the 2024 Keith Steinbeisser Memorial Livestock Judging at Dynneson Feedlot near Sidney on Sept. 29.

Result Summary

Novice Teams:

1st: Richland County

Novice 2

Oliver Becker
Gunner Forbes
Aspen Nagle
Mallory Van Every

2nd: Richland County/Miles

City Novice

Owen Vitt
Peyton Denowh
Jolee Dougherty
Lawson Dice

3rd: Richland County

Novice 1

TJ Germann
Olivia Reimann
Cassie Reimann
Mya Verschoot

Individuals:

1. Mya Verschoot
2. Peyton Denowh
3. Oliver Becker

Reasons:

Aspen Nagle

Juniors Teams:

1st: Richland County

Juniors 1

Kenzley Van Every
MaKena Balducke
Kinsey Nagle
Beau Becker

2nd: Richland County Junior 2

Hadli Williams
Kinlee Peters
Brynlee McNally
Mabel Donnelly (Carbon County)

3rd: Miles City Juniors 1

Morgan Gibbs
Layla Dice
Ted Jeffers

Wyatt Asbeck (Richland County)

Individuals:

1. Kinsey Nagle
2. Beau Becker
3. Mabel Donnelly

Reasons:

Beau Becker

Seniors

Teams:

1st: Miles City Seniors 1

Kiptyn Frasch
Rylan Ziles
Molly Webb
Evie Peila

2nd: Miles City

Seniors 2

Trevor Jeffers
Layne Meek (Dawson County)

Holden Salivar (Roosevelt County)

Myli Josephson (Richland County)

3rd: Senior 4-H/FFA

Cody Olson (Froid FFA)
Amelia Johnson (Plentywood FFA)

Molly Miller (Carbon County)

Harley Donnelly (Carbon County)

Individuals:

1. Layne Meek
2. Rylan Ziles
3. Kiptyn Frasch

Reasons:

Layne Meek

FFA

Teams:

1st: Plentywood FFA

April McCabe
Lindsey Johnson
Miley Dixon
Autumn McCabe

2nd: Froid FFA

Lilly Johnson
Keira Stentoft
Jordyn Breuer
Briar Grainger

3rd: Fairview FFA

Addison Swaney
Cambree Hansen
Kendal Vitt
Lander Monson

Individuals:

1. April McCabe
2. Autumn McCabe
3. Lindsey Johnson

Reasons:

Lilly Johnson

Adult

Individual:

1. Sierra Osborne



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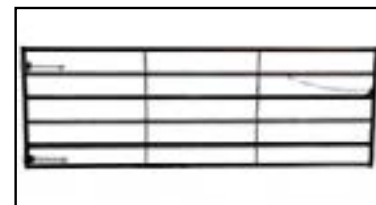
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Pollari Earns NILE Merit Heifer & Montana Hereford Association Heifer

By Dianne Swanson

Josh Pollari, a member of the Richland Aces 4-H Club and a sophomore at Sidney High School, is a very busy young man but he found time this summer to complete the lengthy application process for a NILE Merit Heifer. He submitted a 5- to 8- minute video, an essay, and the application in June and was notified in September that he was one of only 12 young people in the western United States to earn a heifer.

The NILE Merit Heifer is part of the Youth in Agriculture program which was created by the recently deceased Bill Pelton. Breeders donate animals which are then provided to the winners. Pollari's purebred Hereford heifer is coming from Beery's Land & Livestock in Vida, MT, which his dad Andy said is where they buy their bulls so they are delighted. Pollari will not have ownership of the heifer until he fulfills all the requirements including showing it at the 2025 NILE as a bred heifer. Once that is done successfully, the heifer is his.

As a member of the Richland Aces, Pollari has multiple projects including cow/calf pair, shooting sports, outdoor adventure, market steer, and gardening. Accurate records are essential in all 4-H projects and he and his mom, Karen, credit that with part of the reason he was able to earn the NILE Merit Heifer. He will need to keep meticulous feed and expense records for his heifer. If he falters, the heifer goes back.

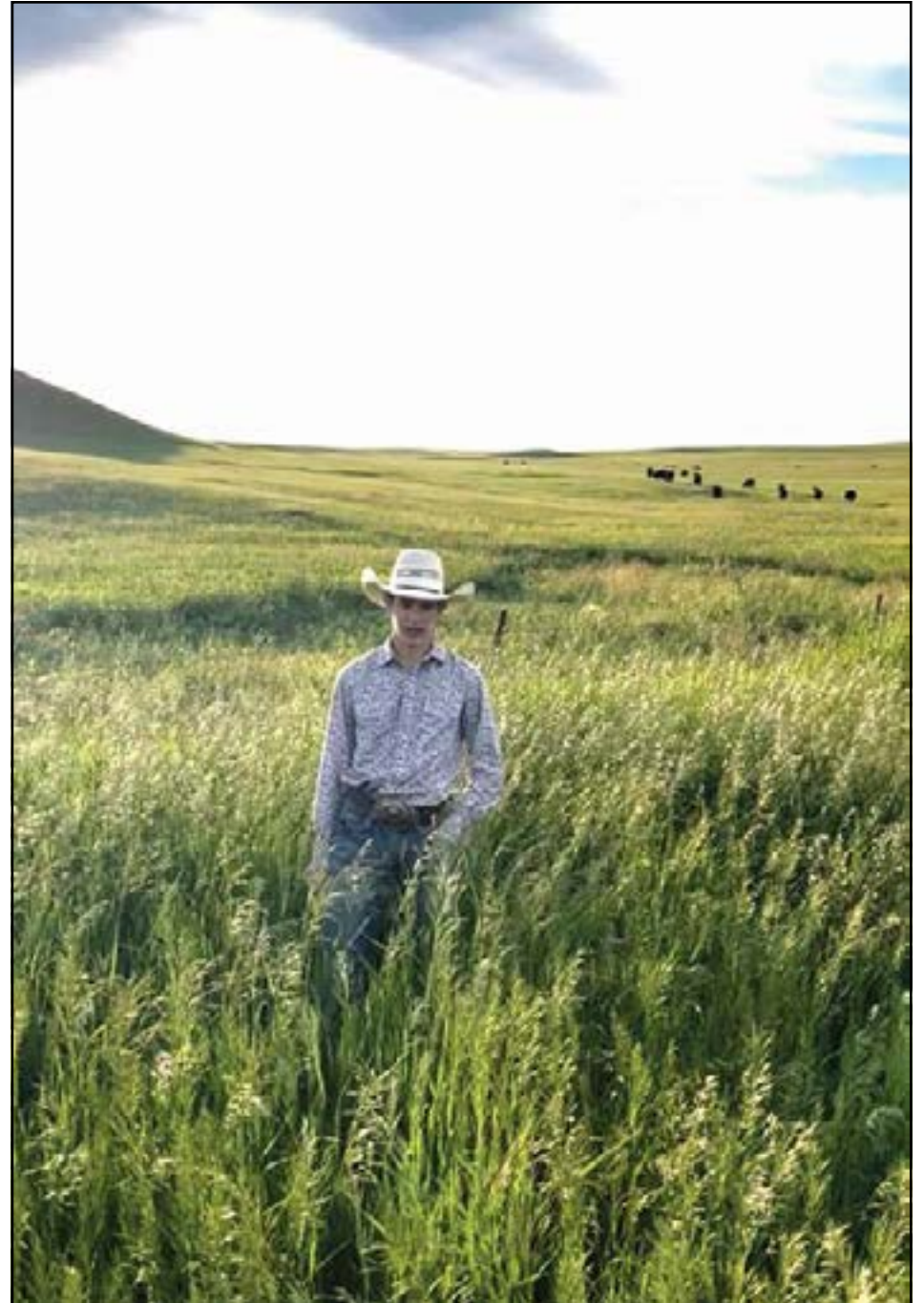
In addition to the NILE heifer, Pollari was the only one in the state to receive a Montana Hereford Association grant of \$1000 to put towards the purchase of a purebred Hereford heifer. The grant is intended to help young farmers start their own herd.

The two heifers will need to be kept close by on full time feed, not out to pasture with the rest of the herd. Pollari will be working with Madri Blom to AI the heifers.

Pollari joined the Junior Montana Hereford Association recently and was elected treasurer. The group is sponsored by the Montana Hereford Association which is working hard to promote the Hereford breed and encourage youth involvement. Pollari is looking forward to attending a large show in Kansas where he can visit with other breeders and learn more about agriculture in general.



Josh Pollari shows his blue-ribbon Hereford heifer at the 2024 Richland County Fair. (Photo submitted)



Josh Pollari on the family farm in the Girard community. (Photo submitted)

In high school, Pollari just finished competing in cross-country, plays trombone in the band, jazz band and with the Sunrise Brass Quintet. He is headed to Minot State for honor band soon and has received superior ratings at music festivals. He is a member of Math Madness, Key Club and American Politics Club and is a Junior Leader in 4-H.

Congratulations Josh on earning your Hereford heifers!

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Montanans Help Bridge Rural, D.C. Divide

By Alice Miller

Press Relations Specialist, Montana Farmers Union

Montana Farmers Union member Sarah Degn, Sidney, attended National Farmers Union's Legislative Fly-In earlier in September. There, she advocated for family farms and ranches, heard from departments and experts, and met with Congressional members.

Legislators in D.C. have a clearer understanding of agriculture in Montana, thanks to the Montana farmers and ranchers who spoke with leaders and Congressional members during the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In held earlier in September.

During the Fly-In, more than a dozen Montana Farmers Union members had the opportunity to hear from leaders from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, and more about the Farm Bill, what's being done to curb anti-competitive practices in agriculture, and more. Members also had a chance to talk directly with Congressional members about priorities for the Farm Bill and rural Montana based on their personal experiences and MFU's grassroots policy.

MFU member Emma Wickens said the Fly-In presented an opportunity to connect with elected officials and their staffers to help bridge the gap between their wanting to help and understanding what will help rural communities and farmers and ranchers. As an example, she was able to share how programs such as conservation programs currently being funded through the Inflation Reduction Act positively impact her ranch.

"Eric (Wickens) and I were very grateful to be a part of the Fly-In and really honored to be asked to join. The experience was eye opening, seeing the offices of Senators and Representatives, and realizing that if we needed to call or reach



Montana Farmers Union members recently travelled to Washington, D.C., where they shared their personal stories and used MFU policy to advocate for fellow farmers and ranchers during the National Farmers Union's Legislative Fly-In. (Photo: Courtesy Montana Farmers Union)

out to them, it's truly real hard-working staff on the other end interested in your input. Despite what we see on the news, Washington, D.C., is working hard to figure out solutions. Whether those solutions line up on both aisles is another thing, but nonetheless the staffers of those elected officials are making things happen," Wickens said.

Also, during the Fly-In, members witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between National Farmers Union and the U.S. Department of Agriculture addressing staffing levels and improve customer service at USDA Farm Service Agency county-level offices.

While NFU's Legislative Fly-In occurs once a year, MFU continues legislative work year-round, including through policy formation during the grassroots organization's Annual Convention, planned Oct. 17-19 this year in Whitefish.

"Montana Farmers Union continually advocates for family farmers and ranchers based on policy formed by its members, including advocating for a Farm Bill that benefits family producers and for policies at the state level that impact producers daily," Schweitzer said, encouraging members new and old to attend Convention to partake in the policy process ahead of the 2025 Montana Legislative Session.

"MFU policy is the collective voice of Montana's family farmers and ranchers. Make sure your voice is part of making ag in Montana stronger," Schweitzer said.

Annual Montana FFA Ag Expo Set For Nov. 14-16 At MSU

From MSU News Service

BOZEMAN — Montana State University will host nearly 1,800 high school and middle school students from across the state Nov. 14-16 for the annual Montana FFA Ag Expo.

The event includes leadership development workshops, education about career options with industry representatives, and tours of MSU research and academic facilities. Students will also compete in FFA activities, such as quiz bowls and livestock judging, which will be hosted both on campus and at the Gallatin County fairgrounds.

The expo is the result of a partnership between the university, Montana John Deere dealers – C&B Operations, Frontline Ag Solutions and RDO Equipment Co. – and the Montana FFA Foundation. The foundation supports 111 FFA chapters and over 7,000 members across the state. Its mission is to cultivate partnerships, promote awareness and secure resources to enhance agricultural education and opportunities for students.

The expo is largely a volunteer-run event, requiring hundreds of judges and facilitators to put on the career development events. Those interested in volunteering can sign up at signup.com/client/invitation. No experience is necessary.

Groups can also register to host an exhibit at the expo's career show on Friday, Nov. 15, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. More information on the career fair can be found at montanaffa.org/association/news-events/montana-ffa-ag-expo/.

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MOBILE FRIENDLY

Governor Gianforte Celebrates National 4-H Week In Eastern Montana



Governor Greg Gianforte presents his National 4-H Week proclamation with Richland County 4-Hers at the Richland County Fair 4-H exhibit building in Sidney on Oct. 9. (Photo by Jody Wells)

By Kaitlin Price, Office of the Governor

SIDNEY, MT – Governor Greg Gianforte celebrated National 4-H Week with young Montanans in eastern Montana last week.

“Our 4-H programs in rural Montana are raising the next generation of leaders and making our communities stronger,” Gianforte said. “I am always impressed to visit with young Montanans who are passionate about their projects.”

During a visit to the Richland County Fairgrounds, the governor got an overview from over 50 4-H members on their projects and awards won at the Summer 2024 Richland County Fair and Rodeo.

Serving nearly 20,000 Montana kids in all 56 counties each year, Montana 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth development program in the state.

4-H offers more than 200 different projects and experiences that actively engage youth in learning and developing the life skills needed to prepare for meaningful employment, make a positive impact as leaders in their communities, and become well-informed citizens who actively engage in their communities and the world.

This year, Richland County 4-H students raised award-winning steer, goats, and pigs, while also exploring projects like painting, cake decorating, woodworking, ironworking, quilting, floral designing, and music.

In Fallon County, the governor visited with 4-H members to hear about their livestock and indoor projects.

The Fallon County 4-H has over 180 young members and 26 leaders who’ve completed over 27 projects this year for the fair. One team leader, Kennedy, shared with the governor more about her involvement.

“I’ve been in 4-H for 10 years. I show horses and swine and do indoor projects such as sewing and leathercraft needlepoint. I’ve never been into sports, so through 4-H and FFA, I’ve been able to show off my skills,” Kennedy said.

Concluding the visit and joining members, Gov. Gianforte read and signed a proclamation to declare the week National 4-H Week in Montana

In December 2022, the governor contributed a quarter of his annual governor’s salary to the Montana 4-H Foundation, a youth development program empowering young Montanans to lead for a lifetime.



Ragged Butte Roughriders Commemorate National 4-H Week

Ragged Butte Roughriders 4-H Club, Alexander, decorate hay bales in honor of 4-H week at the corner of Hwy. 85 and Hwy. 68 at Baker Energy Services. (Submitted by Sheila Monson)



The Market Celebrates National 4-H Week Oct. 11

The Market, Sidney, celebrated National 4-H Week last week by hosting former 4-Her and former Miss North Dakota Codi Miller, along with local 4-H members. Shown (L to R): are Josh Pollari, former Miss North Dakota Codi Miller, Landry Larson, MaKena Balducke, Elicia Snodgrass, Maddie Schieber, and Leddy Larson. Shown in front is Whitlee Balducke. Special thanks to the Market for hosting the event for the 4-H members.

MTHS Welcomes New Centennial Farm & Ranch

By Eve Byron
Public Information Officer
Montana Historical Society

The Montana Historical Society (MTHS) recently welcomed Lund's B Bar Angus Ranch, Wibaux County, to the Centennial Farm and Ranch register.

Randy Lund and his siblings surprised their mother Ethel on her 90th birthday with the Centennial designation honoring her and the Lund family's remarkable longevity on their land. She received the signature MTHS roadside sign, and a framed certificate signed by Gov. Greg Gianforte.

"By honoring families who have owned their land for 100 years or more, we help preserve Montana's strong agricultural roots and the stories and traditions that define our rural communities," said Christine Brown, MTHS Outreach and Interpretation historian. "These families deserve a hearty pat on the back and recognition for achieving this rare milestone."

The Lund family's legacy weaves together the story of generations of Lund family members working together to keep and eventually merge various farm and ranch lands. Brothers Charles and Melvin Lund each claimed 320-acre homesteads in Wibaux County in 1914. The brothers farmed wheat and shipped eggs, milk and other items via rail from nearby Carlyle to Beach, ND.

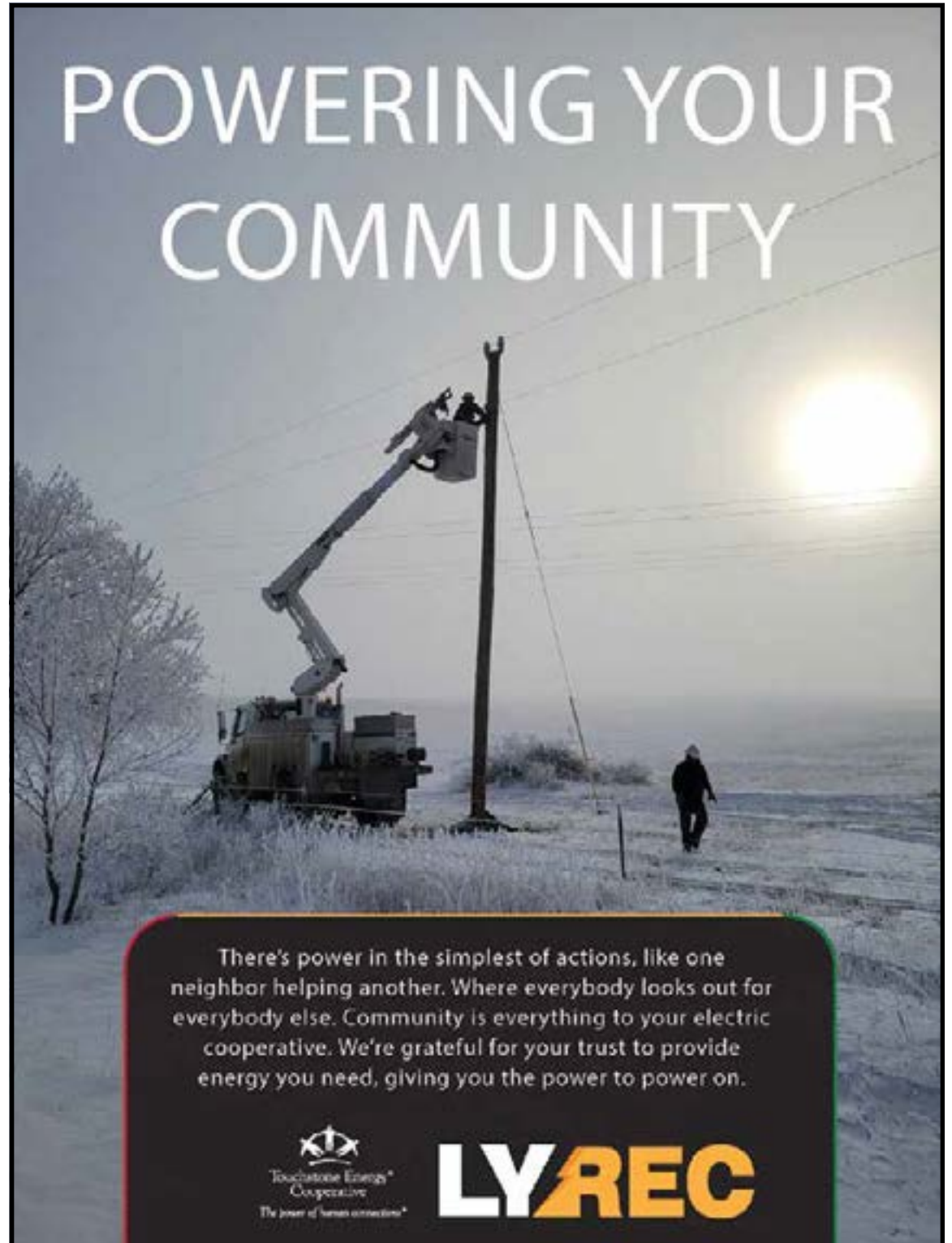
Charles and his wife, Lida, had one son – Calvin – and Melvin and his wife Bertha had three sons – Claude, Vernice, and Floyd. In the mid-1920s, cousins Calvin and Claude married sisters Lydia and Janette Stark, respectively. The cousins continued helping on their parents' farms, purchased their own land nearby, and raised families of their own. During the droughts of the mid-1930s Charles and Lida retired to Baker and Calvin and Lydia followed suit, opening a Standard Oil dealership while still operating the farm. After Charles and Lida and eventually Calvin passed away, Calvin's son Harold, who also operated the Baker Dry Cleaners, farmed their land until 1991.

Meanwhile, Melvin, who had sold his original homestead to purchase another property on the Carlyle Road, began farming with his son Claude in 1925. Claude and Janette later purchased their own farm two miles west and after Melvin and Bertha retired in the late 1940s, continued farming Melvin's land. Claude's son Robert (Bob) began farming with him after completing his degree in agricultural economics at Montana State College (MSC) in 1955. Bob married MSC classmate Ethel Swingle in 1956, and in 1957 Claude and Bob started raising registered Angus cattle under the B Bar brand. Their cattle gained widespread recognition and they began acquiring more land and cattle. Claude and Janette semi-retired to Billings in 1973 but stayed active in the operations until they died in 1983 and 1992, respectively.

Bob died in 1989 after a battle with cancer. His wife Ethel, sons Rob and Steve, and his mother Janette assumed the ranch operation. Ethel inherited the original homestead in 1992 along with the first property bought by Claude and Janette, which is where the ranch headquarters are now. In 1994, Ethel also acquired the original Charles Lund homestead after his grandson Harold died.


Today, Melvin Lund's great grandsons Rob and Steve with

their respective spouses operate Lund's B Bar Angus Ranch. In addition, Steve's two sons Cooper and Angus, with his wife Briley and daughter Emery are also living on and involved in operating the ranch. The original farms established by Charles and Melvin are now part of the approximately 10,000 acres owned by Ethel, Rob, and Steve.



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Use Caution When Grazing Frost-Damaged Forage Crops

Several management steps can help mitigate risks of feeding frost-damaged forages to livestock.

By NDSU Agriculture Communication

As frost begins to appear across parts of the Northern Plains, temperatures have been low enough to cause leaf burning and plant stress in many frost-sensitive annual and perennial forage plants. James Rogers, North Dakota State University Extension forage crops production specialist, highlights three main frost effects: prussic acid production, nitrate accumulations and bloat.

“The most concerning of these frost effects is prussic acid which can develop in the sorghum family of plants,” Rogers says. “If cattle are grazing sorghum forages and frost warnings are in the forecast, remove cattle until after a killing frost has completely killed the plant and residual growth has fully dried down.”

Prussic acid can be released in the sorghum family when the plant undergoes a form of stress, such as frost, drought, grazing or chemical applications. When prussic acid develops, concentrations are highest in new, rapidly-growing leaf tissue and higher in leaves than stems, creating a hazard for grazing cattle. Once ingested by the animal, prussic acid blocks body cells from receiving oxygen.

A light frost can stop plant growth but will not kill the plant crown. The root crown then can still produce new shoots that can contain high levels of prussic acid. Cattle can detoxify a high percentage of low-level prussic acid exposure, but the high concentrations found in fresh regrowth following a stress period greatly increase the risk.

Fortunately, prussic acid levels drop as the sorghums dry. Complete dry down will usually take a week or more, depending on drying conditions. After the plants have completely dried down, it is safe for cattle to graze out the sorghum as a standing hay crop.

Frost can also cause conditions for nitrate accumulation. Forage crops such as annual cereals (oats, barley, rye), brassicas (turnips, radish), sorghums and millets can accumulate nitrates, leading to nitrate poisoning in ruminant animals. High nitrate levels may occur in hay containing these crops or late-planted crops that are targeted for late-season grazing or hay production.

Unlike prussic acid, drying of the forage for hay will not eliminate high levels of nitrate. Ensiling reduces levels by up to 50%, but if the initial nitrate level is high, even a 50% reduction might not be enough to reduce the concentrations to a safe feeding level for all livestock. Testing for nitrate levels is crucial to develop management strategies for feeding. Nitrate testing may be available at no cost to producers through NDSU Extension. Contact your local NDSU Extension agent for information about testing.

Frost damage can also increase the risk of bloat, particularly in legumes. In ruminants, bloat occurs when froth builds up in the rumen, preventing the animal from expelling gas. The gas builds, putting pressure on internal organs.

Frost damage in legumes or other plants with high levels of soluble proteins, such as alfalfa, clovers and vegetative cereal crops, causes a rupturing of plant cells, which then releases soluble proteins. Plant cell damage can also lead to increased levels of potassium, calcium and magnesium. These combined effects lead to increased risk of bloat in ruminants. This risk is highest one to seven days after frost occurs.

To mitigate risk during periods of plant stress, Rogers suggests several management steps based on the issue of concern:

Prussic acid

- Avoid grazing sorghums following a period of light frost. Wait seven to 10 days or more before releasing cattle to graze.
- If new shoot growth begins following a light frost, avoid grazing until regrowth is 18 to 24 inches tall or after a killing frost.



Frost-damaged sorghums may contain prussic acid, which can cause health risks for livestock. (NDSU photo)

- Wait seven to 10 days or more following a killing frost to allow time for prussic acid dissipation. Once the plants have completely dried, grazing can resume.
- Never turn hungry cattle out on sorghums.
- Harvest as hay or silage to reduce prussic acid concentrations.

Nitrate accumulation

- Test forages for nitrate levels.
- Dilute high-nitrate forages with low-nitrate forages to bring the overall nitrate level down to an acceptable level for feeding.
- Allow cattle a period of adjustment for higher levels of nitrate in the diet.
- Ensure nitrate levels in stock water do not increase risk.
- Monitor cattle health during the feeding period.

Prevent bloat

- If a pure stand of alfalfa has received a light frost, avoid grazing for at least three days or more to allow the bloat risk to decrease. For frost-damaged legumes, the biggest risk will be one to five days following frost damage.
- If a killing frost has occurred, give plants time to dry down before. This may take a week or more depending on conditions.
- Avoid turning hungry cattle onto a frost-damaged pasture of pure legumes or high percentage of legumes, and limit the amount of time spent grazing.
- Provide some type of supplementation, such as poloxalene blocks.
- Monitor cattle health. Some individuals seem to be more prone to bloat than others. If bloat occurs, be prepared to treat animals quickly.

“Fall is a great time of year with the changing of the seasons, but it can also cause negative changes in our forages that can impact livestock health,” Rogers says. “Be aware of these concerns and be prepared to deal with them.”

For more information on managing frost-related risks in forage crops, contact your local NDSU Extension agent.

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Varying In-Field Moisture Makes Corn Harvest, Drying, Storage Challenge

Drying and storage concerns will arise if corn is dried with large moisture content variations.

By NDSU Agriculture Communication

Due to a challenging spring planting season, corn has varying moisture levels between fields and even within fields. This may be due to replanted portions of fields, with the initial planted acres at about 15% while the replanted acres are still in the upper 20% moisture range.

“One option is to segregate harvest as much as possible,” says Ken Hellevang, professor emeritus and retired North Dakota State University Extension agricultural engineer. “Harvest the initial planted acres now, then come back to harvest the replant acres once they’ve dried down near or below 20% grain moisture.”

The NOAA Climate Prediction Center Outlook through the latter part of October is for continued drier- and warmer-than-average conditions. The Iowa State University corn dry-down calculator estimates that 28% moisture corn in Ransom County will dry down to about 20% by the end of October. Typically, little drying occurs during November, so late October is normally when harvest and drying is recommended.

If all the corn is left standing until the replant areas dry down, the corn that is at 15% moisture now is not expected to dry below about 13-14%, due to that being the corn equilibrium moisture content for late October weather conditions. However, there is a risk of preharvest losses due to ear drop or stalk breakdown.

“Scout the corn to check for stalk integrity. Push the plant sideways about 8 to 12 inches at ear level. If the stalk crimps near the base or fails to return to the vertical position, stalk rot is indicated. Also, look for ear drop and ear shank weakness. Most corn hybrids today have good stalk and ear shank strength,” Hellevang says.

Corn with a large moisture variation dried in a high temperature dryer will have a large moisture variation after drying. The high moisture corn will dry some and the 15% corn will dry to a very low moisture content. Some of the newer dryers mix the corn in the drying column, which is beneficial. However, a moisture variation will continue in storage. If 20% moisture corn kernels are mixed with 10% moisture kernels, the 20% may come down to 17% and the 10% increase to 13%, but the corn moisture content does not equalize. Extended aeration will help with some moisture equalizing, but it will not reach the average moisture content. Also, kernels segregate as they flow into a grain bin, so if there is a variation in kernel size or density, pockets of wet corn may occur. Even corn harvested with moisture variations of 14% to 20% will have a moisture variation after drying, and aeration for longer than typical is recommended along with more care in storage management. Corn at moisture contents exceeding about 20% cannot be dried using natural air drying.

The two preferred options for large corn moisture content variations in a field are to wait for the high-moisture corn to dry before harvesting the field, or to harvest the dry portion now and wait for the rest to dry. Drying and storage concerns will arise if the corn is dried with large moisture content variations, warns Hellevang.

Corn should be aerated immediately after being placed into storage to ensure the corn has been cooled to below 70 degrees Fahrenheit and cooled as outdoor temperatures cool until it is 20 to 30 degrees for winter storage.

For more information, visit ndsu.ag/dryingcorn.



Drying and storage concerns will arise if the corn is dried with large moisture content variations. (NDSU photo)

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