

First Iowa turkey farm restocks

By DAVID PITT
Associated Press

MANSON, Iowa (AP) — Thousands of small young turkeys ran around the barns on the Moline family farm Monday near Manson, the first Iowa farm to restock birds after a bird flu outbreak decimated flocks in the Midwest.

Owner Brad Moline, who farms with his father and brother, said it's a sign the industry is turning the page on an outbreak in which about 48 million birds died from the virus or were euthanized to prevent its spread.

The virus spread to the Midwest in the spring, affecting 15 states, with Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska losing the most birds.

Cleaning and disinfection at Nebraska and Minnesota farms should be completed by mid-August and at Iowa farms by the end of the month, said Jack Shere, a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinary administrator.

Farms must wait 21 days after they test free of virus before introducing new birds, he said.

Moline hosted state and federal agriculture officials at a news conference Monday to celebrate restocking barns and offer some hope to others still awaiting the green light to move forward.

The young turkeys in his barns were trucked to the farm 120 miles northwest of Des Moines from a hatchery in Wilmar, Minnesota.

Moline recalled how about 90 turkeys were found dead on May 19 in one of his barns of 7,000 birds. Within four days, only a handful of birds were still alive.

"The disease is that destructive and that devastating and that fast. It's something generations of turkey farmers have never seen before and have never been seen on this farm and hope we never do again," he said.

Moline and agriculture officials said the industry is much better prepared should there be a recurrence of the virus this fall.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey said poultry farmers are looking at biosecurity practices that include controlling worker access to barns and keeping vehicles from parking near them. Wild birds and rodents, which carry infected droppings on their feet, must be kept out of barns, he said.

The outbreak cost the poultry industry an estimated \$360 million, spreading so quickly it overwhelmed resources.

"There are a list of things that if it comes back again we'll be more aggressive on," Northey said. "We'll be more aggressive to make sure it doesn't move and if we get a few cases it will stay at a few cases."

The key will be quicker detection of the virus, Shere said. He said farmers now know that even a few dead birds should be alarming. Some may consider preventative testing.

"The longer birds are infected the more it spreads and the virus load climbs," Shere said.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Roy Dube inspects his soft white spring wheat while harvesting south of Rosalia, Wash., the morning of Aug. 6. Dube is mindful of lower wheat prices while he works, and market analysts say they could fall farther.

Farmers keep an eye on wheat prices as harvest wraps up

Any rallies would be limited, market analysts say

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

ROSALIA, Wash. — As farmer Roy Dube enters the final days of his 2015 wheat harvest, he's keeping an eye on prices.

"Sometimes more than once a day," he said with a chuckle. "Prices are way down. We're getting really clobbered by the strong value of the dollar. I don't know if we've reached our bottom yet for this year."

Prices are down about a dollar a bushel from a month ago, said Dube, who farms near Rosalia, Wash.

"I don't think any of the farmers thought it would go down that much," he said.

Prices for soft white wheat at Portland are \$5.47 to \$5.62 per bushel, down from 6.68 to \$7.13 per bushel at the same time last year, according to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Wheat prices have hit a five-year low, market analysts say, but what happens next is anyone's guess.

"They're either going to go up or they're going to go down," said Dan Steiner, senior grain merchandiser with Pendleton Grain Growers.

"I don't know where the bottom on this thing might be," said Byron Behne, marketing manager with Northwest Grain Growers in Walla Walla, Wash. "I'm thinking maybe we haven't seen it yet."

Analyst Darin Newsom with DTN in Omaha, Neb., said it's easy to argue that wheat prices should stay down. Any time the market tries to rally, it gets knocked down, he said.

"But there's still part of me that thinks wheat is so low that it's going to move up," Newsom said. "Wheat has the fewest bullish reasons to move higher of any of the grains, but it still could."

Any price rally would be limited, Newsom said.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Roy Dube navigates his combine around an old cistern on his property while harvesting soft white spring wheat the morning of Aug. 6 south of Rosalia, Wash. Dube is keeping a close eye on lowered wheat prices as he works.

"If we can get 30 to 40 cents back on this market, maybe at that point it starts to gain some momentum," he said.

Newsom urges farmers to sell a little wheat, but hold back to see if the market improves. But they should be fully aware that wheat prices could drop further, he said.

"It can go up, I just don't know why it would right now," Behne said. "We're not as uncompetitive as we were prior to the beginning of July. The problem is if we rally from these price levels, demand probably just drops right back down."

Steiner doesn't think prices will fall much farther. He believes wheat prices could strengthen once harvest is over.

"As soon as the combines are parked and the bin doors are shut, I think this market is going to trend higher," he said. "It's going to take a ton of supply pressure to drive this thing a lot lower than it is right now. I think the worst of it is already behind us."

Dube, the farmer, is less optimistic when thinking about the end of harvest and beyond.

"This could be a low-price year, and there are some indications it could be a lower price again next

year, too," he said. "We'll do OK this year, but we don't want too many of these in a row."

Idaho reports average grain yields, lower test weights

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Grain farmers are generally reporting average to slightly above-average yields but disappointing test weights as they enter the home stretch of the 2015 harvest.

Idaho crop experts say a string of record-hot days in early July came at the critical flowering stage for spring wheat, likely contributing to lower test weights — which measures the density of grain relative to volume.

Growers receive price discounts for test weights below 60 pounds per bushel, and Idaho Wheat Commission officials say many of the state's test weights have been around 55 pounds a bushel.

"Real high temperature spikes can stress the crop," said Bradford Warner, vice president of marketing with Agspring, the parent company of Thresher Artisan Wheat.

Warner said Idaho wheat yields have been decent, nonetheless.

The good news, explained Mike Erickson, a seed treatment specialist with McGregor Co. in Twin Falls, is that cool and moist May weather apparently mitigated damage throughout Southern Idaho resulting from a rampant barley yellow dwarf virus outbreak that impacted both wheat and barley.

"We were predicting early on we could see some 50 percent yield reductions (to barley yellow dwarf)," Erickson said. "We might have been off 5 to 10 percent."

Erickson said growers haven't seen the record yields they enjoyed last season, but there also haven't been reports of sprout-damaged grain, which was a major problem during the 2014 harvest.

Though crops mostly recovered from barley yellow

dwarf infections this season, Erickson suspects the disease may have contributed to lower test weights in heat-stressed crops.

He warns growers there's an abundance of virus in the ecosystem, and recent rains have promoted growth of volunteers to support barley yellow dwarf until fall grain emerges. Erickson advises farmers to delay planting fall grain until Oct. 15 to avoid flights of aphids — insect vectors of the virus — as they move off corn. Erickson said growers who don't delay planting should consider using an insecticidal seed treatment. He said field scouting is also crucial, and growers who see aphids should consider a post-emergence insecticide this fall.

"I think we are set up again for another nasty (season)," Erickson said.

Cathy Wilson, director of research collaboration with the Idaho Wheat Commission, said yields were down in Northern Idaho, where growers seeded fall crops in dry conditions and were hurt by lack of winter moisture, though some growers were saved by scattered May showers. Soda Springs, a dryland growing area in Eastern Idaho, was a bright spot, Wilson said.

"It's probably an above-average crop but not as good as we hoped," said Soda Springs grower Randy Hubbard, adding hot weather reduced test weights, even at Caribou County's high elevation.

Mountain Home grower Jeff Harper said his test weights were also light, but he was pleasantly surprised by strong winter wheat yields, considering "we grew all of our wheat in an area that was short of water."

In Pocatello, Wilson said grain inspectors have reported few problems, other than somewhat low test weight.

Sawtooth Wilderness becomes law

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama signed legislation Aug. 7 introduced by Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, creating new wilderness in Central Idaho's Boulder-White Cloud Mountains.

Simpson's Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act, H.R. 1138, was developed over the course of several years with input from a diverse group of stakeholders, including ranchers. The wilderness bill was broadly supported by area cattlemen, who regarded it as a far more palatable option to a national monument designation that was also under consideration.

The bill creates three new Idaho wilderness areas encompassing about 276,000 acres — the Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness, the White Clouds Wilderness and the Jim Mc-

Clure-Jerry Peak Wilderness.

The bill also removes special restrictions on four study areas under consideration for wilderness, totaling more than 155,000 acres.

By contrast, proponents of a monument sought to include 591,000 acres. According to Simpson's staff, the wilderness bill had ample input from the cattle industry, and policies governing a monument could change at the whim of an administration.

The wilderness bill closes no roads to motorized use that are currently open to vehicles. Grazing permittees within and adjacent to the wilderness area will be allowed to voluntarily retire grazing permits for compensation from a third-party conservation group.

The bill also awards \$5 million in grants toward a Custer

County community center, a county health clinic, emergency medical support and Trail Creek Highway improvements. More than \$1.5 million in grants have been awarded for trail maintenance and improvements within the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

The bill passed the House on July 27 and the Senate on Aug. 4.

"The passage of this bill is a huge victory for Idahoans who've worked for over 15 years to create a land management plan for the Boulder-White Clouds," Simpson said in a press release following Senate approval.

According to a White House press release, Obama signed the bill with Simpson and seven others standing behind him and said Simpson "was able to receive not a single no vote, which does not happen that often."

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