

Farm-related business sweats amid drought



By Bill Bradshaw

ENTERPRISE — In a year when farmers are hurting because of the drought, related businesses also are feeling the heat as producers are struggling to harvest the meager crops that shippers such as Farm Supply take to market.

“It’s a year like no other,” co-owner Craig Willis said. “The harvest this year, as near as we can tell, is about 65% of normal in Umatilla County. It’s just getting going here (in Wallowa County), but I’m sure it’ll be affected here, also.”

Farm Supply not only ships grain to market, but hauls fuel, chips, fertilizer, logs, cattle and nearly every commodity grown in the Northwest. The company, which Willis owns and operates with his wife, Candi, ships throughout Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Utah and Northern California.

“We haul ag commodities everywhere,” Craig said.

“If it fits, it ships,” quipped daughter Kylie.

Craig is even seeing ranchers shipping their livestock early, moving them from summer to winter pasture earlier or to feedlots.

“Normally, we don’t haul a lot of cattle this time of year, but this year ranchers are getting them off of pasture or moving to different pastures” because of the drought, he said. “We’re doing a lot of



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
Farm Supply owners, from left, Candi and Craig Willis, stand with daughter, Kylie, near one of the trailers at their Enterprise operation. Like agricultural producers, related businesses like Farm Supply are feeling the heat from this year’s drought.



Farm Supply/Contributed Photo
A Farm Supply truck takes a load of grain from a farmer’s grain cart as it prepares to haul the crop to market.

cattle shuffling.” In addition to Craig and Candi Willis, Kylie helps out in the office and her husband, Clint, drives truck part time and takes care of the cows, while Craig and Candi’s son, Skyler, and his

wife, Amber, take care of most of the farming. Farm Supply has about 55 employees, 50 of whom are drivers of their 50 trucks. Most of the others are mechanics who keep the trucks operating, as do some

mechanics the company contracts with. “We are thankful for the employees we have and couldn’t provide great service without them,” Candi said. The Willis’ have owned

the business since 2004. Craig went to work there in 1977, but the company dates to 1938.

“It’s an old, old company,” Craig said. “I used to drive a lot. I drove every day for 32 years before I bought the company, and then I continued to drive and dispatch trucks as we built the company until about 2010.”

“Now he just has to be within phone range because he’s on the phone all the time,” Candi said.

The Willis’ both are Wallowa County natives.

“Our families go back generations here,” Craig said.

The company has three locations. In addition to Enterprise, they also have outlets in La Grande and in Lewiston, Idaho, where a fleet of 12 trucks are kept busy.

In fact, Lewiston is one

FARM SUPPLY

Who: Craig and Candi Willis

Where: 319 Golf Course Road, Enterprise

When: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Phone: 541-426-5915

Email: farmsupply@eoni.com

of the more popular destinations for Wallowa County commodities, since the city on the Snake River gives the otherwise landlocked Idaho a seaport. While they also ship to Tri-Cities, Washington, “Lewiston is way closer,” Craig said.

“For us, it made more sense to drive the bushels to a port closer to the ocean and that’d net the farmer more money for the same freight,” he said.

But farmers here are going to be hurting once they get their drought-stricken crops to market.

“Yields are bad over (in Umatilla County), but the dryland here is just a catastrophe,” Craig said. “The irrigated ground here, I think will be down, but not like the dryland. Even irrigated hay, the yields are down.”

That’s both because of limited water and heat.

“You just can’t get over your ground fast enough to keep from being pinched by the heat,” he said.

Bill Bradshaw is a reporter for the Wallowa County Chieftain. Have a business tip? Contact him at 541-398-5503 or bbradshaw@wallowa.com.



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CLUES ACROSS

1. Girl who may say “nae”
5. Military wear, informally
9. Rhyming nickname for a ‘90s-’00s Britcom
14. Boat in “Jaws”
15. Acted just like
16. Navajo or Pueblo
17. Tournament favorite
19. Cliffside nest
20. Souvenir shop garment
21. Comes down hard?
22. Opposite NNE
23. Abbr. at the end of a business name
24. Geological period
25. Problem-solve
29. Simple chord
32. Word said with a sigh
33. Apply
34. Houston university
35. Try to prevent
37. “A Hard Road to Glory” author Arthur
38. Tribute from a poet
39. West Coast gas brand
40. Cook, as clams
41. Diagram of options
45. Photographer Adams
46. Suffix for “rocket”
47. “Te ____” (Spanish for “I love you”)
50. Item an Olympian hurls
52. Heart hit with the words “I cast my spell of love on you”
54. Buzzing with activity
55. Yield the desired result
56. Bogus
57. A single time
58. Annapolis initials
59. Fabric for a professor’s jacket
60. Ram like a goat
61. Like the observation “Crosswords are similar to life ...”

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59							60						61	

CLUES DOWN

1. Top housing options?
2. Astrological ram
3. Fastener that may be loose
4. Back talk
5. Slots’ spot
6. Brief outline
7. Convene
8. Not divisible by two
9. Bewildered
10. Bottom-first kind of birth
11. Building with a bell and a pole
12. Not much
13. Flower pollinators
18. Bronze medalist’s place
21. Pointy pickle piece
24. Fashion magazine
25. ____ Bo (exercise system)
26. Deontor’s stick
27. Dept. of Labor arm
28. Abound
29. Put one’s foot down?
30. Carnival attraction
31. Ornate-but-temporary winter structure
35. Towels off
36. Natural resource management subj.
37. Absorbed, as a cost
39. Gave confidence to
40. Bottom line on a letter, say?
42. Cut with a scalpel
43. It led to a 1773 Boston “party”
44. Wish undone
47. Get a smile out of
48. Acadia National Park’s state
49. Available from a keg
50. Ridiculous, to a Brit
51. Translation of Caesar’s “vidi”
52. Computer list
53. “Phooey!”
55. Go up and down

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