

Antibiotic-Resistant Infections Reported In SD

PIERRE (AP) — The Department of Health is investigating a cluster of bacterial infections in northeastern South Dakota. . . . Twenty-six potential cases of carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae, or CRE, from northeastern South Dakota have been reported to the department for evaluation. CRE cases have been reported in 42 states, including all of South Dakota's neighboring states except Nebraska. Bacteria such as Klebsiella and E. coli are found in the human digestive system and can become resistant to carbapenem antibiotics. Patients on ventilators, urinary or intravenous catheters, or long courses of certain antibiotics are most at risk for CRE infections. Healthy people are not at risk.

Ponca State Park To Hold Winterfest Dec. 29

PONCA, Neb. (AP) — Ponca State Park in northeast Nebraska will be the scene of all types of winter activities at the park's Winterfest celebration. The event will be held all day on Dec. 29 and is designed to allow visitors to rekindle wintertime family traditions. Outdoor activities include sledding, a fruitcake-flinging contest, children's kindling hunt, a yule log quest, bonfire and hayrack rides. Indoor activities include art display, crafts, wine and cheese tasting, soup supper, and entertainment. The Yule Log Quest is a team competition to locate the log within the park. The kindling found in the children's contest will be used to light the log for the bonfire. A park entry permit is required for each vehicle entering the park.

Grinches Hacking Down Nebraska Fir Trees

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — With Christmas only days away, authorities in southeast Nebraska say thieves have been targeting rural properties' fir trees. Every year, the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office fields a handful of reports of evergreens taken from acreages, presumably destined to serve as Christmas trees. The Lincoln Journal Star reports that Judy Leif recently noticed a 7-foot spruce on her property near Raymond had been cut down. Authorities say homeowners' best defense is to spray fox urine on the trees they want to keep. The urine puts off little smell when the temperature is below 50 degrees. But if a sprayed tree is brought inside, the smell is overwhelming. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the city of Lincoln both utilize a fox urine mixture to keep protect their trees from thieves.

SD Inmate Charged After Locking Up Jailer

MITCHELL (AP) — An inmate at the Davison County Jail faces charges after he allegedly locked a jailer in a cell with another prisoner. Twenty-three-year-old Cory Zobel, of Salem, is accused of shutting and locking a cell door behind a female jailer who was delivering property to another inmate. According to court documents, Zobel told an officer he did it because he thought it was funny. The Daily Republic of Mitchell reports that Zobel is charged with obstructing a jailer, a misdemeanor, and faces up to a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine. The jailer wasn't hurt.

Heritage Center Loses Buffalo To Development

SPEARFISH (AP) — The buffalo that have been an icon of the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish have been removed from the pasture. Center officials say that recent development near the display pasture has sparked safety concerns, so the buffalo were loaded into trailers Wednesday by officials with the Jumpoff Buffalo Ranch, located near Buffalo, S.D. The male and two heifers were then slaughtered. Center director Peggy Ables tells the Black Hills Pioneer that the center couldn't risk someone climbing the fence and getting hurt. The buffalo had roamed the center's north pasture for nearly 20 years. Ables says plans are in place to add three longhorn cattle to the display for the 2013 tourist season. She says that longhorns, more than other cattle breeds, represent the Old West.

Shooting

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ever return to normal. And as the workweek was set to begin, parents weighed whether to send their own children back to school. Gov. Dannel Malloy said the shooter decided to kill himself when he heard police closing in about 10 minutes into the attack. "We surmise that it was during the second classroom episode that he heard responders coming and apparently at that decided to take his own life," Malloy said on ABC's "This Week." Police said they found hundreds of unused bullets at the school, which enrolled about 450 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. "There was a lot of ammo, a lot of clips," said state police Lt. Paul Vance. "Certainly a lot of lives were potentially saved." The chief medical examiner has said the ammunition was a type designed to expend its energy in the victim's tissues and

stay inside the body to inflict the maximum amount of damage. The sorrowful interfaith service was stark and spare, with a stage that held only a small table covered with a black cloth, candles and the presidential podium. The newly re-elected president said in the coming weeks, he would use "whatever power this office holds" to engage with law enforcement, mental health professionals, parents and educators in an effort to prevent more tragedies like Newtown. He promised to lead a national effort but left unclear what it would be and how much it would address the explosive issue of gun control. Obama closed his remarks by slowly reading the first names of each of the 26 victims. "God has called them all home," he said. "For those of us who remain, let us find the strength to carry on and make our country worthy of their memory." Obama conceded that none of his words would ease the sorrow. But he declared to the community of Newtown: "You are not alone." Privately, Obama told the governor that Friday was the most

Nebraska

Overcrowded Prisons Hike Request

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A two-year effort to cut costs and ease prison overcrowding by paroling more Nebraska inmates is falling short, thanks to a surge of new inmates and offenders who are serving longer sentences. The department is now requesting an additional \$5 million from lawmakers to hire new staff and reopen a housing unit at the Omaha Correctional Center that closed last year, prison officials told The Associated Press. The request follows budget cuts in fiscal year 2011 that eliminated 70 full-time positions within the state corrections system. "While (the department) was able to temporarily close this unit, it cannot remain closed and unoccupied with the increased inmate population," department officials wrote in a budget request. Administrators with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services said the parole program has helped more inmates return to society. And without the parole program, they said, the state's prison overcrowding would

have grown far worse. "The parole plan succeeded, but not in the way anyone anticipated," said T. Hank Robinson, who tracks prisoner data for the agency. "It helped absorb a fairly strong increase in the number of prison admissions. It helped keep the prison population relatively flat." Still, the state prison facilities are holding steady at around 140 percent of their capacity, as they were last year. The number of inmates paroled has surged over the last three years, from 848 in fiscal year 2010 to 1,323 in the 2012 fiscal year, according to the department. The number of prison admissions has risen over the same time period, from 2,874 to 3,047. Robinson said the prison growth is also due to inmates who are serving longer sentences, meaning that fewer are leaving and offsetting the new arrivals. In fiscal year 2010, the average daily population in Nebraska's prisons was 4,462. The number has since grown to 4,609 in fiscal year 2012, according to the department. Nebraska lawmakers will likely review the budget request when they convene next year. "We have to evaluate who these prisoners are, and why parole is not moving as quickly on the ones who are parole-able," said Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford, chairman of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee. Ashford said committee members will dis-

cuss the problem, but their first priority will be on much-needed reforms to Nebraska's two Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Kearney and Geneva. Ashford said the parole program has helped reduce the need to build a new state prison, which would cost an estimated \$120 million. He said the growth was driven by two major factors: mandatory minimum sentences for gun-related crimes, and an increase in sex offenders who are incarcerated. So is the length of their sentences: Ashford said 80 percent of Nebraska's adult inmate population stays incarcerated for at least three years. Ashford said the increase in gun offenders stemmed from stricter laws that lawmakers approved four years ago. Nebraska is among several states that have looked to reduce their inmate populations in the last two years. California adopted a program last year to reduce the prison population by handing paroled inmates over to county probation officers. The Illinois Legislature passed a bill this year that reduced prisoner sentences for good behavior and participation in re-entry programs. In May, Kansas lawmakers approved legislation that gives judges more discretion when sentencing low-level drug offenders who have only one prior conviction.

S.D. Lab Born In Layoffs Finds Success

BY STEVE YOUNG
Argus Leader

BROOKINGS (AP) — At perhaps their darkest hour, as the unexpected announcement about job cuts and a century-old venture being closed down still reverberated in the room, Regina Wixon pushed a note across the table. Staff in the Olson Agricultural Analytical Services Lab on the South Dakota State University campus couldn't believe their ears. Caught in a budgetary pinch sparked by the national recession, the university decided to lay off dozens of faculty and staff — and even shut down entirely its venerable and highly respected ag services lab. Seventeen people at Olson would lose their jobs. Amid the disbelief in the room, lab manager Nancy Thiex stared at the piece of paper. "Let's start our own business," it read. That was 20 months ago. Today Wixon and others from the Olson lab have in fact pulled off a phoenix story of their own — rising from the ashes of those turbulent times to create a private ag analysis business in Brookings. They call it South Dakota Agricultural Laboratories. The work they perform is much the same as

they did at Olson — analyzing everything from feed and forage to soil, water and animal tissue. Thinking about spreading manure on your farm fields? Wixon's lab will check its nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium levels to ensure you won't accidentally damage the land. Need to know the nutrient or mineral content of the feed and forage you're giving to your livestock? Again, that's what the chemists at South Dakota Ag Labs do. "When they decided to close the lab here on campus, it caused us some heartburn," said Todd Trooien, a natural resources engineer at SDSU. "We have to get these analyses done, and it's really helpful to have a local lab so we don't have to haul them a long way. So I'm really glad this worked out for them." That glad feeling seems to stretch across the SDSU and Brookings landscapes these days. In April 2011, Dean Barry Dunn of SDSU's College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences wasn't universally beloved as he was announcing the force reductions — most of them in his college. But Wixon insists now that it was Dunn who helped the Olson lab staff land on its feet. The agriculture dean "was put

in a very difficult position. That's just how it was," Wixon said. "But he's been one of the keys as far as helping us get to where we are today." Though SDSU shut down the Olson lab in October 2011, Dunn allowed staff members to stay on afterward to catalog lab equipment and do other things. To a degree, it gave them a few more paychecks until they got their own venture

running. He also put their business information on an SDSU website for people who needed sample work done. "It wasn't very much," Dunn said. "They kept on running on campus as long as they possibly could. We tried to help them where we could until they got their business up and running. But it really was their hard work and vision that pulled it off."

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