

OUR TOWNS

**Gayville
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Pheasant Championship Slated For This Weekend

Local Hunting Farm Gears Up To Host Event

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON
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Although its regular season ends on March 31, E Circle E Hunting Farms is abuzz with activity.

That's because preparations are being made for the South Dakota State Pheasant Championship, which will take place at E Circle E, located east of Gayville, Saturday and Sunday.

It's been a busy week, event coordinator Anita Emmick said.

"There's a lot of coordinating with the fields, there's coordinating with who is going to catch and tie ribbons on birds, there's coordinating with meals and lodging and payment and registration," she said. "There's a lot of planning. A lot."

It takes "about a week" to get everything in place for the event, she said.

"You can't do too much too far in advance. You can't do anything with the fields," she said. "Last year, we were able to burn (in the fields). In our normal fields, you could have a strip of grass, and we would know where the halfway point is, but not necessarily a person from somewhere else. So we would burn strips, and then it snowed."

This is the fourth year the state pheasant championship has found a home at E Circle E.

"It's a tournament judging the ability of an individual and their dog, pointer or flusher, and they have a field with a set board of four or six," Emmick said. "An individual sets the birds, and then when those birds are set, the individual and their dog will go out, and they're timed on how long it takes the dog to either point or flush that bird up, and then whether they get it on the first shot, or however many shots it takes."

The hunters have been accruing points at similar events in other states for the U.S. Open Pheasant Championship, which takes place

April 8-12 at the Minnesota Horse and Hunt Club.

"That's where they all go and finalize, and then they win the big awards. We're the last on the circuit before they head up to the national part of it," Emmick said.

Any interested spectators are welcome to watch the weekend's events, she added.

Although the tournament events stay the same from year to year, one element that always changes is the weather, and this season's heavy snowfall has forced E Circle E to do some adapting, moving the competition to Hill Farm, which is located about five minutes away from the main lodge.

"In the past, we've had it out on the grass, but the grass is full of snow," Emmick said. "So now we have to use food plots and groom them."

The snow is a lingering concern, she added.

"It's not the soft, poofy snow anymore," Emmick said. "It's a brick. (Monday) was really nice, Saturday was nice, and I think (Tuesday) is supposed to be about 34, so we'll see how it goes. It's going to be pretty wet. And now they're calling for rain."

The snow has meant the pheasants needed to do some adapting, as well.

"The birds don't have anywhere to go now," Emmick said. "They're on top of the snow banks or they're out in the trees. I don't think that we're down a huge amount in numbers, but it's been hard on them. Some of them roost in trees like turkeys. That's not really a natural thing for pheasants. They look like little pumpkins in the tree. So that's

been kind of interesting to watch.

"When those storms came, they blew to other places," she said. "We'll see them down the county line, and someone else will say, 'I've never seen pheasants over here.' They definitely have to work for their food. There's a lot of snow to scratch through for corn. But they're still there."

Emmick said that although weather conditions have been a hindrance in past tournaments, everything has always worked out.

"We had one year where I was up to my knees in water, and the judges were just worn out because they have to run (with the hunters)," she said. "They can't just sit and watch. They have to run with that individual and time them."

Apart from E Circle E employees, volunteers will also be helping to coordinate this weekend's activities.

"It takes probably 20 to 25 people to get it orchestrated," Emmick said. "And then people come here and rent rooms, and Saturday night we always have a big supper that they can buy tickets to, as well."

This will be E Circle E employee and event coordinator Valerie Wuebben's first tournament, and she said she's ready to help out. "I'm just helping getting it advertised and promoted, lining stuff up," she said. "I don't know what I'll be doing this weekend, but I'll definitely be here."

One thing Wuebben said she is looking forward to is seeing the dogs and hunters in action.

"I've never seen it before," she said. "It's my first time seeing pheasant hunting done. So I think it'll be kind of neat to watch, and



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D
Pearl the dog looks for pheasants in the competition field of the South Dakota State Pheasant Championship, which will be overseen by E Circle E Hunting Farms this weekend.

all the spectators coming out to view it."

Emmick said that participants have come from as far away as Colorado and Texas, and that the numbers are generally higher each year.

"One hundred entries would be pretty good, but one person could put in for six to eight entries, because we're doing it Saturday and Sunday," she said. "So probably 70 to 80 would be a good number. The more, the better."

Although everything will be overseen by E Circle E, it is the Minnesota Horse and Hunt Club that established the rules for the tournament.

"We just try and make it so everyone has a good time, and has fun while they're here in South Dakota," Emmick said.

For more information, visit www.ecirclee.com.

Volin-Gayville Horizons Celebration Set For March 21

The Volin-Gayville Horizons Steering Committee will host a celebration on Sunday, March 21, to commemorate the successful completion of the process to receive the Horizons grant. The celebration will take place in the Volin City Hall.

The celebration will start with a free dance workshop from 4-5:30 p.m. taught by Sandi VanderWal and the Yankton County Drifters. They will be teaching the Electric Side, Silver Wings and 16-step. The workshop will be followed by a free supper and a dance with The Outback Band.

There will be various booths to display projects that are being worked on in the community to improve our community and address issues of poverty in our community. Some of these projects include developing a local food bank and addressing hunger in the community, improving communications within our community, providing culture and recreation for children within the community through classes and transportation.

Questions can be directed to Julie at 605-661-8766 or Missy at 267-2217.

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