Cool, Wet Conditions Slow SD Fieldwork

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Cool and wet conditions across most of South Dakota slowed down fieldwork in the last week, but producers welcomed the moisture.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop progress report that the wet weather improved topsoil moisture to 71 percent adequate or surplus. The ratings were 29 percent short or very short, compared to 42 percent the previous week.

There were about two days suitable for fieldwork. Stock water supplies rated 10 percent very short, 22 percent short, 66 percent adequate and 2 percent surplus. Pasture and range conditions were 33 percent good or excellent, 43 percent fair, and 24 percent poor or very poor.

Corn planting in South Dakota is 83 percent done, ahead of last year's 70 percent pace. Soybeans were 42 percent complete.

Study Of Insurance Pool Deficit Sought

PIERRE (AP) — A legislative audit committee should look into a school district insurance pool with a roughly \$8 million deficit that is managed by a nonprofit organization, the South Dakota Legislature's Executive Board voted on Monday.

The board voted 12-3 to recommend the Government Operations and Audit Committee study the shortfall in the pool managed by the Associated School Boards of South Dakota. Association Executive Director Wade Pogany said about 60 school districts in the state are included in the pool, which he said is facing the shortfall in part because of increasing health care costs.

Rep. Don Haggar, a Republican from Sioux Falls, said the shortfall represents a significant amount of money that should be investigated further.

"I think we have a responsibility to ask some appropriate questions, to do some due diligence and to just find out what happened," he said. "There are a lot of questions, and I think it would be prudent to get some answers."

Neb. Poultry Events OK'd Despite Bird Flu

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska officials have decided to monitor poultry events at county fairs and other venues, but they won't ban them even though bird flu has been found in the state.

The state Department of Agriculture sent a letter to poultry show organizers after bird flu was confirmed in chickens from two farms in the northeast corner of the state.

Minnesota, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and West Virginia have all banned poultry events because of the bird flu, but several other states, including neighboring Iowa and South Dakota, are allowing events.

Nebraska agriculture officials say they want to be notified about any poultry shows, so they can evaluate the risks. The state is banning any poultry sales east of U.S. Highway 281 and any sales of birds from eastern Nebraska.

Regents Choose Idaho Official As Exec.

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Idaho education official Michael Rush will replace outgoing South Dakota Board of Regents Executive Director and CEO Jack Warner, the board announced Monday.

Rush will assume the South Dakota role on June 29. He has served since 2007 as the executive director of the Idaho State Board of Education, where his duties also included working as Idaho's higher education executive.

The regents oversee South Dakota's six public universities and two special schools.

"It would have to be a pretty special opportunity to draw me away, and these folks are incredible," Rush told The Associated Press.

South Dakota Board of Regents President Randy Schaefer said in a press release that Rush has committed his working life to education.

"His broad experience and strong advocacy for both higher education and K-12 education made him a perfect fit for South Dakota and the Board of Regents' strategic priorities," Schaefer said.

Memoria

Senators Advance Limited Medical Marijuana Study

BY ANNA GRONEWOLD Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska lawmakers gave initial approval Monday to a measure that would allow certain patients who suffer from severe seizures to use a form of marijuana as part of a medical study.

Senators by a vote of 33-1 approved the bill by Sen. Sue Crawford of Bellevue to commission a University of Nebraska Medical Center study on the effectiveness of cannabidiol, a cannabis extract, in treating severe epileptic seizures.

The move comes less than a week after the legislature gave preliminary approval to a broader medical marijuana bill. Crawford's measure would go into effect immediately after being signed into law, which supporters said would offer an expedited but limited way to expand treatment options for families who need it most.

The bill would authorize neurologists to treat patients using cannabidiol, a low-THC version of cannabis, through October 2019. The drug would be available to neurologist-approved patients who suffer from intractable seizures and have exhausted at least three other antiseizure treatments.

Crawford said the study would help establish scientific evidence on the effectiveness of the drug, but it will be up to future legislatures to decide how to proceed after the study concludes.

"It could very well be that in the next

four years from now we don't need this kind of pilot project because this substance is available through the ordinary prescription process," Crawford said.

Supporters, including a group of senators who met with families using the drug in Colorado as part of an interim study last summer, say there are children in Nebraska with debilitating seizures whose families have exhausted other federally approved treatments and are now desperate for options.

Sen. Al Davis of Hyannis said he hopes the bill's passage will send a message to the federal government to speed up approval processes for similar drugs.

Sen. Tommy Garrett of Bellevue, who sponsored the bill to allow a broad medical marijuana program in the state, called the two measures a "multipronged attack." If passed, Garrett's bill would allow the Department of Health and Human Services up until December 2016 to activate the medical marijuana program. Both Garrett and Crawford said that's not soon enough.

"This one will get a limited number of children some near-term relief, and my bill will go even further," Garrett said.

Nebraska would obtain cannabidiol from GW Pharmaceuticals. The U.S. Federal Drug Administration has authorized the company based in England to provide the drug for rare diseases.

The only no vote, Sen. Merv Riepe

of Omaha, said he believes Nebraska could use results from other states that have authorized similar studies. Ten states passed cannabidiol studies last year and a handful of others are considering similar legislation in 2015. Riepe said by legalizing the substance before knowing its full effects, the legislature falls into a dangerous role of playing doctor.

But after a lengthy debate on the broader bill last week, most other conservative senators jumped to back Crawford's bill, which would draw from an existing health care fund, rather than the legislature's general funds.

Sen. Matt Williams of Gothenburg, who has been a harsh critic of medical marijuana this session, said he believes the cannabidiol study eliminates the potential for young people to abuse the drug because it contains very low levels of THC, the compound responsible for the marijuana high.

"Under this study it would be controlled; it would be organized; it would be very systematic," Williams said. "I am very comfortable with it happening that way, and hopefully people will be helped."

While Gov. Pete Ricketts has vocally opposed legislative legalization of marijuana, he does support FDA-approved studies of marijuana for medical purposes, according to his spokesman, Taylor Gage.

South Dakota Public Library Numbers See Drop

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau PIERRE — Public libraries in South Dakota reported lower circulation overall and fewer visits for 2014, but electronic circulation grew substantially, according to results from the annual statewide survey.

Circulation dropped 17.5 percent from the prior year, but most of the decline resulted from a correction in 2014 to over-reporting at the Rapid City Public Library in previous years, according to State Librarian Daria Bossman. She said removing Rapid City from the equation put the circulation drop at 3.9

percent.thi"So it's still down, but notanso dramatically and this ispeto be expected because oftothe tremendous movementofin many of our libraries,pamost especially within theDalarger ones toward e-books,fore-magazines and other down-loadables," Bossman said.

Federal definitions also don't yet fully capture database usage, such as streaming video as it replaces

physical video, she said. Meanwhile electronic distribution of materials through downloaded audio and e-books was up 20.7 percent in 2014, according to the survey. Eighty-eight of 111 public libraries now participate in the South Dakota Titles To Go program for sharing e-materials.

In turn, individual visits were down 2.7 percent. "This is naturally a na-

tional trend especially with more libraries offering downloadable services," Bossman said. "The logic is that patrons no longer need to go to a library to pick up a book to read and more people are relying on the Internet for basic informational needs."

She said one of the big stories for 2014 was the 11 percent rise in local library programming. She said nearly 272,000 people attended last year. During the past 10 years, local programming climbed about 75 percent, according to Bossman.





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