

Fire Destroys Barn; Blaze Deemed Suspicious

ARMOUR (AP) — A fire that destroyed a hoop barn near Armour has been deemed suspicious.

The Daily Republic reports the barn that burned Thursday morning was owned by Doug Luebke, who also owns an under-construction hog barn that was vandalized Wednesday.

A hoop barn is a building with a tarp covering metal framework. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office says Luebke's barn housed 350 1,000-pound square hay bales and two tractors. The machinery had only minor damage. Luebke estimated total damage at about \$60,000.

The fire's cause wasn't immediately determined, but Deputy Brandon Wingert says the blaze is suspicious. Local, state and federal authorities are investigating.

In the vandalism incident, someone drove a stolen tractor that was pulling a tile plow down the center of a recently poured concrete floor.

Bats

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1 percent of all bats actually have rabies."

Kempena said interaction between humans and bats tends to become more of a problem in the summer.

"Where it becomes an issue with humans is that, during the summer, females will congregate in maternity roosts to give birth and rear their young," she said. "Sometimes, those maternity roosts are in buildings that have appropriate temperatures like warmer temperatures in the attic. ... A lot of times, an individual bat will get into the living quarters, not on purpose, and that's one way of human and bat interaction."

She added that it's difficult to detect a bat bite.

"You might not know that you've been bitten by a bat," she said. "They've got small teeth. In addition, if you've been sleeping or you've got a small child in the room, that person or that child might not realize that they've been bitten."

She said in these cases, efforts are made to catch the bat and test it for rabies.

"Based on the chance that you might contract the disease, typically in that instance, the bat is captured and tested for rabies," she said. "You can't tell if the bat has rabies just by looking at it."

Nick Hill, disease surveillance manager with the South Dakota Department of Health, told the *Press & Dakotan* that the number of events of contact requiring examination is low in the state, but people should still be aware.

"As far as contact is concerned and the need for

follow-up and treatment, we're probably seeing a below-average year," Hill said. "However, we're always needing to maintain a high level of awareness for that potential so that people who do have actual exposures are aware and do seek healthcare so they are protected."

Hill said the department tends to receive close to a dozen reports each year of bat-human contact.

Kempena added that while bats have a reputation of being scary, the risks are very low and the creatures are very beneficial to the area.

"Contracting rabies from a skunk or a dog is more likely than contracting rabies from a bat, but there is still a health risk," she said. "Bats are often misunderstood. They're not as bad or as scary as a lot of people think. All of the bats in South Dakota perform an important ecological service by eating insects. They're not blind, they don't suck blood here."

Hill said the rarity of transferring rabies from bats to humans is due to public knowledge.

"We have not had a human rabies case since the early '70s," he said. "I think that's partly attributed to a high degree of knowledge the public has and medical providers have with regard to the risk of rabies."

Kempena said around 13 known species of bats regularly inhabit the state, with three species which migrate out of state for the winter. Big brown bats, little brown bats, silver-haired bats, hoary bats and eastern red bats tend to be the most prominent types in the region.

She added that relatively little is known about populations or the species themselves.

"Bats in South Dakota are

a group of species we don't have a lot of information on," she said. "We've done research and we're doing some monitoring."

Kempena said with the available research, the GF&P has noticed the number of bats trending downwards.

"Over the last two or three decades, from the research and work that has been done in South Dakota, we can't get any population estimates like with other species in South Dakota like ring-necked pheasants and white-tailed deer," she said. "In general, we've seen overall declines of bats in South Dakota. However, (with) those three species that are migratory, there could be peaks in activity that could be mistaken for peaks in actual population numbers."

Kempena said it's easy to remove bats and keep them out of buildings.

"It's relatively simple to get an individual bat out," she said. "Just close all but the doors and windows leading to the outside and hopefully the bat will fly out on its own," she said. "Or, wearing gloves, you can capture the bat using a box or a coffee can. Cover the bat and slide in a piece of paper or cardboard and carry the bat outside and put it in an area away from (other humans)."

As for keeping them out, Hill said there's a number of precautions people can take.

"People should have proper barriers in their home to preclude bats from inhabiting the home environment," he said. "Keep screens repaired so that bats aren't going to be flying indoors when it's a little cool outside and it's warmer indoors."

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Couple Preserves Sarpy Farm From Development

PAPILLION, Neb. (AP) — A Sarpy County farm is shielded from future development after a deal that started seven years ago has helped turn it into the second-largest patch of protected property in Nebraska's smallest county.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports that Ron and Carol Patterson's 693-acre farm is permanently protected by selling conservation easements designed to shield it from incompatible land uses and excessive development.

The farm consists of four parcels owned by the couple and other families.

"Imagine what you could do with this 700 acres," Ron Patterson said. "You're talking lots of money and a huge development. But we couldn't stand it."

County officials designated 11,000 acres as the county's most important and vulnerable environmental district that should be persevered after the Pattersons and other landowners in the bluff have advocated for preservation, but they wanted more protection.

According to the couple, they have been fighting to save the Schramm Bluffs above the

Platte River on their property from development before they learned about the easements from Dave Sands, executive director of the Nebraska Land Trust. Easements are voluntary legal agreements that permanently prevent commercial and residential development of a site.

Landowners who grant conservation easements reduce the value of their land through relinquishment of development rights. According to Sands, the Pattersons donated a significant portion of their easements by selling them for less than their appraised value.

Other partners in the deal included the Papio-Missouri River and Lower Platte South Natural Resources Districts, eight foundations and several individuals.

The couple says they wanted to preserve not only the farmland, but also the woodlands, creeks and historic American Indian sites on the property.

According to Carol Patterson, "It'll be here after we die, nice and green and welcoming to Omaha and Lincoln."

Florida Man Gets 14-15 Years For NE Chase

HASTINGS, Neb. (AP) — A 34-year-old Florida man who led officers on a chase through three southern Nebraska counties has been sentenced to prison.

On Thursday Adams County District Judge Terri Harder gave Christopher White 14 to 15 years in prison. White had pleaded no

contest and was convicted of methamphetamine distribution, attempted possession of a firearm by a prohibited person and operating a vehicle to avoid arrest. His companion on March 10 was 31-year-old Keri Ansley, who was sentenced last month to time served. Both are from Milton, Florida.

Prosecutors say the two tried to evade officers while racing through Adams, Kearney and Webster counties. The chase ended when the couple's vehicle ran out of gas. Officers say the two had a firearm and methamphetamine with them.

Health

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plans available with it, said Grassrope. The extra attention is important for another reason.

"Avera and Sanford hospitals are a part of the ACA, but Dakotacare opted out," she said. "That's why I encourage all clients, whether they have a plan for 2016 or not, to renew every year, to see if the plan they had before is still available. If they stay with Dakotacare, they will lose their tax credits because it's opting out of the Health Insurance Marketplace."

To apply for ACA healthcare, clients will need personal information like their home address, proof of employment and income, Social Security numbers for all members of the household, workplace insurance information if available and, if from another country, document information of legal immigration. They will also need an estimate of what their household income will be in 2016.

CHAD created the system of certified navigators to help people better understand the ACA and how it

works.

"When the ACA became law, it was something new and people didn't have much knowledge of it," Grassrope said. "They hired navigators like myself to help people navigate through the process of signing up the ACA from start to finish."

She emphasized that the navigator services are free and provide unbiased services to clients.

"We don't sell insurance. We're just helping people find out what is the best possible insurance plan for them and their families," she said. "We show them an apples-to-apples comparison of healthcare plans and narrow it down based on facts."

"It can be intimidating for someone to go to the Health Insurance Marketplace and not know how to answer certain questions," she added.

Last year, 17,000 people in South Dakota signed up in the ACA, and Grassrope hopes that number will grow.

"Any amount of people we sign up means they're having quality healthcare that wasn't available to them before the ACA became law," she said. "A lot of people I work with are self-employed and/or farmers, who wouldn't have qualified to get cheap insurance and

couldn't get any from an employer. I hear them say a lot of times, 'I never would have been able to get this without the ACA.'"

Grassrope hopes to draw more people's attention to the ACA, including American Indians and Alaskan natives.

"Not a lot of them know they can get coverage," she said. "If their income is at the federal poverty level, they can enroll in something that will cost them nothing other than their monthly premium."

She added that people part of the Indian Health Services can still use their plan through that in addition to their ACA healthcare plan.

Grassrope credits the support of the Sanford and Avera systems for helping the ACA to thrive in South Dakota.

"Avera in Yankton has been supportive in partnering with us so their clients can be helped with having a medical plan," she said. "People can visit me while I'm there to set up an enrollment appointment or get ACA information."

For more information about the ACA, visit healthcare.gov.

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Dialysis Unit Open House

Please join us!

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Avera 
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501 Summit St.
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**Thursday, Nov. 19
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A short program and ribbon cutting will take place at 4 p.m.

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