

# Combine Fires Plague Farmers

## SDSU Offers Tips To Help Minimize Field Danger

BROOKINGS — Combine fires cause serious injuries and millions in property losses each year — this harvest is no exception says Daniel Humburg, professor of Ag & Biosystems Engineering Department at South Dakota State University.

"Extreme conditions in South Dakota this fall created a perfect storm of high temperatures, low humidity, dry crops, and high winds producing extreme risk of fires during harvest of soybeans and sunflowers," Humburg said. "One Sully County farmer reported having three fires start on his combines in one day."

Humburg says most farmers are aware of how to prevent a combine fire — keep the machine clean of possible fire-causing materials and eliminate sources of heat that could lead to a fire — however, he encourages producers to also pay special attention to the engine and engine compartment.

"A high percentage of all machinery fires start in that area," he said. "We believe the exhaust manifold and turbocharger are the ignition source for the majority of the fires we are seeing."

Other sources of ignition heat include: failing bearings and wrapped plant residue. Humburg says producers can identify hot bearings by purchasing a non-contact infrared laser temperature gun for less than \$50.

He adds that new model combines pose a greater risk than old models.

"They have a much larger volume of synthetic materials such as shields, panels and fuel tanks that will burn once a fire is ignited," he said. "This increases the risk of a fire that can consume the machine. A smoldering fire in crop residue can easily spread to a fuel tank, hydraulic line, or wiring harness and become catastrophic."

Another step Humburg encourages farmers to take to prevent combine fires is to frequently blow any dry chaff, leaves and other material off the machine with compressed air, and to clear off any wrapped plant materials on bearings, belts and other moving parts. Leaking fuel or oil



Area firefighters were summoned this week to numerous field fires, including this one west of Volin Wednesday. With the harvest in full swing, combines are sparking numerous fires that can be destructive both physically and financially. This fire burned about 40 acres of unharvested beans.

KELLY HERTZ/P&D

hoses, fittings or metal lines should be replaced or repaired before continuing harvest.

Sunflowers represent a more severe challenge. In the current weather conditions, producers can experience frequent fire events — even with new equipment that is well maintained.

The South Dakota Oilseeds Council has recognized the severity of this problem, and is funding research at SDSU to understand the differences between sunflowers and other crops which make sunflower residue more prone to ignition.

Engineers in the Ag & Biosystems Engineering Department are performing lab tests to simulate the events on a combine

and identify the mechanisms of residue ignition. Practical solutions to the hazard are also being explored.

"As we better understand the problem, we hope to develop one or more systems that could prevent many of these fire events," Humburg said.

Humburg reminds producers that despite their best intentions and good maintenance, a fire on a tractor or combine can still occur. Smoldering fires in layers of dust may best be extinguished with water. For larger fires, the best source of protection for a combine is at least one fully charged 10-pound ABC dry-chemical fire extinguisher.

"Only select extinguishers with Under-

writers Laboratory approval and have two extinguishers on the machine in case one malfunctions or loses pressure," Humburg said. "Keep one mounted in the cab, and one where it can be reached from the ground. If a fire does break out on a machine, quickly shut off the engine, grab an extinguisher, get out, and get help."

Older machines with primarily steel construction could often be saved with a fire extinguisher. New model machines with poly tanks, panels, and shields, can quickly ignite beyond the capacity of a fire extinguisher.

"If in doubt don't risk your life; step away and call for help," Humburg said.

## Reorganization Will Boost 4-H, Official Says

BROOKINGS, — South Dakota 4-H will enter the new project year with a new face and focus, says Karla Trautman, Associate Director of SDSU Extension.

"South Dakota 4-H has more support today than ever before," said Trautman of the changes made to South Dakota 4-H as a result of the Extension reorganization implemented to comply with the \$1.4 million in budget cuts.

More than 30 new 4-H Youth Program Advisor positions were created to focus on 4-H as a result of the reorganization and SDSU's commitment to the youth organization which more than 59,000 South Dakota youth participate in on an annual basis.

"The university reinforced its commitment to 4-H and youth development by implementing county-level 4-H Youth Program Advisor positions," Trautman said. "4-H members and programs did not have this type of dedicated focus in the old system."

Trautman explains that the Extension reorganization provides more of a prioritized 4-H focus because 4-H Youth Program Advisors are fully committed to 4-H and youth programming. In the old system, Extension personnel were responsible for subject matter programs, such as family and consumer sciences, livestock or agronomy in addition to 4-H programming.

"4-H members and their families should see increased opportunities because of this reorganization," Trautman said.

Increasing 4-H personnel during budget cuts is possible thanks to a coordinated effort between SDSU Extension and counties throughout the state.

In the reorganization, funds were allocated by Barry Dunn, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of Extension, to fund 17 4-H Youth Program Advisor positions. At the same time, SDSU offered a cost-share program to South Dakota counties which provided them with the opportunity to secure their own dedicated 4-H Youth Program Advisor. Within the cost-share program, both SDSU and the counties would share the salary cost of employing the 4-H Youth Program Advisor.

All South Dakota counties participated in this program. When SDSU Extension negotiated new 4-H service agreements with all South Dakota counties in 2011, they were asked to consider the level of support they would choose to invest. Some counties, with higher youth populations, chose to have one advisor serve only their county. Other counties formed partnerships with neighboring counties and will share the 4-H Youth Program Advisor.

"Today there are more than 30 individuals dedicated to supporting 4-H and youth programming thanks to the synergy between SDSU and counties throughout the state," Trautman said. "It's exciting to see that even on a limited budget, because of our strong commitment to give of the resources we have, we are able to ensure all South Dakota youth have the opportunity to be involved in 4-H and youth extension programs."

All 32 positions are expected to be filled by mid-November.

## Blair Elected S.D. Beef Council Head

PIERRE — Ed Blair, Vale, cattle producer, was elected president of the South Dakota Beef Industry Council (SDBIC) during its annual meeting Oct. 1.

Blair, a partner in a family owned business, Blair Brothers Angus, takes leadership of the organization that collects and administers the \$1 Beef Checkoff on cattle sold in South Dakota.

First named to the SDBIC Board in 1995 as a representative of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, he takes over the presidency from Merrill Karlen, Oaoma. Blair has been active on the state and national level for several years, most recently serving as SDBIC vice president. He is a director on the Federation of State Beef Councils, past member of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) and past director on the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB), acting as chairman and vice chairman of both the CBB's International Marketing and Audit committees.

Karla Pazour, Pukwana beef producer, was elected vice president. Pazour is a representative from the South Dakota Cattle-Women.

Gary Deering, Sturgis cattle producer, was elected treasurer, and is a representative from the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association.

Wayne Tupper, owner of Kimball Livestock Exchange, was re-elected as one of three SDBIC members on the USMEF.

New members coming onto the SDBIC board are: Todd Mortenson, Hayes, replacing retiring Merrill Karlen (S.D. Cattlemen's Association); Julie Holmquist, Reliance, replacing retiring Lisa Dorschner (S.D. Cattle-Women); Justin Tupper, St. Onge, replacing the late Johnny Smith (S.D. Livestock Auction Market Association); Mike Maher, Isabel, replacing retiring Vaughn Meyer and Ryon Rypkema, Caputa, replacing retiring Debbie Harwood (S.D. Farmers Union); and VeaBea Thomas, Harrold, replacing retiring Roger Gerdes (S.D. Beef Breeds Council).

# Extension Specialist: Dry Conditions Affect Fall Weed Control In Pastures

BROOKINGS — Dry conditions over the past month have reduced weed growth which may cause some landowners to change plans regarding their fall pasture herbicide applications.

"Since herbicides generally work by inhibiting normal plant growth processes in such a way that the plant's own toxic chemicals cause its death, any environmental factors which slow plant growth, will also reduce its susceptibility to herbicides," said Mike Moechnig, SDSU Extension Weed Specialist.

Moechnig says Canada thistle is one weed that has been particularly nasty this year, but dry conditions now may reduce its susceptibility to herbicides.

"It is difficult to speculate what the effect may be, but perhaps control could be 10 to 20 percent less than a spring (mid to late June) application," Moechnig said. "Higher herbicide rates and the use of surfactants may improve control slightly, but likely not enough to completely negate the drought effects."

Moechnig recommends using higher rates and surfactants at this time if applications are still planned

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MIKE MOECHNIG

for this fall. He says using a potent herbicide such as Milestone or ForeFront could minimize reductions in control relative to more general maintenance herbicides such as Grazon or 2,4-D.

To assess the potential for good control yet this fall, he encourages growers to look for two things:

- Regrowth: The success of fall applications is very dependent on fall thistle growth. We have been monitoring Canada thistle shoot emergence at one location in Brookings and have not seen many new shoots emerge since the end of August. Therefore, the combination of dry conditions and thick grass canopies could inhibit fall herbicide activity. Areas mowed or grazed earlier this year provide the best opportunity for fall thistle growth.
- Condition of thistle leaves:

Herbicides may be effective as long as the thistle leaves are still green. Frost has been light so far in many areas, so older thistle growth is still somewhat green in many areas which will allow herbicide uptake even if the fall growth is limited. In general, Canada thistle control will begin to decline as thistle leaves become more brown from frost and drought. However, some of the more potent herbicides will have some soil activity so you will likely get some control (about 50 percent) regardless of the thistle shoot conditions.

Moechnig says if landowners have the flexibility to wait until next spring or summer, they will likely have better Canada thistle control for each dollar spent by waiting.

"In late June, soil moisture is often more plentiful and Canada

thistle plants are often taller than the grass canopy making them better targets for herbicide applications," he said. "Generally, it is best to control Canada thistle in mid to late June - just prior to seed production - but some herbicides may also be effective any time in July or August."

Dry conditions may affect control of other pasture weeds as well. Moechnig says landowners may see more emergence of biennial thistles, such as musk and bull thistle, in the spring if dry conditions this fall inhibited normal fall germination.

"In my opinion, fall applications of herbicides such as Milestone, ForeFront, or Tordon/Grazon will not provide much residual activity to control spring emerging biennial thistles," Moechnig said. "Absinth wormwood control may be fine yet since it has such a large taproot. We had great wormwood control this year from late fall applications last year, so there may be plenty of time to wait on the absinth wormwood if people would like to wait for more moisture or wait for tree leaves to fall if applying herbicides, such as 2,4-D, around trees."

## Speaker Addresses 'Morality Of Animal Agriculture'

BROOKINGS — The SDSU Swine and Pre-Vet clubs are hosting Wes Jamison, an Associate Professor of Communications at Palm Beach Atlantic University, to present his seminar, "The Morality of Animal Agriculture," on the South Dakota State University Tuesday, Oct. 11.

The keynote presentation will begin at 7 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center on campus, and the general public is encouraged to attend. In addition, Jamison will be available to visit with other groups and classes throughout the day.

Jamison talks about the intense conflict in Animal Agriculture in the United States regarding the proper role and treatment of

animals. Most analysis of these issues involves physiological, behavioral and economical impacts. However, this is boiled down to what is determined socially and politically acceptable by two competing worldviews.

Jamison's seminar presents information on the conflicting views between the two sides on the idea

of consumptive use for livestock, the tactics of animal rights groups, and how the industry can use these tactics to redefine their image. He's a nationally known speaker and provides a completely new concept of how animal agriculture needs to promote their industry.

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