

IN BRIEF

USDA wants to aid suffering farmers

DEADWOOD, S.D. — The U.S. Agriculture Department is proposing changes in farm programs to better help farmers hurt by droughts, floods and other disasters, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said.

Current price support programs tend to help farmers when they grow the biggest crops, but give them too little help when they are unable to grow normal crops, he said Monday in a talk with 10 governors attending a Western Governors' Association annual meeting.

Johanns said farmers have told him "you pay me the most when I need you the least, and you pay me the least when I need you the most."

Under the current system, when farmers grow a bumper crop of corn, soybeans or wheat, prices tend to drop and farmers qualify for price-support payments, Johanns said. But a farmer with a crop failure cannot get those payments.

Under the department's proposal, farm revenue would be taken into account in determining payments to farmers, Johanns said.

Johanns, a former governor of Nebraska, said he hopes Congress will pass the measure by September.

Higher wheat crop expected this year

WICHITA, Kan. — The nation's farmers are expected to harvest a wheat crop 24 percent bigger than last year's drought-plagued crop, the government said.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service released a revised estimate Monday that projected winter wheat production at 1.61 billion bushels nationwide, down only slightly from the agency's forecast a month ago.

Its figure is based on a projected national average yield of 42.2 bushels per acre from 37.2 million acres.

The vast majority of that acreage is in Kansas, where farmers are expected to bring in 361 million bushels. The forecast is based on an average yield of 38 bushels per acre from 9.5 million acres, Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service said.

Last year, Kansas farmers, struggling with a prolonged drought, averaged 32 bushels an acre from 9.1 million harvested acres. The 2006 harvest in the state totaled 291.2 million bushels.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FARM & GARDEN

Horse community not unlike a church

Indiana wants me and Lord, I can go back there.'

OK, so I paraphrased a little from the song, but I thought it kind of appropriate as we have been staying at the Mid-West Trail Ride, Norman, Ind. — about 15 miles south of Bloomington off Route 446 — this week, courtesy of Jeff & Kim Humphries, the fun, friendly and very helpful managers of the site.

We have had a really great time here, meeting up with Jodi and Bill, some friends we made on our trip down at Horse Heaven Ranch in Alabama last Easter.

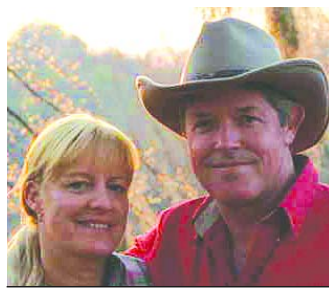
That's one of the great things about going to organized trail camps — you meet lots of new people and make new friends from all over the country, and then bump into them farther down the road at another site.

It's actually really useful for us to make new contacts wherever we go, as we nearly always learn something from everyone we meet — some information about the local area, something new we didn't know about horses or trailering (and there's plenty of subject matter for us there), or somewhere new that we should definitely go visit and ride.

In fact, although we often get e-mails from our Web site with invitations from people all over the country to come ride and stay with them, we are also lucky enough to have the people we meet offer to host us in areas we haven't yet reached.

One such invitation came when we were in Michigan last week, and one of the girls we met there told us of her parents living in Alaska, who would be more than happy to have us come and visit. It never ceases to amaze me how hospitable Americans are, and particularly those within the horse community.

And you know what, "them horse folks is nearly always trustworthy." It is very rare that you will come across a "bad apple" in the horse world. Sure, you get a bit of tomfoolery now and again, but it is nearly always good humored and everyone is always willing



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES

to help out a fellow rider in need.

One thing I have noticed (can't help but notice) on our travels around the country is the myriad of churches there are spread everywhere, and I'm not talking big institutions like the established faiths around the world, but the weird and wonderful ones, who seem to be able to call themselves anything they like, and have their own little following.

They pop up in the most unlikely places, often in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes seem to congregate around each other — you can drive for a mile or so and count over half a dozen churches in that short space. In fact, it doesn't seem uncommon for a town to have 40, 50 or even more churches in it. I wonder if there are enough people to go around sometimes!

Anyhow, I digress here, as the point I was trying to get to was that the horse community is a bit like a big church in itself — always willing to help one another, enjoying each other's company, and often congregating at big events to celebrate the horse and the lifestyle that goes along with it (hmm, there's an idea, maybe I should start up my own church to help all horses and their riders — the First Equine Episcopal, has a neat ring to it, don't you think?!). Which brings me neatly back to the Mid-West Trail Ride campground where we are currently enjoying miles and miles of easy going trails, leading naturally into the Hoosier National Park for yet more miles of shady, wooded trails (great for staying cool on a hot day).

The campsite has over 300 electric hook-ups for trailers, and offers covered, lit stalls for the horses. There



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

ABOVE: HorseQuester David Snogles is seen on his trail in Norman, Ind., the latest stop on his trip across America to raise money for charity.



David Snogles and his wife, Anita, have been staying at Mid-West Trail Ride.

are hot and cold drinks available on tap 24/7 at no extra charge, and on special weekends, all the catering is taken care of (yeah, no washing up!) with live entertainment provided, too!

This weekend had a particularly good, versatile group — the Keith Swinnell Band — who entertained us Saturday night with some great Country, Rock, Pop, and Bluegrass music, and as the lead guitarist was from England, we had the bonus of a good old "chinwag" with him after the show.

All in all, despite the stresses and strains of constantly being on the road (especially with a couple of horses in tow), we realize that we are lucky to be doing what many a person can only dream of.

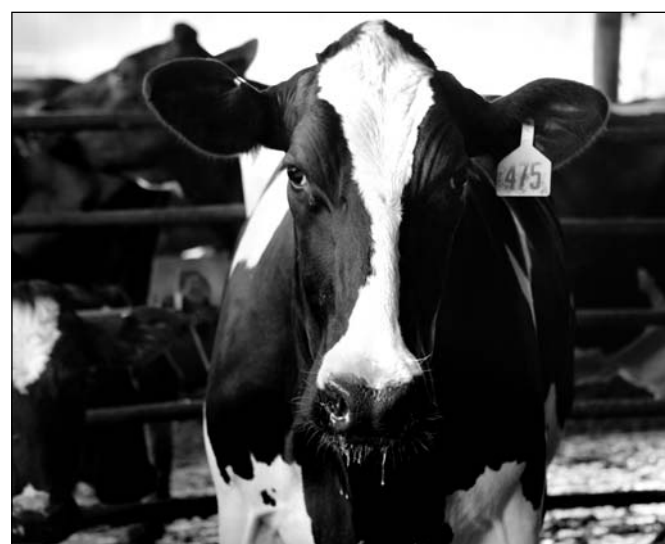
In fact, when we were recently interviewed by the Lexington Herald (Kentucky), one of the first things the journalist said to us was "you do realize you are doing every American's dream, don't you?"

Up until now, I guess we didn't ... not really, but then our slogan on the truck and trailer and on our Web site does say "Ride the Dream", so perhaps he was right after all.

Until next week ...

David and Anita Hasbury-Snogles are British residents riding across the United States on horseback to raise money for charity. Visit HorseQuestUSA.org for more information. David can be reached at david_hasbury@yahoo.com.

Dairy farmers struggle to keep family traditions



AP PHOTO

A Holstein dairy cow stands in a barn at the Williams' family farm in Hatfield, Mass. The average price paid to farmers for a gallon of milk last year was \$1.16, while the cost to produce it in Massachusetts was about \$1.60.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HATFIELD, Mass. — Darryl Williams was told he might ease his migraines by cutting down on milk, so the dairy farmer has a glass of water with his lunch.

It's about 1:30 p.m. and Williams has spent the past eight hours milking cows, fixing a tractor, and helping a veterinarian check his herd for pregnancies. He still needs to spread manure and get through an afternoon milking on the 175-acre farm that's been in his family for 346 years.

The migraines aren't bothering him today, but he has other headaches — like a \$10,000 bill for corn seed just delivered by the mailman.

It's another day in the life

of a dairy farmer.

The bill will eat more than half of the \$19,000 he's expecting from an emergency state payout to dairy farmers, who suffered some \$18 million in losses last year. His share of that loss was \$50,000.

"It will take us two years to dig out of last year's hole," said Williams, 47. "And once we get out, there will be another hole."

The Northeast dairy industry has been declining for the past quarter century. Massachusetts had 829 dairy farms in 1980 compared to 179 today.

But 2006 was the worst year yet for farmers like Williams, who say the rising costs of fuel, feed and fertilizer have far outpaced milk prices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture began setting the minimum prices that farmers are paid for their raw milk in the 1920s to ensure they could sell their product before it spoiled.

The average price paid to farmers for a gallon of milk last year was \$1.16, while the cost to produce it in Massachusetts was about \$1.60. Although prices are climbing in grocery stores, farmers say the money isn't coming back to them because shelf prices are set by retailers.

"Last year was a perfect storm for dairy farmers," Williams said. "The government's milk prices crashed, every expense we had went up, and it just killed us. It killed everybody."

HOLDEN INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.
Specializing in...
Auto • Home • Farm • Business
605 S. Main Street
Culpeper, VA 22701
Business (540) 825-8011
Toll Free (800) 272-1292
Fax (540) 825-4375
Email deborahthomas@theholdengroup.com
Deborah Thomas
Insurance Agent

CULPEPER ANIMAL HOSPITAL, PLC
CARING FOR YOUR SMALL ANIMAL COMPANIONS
10% Off All Tick & Flea Products & Heartworm Prevention Medications!
Meredith Vargas, DVM,
Cathy Kreyling, DVM • John Bond, DVM
441 Aspen St. • Culpeper 540-829-9085
(Rt. 522N, across from Found & Sons Funeral Home)
Open Mon.-Fri. 7:00-6:00 pm; Sat. 7:00-1:00 pm

Culpeper County Volunteer Fire Department
BINGO
WEDNESDAYS
Doors open 5 pm
Early Games start at 6:30 pm
Regular games 7 pm
Non-Smoking
AT THE FIREHOUSE
151 W. Davis St., Culpeper

Over 10,000 locations worldwide.
540-428-3400
256 Broadview Ave
Warrenton, VA 20186
540-825-3799
605 S Main St (Asher & Main St)
Spend more free time with your daughter this summer.
JOIN NOW and daughter is FREE for 3 months OR YOU
Join Curves now and bring your daughter for three months free. Work out together on our strength-training and cardio circuit all with the total support of our trainers. You'll get a total body workout in just 30 minutes. And real results fast. Now that's quality Mother-Daughter time.
Curves
Amaze yourself!

Did You Know ...
Clarke Hardware
Has 26" Mens and Womens Beach Bicycles?
Celebrating over 100 Years of Service in Culpeper and the surrounding area!
201 E. Davis Street - Culpeper 825-9178
Open 7:30 am-5:30 pm Mon.-Sat. www.clarkehardware.com

The Corner Deli
Omelets, breakfast sandwiches, pancakes, coffee, Philly-style hoagies, hamburgers, salads, sandwiches, homemade soups & chilis, pie, ice cream, beer, party platters, Lunch Specials Daily and more!
439-2828
Fax to 439-2840
STEAMED SHRIMP THURSDAY & FRIDAY NIGHTS
Open: Mon.-Sat. 7 a.m.-8 p.m., Closed Sunday
Bus. Rt. 15/29 & Rt. 651 & Main Street, Remington