

May, 2017  
316-773-9851

Sedgwick County Farm Bureau  
Agricultural Association



## “Farm Bureau News”

### President’s Report: Max Tjaden

Something is abuzz in Farm Country as of early January: the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee (*Bombus Affinis*) was put on the Endangered Species List. This was the declaration given by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Two of the service’s multiple missions are to, “conserve and restores wildlife habit and ... protect endangered species.” Their authority to do this is derived from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) passed in 1973.

The Supreme Court ruled that “the planned intent of enacting the ESA “was to halt and reverse the trend toward species extinction, **whatever the cost.**”

The Rusty Patch Bumble Bee’s common range once included 28 states but as of 2012, it has only been documented in 5 Midwestern states, plus Virginia. However, there have been many more citizen reports of sightings of this bee, including in Kansas, since. The last verified, official report of its presence in Kansas was 1898. So Kansas could possibly end up in the bee’s historical range.

The primary reasons given for the RPB bee’s 90 percent population decline are:

1. Loss of habitat
2. Disease
3. Varona destructive mite
4. Climate change
5. Pesticides

The powers-that-be can’t do much of anything about the first 4 reasons, so it leaves reason #5, which something CAN be done about – insecticides. So how will that affect Sedgwick County, Kansas?

The top concern arises out of a class of insecticides known as “neonicotinoids.” This is a nicotine-like compound that affects the nervous system of the targeted insect. This is the base compound for a couple of systemic seed treatments producers use in this area, Gaucho and Cruiser.

The EPA has already informed companies that have applied for neonicotinoid pesticides permits that they will most likely be denied due to the risk to “pollinators.”

Producers in southwest Kansas just spent the last 6-7 years battling to keep the “lesser prairie chicken” from being put only on the “*threatened* species” list and all the problems associated with that.

Now we have the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee that has been put on the “Endangered Species list,” whose decline will be halted and reversed, **whatever the cost** (especially to us producers).

### Rhonda McCurry:

Your county Farm Bureau board of directors is once again working on a television ad that will air this year on KWCH. Since 2013 Sedgwick County Farm Bureau has produced two 30-second spots featuring member families to promote planting, harvest and food production. The upcoming segment will target misconceptions of how food is grown and will be longer than the previous 30-second spot. Be watching upcoming newsletters for details on when it will air.

### Kent Ott:

Is it Morning (Mourning) in America?

Is it morning in America? I asked my daughter this question a few weeks after the November election. Her response surprised me when she said yes. Her friends and coworkers were a little sad after the election and were in mourning. My question to her was based on the old Ronald Reagan campaign theme "Morning in America." How is it that we are so divided in our country over our President? This position is important but is not what we do and what those around us do more important to our well-being?

I was convinced of this after attending the Kansas Farm Bureau Convention in Manhattan. The main speakers at the convention were greatly inspiring. We heard from Keni Thomas, a former Army Ranger. He recounted his story of their mission in Mogadishu, Somalia, which was made famous by the book and movie "Black Hawk Down." Their actions reflected courage, sacrifice, and duty. Zippy Duval, our new American Farm Bureau President, shared the emotional and moving account of sending his son off to war. He also talked of his path to becoming president and his plans to service our profession. Also impressive at the convention were all the people who quietly and faithfully do their work behind the scenes. These are the things that improve our organization and our profession.

This past weekend my wife and I attended a showing of a locally produced film by Lone Chimney Films called "Home on the Range." The film tells the story of the origin of the song, "Home on the Range." The film traced back to the original author of the song, Brewster Higley. He was a Smith Center homesteader in 1872. The song and film showed the rich history of our state and reflects the toughness of our ancestors. Our character also is reflected in our state's motto, Ad Astra per Aspera or "To the stars through difficulty." This new year may not be easy, but we should reflect on our ancestors and our patriots for the hope for tomorrow. It is Morning in America!

## Todd Kissinger:

At this year's 98<sup>th</sup> annual KFB meeting, the breakout sessions covered some very important issues. But what really caught my attention this year was the keynote speaker, motivational speaker, story teller, country musician and American hero: Keni Thomas.

Keni Thomas is an U.S. Army Ranger who served in Mogadishu; most people know his story from the movie *Black Hawk Down*. The first thing that he did before he began his "story", as he calls it, was ask the veterans in the audience to raise their hand as he thanked them for their service. Keni emphasized that leadership isn't about me, it's about who is at my left and at my right. He knew that the reason he was on that stage at that moment was by the grace of God and the rangers that fought with him. That really drove home his point about the people to his left and to his right. Keni told us leadership is about how you influence people to get the job done and the example you set for others. That to me is so important because I know I sometimes fall into the trap of look at what I do and what you don't do. I'm not the only one who gets the job done. This for me was like being in the right place at the right time. A lot of what Keni spoke about, we can apply to our business and family. I would encourage you to visit [www.kenithomas.com](http://www.kenithomas.com) and watch some of the leadership videos he has on his website, for we always have room for improvement and refreshing.

## 2017 Be Ag-Wise: Misconceptions of Agriculture:

Workshop February 25, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost \$40 call Gayle at 773-9851 to register. Lunch included. Focus will be elementary students, but lesson plans for all grade levels will be shared. All are welcome,

## Brian Wetta:

The AFBF convention in Phoenix, Arizona was a great event. It allowed the board an opportunity to interact with producers from all across the nation. Arizona is an exceptionally diverse state with production of commodities including beef, dairy, cotton, lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, apples, and citrus. Because of the mild climate, a crop is being planted or harvested every month of the year in Arizona. Conversations with these producers allowed me to see that we have similar interests within Farm Bureau even though we may grow different crops. We all want what is best for agriculture.

One thing that American Farm Bureau Federation supports is a decrease in the amount of regulations being pushed onto farms and small businesses across the nation. President Zippy Duvall spoke on this and encouraged members to take action immediately through a text alert. He asked those in attendance to text a code to AFBF to start the action process. Thousands of farmers in attendance took action which was shown on the projection screen instantaneously as we began to text. The text sent us a web link <http://p2a.co/QRm2nzf> which allowed each of us to contact our legislator via email. Because of the leadership of Zippy and the grassroots participation by those in attendance, thousands of letters were sent to representatives all across the nation encouraging them to reform the costly regulatory burdens being placed on us daily. I encourage you to continue this call to action by using the weblink to contact your representative.

Finally, I want to remind everyone that Sedgwick County Farm Bureau annually awards four \$1,000 and two \$500 renewable scholarships to high school seniors whose parents are members of Farm Bureau. I encourage any senior to apply for these scholarships. Applications are due March 1<sup>st</sup> and can be found online at <http://sgfb.org/id74.html> or by contacting your school counselor.

### Scholarships

Sedgwick County Farm Bureau Agricultural Association is proud of its 28 year history of providing scholarships to students from Farm Bureau member families. More than \$ 320,150 has been awarded to 155 seniors who demonstrated academics and leadership with an emphasis in the agriculture industry. Current high school seniors should contact their counselor to apply for the Sedgwick County Farm Bureau Agricultural Association scholarship, which are due March 1.

In addition, high school juniors should take note of a new Farm Bureau agriculture ambassador program. Details will be available this spring and interested students should ask their counselor for this information or call the Sedgwick County Farm Bureau office at (316) 773-9851.

## Jon Kerschen:

As we begin 2017, we have seen a lot of changes in the political environment. From the new presidential administration to the many new faces in the Kansas State Legislature, there will be plenty of opportunities for Farm Bureau to advocate for you. It is important that your voice is heard among lawmakers. Farm Bureau has dedicated lobbyists that take your concerns to the policymakers and a staff that keeps an eye out for you in Topeka and Washington. They also issue action alerts to the members when bills or policies that affect agriculture are before lawmakers. They need to hear from you and see your support. Please take advantage of these alerts or contact your legislators in person to voice your concerns or support. The Sedgwick County Farm Bureau board will be taking part in a legislative day in Topeka on February 9th. If you have something you would like for us to mention to our state legislators, please contact a board member and we will make sure it is shared. Take advantage of the resources Farm Bureau has to help insure your voice is heard, and always keep our leaders and lawmakers in your prayers.

## Donna Wise:

Have you ever felt that as a farmer or rancher you are pretty much on your own and are being attacked from all sides? I think many of us feel that way at times. At the recent American Farm Bureau Federation convention in Phoenix this week we learned that those feelings are appropriate. Depending upon who is included in the count only 1-2% of the population is involved in agriculture. That means 99% don't know what farmers and ranchers actually do. In addition, there are many parties who have an agenda that points to people in agriculture as those who are abusing animals and poisoning the food supply just because we can.

There are vegan organizations who are not satisfied with not eating animals or their products themselves; they don't want anyone to partake of animals. These groups are actively working to undermine animal agriculture by spreading false information about our food supply and encouraging regulations that make agriculture so expensive that producers are pushed out of business. There are governmental agencies that justify their existence by creating more regulations that do little to protect our planet, but do much to add bureaucratic burdens to farmers and ranchers.

What are we to do? Join together to tell our story. I have been amazed at the number of people I have met who have no idea what Farm Bureau is about. Because the insurance branch of the organization has done such a good job of advertising, the real Farm Bureau purpose of being the Voice of Agriculture has almost been lost.

Farm Bureau has lots of people who are actively advocating for agriculture, but we need more. Because misinformation about gluten and genetically modified food and chemicals is so readily spread through social media and other ways, we must all be actively involved in learning the facts and telling our story. Farm Bureau is involved in many public events and has training to help us do that, but YOU have to get involved to make it work.

One way to get started would be to participate in the Be Ag-Wise: Misconceptions of Agriculture event which will take place on Feb. 25. Sign up information is available elsewhere in the newsletter. Yes, it does cost a registration fee and a day of your time, but can you afford not to get involved? If you can't do this, keep an eye out for other ways to advocate for agriculture. If we don't tell our story, how can we expect the decision makers in government to know what we need?

Please get involved! It is in your best interest to do it! Besides, we're good folks who have a lot of fun. Call the office or contact any board member to see how you can do your part to tell the story of agriculture.

Happy farming!

## Joe Youngers:

Another year has come and gone. It was a challenging year to say the least and I think most would agree if you are involved in agriculture at all. Struggling cattle and grain prices have us looking for answers. As I look forward to 2017 and beyond all I can see is uncertainty in the farm sector. Strategic planning in the near future is going to be of the utmost importance.

Earlier this month the Sedgwick county board held a legislative luncheon. It's a time when members and board members get a chance to meet their legislators before they head to Topeka to start the session. I had the pleasure of setting next to our Kansas Farm Bureau president Rich Felts. He and other KFB leaders were at the luncheon. We talked politics, farming and Farm Bureau. Overall the luncheon was a success in my opinion. In conclusion, the legislators will call on farmers or Farm Bureau if needed. This is likely since there are some important issues that will surface this year.

## Byron Wells:

As I am writing this newsletter, I wonder where another year has gone. It may have seemed like 2016 was a long year, with the presidential election and agricultural markets falling to dangerously low levels. Well, now it is 2017 and with every new year comes new hope and new opportunities. So far this year, I am thankful the winter storm was not as bad as predicted, hope that you all can say the same.

So as we begin our journey though 2017 what opportunities can we take advantage of? There are far too many people who are willing to stand on their platform, a.k.a. their soap box, and tell everyone what they think, including professional athletes, movie stars, and politicians. The thing is that we have a great platform though Farm Bureau. There are many board and staff members throughout the state and nation constantly trying to improve this platform. The thing about an organization like Farm Bureau is that the more people that get involved the stronger the group becomes as a whole. This also helps keep the organization in check, and reduces the chances of a person or issue being left behind. You can keep up with what is going on in Sedgwick County Farm Bureau on the Internet at [sgfb.org](http://sgfb.org), and likewise at [kfb.org](http://kfb.org) for Kansas Farm Bureau. If you are not tech savvy, or just otherwise swear off computers you can always contact the Sedgwick County Farm Bureau office, see the number at the beginning of this newsletter, and our great staff can point you in the right direction.

I know that we are all busy and getting involved is a good thought but not always practical. There are also local FFA and 4-H groups that need support and involvement as well. One last thing that would really be helpful is feed back; let us know if you feel the association is heading in the right direction. Best wishes and good luck in the new year.

## Bill Carp:

The opportunity to attend the National Conference is much appreciated. What we come back with each time is different wherever we go. Farm Bureau always organizes local farm tours the days before and after the conference, so this year for the first time Joy and I stayed an extra day to do one of these tours. We visited a dairy that was milking 9,000 cows a day, 200 cows at a time. Wow! They had 1000 head being milked separately with the label of organic. As we drove up to the dairy, there was a lush green crop growing on both sides of the road. A bus load of farmers, predominately from the mid west, and not one of us could determine what this crop was. Turns out, the lush green crop was weeds, evidently unrecognizable to those of us from the heartland. The planted crop was irrigated oats to make pasture for the cows that were being milked as organic. Since they could not use pesticides on the pasture, the weeds had taken over, and the cows had to search underneath for what oats they could find. If only I could find a way to make this work with my soybeans.

We also took a second farm tour. Joy and I had rented a car, and so along with our fearless leader Max and his wife, Anne, and Brian Wetta, we all squeezed into a Ford Escape - and escaped for an afternoon. We had no idea where we were headed, except that a man on the elevator earlier that morning was from the Phoenix area and said he farmed south of town, so we headed south. After over 20 miles of nothing but desert, we were about to give up on finding any farming, thinking it must just be a story they tell that any farming was being done there. We came to the south edge of the town of Maricopa, about ready to turn around a try something different, when we saw a little patch of irrigated alfalfa. Perhaps it was true. Maybe they did farm here! We travelled perhaps another two miles south and east of town and all of a sudden we were surrounded by alfalfa fields, pecan orchards, an ethanol plant and a 40,000 head feedlot feeding Holstein steers from the dairies. Being the driver, I felt responsible that my passengers had a fulfilling farm tour, so we pulled up to the office of the feed yard, proceeded to go in and ask if someone could give us a tour. As you know, none of us from Kansas have ever seen a cattle feed yard. The manager, Bas Aja, spent over an hour with us, showing us around his yard, and giving us the history of the area and the farming practices. We could not have arranged a more knowledgeable or informative guide. This is already becoming a long article. I would have to take a lot more space to tell all we learned from him.

Fascinating as it is to see how they farm there, and the fact that they say the wind seldom blows, I'm not sure I'm ready to try farming in the desert. Note of fact: they use 7 acre feet of water to grow an acre of alfalfa. Kansas Department of Water Resources would have a heart attack.