

Drought has let up; egg prices are down

Douglas County has had very timely rains since the end of June. The July 13 U.S. Drought Monitor map shows a lessening of the drought we have been in since the middle of June. I have had 4.5 inches of rain starting with the rain that came with the damaging wind on June 29. We are not caught up but rain when the corn is pollinating is always good.

Nearly everyone had some tree damage and I know of at least two grain bins that were torn up. There was roof damage as well. Most of the corn stood the wind well. The plants that were leaned over have mostly straightened up or elbowed back up vertically. A big threat at this stage in corn is green snap where the plant is broken off. We seem to have avoided that in most fields.

A friend sent a picture of a cornfield in western Illinois blown over to about knee-high. That corn is unlikely to straighten up or pollinate normally. If there are ears to harvest, it will be a long slow process. There was damage like that scattered around the state, but fortunately not widespread.

Our soybeans welcomed the rain as well. Those planted in 30-inch row spacings finally covered the middles. Getting

that bare ground shaded is important to suppressing weeds as the herbicide effectiveness wears off. It looks like our soybeans will be short this year. That does not mean we cannot have good yields but with sub-soil moisture depleted, it will need to keep raining. The soybean plants are blooming but have not set pods yet.

Most of the state got some rain but a large part of Illinois north of here is still shown in severe drought. I was in a Zoom meeting that included a farmer from far southern Illinois. They have had no rain through all of this. Luckily, they can irrigate part of their farms and will have some crops to harvest.

Wheat harvest in the area is mostly finished. I have not heard any yields. Usually drier weather benefits wheat, up to a point, because there is less disease. Excellent prices when the wheat was planted last fall encouraged more acres than I remember in several years. The wheat planted in this area is soft red winter wheat. That flour is used mainly for cakes and cookies. Bread flour is made from the hard red winter wheat grown in the southern plains.

Most of the wheat was followed with a double crop planting of soybeans. The recent rain should get them to

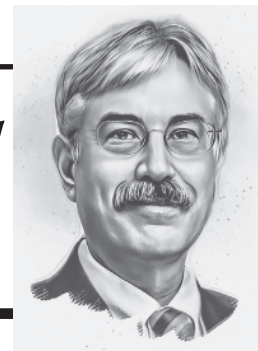
germinate. Continued rain and a long growing season would let these double-crop beans come close to matching full-season soybeans for yield. A killing frost in late September might mean they yield nothing. With fall soybeans priced around \$13, it is worth a try.

A government report on crop acres, expected yields, and projected supply numbers came out on July 12. It showed three million more acres of corn than expected and reduced soybean acres. The markets reacted wildly with both corn and soybeans down. Prices were back up the rest of the week as the reality of the weather came back into the market. No one is sure what the extended drought has done to yields. The USDA did not lower either corn or soybean projected yields, so many market observers think they will in the August report.

The Ukraine - Russia conflict is still affecting grain markets. Farming in Ukraine can be life-threatening because so many land mines were left behind by retreating Russians. Areas the Russians did not occupy may have unexploded artillery shells in them. This affects as much as 25% of Ukraine's farmland. The agreement that lets Ukraine ship grain out of the Black Sea

Douglas County Agriculture

By Larry Dallas



is up for renewal again as well. All this uncertainty gives the grain markets strength.

The grain out of the Black Sea region goes mostly to North Africa and the Middle East, both politically volatile regions. I heard a market commentator that said the Arab Spring of several years ago was preceded by drought in Ukraine and Russia. More expensive and less available food is a formula for upheaval.

Livestock markets have uncertainty too. California's Prop 12 governing space requirements for breeding hogs will not go into effect until December 31 now. The status of meat already in the state on the initial effective date of July 1 was in doubt. This delay would let that meat be sold before the end of the year. I am not sure California has all the other regulations needed for this law to take effect figured out either.

Farmers in pork-raising states hope to get a congress-

sional solution to this. A Kansas senator has introduced a bill to stop any state or local government "from imposing rules on the preharvest production of any agriculture product sold in other states" and there is a similar bill in the House. This issue has far-ranging implications for all interstate commerce, not just agriculture. If Congress does not fix this, the Supreme Court will need to re-visit the matter.

My sister noted that egg prices have gone down but without the news stories that accompanied the big increases 18 months ago. Thinking about that led me to interesting facts about egg production. The latest U.S. Department of Agriculture report on egg production shows that wholesale egg prices in New York are 59% lower than last year. At present, they estimate domestic egg production of 21.5 million dozen eggs each day. That is only about a million more than a year ago

when prices were much higher. There are both exports from and imports into the U.S. of eggs and egg products.

The highly pathogenic avian flu that cut laying hen numbers and led to high egg prices is also out of the news at present. Online I found an interactive map that shows HPAI outbreaks all over the country. Most of the detected outbreaks are in the backyard or small number of flocks. There is a commercial turkey flock of 18,200 birds in Wayne County, Illinois that is infected, and a flock of ten birds in Missouri as well. The information at our fingertips is amazing, as well as knowing the Centers for Disease Control tracks ten bird flocks in Missouri.

The extended dry weather slowed down the need to mow but we have roadsides left to get over the first time. We hauled our last bin of corn out. I do not think there is much grain left on the farm, at least in Central Illinois. It will soon be time to ready the grain bins for the 2023 crop. Cooler weather is needed for getting serious about that. Most farmers are thinking about getting ready for harvest.

Thank you for reading about Douglas County and world agriculture this month.

Comparing Seabiscuit, Kurt Warner and me

The history of sport is littered with examples of the feisty underdog, overcoming overwhelming odds to win everlasting glory.

Seabiscuit was a diminutive thoroughbred whose rise from less than stellar beginnings captured the world's imagination during the Great Depression. Seabiscuit's racing career got off to a slow start, with the small horse being described as knobby kneed, and given to sleeping and eating for long periods, according to one trainer. Through time and persistence, and hard work by his trainer, he rose from those humble beginnings to win Horse of the Year in 1938. Books and movies have been written about his unlikely success story.

We all remember the story of Kurt Warner, right? For

those who don't, here's his tale. Kurt Warner was a quarterback at Northern Iowa, who after being relegated to the bench for three years, finally earned a starting spot in 1993, his senior year. He played well, but not well enough to be drafted, and was cut by the Green Bay Packers before the 1994 season began. His passion for the game still burned however, so he took his talents to the Iowa Barnstormers, of the Arena Football League. For those who aren't familiar, the AFL, which is set to start its third iteration in 2024, is played indoors.

Warner, who played well in the AFL, augmented his football income by stocking shelves at a Hy-Vee grocery store in Cedar Falls. Finally, in 1997, Warner signed a futures contract with the St.

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



Louis Rams, who sent him to their euro league affiliate, the Amsterdam Admirals where he led the league in touchdowns and passing yards. 1998 saw him return to the US as the third string QB for the Rams. After the season, the Rams traded their starter and backup QB's and signed Trent Green to be the starter with Warner as a backup. As luck would have it, Green got injured in a preseason game and Warner was named the starter.

All he did was have one of the best seasons in NFL history, throwing for 4500 yards and 41 TD's. The 1999 season was the first of three straight years where the Rams scored at least 500 points, an NFL record. The Rams, and their shelf stocking QB went on to win the Super Bowl, in one of the unlikeliest seasons ever.

My recent participation in the "Calcutta" at Tri City Country Club isn't one of those stories. Just the opposite, in fact.

I'm not knobby kneed, but I am certainly prone to sleeping and eating for long periods, and that's where any similarities between me and the undersized racing champion end, just as my shelf stocking experience sums up my connection to Kurt Warner.

To put it succinctly, I basically stunk up the course for 36 holes of golf. While my captain, Toby, was hitting 300-yard drives, and teammates Lance and Andrew both holed out shots for Eagle during the tournament, I stumbled along. We played 36 holes and used one (!) of my drives. My approach shots shouldn't be called that because they didn't land anywhere near their intended targets. Even my usually somewhat reliable putter decided that the third week-end of July would be a good

time to leave town. Not great, Bob.

Lucky for me, my playing partners were very cool about things and continued to offer me encouragement, even as I got farther and farther into my own head regarding my rapidly deteriorating swing. In fact, a few tips I picked up along the way have led to some encouraging results in some of my play. (Last Tuesday's men's league notwithstanding. I set the game of golf back a couple of decades with my miserable performance.) The crazy thing about it is that I am still loving the game, even though I stink. So maybe my story won't end in fairy tale victories with the admiration of all raining down on me, but I'm going to keep trying. For now, however, I think I'm going to have a snack and take a nap.

Updating a computer not as simple as it ought to be

I was anxiously awaiting my new computer, which I knew would come with some growing pains. Anytime you upgrade anything, there will be a few new things to get used to. Unless you use an Apple computer like I do; then you can expect everything to be different.

I like to have the latest technology available to me, but who can afford to replace their MacBook every year? Besides, why fix what isn't broken?

Well, this time, I decided to do just that. My old laptop still works fine, but it's about five years old, so it's slowing down and showing its age. Plus, it's out of memory.

When I bought it, my previous MacBook crashed, and I was on deadline. I needed to replace it immediately, so I was at the mercy of what was available "off the shelf." I've learned that if you want a faster computer with more memory, you have to order it direct from Apple. So that's what I did.

I didn't order the biggest,

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



fastest, bestest model. It's the biggest available but only the second fastest. I decided that three times faster than my current model is fast enough, and the \$400 I saved will buy a lot of cigars. I don't do any gaming or programming, so I think this one will be fast enough.

It arrived quickly, and I've been busy transferring files over and have been using it tonight. As expected, not all of my old applications will work on the new machine, so now I have to decide whether I really need them and do I want to spend the money to upgrade them.

I've been using Apple computers since I bought a used

Apple IIE in the late 1980s. I've been using the Mac brand from Apple since 1990. Thus, I feel entitled to complain about a few things.

My last three Macs have been MacBook Pro laptops. And each of them uses a different power cord. Do you think that maybe, just once, Apple could design a new computer that uses the same power cord as the last one?

The power cord comes in two parts: a short cord that connects to the computer with an attachment that will plug it into the wall. The wall end is clunky and heavy, so it doesn't work well with all electrical outlets. You can get an exten-

sion, which gives you twice the length and fits nicely into any 110 outlet.

My previous two laptops came with the extension. This time, it didn't. If you want one, that's extra. You'd think that a computer that costs almost \$5,000 would come with the 3-foot length of wire that makes using it way more convenient.

I bought \$50 worth of cigars last week, and they threw in a 50-cent box of matches. When you buy a new car, it usually comes with a full tank of gas. It's customer service.

On the Mac I'm replacing, the power cord can be plugged into any of four USB ports on the computer. The new one has to be plugged into a single port on the left-hand side. I like my cord plugged in on the right-hand side. It's a little thing, but one more thing to get used to.

The scroll pad also works in the opposite direction of my previous computer. So now, what used to be scrolling up is now scrolling down. Why? Why? Why? So far, I haven't

been able to find a setting to change it.

Apple also let's you use Bluetooth to transfer files between devices. That's handy. Except that it doesn't work.

We're all familiar with Bluetooth. It allows you to connect your phone to your car, or a wireless keyboard to your computer. Or earbuds to your phone or iPad. I can connect any new phone to my 13-year-old car with no problem, but I can't connect two computers by the same manufacturer that are maybe five years apart?

The operating system on the new Mac seems completely different. The way the folders and files look is different. They seem to work pretty much the same way, so it appears to be an aesthetics-only change.

I get it. It's nice sometimes to paint the room a new color and rearrange the furniture. But you expect the outlets and light switches to stay in the same place.

Probably the biggest hurdle is updating all the passwords for websites and software that

I use. Google made a lot of that easy because it stores passwords for you. For the others, I'm finding that activating the software on the new computer deactivates it on the old one. That's a piracy thing a lot of software companies have been doing for years to keep you from using a program on multiple devices.

For the tech-resistant folks in the audience, I'm sure this babble is meaningless. I'm sure Mike Carroll lost interest a few graphs ago. Bill Englehardt is still reading only because Bill reads everything.

On the other hand, most of my babble is meaningless, so why should this be any different?

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