

SDSU: 20 percent of state now in extreme drought

This week's U.S. Drought Monitor reflects intensifying drought conditions in South Dakota, says Dennis Todey, SDSU Extension State Climatologist of the July 26 drought summary.

"Extreme Drought (D3) was introduced in many southeast, south and western counties," Todey said. "This is a one-category degradation from last week, where much of this region had been in D2, or Severe Drought."

Twenty percent of the state is now in Extreme Drought (up from 0 last week). Another 39 percent is in Severe Drought, says Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist.

"Most of the rest of the state is in Moderate Drought (D1). Nearly all of the Corn Belt is in at least Severe

Drought (D2). Only a handful of states have no drought issues across the country," Edwards said. Edwards says the new Extreme Drought category in South Dakota depicts further eroding crop conditions, limited water availability and the continued extreme heat that has affected the region. Additionally, many fires continued in the Black Hills and plains of the west, exhibiting extreme fire danger and fire behavior.

Todey adds that crop reports from the southeastern counties indicate more than half of planted corn could be a total loss.

"Many corn fields in the area are being chopped for silage, as the crop has already lost all opportunities for

recovery," Todey said. "It is expected that this practice will continue. Corn that has been damaged during tasseling has no chance for recovery."

Todey adds that soybeans in the southeast are beginning to flower. "Many flowers are aborting due to the hot and dry conditions that continue to impact the region. This water-intense period of development for soybeans is a critical time, and aborted flowers will impact yield," Todey said.

Edwards says that livestock operators are struggling to keep up with cattle feed and water demands across almost all of the state.

"Feed will continue to be in short supply as a very large area of the U.S. is currently experiencing drought

conditions, so there is little to no feed to buy or sell locally or in neighboring states," Edwards said. "As water supplies dwindle, water quantity and quality is also becoming an issue."

The eight SDSU Extension Regional Centers are all equipped to perform quick nitrate tests for feed and water quality for livestock. Contact your local Center for details. Contact information for Extension Regional Centers can be found at iGrow.org.

SDSU Extension will provide weekly drought briefings throughout the 2012 growing season.

To keep up to date on how the drought is impacting South Dakota's agriculture industry, visit iGrow.org.

McKesson agrees to pay states \$151M

Attorney General Marty Jackley announced today that South Dakota, as part of a national settlement against the McKesson Corporation, has resolved allegations that McKesson violated the Federal False Claims Act and various state false claims acts. The case involved reporting inflated pricing data for a large number of prescription drugs, causing the state's Medicaid program to overpay for those drugs. Medicaid is funded jointly by the federal government and South Dakota.

"We are pleased that State of South Dakota's Medicaid Program will receive \$380,300.78 as part of this multistate settlement," said Jackley. "The settlement reiterates the importance of keeping drug prices affordable for the

consumer and ensuring that state programs are not being compromised through inflated prices by pharmaceutical companies."

The drug pricing data at issue in this settlement concerns the "Average Wholesale Price" (AWP) benchmark used by most states, including South Dakota, to set pharmacy reimbursement rates for pharmaceuticals dispensed to South Dakota Medicaid beneficiaries. South Dakota alleges that McKesson, one of the largest drug wholesalers in the country, reported inflated AWP pricing data to First Data Bank (FDB), a publisher of drug prices, thereby inflating many AWP's that are used by South Dakota to set reimbursement. In April, the federal government settled the federal portion of this

lawsuit for more than \$187 million; this agreement recovers the state Medicaid share for South Dakota.

South Dakota's share of the recovery is \$380,300.78, which will go to the state general fund. The overall recovery attributable to South Dakota's Medicaid program (representing McKesson's April 2012 payments to the federal government for damages suffered by South Dakota's Medicaid program, combined with the state settlement announced today), is \$1,145,260.90, of that amount \$764,960.12 is the Federal Medicaid share.

The South Dakota Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the South Dakota Department of Social Services assisted in recovering the settlement money.

Red Sox go to state Class 'A' tournament

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

The baseball season continues into the state Class "A" amateur tournament this weekend for the Vermillion Red Sox, who emerged from the Southeast Regional Tournament as one of three teams qualifying for the postseason.

The Red Sox will play the Rapid City A's at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Yankton's Riverside Field in the first round of the state classic. At 5 p.m. that day the Pierre Rattlers will take on the Brandon Valley Merchants.

The tourney begins at Yankton Friday with a doubleheader that matches the Renner Monarchs against the Sioux Falls Saints, followed by Castlewood vs. Mitchell. The weekend's four winners advance to the next round in Mitchell next weekend.

Vermillion clinched its state tourney berth with an 11-1 trouncing of the Yankton Tappers last Wednesday, ending the game prematurely with a four-run bottom of the seventh that invoked the 10-run mercy rule.

Meanwhile, Red Sox hurler Nate Olsen kept the Tappers in check all night. Yankton didn't have a hit off Olsen until Jared Miller launched a home run over the right-field wall in the fifth inning. The Tappers loaded the bases with two out in that inning in an attempt to cut

even more into a 5-1 Vermillion lead, but Jason Livermont's line drive was caught just above ground level by second-baseman A.J. Staier to end the rally.

Yankton was no threat after that as the Red Sox scored two in the fifth on RBI doubles by Cody Aughton and Dan Hansen.

The game-ending outburst in the seventh was ignited by Reese Steckler's single. Following an infield error, Aughton's bunt basehit was played into a costly two-base error. Hansen's double and Robin Chute's single finished it off.

Miller had Yankton's only two hits off Olsen. Tapper starter Trey Krier surrendered the first seven Sox runs to take the loss.

Earlier in the tournament the Red Sox had lost to the Renner Monarchs, 15-2, in another seven-inning affair. Jay Merrigan had two of Vermillion's seven hits. A grand-slam homer by Jason Nyhus was one of Renner's 14 hits.

Meanwhile, the Vermillion Grey Sox saw their season end in the District 7B tourney as the Akron Rebels topped the Grey Sox, 15-1, in a contest to determine the district's final state "B" tourney participant. Blaze Hanson pitched the seven-inning complete game, allowing only five hits while fanning three. Four Grey Sox hurlers allowed 16 walks. Tyler Johnson had the lone RBI for Vermillion.

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