



July 11, 2003

### **CASH INCENTIVE TO IDLE WHEAT STUBBLE**

Saline County farmers have an added incentive to leave wheat stubble idle and park the plow this summer. The Saline County Pheasants Forever Chapter has a new program where wheat growers are encouraged to leave standing stubble which can be used by pheasants as a cover and food source during the late summer, fall and winter months. One requirement is the wheat stubble must be 15 inches in height. Growers can still maintain control on hunting and do not have to allow public hunting.

The program is set up to pay wheat growers for leaving their wheat stubble undisturbed until March 20th of next year. However, there are three options for growers to fit their management scheme. If you spray volunteer wheat and weeds, the payment is \$3.00 per acre. If you wait and spray until September 15th, the payment is \$5.00 per acre and if unsprayed, the payment is \$7.00 per acre with a maximum payment of \$150. Therefore, the wheat stubble program is for anywhere from 21 to 50 acres.

Applications are available on the Internet at the Saline County Cooperative Extension website at [www.saline.unl.edu](http://www.saline.unl.edu) under the link "Environment". If you do not have Internet, we can mail you the form "snail mail" if necessary, just contact my office. Short wheat put up for straw may not qualify as the stubble needs to average 15 inches in height. Jim Wissenburg, an area member of Pheasants Forever, indicated contracts can still be arranged by filling out this form and having a member approve the application and site. Call Jim at 826-5216 for more information.

### **HOPPERS MAKE THEIR MARK**

Grasshoppers and leafhoppers are feeding heavily on alfalfa this year in many fields. The small leafhopper actually poisoned alfalfa plants before our second cutting, stunting the growth and causing yield losses. Potato leafhoppers are tiny, yellowish-green, wedge-shaped insects. They often blow into our region from the southeast in early to mid-summer.

Leafhoppers turn alfalfa yellow and stunt growth, especially new seedlings. An early symptom of leafhopper damage is a triangle or V-shaped yellow or purple area at the tip of alfalfa leaves. This discoloration is caused by a toxin the leafhopper injects into the alfalfa plant as it sucks out plant juices. As feeding continues, the entire plant can turn yellow and growth may stop.

Starting now, check fields weekly for leafhoppers before symptoms appear on regrowth. If you detect leafhoppers early and they are still present, insecticides can kill them easily. Unfortunately, you may need to spray several times since leafhoppers can migrate from other fields and reinfest your sprayed field. In other words, continue to scout and do not let one spray application give you a false sense of security. Mowing the alfalfa removes the poison and temporarily removes the winged leafhoppers. Do not automatically spray established stands. Instead, closely scout new regrowth at least weekly for leafhoppers. If they reappear, then use insecticides before much damage occurs.



The second benefit of the pesticide application will be controlling grasshoppers before they get to the brick stage. When grasshoppers are large, about the only surefire way to kill them is crushing them between a couple of bricks. For more information, contact me at the Cooperative Extension Office in Saline County at 821-2151 or go to the "Farm and Ranch" site at our webpage at [www.saline.unl.edu](http://www.saline.unl.edu) and visit our entomology links.

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