

November 24, 2010

### **AGGIE TRIP WAS A SUCCESS**

Fifteen Ag Extension Educators from Nebraska (including myself) decided it was time for a fall bus trip not only to learn, but cheer on those Huskers in hostile territory. It ended up being a really good trip. The first stop was the Cloud County Community College wind tech program in Concordia, KS, the same location that landowners from Saline County visited in 2009.

Some changes had occurred since then. Instructors Lucas Chavey and Bruce Graham did a great job educating our group and gave us the VIP tour of the Community College's new wind turbine installations. They had partially completed the plans to install four wind turbines that will provide direct practical training and enough electrical energy to offset the Concordia campus HVAC and lighting systems annual consumption which cost around 10 cents per kwhr. The program was growing through a Federal grant and donations.

With a minibus fuel system breakdown in Concordia, KS, it ended up being a blessing in disguise. Our new substitute ride was a large, more comfortable bus with a lot of room. After an overnight stay in Oklahoma City we headed to Huntsville, TX and Dominion Farms. The family farm specialized in value added grass fed beef, free range chickens, pasture raised pork, meats and strangely enough basset hounds. There was a good price for "natural" farm fresh. Twenty year old Longhorns processed into hamburger were \$5.25 per pound and chicken was \$3.91 per pound at the farm store. A former school superintendent and daughter were the main success of the operation. A son-in-law that wanted to go more large scale now is the county judge instead. The success of this farm reminded me of the success of organic farms in Nebraska including Welsch Farms northwest of Crete.

Trans Ova Genetics in Centerville, TX opened your eyes to beef genetic preservation technologies and the large advances companies like this have made. The tour guide called herself a 4-H manager. She was the organizational leader for the largest, local 4-H livestock club that had 120 youth involved. There were some great examples of community service they had accomplished with those kinds of numbers helping out.

The Texas A&M Ag College rolled out the carpet for us including tours of the turf farm research, soil lab improvements, organic plots, crop research, bioenergy crops and the research farm south of College Station. The tour of the Agronomy and Soils Department was by former UNL Wheat Specialist Dave Baltensperger who is now a Department Head of the Agronomy and Soil Science Department. The school turned down 27,000 applications this year.

I was somewhat disappointed in one area of the research farm in the Brazos River Valley. I was not seeing a lot of new cropping systems innovation on the conventionally over-tilled, shallow, red soil that was maybe one-half percent organic matter. Cotton and corn was the norm and they hit a rare home run this year with historical high cotton yields and prices.

The displays at the George Bush (41st president) presidential library on the Texas A&M campus and the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City were special. Running into Nebraskan's that you



know in the “nose bleed” section in Kyle Field made our red penetration even better. We may not have won the football game but the trip with co-workers was special.

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