

## Abnormally dry conditions in the central Sandhills

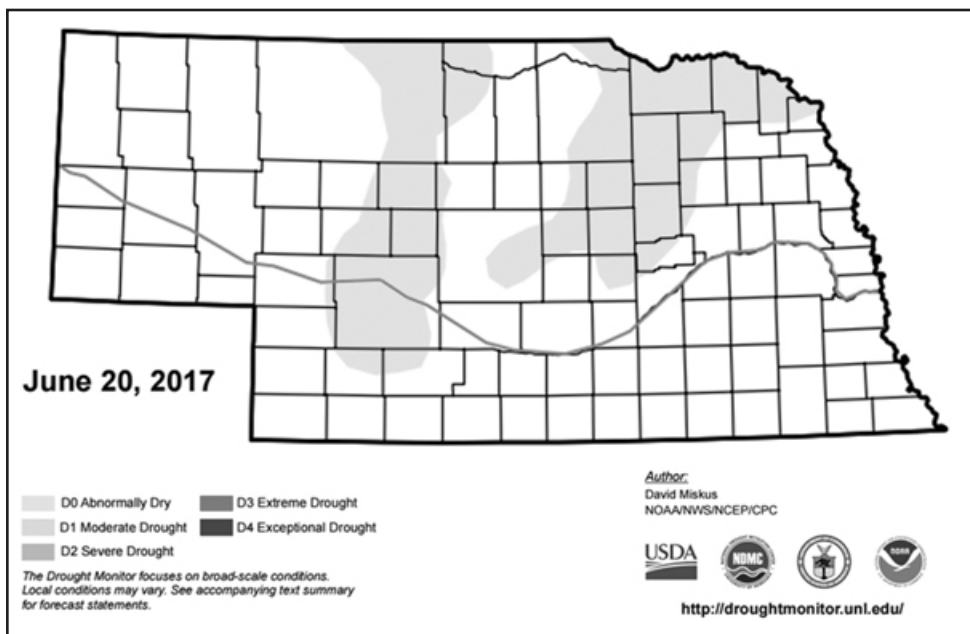


Fig. 1 diagram shows the shaded areas in the central Sandhills as in the Abnormally Dry category.

By Mitch Stephenson  
Nebraska Extension  
Range Specialist

Recent changes in the UNL Drought Monitor reflect what many producers in the central Sandhills have begun to see on their rangelands (See Fig. 1). While most areas in Nebraska are not seeing the moderate to severe drought conditions that our neighbors in the Dakotas are experiencing, the threat of drought is still concerning for Nebraska when looking at the predictions for above average temperatures for the rest of the growing season (Climate Prediction Center, www.cpc.noaa.gov).

**Importance of spring precipitation**  
Spring precipitation plays a crucial role in determining the amount of forage produced in many areas of Nebraska. Precipitation in the early spring at the UNL Gudmundsen Sandhills Lab (GSL) near Whitman Nebraska was near the long-term average, but conditions have become drier with precipitation in June at only 0.2 inches. Average June precipitation for this area is about 3.7 inches.

Because of the abundance of warm-season grasses we see in the Sandhills, early summer precipitation plays an important role in the determining the amount of forage that is produced. Most warm-season species are just beginning their growth in the middle part of June and, unless we see some precipitation in the next few weeks, we may need to think about options for conserving available forage or finding other forage options for later in the summer. If dry conditions persist into July, grasses will usually not respond with a high degree of growth, even if we get precipitation later in the summer.

**Drought of 2012**  
The dry conditions in 2012 are still a recent memory (See Fig. 2). In that year, precipitation

was below average from May to the end of the year. In most areas of the Sandhills, production on warm-season grasses was well below what was typical. Production of warm-season grasses in 2012 at GSL were only 63% of the average production.

The dry conditions in 2012 also had a residual negative influence on the production of grasses during the following year. The production of grass in 2013 was only half of the longer-term average even with precipitation that was close to normal in that year. Warm-season grass production at GSL has steadily increased every year since the drought in 2012 to levels closer to the longer-term average.

It is important to include a multi-year recovery strategy in a drought plan to ensure that rangelands are given opportunities to recover to pre-drought levels. The combination of heavy grazing pressure and drought is one of the main causes of rangeland degradation. Drought is unavoidable, but management of grazing may help reduce the negative effects to desirable species composition and forage production.

"Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth."

This was the reported response from heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson when asked about his plans for an upcoming fight. Planning for drought can feel the same when the drought actually hits and some of the best-laid plans fall apart. However, having trigger dates, contingency plans, or reserve forage resources can lessen the blow of the drought.

Trigger dates are predetermined times of the year when decisions should be made for drought management. With the dry conditions in June, July 1 may be a good date to start deciding if contingency plans should be employed if no new precipitation is gained.

Contingency plans that are often used include reducing cattle numbers by selling cull or extra cattle, planning to early wean, or finding extra forage or feed resource. Selling cattle is a difficult option, but it is one of the most direct ways to relieve heavy grazing pressure from drought stricken pastures. Early weaning will reduce the feed intake requirements of the cow and help in reducing the forage demand of the cow herd. Feeding hay may not be a long-term solution to drought in all situations, but with current prices of hay or distillers grains in Nebraska, there may be options to dry lot some cattle for a period to keep cattle on the ranch and not have to truck cattle to find forage. Lastly, having some forage as a drought reserve every year can help provide greater management options when droughts occur.

The University of Nebraska has many resources available for drought management information. For more information, please see the website below or contact your local UNL Extension office.

1. Managing drought risk on the ranch - <http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan>
2. UNL drought resources for livestock - <http://droughtresources.unl.edu/beef2>
3. U.S. Drought Monitor - <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>
4. Trigger dates and stocking rates - <http://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/beef/article/trigger-dates-and-stocking-rates-drought-mitigation-cornerstones/>
5. Summer pasture rental rates on a price per ton basis consumed by the cow-calf pair - <http://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/beef/6418/36729>
6. Management considerations for beef cows in confinement - <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2237.pdf>

## Victory Underground To Be Featured At Thomas County Fair



COURTESY PHOTO

The group Victory Underground will be featured on Saturday, July 29, at the Thomas County Fair. Band members John Victory, Jerik Victory, Karston Victory, Justin Kane, Wallace Selby and Aarron Young, bring Southern and Classic Rock, Red Dirt Country for an evening of fun and entertainment.

Plan now to attend the Thomas County Fair, July 25 - 30. Many activities have been finalized for this year's celebration.

The week's activities get underway at 9:00 a.m. with the 4-H Horse and Small Animal shows. The 4-H Livestock and Shooting sports will be held on Wednesday, July 26 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, July 27 is 4-H entry day at 9:00 a.m. The Open Art and Photo Show will be open for viewing at the Thedford Art Gallery from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Open Class entry will be held from noon to 2:00 p.m. and the exhibit building will be open from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Friday, July 28 will be a full day of activities with the Open Art and Photo Show at the Thedford Art Gallery open for viewing from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The FFA Alumni Concession Stand will be open at the Thomas County Fairgrounds from

9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The steer roping at the Thomas County Fairgrounds will begin at 9:00 a.m. and the Thomas County Historical Society Museum will be open from 10:00 to noon and 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Rodeo slack will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the Thomas County Fairgrounds and the community barbecue will be held at the Thedford Golf Course at 5:30 p.m. with a round of night golf being held at dusk. The evening's activities will be rounded out with the Thomas County Fair Rodeo beginning at 7:00 p.m. A Kid's pedal tractor pull will be held at 4:30 p.m.

You can get an early start at 7:00 a.m. at the biscuit and gravy breakfast at the Thedford Life Center until 9:00 a.m. The Youth Fishing Tournament at L&L Gravel will also get underway at 7:00 a.m.

The Eastern Star Garage Sale at the Masonic Hall

will run from 8:00 a.m. until they decide to close and the Thedford Art Gallery will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for public viewing.

The Thomas County Historical Society lunch stand will be held at the Thomas County Fairgrounds from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the tractor pull will run from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Fairgrounds.

"Nebraska Through My Eyes" is the theme of the annual fair parade, which will begin at 11:00 a.m. and the turtle races will be held at the Thomas County Fairgrounds following the parade.

Fun Jump waterslide will be at the Thomas County Fairgrounds from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and kids games and horse shoes will also be at the fairgrounds from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The annual Mud Volleyball tournament will get underway at 12:30 p.m. at the Thomas County Fair.

(Continued on page 6)

## Total Eclipse of Sun Forever Stamp on Sale Now at Local Post Offices

First-of-its-Kind Stamp Reveals Second Image

The Postal Service is commemorating the upcoming August 21 solar eclipse by issuing the first-of-its-kind Forever Stamp which transforms the solar eclipse image into the Moon from the heat of a finger. Once cooled, the image reverts back to the eclipse. The stamps are sold in panes of 16 Forever stamps available now at your local Post Office, Post Offices nationwide, and online at usps.com/shop.

"With the release of these amazing stamps using thermochromic ink, we've provided an opportunity for people to experience their own personal solar eclipse every time they touch the stamps," said Terra Boyer, NTFT clerk at the Thedford Post Office.

Thermochromic inks are vulnerable to UV light and should be kept out of direct sunlight as much as possible to preserve this special effect. To help ensure longevity, the Postal Service is offering a special protective sleeve to hold and protect the stamp pane for a nominal fee. The back of the stamp pane provides a map of the August 21 eclipse path and times it may appear in some locations.

A total eclipse of the Sun



COURTESY PHOTO

occurs when the Moon completely blocks the visible solar disk from view, casting a shadow on Earth. The 70-mile-wide shadow path of the eclipse, known as the "path of totality," will traverse the country diagonally, appearing first in Oregon (mid-morning local time) and exiting some 2,500 miles east and 90 minutes later off the coast of South Carolina (mid-afternoon local time) passing through portions of 14 states.

This stamp image is a photograph taken by retired NASA astrophysicist Fred Espenak of Portal, AZ, who is considered by many to be the world's

leading authority on total solar eclipses with 27 under his belt. The photograph shows a total solar eclipse seen from Jalu, Libya, on March 29, 2006.

"A total eclipse of the Sun is simply the most beautiful, stunning and awe-inspiring astronomical event you can see with the naked eye - but you've got to be in the 70-mile-wide path of totality," said Espenak.

"The Postal Service printed 60 million of these stamps and once they're sold, that's it," Terra Boyer said. "We're not going to produce any more. I recommend getting those stamps as soon as you can."

**Index**

Legal Page .....2  
Community  
Calendar .....2  
Social Side .....3  
Opinion Page .....4  
Classified Page .....5  
Looking Back .....6

**Inside This Issue**

- L.J.'s Column
- Over The Hills
- Happenings On The Hill
- Life's Outtakes
- Odds & Ends
- Statewide Classified Advertising

**Notices**

- Thomas County Commissioners Public Notice
- Legal Notice Of Sandhills Corral Liquor License

Summer Reading Program Starts July 5  
See Page 6 for more info