

Forage Matters: An Accelerated Spring

By James Rogers, Forage Crops Production Specialist, NDSU Extension

This year, by far, has had the most bizarre weather I have ever experienced in my lifetime across a career spanning three states. I have experienced flooding, droughts, tornadoes, a hurricane or two and a few blizzards. The windy, hot, cold, dry and wet conditions we have experienced in just a couple of months are indescribable. I am still finding dirt and dust from the storm from a few weeks back.

To that, add the variation in conditions across the state. In one week's time, I received calls from one part of the state about excessive rainfall creating poor hay-drying conditions, and from another part of the state about a potential 50 percent hay crop. It has been weather anarchy!

We can't change the weather. The weather is going to do what it is going to do, we just have to manage through it.

The weather has affected spring forage production. Spring forage growth started slowly with cold temperatures and dry weather, but it has accelerated over the last 30 days. As day length increased and temperatures and moisture rose, forage plants entered the reproductive phase, producing seedheads that signaled plant maturity. What we are seeing is that forage grasses have reached maturity with very little forage mass underneath.

Once grasses have reached maturity, very little additional forage mass will accumulate, and forage quality will decline. The rate of this decline will vary by plant species. Wheatgrasses decline very rapidly in quality once they reach maturity, whereas a legume such as alfalfa declines much more slowly after blooming. The point here is that if you have hay ground that has headed, harvest as soon as you can. Delaying harvest will result in a decline in forage quality and very

little, if any, additional increase in yield.

Grazing will slow forage reproductive development and prolong the vegetative stage, but eventually the forage plant will reach maturity. This is when plant growth will slow, and its rate becomes dictated by rainfall, temperature and grazing management.

In areas of the state experiencing dry conditions and low soil moisture, implement a grazing management strategy, if possible. If rotational grazing, slow the rotation down. Slowing the rotation allows paddocks not currently being grazed to recover and grow. Be cautious and observant concerning the intensity of the grazing. Leave leaf area on plants when cattle are rotated. This residual leaf area is needed for quicker regrowth and recovery. It will also help plants capture more rainfall when rainfall occurs.

Keep grazing records. This will be important as you set up your grazing program next year. Paddocks that received more grazing days this year can require more rest days or a different period of the year for grazing the following year.

Back to hay production. As hay-making season hits, field drying time of the crop can be an issue. The longer a hay crop stays on the ground, the higher the risk of damage from a rainfall event. This is especially true for high-yielding crops such as summer annual forage grasses or delicate crops such as alfalfa.

Using a preservative at baling can speed the baling process. Preservatives work to reduce bale heating and inhibit the growth of aerobic microbes that cause moldy hay, dry matter loss and reduced forage quality. Preservatives work best on hay with moisture levels from 18%-25%. At 30% moisture and higher, efficacy declines. Application rates will depend on bale size and hay moisture content. Commonly used preservatives are propionic, lactic and acetic acid. If using propionic

acid, a buffered or neutralized formulation is advised to reduce equipment corrosion. A mixture of propionic and acetic acid would aid in both mold and bacteria growth.

To speed drying time, a hay drying agent such as potassium carbonate or sodium carbonate can be applied at cutting. These agents work by breaking the waxy layers covering leaves and stems, which speeds up moisture loss when the plant is cut. A disadvantage of using a dry-

ing agent is that it is applied at harvest, meaning an applicator must be mounted on the hay cutter. Drying agents work better on legumes than grasses.

Our weather story continues. Yesterday, I was windblown all afternoon during an outdoor North Dakota State University Extension event. As I write this column, we're experiencing a downpour so hard I cannot see across the parking lot. I'll still take the rain.

Public Informational Meetings To Examine Data Center Development In North Dakota

Health Freedom North Dakota will host a series of town hall-style informational meetings and Q&A sessions in Fargo, Wishek, and Mandan this July. These events are intended to help residents learn more about hyperscale data centers, the industrial systems that support them, and possible health, environmental, and safety considerations for local communities.

The meetings will feature two guest speakers with national experience in industrial hygiene, exposure science, and occupational and environmental health and safety. Tammy K. Clark is a Health, Safety, and Compliance professional with more than twenty years of experience in industrial hygiene and occupational and environmental health and safety. Kristen Meghan is an exposure scientist and industrial hygienist with twenty-four years of experi-

ence in occupational and environmental toxicology, including service in the U.S. Air Force and work in the VA healthcare system.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn how hyperscale data centers operate, hear perspectives shaped by national experience, explore questions related to community health and safety, and ask questions directly during the discussion.

Event Schedule:
Fargo, July 7, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Ramada Inn by Wyndham, 3333 13th Ave S, Fargo, ND 58103

Wishek, July 8, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Wishek Civic Center, 21 8th St S, Wishek, ND 58495

Mandan, July 9, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Historic Mandan Depot, 401 W Main St, Mandan, ND 58554

These events are free and open to the public. Residents are encouraged to attend, learn, and ask questions.

Proceedings Of The Board Of County Commissioners

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MOUNTRAIL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

1. OPENING & ROLL CALL

The Board met in regular session on Tuesday, June 2, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. in the Emergency/Community Room, Mountrail County Courthouse, Stanley ND with Commissioners Trudy Ruland, Wayne Olson, John DeGroot, Joan Hollekim and Jason Rice present. State's Attorney, Wade Enget was present.

Chairman Ruland called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. BUSINESS

A. AGENDA

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Rice, to review and approve the agenda as corrected. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

B. MINUTES

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2026 meeting as corrected. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

C. FEES

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the Overweight fees. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Ruland, Olson, DeGroot and Rice voted yes. Motion carried.

D. PAYROLL

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the Regular Full Time Employee Classification for JB Barrera as a Deputy II with the Sheriff in the amount of \$36.95 per hour/\$76,853 per year. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the Regular Full Time Employee Classification for Zoe Botz as a Family Specialist I with the Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone in the amount of \$27.00 per hour/\$56,160 per year. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice, Olson and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Hollekim, to approve the Temporary Employee Classification for Kyra Fox as a Sprayer with the Weed Control in the amount of \$27.03 per hour not to exceed 50 hours per week/720 hours per year. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, DeGroot, Hollekim and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the Temporary Employee Classification for Hannah Braaflat as a Seasonal Roadworker with the R&B in the amount of \$25.47 per hour not to exceed 50 hours per week/720 hours per year. Upon roll call, Hollekim, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the Temporary Employee Classification for Gage Hochhalter as a Seasonal Roadworker with R&B in the amount of \$25.47 per hour not to exceed 50 hours per week/720 hours per year. Upon roll call, Olson, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice and Hollekim voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the salary increase for a promotion banding/grading change for Chelsea Bingen as a Dispatcher II with the Sheriff from a B22 to a B23 in the amount of \$34.61 per hour/\$71,987 per year. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Hollekim, Olson, Ruland and Rice voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the salary increase for a promotion banding/grading change for Julissa Gonzalez as a Dispatcher II with the Sheriff from a B22 to a B23 in the amount of \$34.61 per hour/\$71,987 per year. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Ruland, Rice, Olson and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the salary increase for a promotion banding/grading change for Janelle Miller as a Dispatcher II with the Sheriff from a B22 to a B23 in the amount of \$34.61 per hour/\$71,987 per year. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Ruland, Rice, Hollekim and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the salary increase for a promotion banding/grading change for Julissa Gonzalez as a Dispatcher II with the Sheriff from a B22 to a B23 in the amount of \$34.61 per hour/\$71,987 per year. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Ruland, Rice, Olson and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

tion carried.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the salary increase for a promotion banding/grading change for Phillip Jernigan as a Dispatcher II with the Sheriff from a B22 to a B23 in the amount of \$33.76 per hour/\$70,221 per year. Upon roll call, Rice, Hollekim, Ruland, DeGroot and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

E. OIL & GAS FLARING
Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the signing of the letter for the oil industry flaring during dry and windy conditions to be sent to the Attorney General, ND Ag Commissioner, Governor and ND Industrial Commission. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

F. GAMING SITE AUTHORIZATION
Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Hollekim, to approve the signing of the gaming site authorization for Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1326 at Whiskey Flats from July 1st, 2026 to June 30th, 2027. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Rice, Olson, DeGroot and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

G. RAFFLE PERMIT
Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve the raffle permit for the White Earth Valley Saddle Club to be held on June 13th & 14th. Upon roll call, Olson, Ruland, Hollekim and Rice voted yes. Motion carried.

H. VACANCY OF JUDGESHIP NO. 5
Wade Enget, State's Attorney discussed the notice of consultation in the matter of the retirement of Judge Todd Cresap for Judgeship No. 5 in Minot North Central Judicial District.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve signing the letter for the continued representation for the Judgeship No. 5 with Chambers in Minot North Central Judicial District. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

I. ND STATE AUDIT FOR 2025 YEAR
Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the signing of the Non-Audit Services Checklist for the 2025 Audit year with the ND State Auditor's Office. Upon roll call, Rice, DeGroot, Ruland, Hollekim and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

J. PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR P&Z JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF ROSS

Melissa Vachal, P&Z Administrator discussed the P&Z Joint Administration of Powers with the City of Ross to take over the P&Z Ordinances within the City.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Olson, to approve advertising for the public hearing on July 7th, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. to discuss the P&Z Joint Administration of Powers with the City of Ross. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

K. STOP PAYMENT

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve the stop payment and reissue for Check #120762 on August 5th, 2025 to Silver Hill Energy totaling \$21,000. Upon roll call, Olson, Ruland, Hollekim, DeGroot and Rice voted yes. Motion carried.

L. BILLS
Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the bills totaling \$490,679.89 & May 10 through 23 payroll, checks #20234-20235 and direct deposits #1-175 totaling \$476,745.46. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Olson, DeGroot, Rice and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried. (A complete list of bills is posted on a regular basis on the Mountrail County website at www.co.mountrail.nd.us under the County Commissioner heading and/or are available for review in the Auditor's Office during normal business hours).

3. APPOINTMENTS SCHEDULED
9:10 A.M.

Jessica Niemtila, Treasurer met to discuss the renewal of the Certificate of Deposit.
Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the renewal of certificate of deposit (CD) for \$3,207,927.83 with Liberty State Bank for a 6-month term. Upon roll call, DeGroot, Rice, Hollekim, Ruland and Olson voted yes. Motion carried.

9:15 A.M.
Jim Hennessy, Weed Control Administrator met with the board to amend the 2026 Weed Control Budget. Weed Control Administrator Hennessy suggested moving \$50,000 from the Chemical line item and splitting up between the benefit line items.

Dakota Gardener: What Is A Blue Raspberry?

By Tom Kalb, Horticulturist, NDSU Extension

Blue raspberry is one of the most popular flavors in America. You can find blue raspberry slushies, drinks and candy everywhere.

It would be fun to grow blue raspberries in our gardens, but no blue raspberry plants are sold at garden centers. That's because blue raspberries are produced in factories, not on farms. The fruit is completely artificial.

The blue raspberry originated when makers of slushies and other frozen treats had more red flavors than shades of red dye. Fifty years ago, when you saw a purple popsicle, you knew it was going to taste like a grape. When you saw an orange popsicle, you knew it was going to taste like an orange. But when you saw a red popsicle, you didn't know if it would taste like a cherry, strawberry, raspberry or watermelon. Kids were confused and sometimes disappointed.

Raspberry treats often used a burgundy-red dye (FD&C Red No. 2). This dye was banned in 1976 by the Food and Drug Administration as a possible carcinogen. Scientists needed to find a new dye for raspberry.

The ICEE frozen treat company found brilliant blue dye (FD&C Blue No. 1) sitting on the laboratory shelves, and the blue raspberry was invented.

Blue raspberry treats are brightly colored and distinctive. There is no other fruit (or food) that has its

electric blue color. When a kid sees a blue popsicle, they think the color is cool, and they know it is going to taste like blue raspberry.

Since blue raspberry is artificial, the scientists could make its flavor anything they wanted. The flavor of a blue raspberry varies slightly from company to company, but it does not taste like a natural raspberry.

Natural raspberries have a delicate zest and floral aroma. Blue raspberries typically have a sharp, tangy, sweet-tart flavor. It has been reported that the chemicals used to create blue raspberry may be similar to the aromas found in apples, cherries and pineapples.

With added sugar, blue raspberry tastes more like candy than fruit. It's no wonder blue raspberry has become a popular flavor for kids.

You can find blue raspberry juices with natural flavors. But if you look at the list of ingredients, you will find it probably does not contain any raspberry juice. It more likely contains less expensive juices such as apple and orange.

Blue raspberry snacks are everywhere this summer. They are colorful and fun to eat, but they are unreal and not especially healthy. Eating a blue raspberry snack will bring a smile to your face, but it will turn your tongue blue.

Go ahead and enjoy a blue raspberry snack, but don't forget to eat some real raspberries, too.

For more information about gardening, contact your local NDSU Extension agent.

North Dakota Game And Fish News

Zebra Mussels Discovered In Horseshoe Lake

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has confirmed invasive zebra mussels in Horseshoe Lake, Richland County, after detecting zebra mussel veligers in routine plankton tow net samples.

Department aquatic nuisance species coordinator Ben Holen said subsequent follow-up sampling found additional adult mussels in the lake.

The 275-acre lake is located five miles southwest of Hankinson and is near Lake Elsie, which has had zebra mussels present for a number of years.

Horseshoe Lake is now considered a Class I ANS Infested waters. Emergency rules will go into effect immediately to prohibit the movement of water away from the lake, including water for transferring bait. Notices will be posted at lake access sites.

Zebra mussels are just one of the nonnative aquatic species that threaten our waters and native wildlife. After using any body of water, people must remember to follow North Dakota regulations:

- Remove aquatic vegetation before leaving the water access and do not import into North Dakota.
- Drain all water before leaving the water access.
- Remove drain plugs and devices that hold back water and leave open and out during transport.
- Do not import aquatic bait into the state. For Class I ANS Infested waters, aquatic bait cannot be transported away from the water during the open-water months. In all other areas, bait must be transported in a container that holds five gallons or less. It is illegal to dump unused bait on shore or into the lake.
- All docks, lifts and related equipment must be dried and left out of water for at least 21 days before being placed in another water.

In addition to North Dakota regulations, the Game and Fish Department strongly recommends the following:

- Avoid mooring watercraft in zebra mussels infested waters.
- Clean - remove plants, animals and excessive mud prior to leaving a water access.
- Drain - drain all water prior to leaving a water access.
- Dry - allow equipment to dry completely before using again or disinfect.

For more information about ANS in North Dakota, options for disinfection, or to report a possible ANS, visit <https://gf.nd.gov/ans>.

Crowing Counts Up Statewide

The number of roosters heard during the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's 2026 spring pheasant crowing count survey was 23.2 crows per stop, up 9 percent statewide from last year.

"Overwinter survival of adult pheasants has been outstanding. Typically, we lose up to 75 percent of our pheasant population each winter, but that has not been the

case as of late," said RJ Gross, Department upland game management biologist.

By region, observers heard 32.7 crows per stop in the southwest, up 5 percent from 2025; 22.2 crows per stop in the northwest, up 4 percent; and 23.1 crows per stop in the southeast, up 24 percent from last year. The count in the northeast, which is not a primary region for pheasants, was 9.3 crows per stop, up 43 percent from 2025.

Crowing counts are just one part of the picture, providing a glimpse of the population going into the breeding season. But Gross expects more good news as the peak of the pheasant hatch approaches.

"Entering the nesting season, residual grass cover looked good," Gross said. "We have received ample precipitation that has led to increased growth in nesting and brood rearing cover across the state. Combined with high overwinter survival over the past three years and near ideal nesting habitat conditions, things are looking great for pheasants in North Dakota."

Pheasant crowing counts are conducted each spring throughout North Dakota. Observers drive specified routes, stopping at predetermined intervals, and counting the number of roosters heard crowing. The number of pheasant crows heard is compared to previous years' data, providing a trend summary.

As always, the late summer roadside counts conducted in July and August will give a better idea of brood production and the hunting outlook for fall.

Fireworks Prohibited On WMAs, Camping Restrictions Lifted For Holiday

With Independence Day approaching, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds outdoor recreationists fireworks on state wildlife management areas are prohibited.

The primary objective of a wildlife management area is to enhance wildlife production, provide hunting and fishing opportunities, and offer other outdoor recreation compatible with these objectives. Activities that do not disrupt the intentions are encouraged, and fireworks are not compatible.

In addition, the department will lift the Tuesday-Wednesday no-camping restriction for the Fourth of July holiday week, which will allow overnight camping June 30 and July 1 on those WMAs that otherwise have this two-day restriction.

Pronghorn Survey Begins

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual aerial pronghorn survey will begin June 28 and is scheduled to be completed within two weeks.

During the survey period, small airplanes will sometimes fly low over parts of western North Dakota.

The survey determines pronghorn abundance, herd demographics and fawn production. This data is used to set the number of licenses for the fall hunting season.

Moved by Comm. Rice, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve adjusting the true and full value from \$2,572,300 to \$1,282,800 on parcel #58-0042300 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage due to the condo units being included in the values that have separate parcel numbers already assessed. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson, Hollekim and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Tax Director Savage discussed an appeal/adjustment needed on parcel #61-0094408 in the City of Stanley as the property has an assessment of personal property. Also present were Amanda Dennis, Assessor for the City of Stanley & Jaden Randall, Delta Property Tax Advisors.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve removing the value of \$148,400 on parcel #61-0094408 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage due to some of the property being personal property with an adjustment of the true and full structure value of \$1,730,900 to \$1,582,500. Upon roll call, Ruland, Rice, Olson voted yes, Hollekim and DeGroot voted no. Motion carried.

Tax Director Savage discussed parcel #28-0006600 in Unorganized Township 155 North, Range 94 West which qualifies for farm residence exemption.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Rice, to approve the farm residence exemption on Parcel #28-0006600 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, Hollekim, DeGroot, and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

Tax Director Savage discussed the Debing Township equalization meeting. The parcel #27-0016304 is no longer a salt water disposal site.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Olson, to remove the commercial structure value on Parcel #27-0016304 in the amount of \$556,100 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Ruland, Rice, Olson and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Tax Director Savage discussed the Liberty Township Parcel #51-000643 with the total new construction on the tax rolls and only 25% is complete so will need to remove the residential structure of \$340,500.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Rice, to remove 75% residential structure value on Parcel #51-000643 in the amount of \$340,500 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage. Upon roll call, Rice, Olson, Hollekim, DeGroot and Ruland voted yes. Motion carried.

Tax Director Savage discussed the McGahan Township Parcel #16-0018100 as two FEMA trailers were removed.

Moved by Comm. DeGroot, seconded by Comm. Olson, to remove the residential structure value on Parcel #16-0018100 as two FEMA trailers were removed in the amount of \$34,700 as per the recommendation of Tax Director Savage. Upon roll call, Hollekim, Ruland, Rice, Olson and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Chris Miller discussed Parcel #16-002101 and stated he believes the assessment is high on this property. The true and full structure value is \$62,000 and he purchased it for \$40,000. Chris Miller stated he would like it reduced to \$40,000 & Mr. Miller supplied a packet of information to the Tax Director. Chris Miller also discussed Parcel #16-002100 on the machine shed he built which doesn't meet building code specs. The true and full structure value is \$47,300; Mr. Miller requested the value be reduced to \$25,000. This will be discussed more at the special meeting held on June 18th at 8 a.m.

Tax Director Savage discussed the Spring Coulee Township Parcel #36-0013705 that qualified for a Farm Residence Exemption.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Olson, to remove the residential land value of \$20,000 and structure value of \$252,500 for a total reduction of \$272,500 and add an agricultural value of \$300 for the 2 ag acres as per recommendation of Tax Director Savage as Parcel #36-0013705 qualified for a farm residency exemption. Upon roll call, Olson, Ruland, Hollekim, Rice and DeGroot voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rice, to recess the County Board of Equalization meeting at 12:38 P.M. until June 18th, 2026 at 8:00 A.M. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT
No one had any comments.

5. ADJOURN
The Board adjourned at 12:39 P.M. to meet in regular session on Tuesday, June 16, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. Accepted and approved this 16th day of June, 2026.

Tax Director Savage discussed an adjustment needed on parcel #58-0042300 in Parshall City for reduction of value due to a double assessment from condo units being assessed separately.

Stephanie A. Pappa
Mountrail County Auditor