



THE  
**FOWLER EQUITY EXCHANGE**

Fowler, Kansas 67844

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U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Fowler, KS  
Permit No. 21

# NEWSLETTER

*"Keeping in touch with your cooperative business"*

January – February 2006

## Manager's comments

*By Bob Bender*

The start of the new production year is already upon us as we all plan for the upcoming year and growing season. Many of you have already applied ammonia to corn ground with the open weather we have been having. Ammonia prices have been staying in the \$450 to \$475 range and our suppliers are still saying that the trend is upward and could reach well over \$500 a ton. Early fertilization may be a good move for area producers this year. Don and Randy have been busy going through all the equipment and packing the wheel bearings on nurse tanks. This is to eliminate down time and increase anhydrous ammonia safety for you and our employees. The fertilizer department personnel are ready and eager to serve all your input needs.

Your Fowler Equity, along with most other elevators, still has a large amount of grain in storage as many producers are hoping that prices will increase substantially in the next few months. Prices are stable for the time being, but with the large amount of grain that will soon be hitting the market, most analysts do not expect a huge jump in the markets. Hopefully, the price will rebound at least enough to cover storage and interest costs for you. When we get into weather market situations later in the spring or early summer, that may be a good time to sell part of that grain, if you can hold it for that long.

Your cooperative remains on track for a profitable year barring any major problems. Many Co-ops in the state are still struggling financially, even with the good fall crops we had. A strong balance sheet, along with sound business decisions by your board of directors, has kept the Fowler Equity Exchange one of the most stable Co-ops in the state. This would not be possible without the help and support of you, our farmer members. We sincerely appreciate that!

As we head into the busy time of preparing to plant this year's crops, please use caution when working on the farm. Agriculture remains the most dangerous occupation in the country according to government surveys. Most accidents are caused by carelessness, so please slow down and be careful.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about **your** Fowler Equity Exchange, please call or stop by the office. Thanks for your business! -TFEE-

## From the Office

*By Barbie Padgett*



Grain customers who received deferred payments in January 2005 will be receiving a form 1099 for interest paid on those funds. Be sure to retain those records for your income tax preparation.

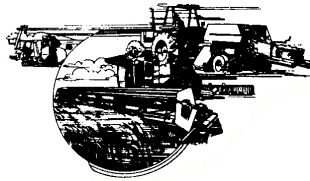
Your Fowler Equity paid patronage on grain and grain storage in May 2005. Grain customers who

*Please turn to **From the Office** on page 2*

received any new allocations should expect a substitute 1099 form in the mail. These tax documents should be mailed to you by the end of January. If you have any questions please give me a call at the main office. -TFEE-

## Fertilizer Department

*By Don Burdett*



It has been an open fall and winter so far and fertilizer was still moving up to last Friday, January 6. At this point, we estimate we are about 90% through with applications this winter. There will be another rush period in March just ahead of spring planting. In the meantime, we are busy with packing wheel bearings on anhydrous ammonia nurse tanks and doing repair and maintenance work on the other equipment. We make a sincere effort to keep the equipment in good condition to avoid problems during the busy seasons of the year.

Prices for fertilizer seem to keep advancing and there does not seem to be much hope among people in the industry that the trend will go the other way at least into the spring. Because of the price situation, some producers plan to plant more beans and less

corn this spring. The thinking is that soybeans take less fertilizer and about the same amount of water. Anhydrous ammonia is still the least expensive source of nitrogen (N).

The wheat in the area looks quite good, but it needs some moisture. Some are pasturing their wheat and those fields will need to be fertilized to replace the nitrogen removed by the grazing cattle. There is a "rule of thumb" that says grazing removes about .04 pounds of nitrogen per pound of beef weight gain.

Nitrogen is the element most likely to limit wheat production. Since most of the root system is developed early, adequate nitrogen must be in place early in order to provide for the greatest utilization of water and production efficiencies. Adequate nitrogen is also needed to promote tillering, head formation, and grain filling. Nitrogen should be in the root zone prior to the jointing stage of growth to provide the most benefit to the wheat. Frequently, top-dress applications are made too late and profitability is reduced.

The total N requirement for wheat is directly related to yield. About 2.4 pounds of N per bushel are required for winter wheat. Residual nitrate N in the soil profile and organic matter decomposition will provide part of the required N and should be subtracted from the total N requirements.

### **Nitrogen deficiency symptoms:**

- Overall light green color on small plants as well as yellowing of the lower leaves on older plants.
- Reduced tillering.
- Reduced vigor.

We have the 32% liquid nitrogen you'll need for top-dressing your wheat.

It would be a good idea to look your wheat fields over for weeds. The conditions that have been good for the wheat are also good for the weeds to germinate and grow. Don't make your wheat compete with weeds for moisture and nutrients. It may cost a few bushels of wheat to control those weeds, but not using herbicides and having a problem will likely cost a lot more bushels in the long-run. Chemicals can be applied along with the top-dress application or sprayed separately if you applied sufficient nitrogen earlier. It is important to do it early before the weeds become too big for efficient control. We keep the basic chemicals on hand here at your Co-op and we can get any product you want. East Kansas Chemical is a good source and

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### **The Fowler Equity Exchange**

P. O. Box 350  
Fowler, KS 67844

### **Directory**

#### **Office**

<b>Phone</b>	<b>620-646-5262</b>
<b>FAX</b>	<b>620-646-5372</b>
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:fowlerequity@rurallink.net">fowlerequity@rurallink.net</a>
<b>Fertilizer Department</b>	<b>620-646-5428</b>
<b>Service Station</b>	<b>620-646-5284</b>

### **Officers and Directors**

Tom Huelskamp	Chairperson
Dale Zortman	Vice Chairperson
Doug Heinz	Secretary-Treasurer
Kyle Lewis	Director
Jay Lundeen	Director
Brent Post	Director
John Thomas	Associate Director
Bob Bender	General Manager-President

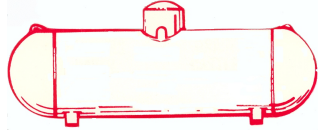
## Fertilizer Department *continued from page 2*

your Fowler Equity has an interest in that company. They have a route truck that will deliver products to us as well as farmers in the area.

Please let us know if we can be of service. We are always glad to help and we appreciate your business. -TFEE-

## Propane

*By Randy Reese*

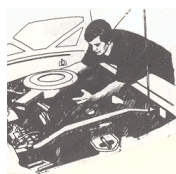


As we move on through the winter months, we will continue to keep the propane tanks of our route customers filled. We remind those of you who are not on the route system and call to order propane need to make sure you watch the gauge on your storage tank and call when it gets down to about 10% of capacity. If you run out of fuel, we are required to do a systems check and replace any defective or outdated parts before we can fill the tank. There is an extra charge for the check. There is also an extra charge if we are called out after regular business hours. All new customers are also required to have the safety systems check before we can fill the tank.

The price of propane as we write this on January 9, 2006 is \$1.45 a gallon. Many of you contracted propane for this winter at \$1.35 a gallon so those folks are saving some money. Contracting usually, but not always, pays. Let us know if we can be of service. Your business is appreciated. -TFEE-

## From the Service Station

*By Ron Smith*



Here we are well into January and spring can't be too far off. That means many of you will soon be getting your sprinkler irrigation systems in shape for the growing season ahead. We have a good stock of repair parts for irrigation sprinklers. Parts and repairs for all brands of systems are available. If we don't have exactly what you need, we can special order for you. Your Fowler Equity Station has tires of various sizes for sprinkler systems. We can mount the new tires for you but it must be done here at the station.

**It is winter time in Kansas** and that usually means some bad weather with which to contend.

There are several things we need to do to be prepared. One is having our vehicles checked over to be sure the antifreeze will prevent freezing as well as protect the cooling system from rust and corrosion. We have a supply of bulk and packaged antifreeze in stock. Antifreeze should be changed periodically. The old coolant may prevent freezing but the additives that prevent rust and corrosion eventually wear out and won't do a complete job of protecting the cooling system.

If you have a battery that is on the weak side, it will very likely let you down one of these really cold mornings. Even a new, fully-charged battery has only about half the cranking power at 0°F. that it has when it is warm. Couple that with a cold engine with cold oil in the crankcase and you have a potential problem. Let us check the battery in your vehicles and equipment and if you need a replacement, we have them for just about every application.

Good tread on the tires is very important, especially when you are forced to drive on wet, icy, or snow-packed roads. When you stop to think about it, there is only a small patch of rubber in contact with the road at any given time. You need all the traction you can get to be safe while driving in winter weather conditions. Again, we have competitive prices on quality tires that will fit your vehicles.

The rubber fillers in the windshield wipers may have deteriorated during the hot summer. They may be hard and cracked so they can't clear the windshield during rain or snow storms. Let us check them out and replace them if needed. It's another safety factor. Be sure all the lights are working properly. That's still another safety factor and you very likely use them more in the winter months. How long has it been since you had the transmission on your vehicle flushed and the fluid changed? Most manufacturers recommend a flush and fluid change every 30,000 miles. Bring your car or truck in and let us check it over and service it for safe driving this winter.

Are you using E-10 Unleaded gasoline? There are a couple of factors that are especially an advantage during the winter months. You should never have to add gas-line antifreeze since no moisture accumulates in the fuel tank. It is absorbed by the ethanol. Another factor is the higher octane rating which means faster and easier starting during cold weather. Give it a trial run. We think you will see a difference.

*Please see Service Station on page 4*

If you use the car wash during cold weather, we urge you to use caution. Water freezes on the concrete and we don't want anyone falling and injuring themselves. -TFEE-

## **Winter driving tips that may save your life**

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The first few days after a storm may seem the most hazardous, but winter weather can be unpredictable. Problems can occur at almost any time, said Mike Bradshaw, Kansas State University safety specialist.

Staying home or postponing plans can be a good idea, but it isn't always possible. With experience, drivers can reduce risks. Simple motor vehicle maintenance – and some practice – also can help reduce risks, he said.

Winter drivers are encouraged to reduce speed, allow a greater distance between vehicles, and more time and distance to stop. Doing so may allow crucial room to maneuver and avoid an accident. Drivers also are cautioned that driving on a recently plowed road does not necessarily mean 'resume normal speed.' Plowed or partially cleared roads may still not be free of snow or icy patches; bridges may be icy, too, Bradshaw said.

"Practice is important because it can help a driver learn more about how their vehicle will handle during adverse driving conditions," said Bradshaw, who recommends choosing an open area (like a parking lot that is not in use) for a practice session.

"Try steering into a skid. And, test brake response. With anti-lock brakes, press the brake pedal and steer. Without an anti-lock braking system, pump the brakes to keep wheels from locking up," the safety specialist said.

The age and condition of a car or truck can affect motorists' risks. Basic maintenance – such as changing the oil every three months or 3000 miles – can prolong the life of a vehicle, make it easier to start on cold winter days, and reduce the risk of a breakdown that can be particularly hazardous during winter months. Preventive maintenance can reduce on-the-road risks, said Bradshaw.

Telephone numbers for the highway patrol and road conditions usually are listed with other

emergency numbers in the front of the phone book. In Kansas, the road condition hotline is 1-800-585-762 (ROAD); cellular phone users can call Star 47, a toll-free number that will automatically connect them to the nearest highway patrol dispatcher.

Replacing radiator and heater hoses every three to four years can reduce the possibility of a breakdown. Checking the condition of the water pump, starter, and heating and exhaust systems also are recommended, the safety specialist said.

"People are driving their vehicles longer. Doing so can produce a substantial cost-saving, but designating part of the savings for preventive maintenance can increase safety and reliability," Bradshaw said.

Easy-to-do maintenance – like cleaning the windows inside and out – can improve safety because interior materials may give off vapors that can cloud windows and reduce visibility, said Bradshaw, who recommended assembling a vehicle safety kit.

The contents recommended for a safety kit include a snow brush and ice scraper; small, steel shovel; flashlight with fresh batteries; jumper cables; and abrasive materials, such as sand, cat litter, and/or traction mats (like a set of older floor mats or carpet scrap). A flare or bright piece of cloth that can be tied to an antenna in case of emergency, and an empty coffee can, candle, and matches also are good to include.

Blankets or sleeping bags and non-perishable foods, such as cereal bars or crackers, can be helpful. So can a cellular phone, Bradshaw said.

If stranded, the safety specialist recommends staying with the vehicle. He also advises marking the vehicle with a bright tie or flare, and resisting the temptation to over-do it, like trying to shovel a car out of a big drift. Clear the area around the exhaust pipe of snow or other debris. Crack the window a bit to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, and run the engine just long enough to remove the chill.

"Wearing a seat belt is a safety step that can save your life. It also is required by law. Children should be secured in safety seats and children under 12 should be seated in the rear seat. It's always a good idea to monitor the weather, but especially important to do so during winter months. If travel is an option and not a requirement, the best strategy may be staying at home," Bradshaw said.

For more winter driving tips, interested persons may contact their local K-State Research and Extension office. -TFEE-