

Governor signs OKFB priority, supported bills

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is celebrating another successful legislative session, as members and staff worked together to improve laws affecting the agriculture industry and rural Oklahoma. Below are the priority and supported legislation signed into law:

OKFB Priority Legislation Signed into Law

HB 1999

Authored by Rep. Skye McNeil and Sen. Eddie Fields

HB 1999 amends the Oklahoma Meat Inspection Act by allowing horses, mules or other equine to be transported, manufactured, processed, packed, sold or prepared in Oklahoma as long as the meat will be sold on the international market. HB 1999 makes it unlawful for any person to sell, or have in their possession with intent to sell, horsemeat for human consumption in Oklahoma.

SB 708

Authored by Sen. John Sparks and Rep. Tommy Hardin

SB 708 increases the penalties for any person who knowingly cuts or damages a fence used for the production of livestock or any game or domesticated game animals. Anyone convicted of a second or

subsequent offense shall be guilty of a felony punishable by a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or by imprisonment not exceeding two years, or by both fine and imprisonment regardless of the dollar amount of damage done.

SB 965

Authored by Sen. Bryce Marlatt and Rep. Mike Jackson

SB 965 transitions the nine-member OWRB board from one member from each congressional district and four at-large positions to one member from nine specific geographical areas. SB 965 provides more regional representation on the board, including one seat for Oklahoma County and one seat for Tulsa County.

HCR 1012

Authored by Rep. Scott Biggs and Sen. Eddie Fields

This concurrent resolution is a precursor to the joint resolution OKFB will pursue



Gov. Mary Fallin (center) signs HB 1638, which creates the Oklahoma Agritourism Activities Liability Act, during a ceremonial signing, June 10, at the state Capitol.

next year to amend the Oklahoma Constitution. The resolution states: "The Oklahoma Legislature recognizes the rights of farmers and ranchers to engage in modern farming and ranching practices will be forever guaranteed in this state. It is the intent of the Oklahoma Legislature that it will pass no law which abridges the right of farmers and ranchers to employ agricultural technology and modern livestock production and ranching practices."

(See Bills, page 2)

Wheat harvest begins in Oklahoma



Kiowa County Farm Bureau member Zac Harris cuts one of his first wheat fields of the 2013 harvest season, June 7, near Hobart. Keep up with the Harris family and others on the OKFB Harvest Watch blog as the Oklahoma wheat harvest makes its way north. Visit www.okfarmbureau.org and click on the OKFB Harvest Watch link to read more about the farm families.

MEMBER BENEFITS

• **Qualsight** – OKFB members can receive 40 to 50 percent off the national retail price for LASIK eye surgery. Call 877-507-4448 for a provider near you.

OKFB highlights a benefit in each issue of *Perspective* as a reminder of the savings available to OKFB members. Find a complete list of savings online at www.okfarmbureau.org.

OKFB CALENDAR

Oklahoma Youth Leading Ag Conference

June 24-27 • Oklahoma City
Contact: Holly Carroll, (405) 301-6610

OKFB Leadership Team Nurse's Scholarship Deadline

July 1 • Oklahoma City
Contact: Marcia Irvin, (405) 523-2405

OKFB Leadership Team Summer Conference

July 12-13 • Claremore
Contact: Marcia Irvin, (405) 523-2405

(Bills, from page 1)

OKFB-Supported Legislation Signed into Law

HB 1638

Authored by Rep. Scott Biggs and Sen. Ron Justice

HB 1638 creates the Oklahoma Agritourism Activities Liability Act. It relieves the agritourism professional from liability for injury or death from the inherent risk of agritourism activities, as long as a warning notice is posted and maintained at the entrance of the agritourism location and at the site of the agritourism activity. Every written contract entered into by an agritourism professional must contain the warning language prescribed in HB 1638. Agritourism activities mean any activity carried out on a farm or ranch for the general public for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes to view or enjoy rural activities.

SB 931

Authored by Sen. Ron Justice and Rep. Scott Biggs

SB 931 is a tort-reform bill that strengthens the Oklahoma Limitation of Liability for Farming and Ranching Land Act. Current law limited liability protection to landowners only if they charged no more than \$10 per acre per year for use of their agricultural property, like for hunting, fish-

ing, boating, camping, wildlife viewing, or recreational farming and ranching activities. SB 931 changed the law so a landowner who is leasing his agricultural property to a person for hunting and fishing has liability protection under the act, regardless of how much the landowner charges.

HB 1923

Authored by Rep. Dale DeWitt and Sen. Ron Justice

HB 1923 creates the Emergency Drought Relief Fund, a continuing fund that can receive monies from all types of sources. The fund has received an initial appropriation of \$3 million. If the Governor declares emergency drought conditions, the Emergency Drought Commission will be formed, consisting of the Directors of the Conservation Commission, Water Resources Board and the Secretary of Agriculture. The commission will determine how funds will be spent, subject to the approval of the Governor. The fund will be for drought-response activities that may include: pond cleanup and construction; water conservation methods in production agriculture; water for livestock; rural fire suppression activities; red cedar eradication; soil conservation; emergency infrastructure conservation and measures; and any other drought response activities identified by the commission.

SB 89

Authored by Sen. Roger Ballenger and Rep. Paul Wesselhoft

SB 89 increases the fine from \$200 to an amount not to exceed \$400 for dumping trash on public or private property, and the person ticketed is responsible for any required court costs.

HB 1740

Authored by Rep. Harold Wright and Sen. A.J. Griffin

HB 1740 institutes stricter penalties for violations of the Oklahoma Scrap Metal Dealers Act. Effective Nov. 1, scrap metal dealers must have a special license issued annually by Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Applicants must provide a full set of fingerprints for a national criminal history record check, along with detailed information on the application.

HB 2055

Authored by Rep. Mike Jackson and Sen. Brian Treat

HB 2055 provides a complete overhaul of the Administrative Procedures Act. The bill requires oversight and legislative approval of agency rules.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Online

Monitor the latest Farm Bureau and agricultural news and information online at okfarmbureau.org.

Currently online:

• **Agricultural News** – Oklahoma Farm Bureau features a new agriculture-related story every day on its site. Read about both AFBF and state Farm Bureau news by visiting the homepage.

• **OKFB Harvest Watch Blog** – The second annual OKFB Harvest Watch blog season is underway. Visit www.okfarmbureau.org and click on the OKFB Harvest Watch link to follow the six farm families.

www.okfarmbureau.org



Farm Bureau pleased with legislative session

Legislation involving water, animal welfare, agritourism and property rights were all successfully passed with the support of the state's largest farm organization.

"We are extremely pleased with lawmakers passing measures on these critical issues for rural Oklahoma," said Mike Spradling, president of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau.

Leading the way early in the session was the issue of horse processing. Legislators passed HB 1999, which amends the Oklahoma Meat Inspection Act by allowing horses, mules or other equine to be transported, manufactured, processed, packed, sold or prepared in Oklahoma as long as the meat will be sold on the international market. The bill makes it unlawful for any person to sell, or have in their possession with intent to sell, any quantity of horsemeat for human consumption in Oklahoma.

Under Oklahoma law, horses are livestock, which are private property.

Farm Bureau, along with a coalition

of other agriculture groups, supported the legislation from the day it was introduced in session.

"Oklahoma livestock producers respect and care for animals," Spradling said. "This legislation provides a humane solution to the challenge of abandoned, abused and otherwise neglected horses."

On the last day of the session, legislators passed SB 965, which reorganizes the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. The bill provides more regional representation on the board.

SB 965 transitions representation on the nine-member OWRB – from one representative from each congressional district and four at-large positions, to one representative from nine geographic areas. The three Panhandle counties get one seat, as does Oklahoma County and Tulsa County, as those areas are the biggest water users in the state. The transition begins in 2014 and adds the requirement that one of the board members

be well versed in oil and gas production.

SB 965 addressed concerns about a lack of regional representation on the OWRB board of directors.

"We strongly support SB 965 because it provides a fair and balanced regional representation on the Water Resources Board," Spradling said.

Sandwiched between those two pillars of legislation were measures providing liability protection for agritourism venues (HB 1638), expanded hunting regulations for feral hogs (HB 1920), emergency drought relief (HB 1923), and a law to make it a felony for a second offense for cutting livestock fence (SB 708).

"Our success this year was a direct result of grassroots membership involvement," Spradling said. "We had county Farm Bureau leaders constantly meeting with their legislators, staying informed and connected. This all played a dramatic and important role in getting these critical issues passed."

OKFB Leadership Team conference set for July 12-13

Make plans now to join the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Leadership Team for the annual summer conference, July 12-13, at Rogers State University in Claremore.

The event will include workshops on Ag in the Classroom, women's heart health and social media. Attendees will tour Shepherd's Cross, a working sheep farm and Christian mission, and eat dinner at the popular Nut House.

Hotel accommodations for the conference are available at the Comfort Inn in Claremore. Those attending the conference should make their own room reservations no later than June 28 by calling (918) 343-3297 and using the code "OFB Women" to obtain the \$84/night rate.

For more information about the summer conference or for a registration form, please contact OKFB Leadership Team Programs



Director Marcia Irvin at (405) 523-2405 or mirvin@okfb.org.

Safety should be top priority during harvest time

With wheat harvest upon us, there's no doubt tractor, ATV and grain bin safety should be considered a top priority in Oklahoma's farming operations. Oklahoma Farm Bureau Safety Services Director Justin Grego said tractors are the leading cause of occupational fatalities in agriculture.

Tractors are being used in many capacities from planting to harvesting and each tractor sees an array of drivers behind the wheel, including those who might not be as familiar with the equipment as they should be, Grego said.

"Not everybody is trained on every type of equipment," Grego said. "Different tractors work in different ways, and I think that's

why people are hurt and killed on them."

ATV accidents also rank among the leading causes of death on Oklahoma farming operations, causing about 18 deaths annually in Oklahoma with a majority of those drivers being under 16 years of age. Grego said this is because ATVs are becoming more prominent in operations across the state, as well as lack of proper ATV training.

"Instead of hopping on a tractor to go do something, now we hop on an ATV," Grego said. "Whether we're going to fix fence or run cattle, a lot of ATVs are in use on the farms."

Grain bin engulfment is always a concern

when harvest approaches, especially when research shows only eight percent of grain bins in the United States are equipped with safety harnesses, Grego said.

"You need to make sure you have a harness or lifeline system attached to the center of the ceiling to prevent those individuals who enter the bin from being engulfed by grain," Grego said. "With entrapments like that, there's not a lot of time to get help for you before suffocation."

Harvest is always a busy and demanding time for farmers, but Grego said farmers should be aware of these hazards to ensure a safe harvest with as few injuries as possible.

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Emergency loans available for farmers and ranchers affected by tornadoes

Francie Tolle, executive director for the Oklahoma Farm Service Agency, announced emergency loans are now available to help farmers and ranchers recover from production and physical losses due to the recent tornadoes.

The Presidential Disaster Designation makes emergency loan funding available to affected individuals in Cleveland, Lincoln, McClain, Oklahoma and Pottawatomie Counties. Additionally, the contiguous counties - Canadian, Creek, Garvin, Grady, Logan, Okfuskee, Payne, Pontotoc and Seminole - also qualify for the emergency funding.

Eligible loan funds may be used to

restore or replace essential property and pay production costs associated with the disaster year. Applicants can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses not to exceed \$500,000. Effective June 1, the rate for these low interest loans will be 2.250 percent.

Producers must meet eligibility requirements and not be able to obtain credit from a commercial lender. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

For more information on the FSA Loan Programs, visit your local FSA County Office or online at www.fsa.usda.gov/ok.



OKFB is still accepting monetary donations for those affected by the recent tornadoes across Oklahoma. Donations can be sent to: Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation, 2501 N. Stiles Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Please specify that it is for tornado relief. Thank you for your support!



OKFB Executive Director Monica Wilke (left) and OKFB President Mike Spradling (right) accept tornado and storm relief donations from Kentucky Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company Executive Vice President and CEO Brad Smith and North Carolina Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company Executive Vice President Steve Carroll. Several state Farm Bureau organizations have donated money, food and supplies to the relief efforts in the past few weeks.