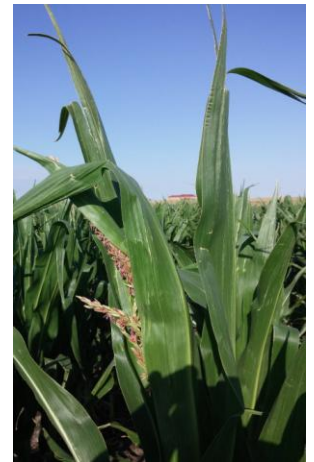


Food Plots:

July and August are traditionally the hottest months of the summer, and they also usually have the least rainfall. Farmers around the Midwest study the forecast, watch the clouds closely, and debate with their friends whether a 20 percent chance of rain means anything. This summer has been no exception, with adequate rainfall throughout the spring and into early July, and then no moisture whatsoever for several weeks. Add in a few days with temperatures above the 100 °F mark, and suddenly the corn is in distress.

Around the Lodge, we study our food plots carefully for signs of drought. Most farmers have crop insurance, so they are still compensated even if they harvest nothing. However, our food plots provide meals for our pheasants, and they cannot eat insurance payments, so our crops are very important. As July progressed with no rain and high temperatures, we began watering our food plots. When the tassels appear, production of ears will soon follow, so this is a particularly critical time in the development of our corn.

Of course, manual watering of corn and sorghum would not be feasible if we had 10,000 acres of corn, but our food plots each comprise three to five acres, which makes the watering process feasible. For areas in close proximity to a water source, we set up soaker hoses and sprinklers. Moving these daily allowed us to reach all areas of a food plot and preferentially water more heavily in sections that were drier. For more remote spaces, we acquired a 425 gallon tank and continuously filled it and then dumped the water into the food plots.



With all of these watering efforts ongoing, you can imagine our excitement at seeing weather forecasts with higher percentages of rain expected. At the end of last week, storms passed through but with only about one-quarter inch of rain. Then we learned that areas only about 30 miles away from the Lodge experienced severe hail, so we were glad that those storms missed us.

Then this week began with more rain in the forecast. We were again hopeful, and our wishes came true. In one day, we had about three inches of rain, and the next day we benefitted from another inch. With this moisture, we are virtually assured of fantastic corn and sorghum growth.

Now we can rest assured that our pheasants will have all the food they can possibly eat!

Lodge Update:

Our storage shed continues to progress. By next week the dog kennels should be completed. We will have 12 kennels, each with an interior space that is 3 feet by 5 feet and an exterior run that is 5 feet by 10 feet. Dog doors separate the interior and exterior spaces so the dogs can venture outside whenever they wish. The exterior runs are covered with an awning, and the floor of the interior portion is heated and thermostatically controlled to ensure the dogs are always comfortable. Each kennel is equipped with an automatic watering dish.



The newest member of our hunting team, Tucker, is due back from training in three weeks. The trainer indicated that Tucker has been a shining star in the program, so we are looking forward to hunting with him this fall.

Pheasants Forever:

At the Innovation Center in Brookings, South Dakota, Pheasants Forever has opened a regional headquarters in our fine state. Dwaine Chapel, Executive Director of the Innovation Center says "Pheasants Forever will provide enhanced opportunity to connect with campus research associated with biosciences. Research partnerships provide solid connectivity between faculty while providing intern and career opportunities to students."

In other news, the annual field report on Pheasant Nesting Habitat Conditions is now available at <http://PheasantsForever.org>, and the Hunting Forecast will be released in September. For members, the Forecast should be emailed directly to them.

Prairie Puzzle:

The answer to last month's question about states that permit open carry of firearms was Utah, Alaska and North Carolina. Unfortunately none of our hunters identified the correct answer. However, we were basing our information on a "carry-friendly" map that indicated both Illinois and South Carolina (as well as some other states) did not permit open carry. As these laws frequently change, the correct answer may be a moving target.

August question: ***According to the GFP, which area of South Dakota had record June rainfall that may have destroyed pheasant nests?***

- a) southeast b) northeast c) northwest d) southwest

Please submit your answer by August 15, 2014 to be included in the prize drawing for a free Dakota Prairie Lodge & Resort hunting hat. Responses will be accepted via mail, phone, or email. Good luck!