

# Southwest Family Farms News

## SOUTHWEST FAMILY FARMS Southwest Family Farms News

### Another Year In The Books

As 2008 wraps up and another year begins, we would like to thank everyone who played a role in making the last year possible. We have the opportunity to work with the best landowners, lenders, employees, and vendors in the area. As you all know farming in southwest Kansas can be quite a challenge. Rainfall was well under average and wind was in abundance. 2008 was known as “the year of the unknown.” Are grain prices going to remain high until harvest? Are input prices ever going to fall? Will it ever rain? Will it ever dry out? These are all questions we encountered throughout the year. Overall, 2008 was a good year. Dryland crop yields were very low, (many did not harvest any wheat or milo) but our irrigated corn turned out well. The 2009 wheat crop is off to a great start, thanks to some greatly needed fall rains. We are excited to see what the new year will bring. We would like to thank you for allowing us to work with you again in 2009!



Reiss Family

### Rain, Rain Come Our Way!

2008 started as one of the driest years on record. According to the National Weather Service, this was the driest January through June period. Morton county received just 2.03 inches of rain. July 2007 through June 2008 was also the second driest 12-month period since 1911. It was drier this year than it was in the “Dirty Thirties.” Farming practices such

as no-till, strip till, CRP, and irrigation helped keep us from experiencing the blowing dirt. Average rainfall for our area is 16.” We ended the year receiving about half of our average thanks to 4-5” of rain in October. This much needed rain helped the 2009 wheat crop get off to an optimistic start!

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## '08 IS GREAT...BUT 80 IS GREATER!

This past September, Kathryn (Grandma Kat) turned eighty years old. We had a wonderful time with many family and friends that were able to join us to celebrate. We had a weekend full of parties, picnics, and barbeques. The Kismet Little Worlds Fair also was taking place during the Labor Day Weekend. Kat's grandkids cleaned up the 1963 Nova SS, made signs, and entered Kat into the parade. The theme for the parade was "'08 Is Great" and the "float" won first place!



We are so grateful for everything that Kat does on the farm. She is always available to run to town for parts or to deliver meals to the field. She is very involved

Kat, grandkids, and great-grandkids in the prize winning float

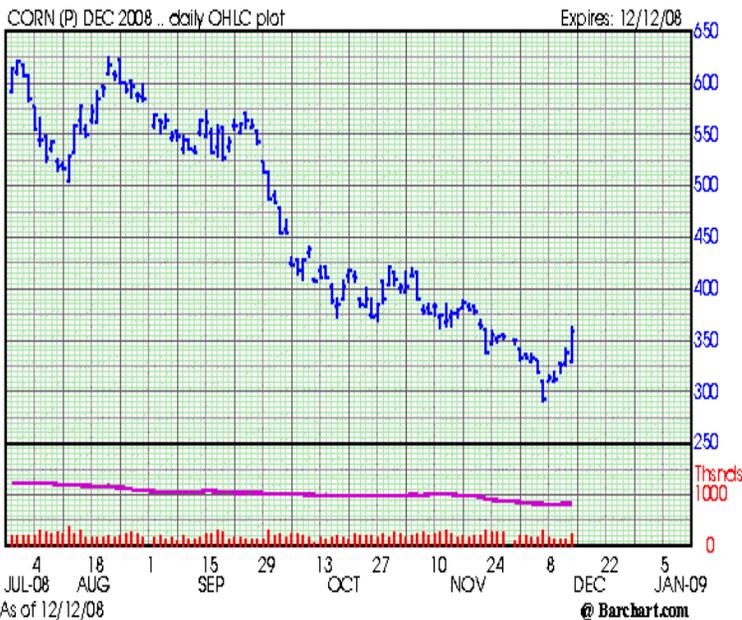
in the day-to-day activities and always has some wisdom and guidance to share!

### MARKETING REPORT

Never would we imagine that a year that brought \$7 corn would be such a challenge. When corn reached its high for the year, many speculated that it would go higher! When the economic recession began, it was too late. Many lenders were unwilling to loan money to grain merchandisers because of the volatility in the market. It was difficult to find vendors willing to forward contract corn. Before crops were ready to harvest the once "Bullish" market was moving downward daily. Irrigation expenses sky rocketed this growing season and in the midst of one of the driest growing seasons on record, it seemed there

was little to no hope for our dryland crops. We were unable to forward price our dryland production because of the low amount of precipitation. It is unknown what kind of yields to expect (if any) until late in the growing season.

We have started to see some inputs coming down in price. The economy has led to the reduction in the commodity prices. Fuel and fertilizer look to be lower than forecasted, but many other inputs (seed, chemical, insurance, etc.) have remained steady or increased.



December corn futures fell drastically before harvest. Un-priced grain was susceptible to market volatility.



Natural gas prices rose just as we began our irrigation season. Prices fell toward the end of the watering season on the futures but remained high locally.

# Operations

## 2008 Crop Production

Dryland yields were significantly lower due to the drought we experienced this year. We did not plant dryland wheat last fall, and it was so dry that many producers did not harvest the wheat they had planted. Our irrigated wheat averaged 52 bu/ac. Our cotton crop was destroyed due to 75 mph winds on Memorial Day Weekend. The crop was about 2" tall when the winds hit. Loose crop residue and neighboring fields blowing wiped out all six circles of cotton.

We replanted these acres to milo. Our corn yields ranged from 100 bu/ac on limited water to 250 bu/ac. The farm average came in at 215bu/ac, which was a very good yield considering the dry growing conditions. The double crop soybeans averaged 42 bu/ac. The irrigated milo averaged 110 bu/ac. The dryland milo

didn't fair as well. Yields were around 26 bu/ac. Most of the milo was in poor condition and blew over. We cut most of it flat on the ground. We were very lucky to be harvesting anything at all on the dryland acres.



2008 Fall Harvest went well. The rain we received fell right in the middle of harvest...but it was much needed!



# Operations

## 2008 Crop Production

Crop input prices have started to slide downward, following the lower grain prices. Fertilizer that was applied in August for the 2009 wheat crop was very expensive. The wheat crop is off to a good start but is in need of moisture. We have completed 95% of our strip-till fertilizer application for the upcoming corn and milo crops. We will start planting corn in early April and then beans and milo in May and June. Wheat harvest will start mid-June.



Fall Strip-Till. In one pass we create a seed bed while applying NH3 and Phosphorus

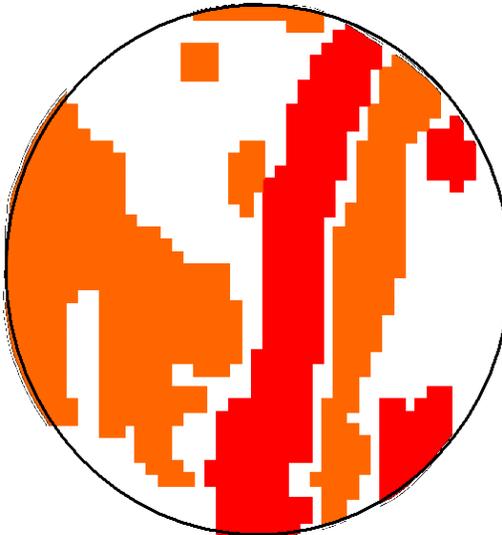


The implement on the left leaves a 6" wide tilled strips 30" apart. In the Spring we will use RTK Guidance to plant on top of the strips

## Investing in New Technology

With the advances in technology, you may have heard of variable rate applications. We have created different "zones" throughout all of our irrigated fields. To do this, we used a Veris CEC Cart. This 5' wide implement sends out electronic pulses in the soil and senses the resistance of the current. The computer in the cab records these readings and the information is downloaded to a computer. We can analyze the readings and create a map that will coordinate the different soil types throughout the field. We are basically mapping out different soil types and their ability to hold fertilizer. Sandy, lighter soils can't store as much fertilizer as the heavier clay soils. We soil sample

these zones every year and apply fertilizer rates to maximize the efficiency of each zone. As you can see in the map below, there are three different zones. If we variable rate apply our



phosphorus on this field, we will use less than half the fertilizer typically applied without sacrificing yield loss. The white zones are nutrient rich and don't require additional phosphorus, while the red spots are deficient and need 55 lb/ac. This technology allows us to cut our costs and conserve a valuable resource.

## Thank You!

**Again, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to work with you this last year. We look forward to the upcoming year and the challenges and opportunities that come with it. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us. If you plan on visiting the area we would love for you to stop by. Our office and tractor doors are always open.**

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Southwest Family Farms will strive to Meet Every Goal And Need with Respect, Understanding, Loyalty, and Enjoyment in producing agricultural products that will sustain profitable growth while maintaining good stewardship of the land.