

OPINION PAGE

All Aboard for the 2011 wheat harvest

This is it. The long-anticipated beginning of All Aboard Wheat Harvest, sponsored by *High Plains Journal* and DuPont Crop Protection.

Over the last three years, there has not been a more popular and anticipated program than All Aboard. We are thankful that you've participated and we couldn't be more happy to get started and introduce you to this year's correspondents.

On Page 1-B, you will find a story updating you on Jada Bulgin. If you will remember, Jada has been a harvest correspondent for All Aboard Wheat Harvest since the beginning. In those years, she and her husband, Leon, have gone from being key managers to being the sole managers of the Hoffmen Harvesting crew. Not to mention, they became parents to Kaidence, who is the fourth generation learning the harvesting way of life.

In addition you will read a profile by Scott Clark, who has been harvesting for 20 years. Scott contributed online last year and we are happy to have him updating us occasionally about his crew, American Quality Harvesting.

Next week, we'll reacquaint ourselves with Zeorian Harvesting. Jenna Zeorian has also been a correspondent since the first All Aboard Wheat Harvest three years ago. The Zeorian crew is a unique family operation that includes Dad and Mom, Jim and Tracy, and their all-daughter support team of Jenna, Taylor and Callie. Since we last visited the Zeorian crew, a lot has happened. Jenna has graduated from college and older sister, Jamie, has gotten married. This summer, the updates from the Zeorian crew will be a team effort between Jenna, Taylor and Tracy.

We also look forward next week to meeting Emma Misener. If you followed the All Aboard harvest online last year, you already know Emma. She contributed to the blog last summer and became famous for driving the combine with one hand and videoing with the other. Don't worry – she put the camera down when it was time to turn. Emma will be contributing full time this summer and we look forward to learning even more about

From the Editor
by Holly Martin



Holly Martin, editor, and her family live on a farm near Ford, KS. She has been with the Journal since 1994.

Emma and her crew, Misener Family Harvesters.

Over the coming weeks, we will be anticipating updates from all four of our harvest correspondents. There are many ways readers can follow the wheat harvest as it moves from south to north through the heart of wheat country. Weekly updates will be printed in *High Plains Journal*. But if you can't wait that long, you can follow online through the blog at www.AllAboardHarvest.com. The website has daily updates, photos and videos. This year will also feature more interaction on Facebook and Twitter, as well as shared videos on YouTube and photos on Flickr.

One of our goals with this year's All Aboard Wheat Harvest is to encourage readers to participate in the tour. We encourage you to send in photos of your own harvest, comment on the wheat harvest in your area, or ask questions. You should also keep your eyes open for giveaways on www.AllAboardHarvest.com. You never know what kind of good things we will give to our readers.

The bottom line is this: We hope that you are excited and anxious as we are to begin All Aboard Wheat Harvest in 2011. Join us on the tour and we promise that the summer will be full of not only wheat harvest coverage, but we'll have some fun along the way.

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Hello debt ceiling

Last week, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner announced the federal government had maxed-out its credit card, or what beltway bandits call the statutory borrowing limit. Since 2001, Congress has voted to raise the debt limit 10 times. Most recently, earlier this year, Congress passed a resolution to increase the national debt limit to \$14.294 billion – or more than \$46,000 for every person in the country. Along with the maxed-out credit card notice, Secretary Geithner also notified Congress that he would immediately halt issuing and reinvesting government securities in certain government pension plans as a way to delay default until early August.

While defense, Social Security and Medicare spending account for more than half of total federal spending, Vice President Joe Biden and Congressional leadership has turned to cutting agriculture subsidies, federal retirement programs, antifraud efforts, and the sale of wireless spectrum and government properties as the solution to the debt crisis. Democrats say Medicare reform is a nonstarter while Republicans oppose any tax increases. The House already passed Rep. Paul Ryan's 2012 budget proposal, a plan which cuts spending by \$6.2 trillion and brings the federal budget into balance by 2030. Last week the House was not in session and many members took a



By Seymour Klierly

lot of heat from their constituents regarding the 2012 budget plan to turn the Medicaid program into a state block grant.

In the Senate the "Gang of Six" has turned into the "Gang of Five." Since late last year, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) has met almost daily with a bipartisan group of senators to discuss next year's budget proposal and a long term debt reduction plan, similar to President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform group discussed. While Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL), Mark Warner (D-VA), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) plan to continue discussions with Conrad, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) announced last week he was no longer a member of the gang saying "there's mandatory spending that was not addressed to my satisfaction."

By August 2nd, members of

Congress and the president must agree to increasing the debt limit or the government will default. Bankers, business executives and foreign dignitaries warned lawmakers a default could trigger a global financial crisis, sending interest rates soaring, and making lending and borrowing of money much more difficult. A default by the federal government would throw a wrench into the value of U.S. Treasury securities, long considered the gold standard of safe investments.

As the federal government continues to borrow 40 cents for every dollar it spends, more emphasis will be put on increasing the debt ceiling while reducing long term debt. All aspects of federal spending remains on the table. Everything from the 0.8 percent spent on agriculture to the 33.3 percent spent on Social Security, 24.6 percent spent on Medicare, and 13 percent spent on Medicaid.

Cattle care top priority for cattlemen

From ranchers to veterinarians and everyone between, we all have a role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of animals. In the U.S. cattle industry, animal abuse will not be tolerated. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association has proactively developed multiple initiatives to assure industry wide adoption of sound animal husbandry practices. Caring for cattle is not just something we have to do, it's something we take pride in doing.

I learned from my father how to care for cattle just as many other ranchers did. However, the face of our industry is changing. We can no longer rely on the tradition of passing animal care principles on from one generation to the next.

That is why, as the oldest and largest national organization representing beef cattle producers, NCBA in 1987 developed the Beef Quality Assurance Program (BQA), which is funded by the Beef Checkoff Program, to provide an educational platform for the cattle industry. BQA is a successful voluntary program that helps to proactively identify and address areas of needed improvement in beef production. It works because of the responsibility and the ownership of the industry.

In the Gettysburg Address, President Abraham Lincoln said our nation's government was developed "by the people and for the people." I am not attempting to compare apples to oranges here, but history has proven when individuals take ownership, they take responsibility. BQA is a successful program "by industry, for industry" that should never be weakened by being misused or construed as the basis of a regulatory or government mandated program. BQA was designed and is regularly updated to provide flexibility to meet the diversity of the industry, including geographical needs, every producer sector or business model and all producer sizes. As technologies continue to develop, so have our programs.

Veterinarians, animal scientists and farmers and ranchers joined forces to develop more than 70 online training modules through the Animal Care Training Program (www.animalcaretraining.org), a cattle management training program, which is managed by the Beef Cattle Institute (www.beefcattleinstitute.org) at Kansas State University.

The Animal Care Training Program provides relevant training information for animal caregivers and is available in both English in Spanish to help us efficiently reach all individuals directly respon-

sible for caring for cattle. While training modules are available online and through other multimedia, we continue to utilize hands-on training.

BQA guidelines provide managers of beef and dairy operations tools to train all workers on appropriate cattle husbandry and management, which includes humane handling and euthanasia. The BQA Code of Conduct states that abuse of animals will not be tolerated. We believe any individual – from workers to guests – who witness willful animal abuse is responsible for making every effort to stop it immediately. Watching and doing nothing to stop abuse isn't acceptable.

BQA isn't our only tool. NCBA has worked with industry to develop and implement the Cattle Industry's Guidelines for the Care and Handling of Cattle. The guidelines provide a basis for care and handling in areas ranging from feeding and nutrition to disease prevention practices to euthanasia. NCBA's Cattle Health and Well-Being committee provides strategic guidance to develop policies to ensure cattle health and wellbeing issues are being addressed to maintain the health and quality of cattle care. The combination of these long-term proactive and responsible programs has made the United States a world leader in cattle health and wellbeing as well as contributed to domestic and international food security.

We will continue to work to expand and improve this educational reach. Unfortunately, there are individuals and organizations attempting to spread misconceptions about animal care. They haven't taken time to learn about the many initiatives and programs currently in place in the U.S. beef cattle industry to ensure animals are treated humanely. Rather than intentionally misleading consumers, media and all stakeholders, which actually demonstrates a total lack of care about the animals in front of them, it would serve everyone well if they would take a few minutes to learn about our industry's commitment to animal care.

NCBA members are passionately committed to providing the utmost care for our cattle and providing a safe, wholesome beef supply. We prove that each day. We will continue working to improve and address the human element in our diverse industry and never stop educating everyone handling and raising cattle.

–Elizabeth Parker, D.V.M., National Cattlemen's Beef Association chief veterinarian

Letters to the Editor

To readers-writers

Editor's note: Letters pertaining to agricultural subjects and issues are welcomed for use in these columns. Ideas, opinions and statements expressed are strictly the responsibility of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect the editorial opinions of the *Journal*. Letters will be reviewed for content and will be edited. Writers are urged to make their letters brief and constructive. Letters must be signed by the writer, and the writer's name will be used with the letter when it is printed, except in unusual circumstances. Writers are asked to give their address and telephone number, where they can be reached if necessary. Address letters to The Editor's Mail, PO Box 760, Dodge City, KS 67801. Letters may also be e-mailed to hmartin@hpi.com.