

Crews head south, wheat harvest begins in Texas

Sage ventures south



Photos by Sage Sammons.

Friday, May 28

Welcome all to Sammons Adventures. Currently we are in Holliday, Texas and just started cutting yesterday. But the adventure started way before we even left our home base of Cut Bank, Mont.

I started my journey two hours after my last final in Las Vegas, and made the trek from Vegas to Billings, Mont. I went to Billings to get my Commercial Driver's License. I met up with three other members of our crew there, and we spent a week going through CDL training. Literally, I had one day of summer before I was back at the books trying to cram for tests. After the long week, we all hurried home to Cut Bank to get ready to go, because the rumor was we were going to leave the next day. But because of the huge storm system Texas received, we were postponed until May 23.

Meanwhile, we spent our time washing, polishing trucks and tying up loose ends before we left. During one of the washing sessions, the exhaust from the pressure washer started the roof of our shop on fire, so we got a friendly visit from Cut Bank's finest volunteer Fire Department. Everything turned out fine as only part of the roof was damaged.

On our first day on the road to Texas, we made it from Cut Bank to Buffalo, Wyo., a record first day travel for Sammons Adventures. On our second day, we were in for a big adventure. The day started with the lead pick-up having overheating issues, but that is almost expected as it is pulling a 15,000-pound header through the rolling hills of Wyoming. Our first big traffic jam came south of Casper as we had to cross a narrow bridge. The widest load happened to be me at 14'8". I crawled across the bridge with only inches to spare on either side, but it seemed much closer.

After lunch, we were inundated by hail. It only lasted for ten minutes but the rainstorm chased us to the Nebraska border. By the time we got to Scott's Bluff, Neb., a 50 mile-per-hour quartering tail winds brought a dust storm that limited visibility to 500 feet.

The winds died down and we muscled through, but lost a truck driver along the way. A no cell policy while driving forced him to hit his own dusty trail. Dad started the policy after having too many close calls with cell phones, and during the convoy we all have 2-way radios in every vehicle to communicate.

Our third day had the possibility of being our best day of driving, but after 300 miles we had a starter go out in one of the trucks in Bryan's Corner, Okla. After four hours of refueling and repairing, we were back on the road, but only made it to Wheeler, Texas.

After a good night of sleep, we started what would be our last day on the road. But we were stopped only ten minutes after starting by Texas DOT at 6:20 a.m. He was very impressed by our crew and the shape of our equipment, and so was my dad. We did however have to drop our grain trailers, as we were a few feet over the legal limit. Three hours later we rolled into our destination, Holliday, Texas.

Thursday morning found the crew getting the combines ready, for what we thought would be sampling the crop on Friday. But after lunch, we tried the wheat and shocked the area as we were able to harvest 12.6 percent moisture wheat. We were only able to get off two truckloads to the elevator because it closed at 7:30 p.m., but didn't quit until all the trucks were loaded.

Sunday, May 30

This summer, I am a truck driver on the crew. We have a policy at Sammons Adventures that all truck drivers double check the three T's: Tarp, Tires and Traps. The three T's can be taken for granted and sometimes steps are skipped when people get into a hurry or over confident.

Yesterday morning I relearned the importance of the three T's, especially checking



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Jenna goes from England to Nebraska to Texas

Friday, May 28

My first blog post for the 2010 All Aboard Wheat Harvest Tour comes on my last night here at home in Nebraska. I've spent the past couple of days packing my things and am finally ready to hit the road and head south. So tomorrow is the big day—the official kickoff of my summer.

The summer has already started for Zeorian Harvesting, though. My parents, Jim and Tracy, have actually been at our first stop in Hamlin, Texas, for a week. Why am I not there? I spent two weeks in London, England, as part of an international communications class I took this spring. It was an amazing opportunity and an amazing, amazing trip.

Harvest doesn't wait for school trips, though. When I left, harvest preparations were just beginning—but when I returned, harvest was happening. It was strange and, I have to admit, pretty sad for me to miss the preparation stage of harvest and the first big trip south—it's one of the most exciting times of the year.

Tomorrow morning, me and my youngest sister, Callie, who stayed in Nebraska this extra week to finish school, will start our 700+ mile journey to Hamlin. My other younger sister, Taylor, leaves on a school trip to Washington, D.C., on Saturday, so she'll catch up with the crew in Texas in about a week and a half. That's all for now. Texas...here we come!

Saturday, May 29

Callie and I were serious road warriors today. We left the house this morning a little before 8 a.m., and arrived here just before 9 p.m., tonight. So the 767-mile trip took us almost exactly 13 hours.

The trip was uneventful, which is a good thing. Callie and I just jammed to a lot of good songs on the radio, had a day full of lovely conversation, and enjoyed the drive.

It's pretty crazy to think that this morning I woke up at home in Nebraska, still in my "normal life"—and tonight, I'm in the trailer house in Texas, living the "harvest life." Is it possible to have culture shock?

On another note, my parents were able to start cutting today.

Sunday, May 30

Yesterday, (May 29) marked the first full day of cutting for Zeorian Harvesting. We cut about 150 acres out of our first 300-acre field, which is a pretty good day for one machine. There are patches of both fairly poor and pretty good wheat in this field, making the bushels per acre range anywhere from 10 to 70. We expect it will average about 35 bushels per acre. The weight has been about 60 and the moisture is around 10 percent.



Last night, I watched the sun set over a wheat field for the first time in nine months. It was amazing! I finally felt like I was "home" again.

Monday, May 31

Happy Memorial Day! A sincere thank you from Zeorian Harvesting to all those who have served or are serving for our country and for our freedom.

As I mentioned in a previous post, my younger sister, Taylor, is currently on a school trip in Washington, D.C. Today, she and the rest of her high school band marched in the Memorial Day parade in D.C.—pretty cool if you ask me.

As for us here in Texas—we're getting back into routine and everything has been running smoothly.

Harvest is starting to pick up a little more around here; there are trucks other than ours hauling to the elevator and another crew pulled into town today.

The first week of June looks like it's going to be a hot one. The forecast shows nearly 100 degrees all week and over 105 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I think it's safe to say there will be no green wheat left after that.

Jenna Zeorian can be reached at jenna@allaboardharvest.com.



Photos by Jenna Zeorian.

Jada:

Look for Jada Bulgin's first harvest updates next week!

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Freezing temps cause alfalfa management decisions

Kansas

Freezing temperatures at this point in early May can injure the stems of alfalfa and create some management decisions for producers, said Jim Shroyer, Kansas State University Extension agronomist.

"When temperatures get into the 20s for several hours, producers can expect to see injury to stems. With the amount of growth currently on alfalfa, I would expect to see stems being crimped high in the plant canopy on stands injured by the freeze," he said.

Heat radiating upward from the soil can counteract the freezing temperatures to some extent and may help protect the plants, he added. However, windy conditions can increase the likelihood of potential injury.

If the tops of stems suffer freeze injury, the uppermost leaves in the canopy will begin dropping within a few days, Shroyer said. Beyond that, alfalfa plant sensitivity will depend on the amount of growth at the time of the freeze. Plants that are 12 inches tall are much more likely to experience significant damage than three-inch tall plants.

During the next few warm weather days, Shroyer advised producers to watch for:

1. New growth continuing from the tip. This means plants are recovering nicely. Take no action unless the stand is nearly ready to cut anyway. If the stand is nearly ready to cut, do so quickly before any leaf drop occurs.

2. New growth emerging as branches below the tip. This means the growing point was killed, slowing plant development significantly, but recovery is occurring. As mentioned above, take no action unless the stand is nearly ready to cut anyway.

3. Normal regrowth emerging from crown buds. This means the growing point was killed and very little new growth can be expected from existing shoots. Cut the stand as soon as possible if sufficient growth is available for economical harvest before new shoots get tall enough to be damaged by the harvest. Cutting or damaging new regrowth shoots will cause severe damage. If the stand is too short, just let the new shoots develop and expect to take the first cutting much later than normal.

When cutting freeze-damaged alfalfa, be sure to leave at least two to three inches of stubble. This will help encourage regrowth, Shroyer said.

If damaged stands are cut, producers should watch the regrowth carefully for further infestations of alfalfa weevil and possibly pea aphids, and treat immediately, he added.

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the traps. Shoveling grain isn't the best way to start your day, or anyone else's on the crew who has to help you with your mistake. It all worked out and everyone pitched in which made the clean-up go much quicker, but it was a very humbling experience and a reminder that details are key when on harvest. Our combine operators also have a policy too; keep the header in the wheat and butt in the seat.

Other than that the day went off without a hitch. We had a great day cutting as we were able to cut more than 450 acres, and that was including a couple moves. That is pretty remarkable when the guys that are running the machines basically just started learning this week. Our three

Case IH 7120's were able to keep the four trucks and our grain cart busy all day long.

As for the crop itself, it looks really good. It has a really good stand and in most spots has had a very good yield, I would guess the average for the area is around 40 bushels per acre. This is much needed since most of the area last year was subject to a huge frost storm that took out much of the wheat. Our farmer had a total loss and we didn't even cut here last season. The moisture has been very low, averaging around 11.5 percent most of yesterday. As I can tell from the road, this is very similar for everyone in the Vernon/Wichita Falls area of Texas.

Tuesday, June 1

Yesterday was Memorial Day.

A day to appreciate everything that everyone has done to protect our great country. This Memorial Day will be remembered for a while on Sammons Adventures Harvesting, and not because we were able to barbecue and play at the lake.

It started very unusual for eastern Texas; we didn't have to fight humidity and were able to get the combines rolling pretty early. There weren't any lines at the elevator and the combines were always in the wheat. Then one of our truck drivers decided to say, "Things are going too smoothly."

Almost as soon as he said those words, problems arose with the combines handling the terrain. One of our combines got stuck twice in sinkholes, and had to be pulled out by our grain cart. You will see this when you are

cutting around ponds (or tanks as they are referred to in Texas), but nothing shocked me more than when Dad got stuck at 4 p.m.

He dug the combine in to the top of the rim of the tire and bent the ladder. He buried the combine so bad that it snapped our towrope from the grain cart. Our farmer had to go get his big tractor and a steel cable to finally pull the combine out. Other than a bent ladder and some shot down pride, everything was fine, but we will be pulling mud out of the undercarriage until at least fall harvest. Everyone was relieved to see that Dad is human and may make a mistake or two.

All in all today was a good day, just memorable. We eclipsed 1,600 acres in two full days and two half days.

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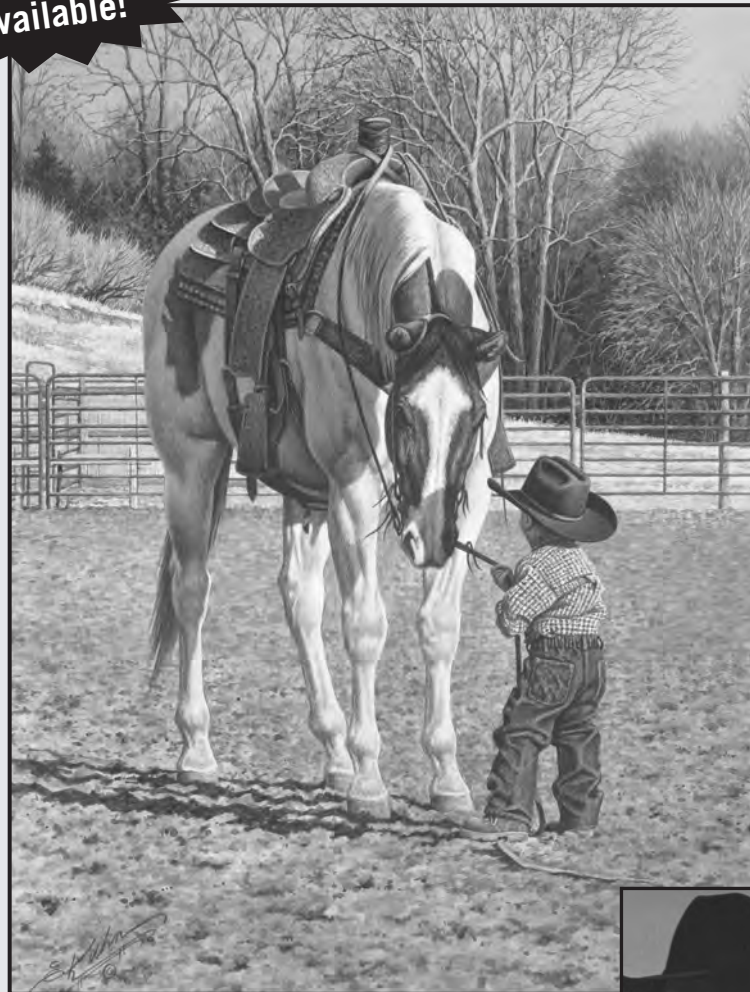


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