

WEST TEXAS Country Trader

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Abernathy
Weekly Review
The Canyon News

The Castro County News
The Clarendon News

The Lorenzo
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Plainview Daily Herald
Ralls Reporter-News

Thursday, May 5, 1994

The Slatonite
The Tulla Herald

Gin Scene

Agribusiness Profile...

By GORDON ZEIGLER
AgReview Writer

Cotton gin Co-Op sets a record in its 50th year of operation

PETERSBURG — In a slower, less complicated world, the cracker barrel at the general store was a good place to kick back and spend time listening to farmers' comment on the state of their agriculture.

That's not so any longer, however. Farmers these days don't have time to spare — especially in May when the critical window exists

AgReview

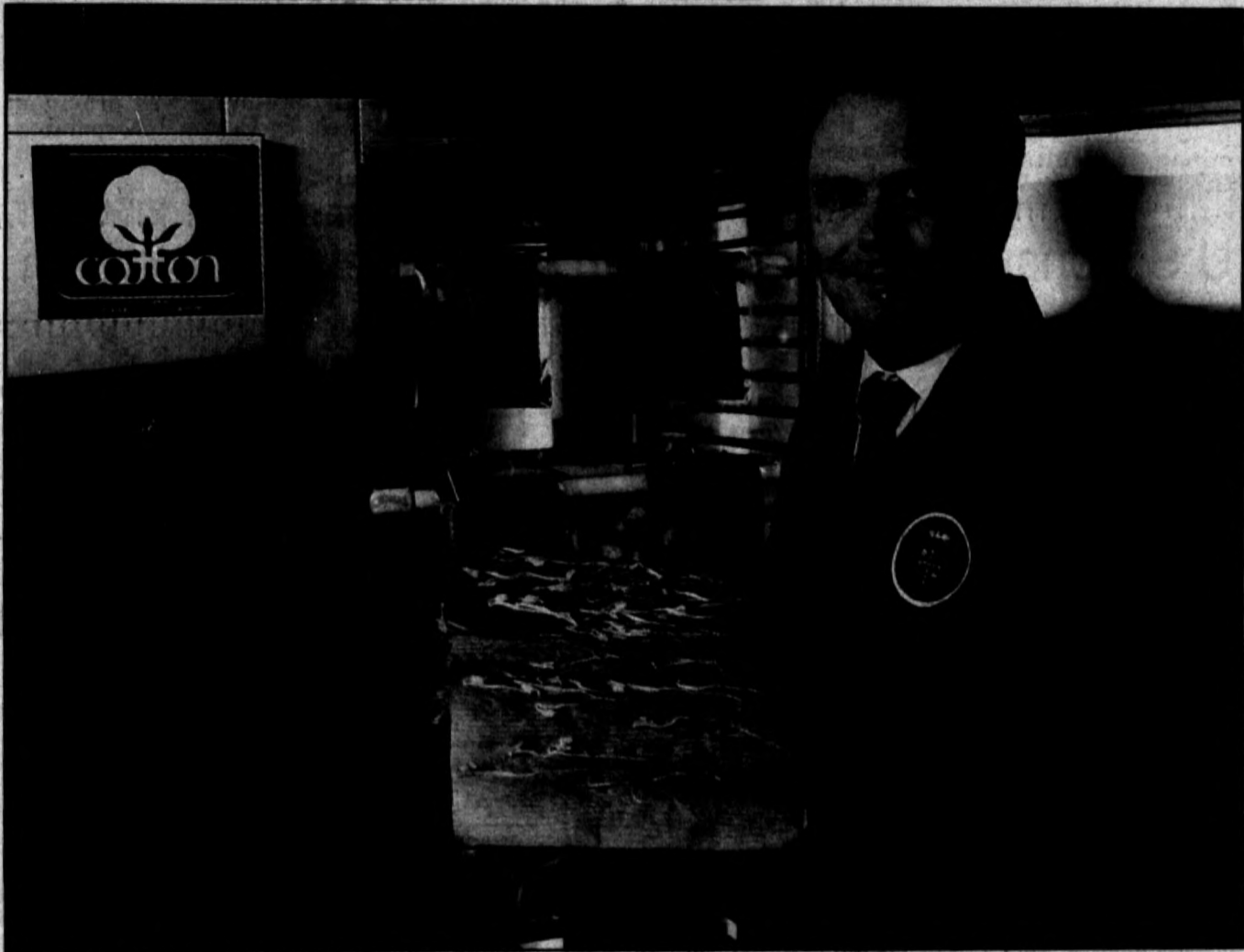
for putting seed in the ground in the nation's largest cotton belt.

The best source to measure the pulse of agribusiness today may be a favorite gathering spot, the local cotton gin office — one of the places where farmers are stopping to make final arrangements for planting seed this month.

A recent search for the "typical" cotton gin led to Petersburg Co-Op Gin, where things seemed unusually upbeat this week.

"We had an exceptional year last year," an optimistic gin manager, Paul Willis, said of the 1993 Petersburg area crop.

Willis' comment seemed to be an understatement, judging from the fact that last year's crop brought to the gin was so
See Petersburg, Page 7



Courtesy Tech Photo/Mark Mamawal

Cotton Study: Dr. Norman Hopper viewseed tests that help industry know which seed has high vigor.

Unlocking secrets of cotton...

By WENDY WALTON
AgReview Writer/Intern

LUBBOCK — Farmers know the importance of seed viability and vigor when it comes to producing top quality cotton.

Now, a test known as the Cool-Warm Index is available to farmers to help determine the quality

of cotton seed.

Dr. Norman Hopper, seed physiologist at Texas Tech University and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, explained how a seed vigor test gives an indicator of the strength of the seed and how it will perform under stress.

See Vigor, Page 2

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Vigor, from Page 1

"Germination or viability tests determine only if the seed is dead or alive," Hopper said. "However, vigor tests determine the ability of the seed to emerge when subjected to stresses such as temperature, soil moisture and disease pressure."

Hopper reported testing seed lots helps the farmer determine the best seed lot. By this method, the farmer can plant the seed with the highest vigor at the earliest possible time.

The Cool-Warm Vigor Index combines the germination results from the standard Warm

Germination test and a Cool Germination test. Once this value is determined, the seed lot is rated as excellent, good, fair or poor.

The equipment and supplies used to conduct the Cool-Warm Vigor Index are the same as those in a standard germination test. The data obtained from the two tests, a warm germination test (counted after four days) and a cool germination test, are used to calculate the CWVI.

Calculating the index of the test is the next step. Following the two tests, germination percentages are added together to give the

Cool-Warm Vigor Index level. Seed lots are then classified as excellent, good, fair or poor. A nomograph found on the seed vigor index brochure may be used to calculate the index.

The final step of the process is using the results.

The results interpreted correctly allow a grower to separate the seed lots according to vigor level.

The seed with the highest vigor level can be planted at the earliest possible planting date when less than optimum conditions may be encountered. The producer may follow with a lower vigor

level later in the season as soil temperature becomes warmer.

On 38 to 40-inch rows, three to four plants per foot produces an ideal population of 40,000 to 50,000 plants per acre.

The Cool-Warm Vigor Index was developed by and in conjunction with the following scientists: Norman Hopper; Gay M. Jividen, Cotton Incorporated; Robert B. Metzger, Texas Ag Extension Service; and James R. Supak, Texas Ag Extension Service. Funding was provided by Cotton Incorporated and Plains Cotton Growers.

(This story was

made possible via an ag communications internship program at Texas Tech

University and Reader's Digest.)



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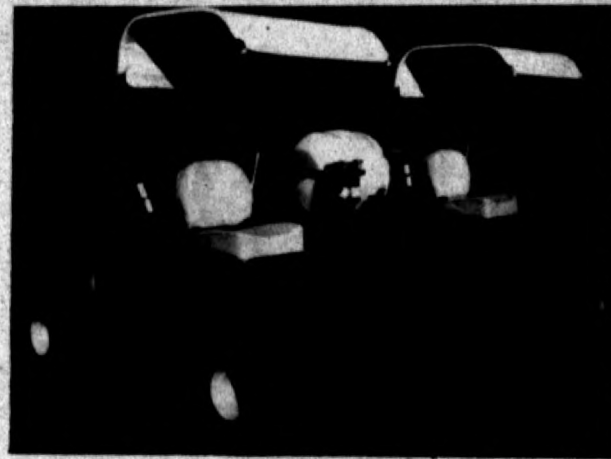
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U.S. consumption of soybean oil hits new all-time high

By MARGARET SCHERF
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumption of soybean oil in 1993-94 is expected to reach 13.2 billion pounds, an all-time record, according to the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service.

"Use of soybean oil in baking and frying fats has led the expansion," the service said this month in a situation and outlook summary on oil crops.

The department this month reduced its forecast of soybean exports by 15 million bushels to 590 million. Through March 31, cumulative exports of 440 million bushels were 156 million below last year's quantity.

Exports would need to average 7.1 million bushels per week for the remainder of the marketing year to reach the projected level. The average export volume last year from April through August was 8.3 million bushels per week.

"With slowing exports, yearend stocks of soybeans are projected to rise slightly from the March forecast to 160 million bushels," the report said. "Stocks as of March 1 dropped to 1,008 million bushels, down 208 million from the previous March."

The projection for the U.S. 1993-94 average farm price was lowered to \$6.40

to \$6.50 per bushel in April. The average farm price increased from \$6.70 per bushel in February to \$6.76 in March, "but prices plunged after U.S. farmers' 1994 planting intentions were released," the report said.

Tight domestic supplies of vegetable oils have swelled soybean and competing oil imports this year, mostly from Canada, it said. In the first four months, imports totaled 18.3 million pounds and significant amounts will likely continue, it said.

"Consequently, projected soybean oil imports were raised to 55 million pounds in April," the report said.

The monthly average soybean oil price increased from 28.85 cents per pound in February to 29.03 cents in March, it said.

"However, the market for soybean oil fell more than 1 cent per pound in early April upon hearing 1994 planting intentions," the report said.

The projected total 1993-94 soybean meal use was raised to 29.6 million tons in April, due entirely to a 100,000-ton increase in domestic demand.

Soybean meal production during October-February was 13.2 million tons, down slightly from 13.4 million a year earlier. "With crush expected to pick up for the remainder of the season, the April forecast for 1993-94 U.S. meal

production is up from last month to 29.6 million tons," the report said.

"Brazilian soybean growers this season pre-sold an unprecedented volume of beans to trading companies

and crushers," the report said. "Most of that was then sold to export early in the marketing year to take advantage of high Brazilian interest rates and currency exchange rates."

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Smoothing transportation focus of NAFTA actions

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States, Mexico and Canada have agreed to better coordinate their planning for transportation projects as the three nations mesh their economies under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The three countries' transportation ministers met here Friday to discuss the added burdens increased trade puts on roads, bridges, waterways, railways and border crossings. It was the first trilateral transportation summit, which will be followed by a meeting in Canada next year.

In a series of loose agreements, the secretaries committed to improved communication among federal, state and local governments in planning new transportation projects. They also agreed to explore new ways of financing border infrastructure projects, primarily by trying to tap into private money.

And, the United States and Mexico committed to find ways of alleviating congestion and pollution at the crowded border crossings along the southern border in part by using new technologies to speed inspections.

"In the past there

have been insufficient cooperative planning efforts involving all levels of government on both sides of the border," U.S. Transportation Secretary Federico Pena told reporters at a midday news conference. "The one thing we agreed to this morning is to ensure that all levels of government ... are all at the table planning and making decisions about these projects."

Said Mexican Transportation Secretary Emilio Gamboa Patron: "We are trying to make the red tape easier between the three countries."

An early test of the governments' new resolve will be a plan to build a fourth international bridge in Laredo, a project pushed by local officials and Gov. Ann Richards.

Mexico will consult with U.S. officials on the Laredo project to ensure that the infra-

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structure on its side of the border complements that of the planned bridge, Pena said.

That could lay the groundwork for joint planning on new border crossings. Gamboa noted that Mexico and the United States share 43 border crossings and are studying plans for 10 more.

"We firmly believe that in order for all of us ... to realize the benefits of NAFTA, the real work begins now," Pena said.

Canadian Transport Minister Douglas Young cautioned that many hurdles lie ahead.

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School balk at extending homestead exemption

DALLAS (AP) — Uncertain about the state's school finance situation and concerned they may be running out of taxing capacity, most school districts appear to be holding back on raising homestead tax exemptions.

As the deadline for increasing property tax exemptions approached Saturday, few local school boards had voted to boost their homestead exemptions above the minimum required by the state, according to the Texas Association of School Boards.

"We have not seen a large number of inquiries about increasing homestead exemptions this year," Dan Casey of the association told The Dallas Morning News in its Saturday editions.

The generous homestead exemptions that Texas homeowners enjoyed in 1991 and 1992 were lost in most

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districts last year after the Texas Supreme Court threw out the state's school finance law.

Voters refused to legalize the law in a statewide referendum on May 1, 1993. They rejected a constitutional amendment that would have preserved the county education district system that was used to distribute school funds.

The CED system gave homeowners a 20 percent homestead exemption on about two-thirds of the property taxes they paid.

On the remaining third, amounts varied depending on what the local school board approved, but in about three-fourths of the districts, it was \$5,000 — the minimum the state required.

After the law was thrown out and voters rejected the proposed amendment, the 188 CEDs in Texas were abolished and the local school boards' homestead exemption was extended to the entire property tax bill in each school district.

An analysis by the state comptroller's office released this week indicated that 272 of the state's 1,048 school districts give homestead exemptions above the state minimum of \$5,000.

Last year, local school officials complained they couldn't react to the reduced homestead exemptions because they missed the annual April 30 deadline for adjusting property tax exemptions.

But, a year later, few have increased their exemptions.

For example, the

Austin school board rejected the pleas of some homeowners last week and decided not to give any more than the state minimum.

Fort Worth school board members also decided to stay at the

minimum.

Rep. Libby Lineberger, D-Manchaca, chairwoman of the House Public Education Committee, said it is unfortunate for homeowners that so many voted against

the constitutional amendment, known as Proposition 1.

The net effect of the reduced homestead exemptions was that homeowners paid a greater share of school property taxes.

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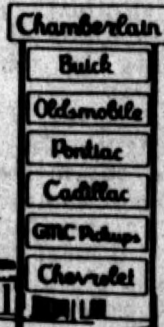


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Hopes for Plant Stress Lab in hands of Congress

By WENDY WALTON
AgReview Writer/Intern

LUBBOCK — The question of whether funding will be forthcoming for expansion of Texas Tech University's Institute for Plant Stress Research will be answered soon by Congress.

This month, Dr. Sam E. Curl, Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Dr. Robert C. Albin, Director of the Institute for Plant Stress Research and associate Dean for Research and Dr. Dick Auld, chairman of the department of Plant and Soil Sciences travelled to Washington to propose a budget of \$8 million for the project.

That trip follows the current halting of the project at an early stage in its development. To date, only a small greenhouse facility has been completed along Fourth Street on the Tech Campus. And, that facility is yet to be used.

Dr. Albin said the goal of the program involves developing an understanding of how plants grow and survive under certain conditions. The research also includes studying extreme temperatures and limited moisture conditions common across the Great Plains area.

Those and other selling points have been hammered to Congress in previous visits to Washington.

"Based on the testimony Dr. Curl gives before the Senate Appropriation Committee on agriculture, rural development and related agencies, the amount of money allotted for the research is decided," Albin said during an interview in March.

For 1995 and 1996 fiscal years, \$4 million is needed each year to finish the research project.

According to Albin, Congress has been supportive of the research program in the past. He feels the educa-

tional part of the program is very positive.

"The research emphasizes three main areas," Albin explained. "First, stress physiology is conducted to identify structural and biochemical mechanisms that display drought or temperature tolerance. Genetic enhancement is conducted to determine deoxyribonucleic acid sequences commonly known as DNA into test species or crops."

Albin said advanced production systems develop improved cultural practices to optimize soil fertility and ensure growers are available to the newest technology.

The cooperation of three agencies are involved in the support and research of the region's agricultural industry — The United States Department of Agriculture, Texas

Agricultural Experiment Station and Texas Tech University, all part of the Institute for Plant Stress Research.

Albin commented on the progress of the program over two decades.

The program began 14 years ago. In Phase I of the USDA plant stress and water conservation laboratory program, Tech received \$4 million. At this time, the construction of the head house and green house project began. This facility reached completion in the spring of 1993. The laboratory when finished will include offices for scientists, support staff, green houses and research equipment.

A brochure produced by the college of agricultural sciences and natural resources explains how Texas Tech University was chosen for the site of

the lab.

An area known as the Great Plains includes regions in the following states: South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. There are various crops grown across these states.

Lubbock has a climate ideal to grow all the crops found throughout the Great Plains area. Based on its climate and resources Lubbock has long been a favored site for the project, according to Albin.

"The overall main objective of the program is to reach the highest productivity level," Albin explained. "By using the funding and research opportunities the program is very positive."

(This story made possible by a grant from the Reader's Digest Foundation.)

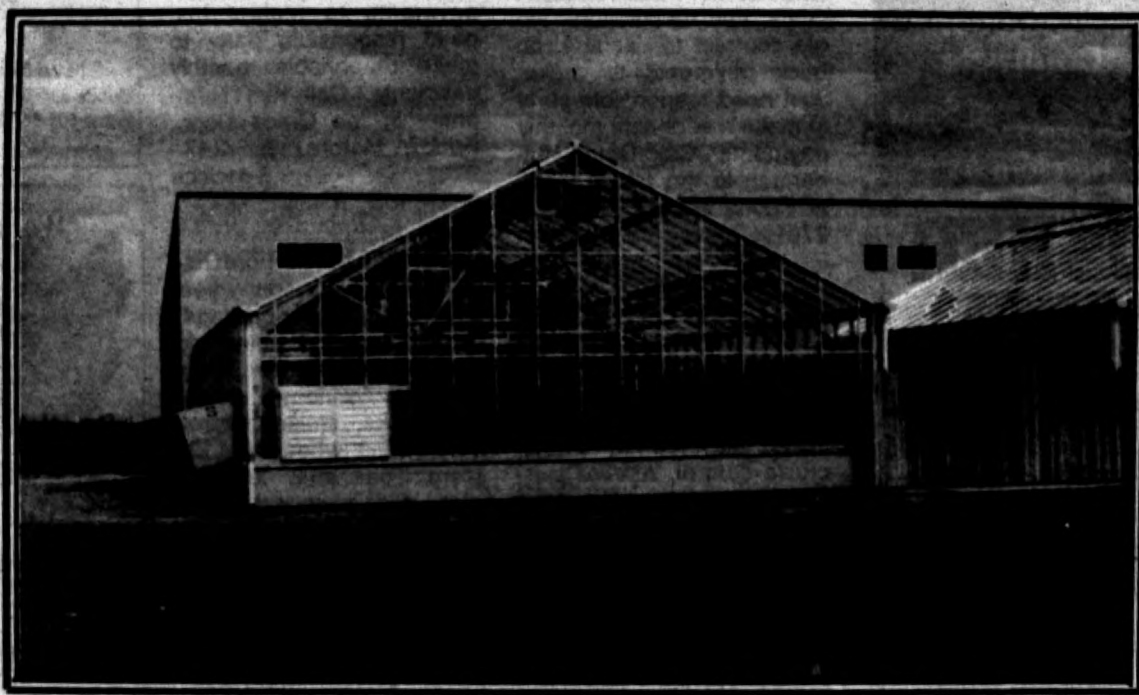


Photo By Wendy Walton

First phase:

The first phase of Texas Tech University's plant stress research facility could move forward if Congress approves appropriations for \$4 million in 1995 and another \$4 million in 1996. The Texas Tech College of Agricultural Sciences sent an entourage of administrators to Washington this month to argue the case for a speedy re-instatement of funds for the project.

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Imported 'possum' threatening U.S. animals?

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Agriculture Department is seeking all brushtail possums imported from New Zealand because of a high risk they may spread bovine tuberculosis to U.S. animal populations.

"The presence of New Zealand brushtail possums in this country is a major threat to the health of domestic animals and wildlife in the United States because these animals are known to be highly infectious carriers of bovine tuberculosis," said Donald Luchsinger, acting deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"We are taking emergency steps to locate all of these

imported possums to prevent them from establishing a population here that could become a wildlife reservoir for bovine tuberculosis," he said.

Six shipments of almost 100 brushtail possums each have been imported into the United States since 1991, according to export records provided by the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

"While some of the

imported possums have been moving in trade channels to menageries and zoos, it is believed that there is a growing U.S. market

for the possums as pet animals," the department said.

A USDA risk assessment earlier this year estimated that there is

a very high probability that at least one possum per shipment is infected with bovine tuberculosis.

The brushtail pos-

sum's cellular immune system is virtually ineffective against the mycobacterium that causes bovine tuberculosis.

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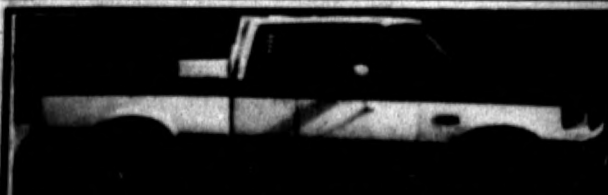
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PETERSBURG, from Page 1
 year's crop brought to the gin was so exceptional, in fact, that it broke all records at the gin. It reported the best net profit in its history — \$1,310,000 — after ginning 44,000 bales. That topped the previous record of 35,000 by almost 30 percent.

The Co-Op reported to its membership last week that turn out and grades last year were near perfect.

Turnout averaged over 24 percent, which is 2-4 percent above normal. Grades were good for the area — of 44,000 bales ginned, more than 75 percent were in grades 11 and 21, the highest the USDA classing office can give.

Crops were especially

bountiful in areas where farms had strong irrigation, with some 2-bale-per acre yields reported.

This combination of good weather, and good cotton helped create a dream year for the Co-Op, the best ever year coinciding its golden anniversary.

Current activity around the gin includes moving lots of cotton seed to customers.

Despite the fact you might think the gin would be virtually inactive this time of year, quite the contrary.

"We are currently busy selling planting seed, preparing to conduct annual gin repairs over the next few months," said Willis.

Willis has some time sizing up the prospects

for next crop year, and it seems like, as usual, it will all be up to the weather.

A profile of Petersburg Co-Op's customer base shows most to be either fully or partially irrigated. About five percent are strictly dryland.

Though Petersburg has received a welcome 2.5 inches of rain in April, that's not quite enough to get dryland cotton off the ground.

For irrigated farmers, the story is a little brighter.

"For the guys who pre-watered, it was ideal," said Willis. "What we want now is for it to clear up long enough for us to plant."

Petersburg's Co-Op owes its beginnings to a town meeting May 23, 1944, in which five men signed on as directors to establish a gin. All deceased now, the board included R.E. Wilson, chairman; W.M. Finkner, E.F. Saffle, W.R. Mosely and J.R. Wommack.

The Co-Op purchased a used gin plant on the city's main street, operating in the center of town until old wooden structure later burned. Its location just north of Higginbotham Bartlett Lumber has remained vacant ever since as the gin moved to its current location on the northeast edge of the city.

Willis said improvements through the years took a quantum leap in the past decade.

"We rebuilt our cur-

rent gin from the ground up, using it for the first time in crop year 1986," Willis said. "The gin then added double lint cleaning, and more recently triple lint cleaning to give customers the best quality fiber for marketing."

Only about 10 percent of gins are equipped with double or triple lint cleaning capability, claims Willis.

Willis, a Petersburg native, returned to manage the gin in 1983. The Petersburg High School graduate received a bachelor's degree at West Texas State University in 1967 then joined Holly Sugar Corp. and was transferred to California. He later entered the cotton ginning business in California before returning to his home town.

Changes Willis notes over his career so far include a transition to

bigger, higher capacity equipment in the gin.

On the production side, Willis said one major change in harvest has included the use of burr-extracting strippers, which result in removing part of the trash, creating a cleaner product when it reaches the gin.

Grading changes within the USDA have worked to the advantage of cotton farmers, believes Willis. The new grading scheme does not penalize bark content as it did in the past. In a year of bad weather and high bark, that change in grading will make a significant difference to farmers.

As seed sales have kicked off, Willis says he notes a strong shift toward two of the newer varieties — the new HS200, and three-year-old HS26. HS 200 is a short season, and 26 is longer season. Both are bred to yield higher strength fiber

and better grades than their predecessors.

Other seed in demand at Petersburg include All Tex varieties like Atlas, Willis said. Paymaster HS145, long the seed of choice in the area, is no longer the top seller.

Several new varieties have become available to farmers this crop year, and Willis expects customers to try them on a small scale, allocating a few acres to prove their yield and quality.

Willis says he is waiting to see how the new HS varieties — which are built to withstand the rigors of the short growing season in the High Plains region — perform in a bad year. The track record so far has been built on good years, such as last year, and he expects them to prove themselves even more capable of performing in the face of rougher weather scenarios.

Friskup in auction championships

CANYON — Steve Friskup, a Canyon resident and prominent auctioneer in the West Texas/Eastern New Mexico region, will be among 30 of the nation's best livestock auctioneers who will compete June 10 in the World Livestock Auctioneer Championship.

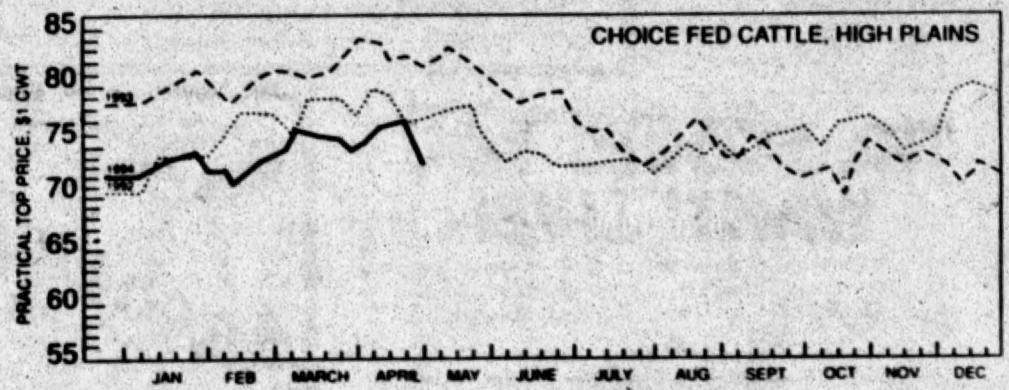
Friskup won a berth in the national contest after judging in the video preliminaries.

Contestants will

be scored on vocal clarity and quality, ability to keep the sale moving and bid-catching ability.

Friskup is associated with Clovis Livestock Auction, Inc., and Portales Livestock, Inc.,

Friskup is one of only three Texans to make the cut. Also in the contest is Jim Knopp, an Amarillo-based auctioneer who is associated with Knopp Livestock in Syracuse, Kan.



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The above report reflects market activity through Apr. 29.

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Carlos Acoustic Electric Guitar, \$200.00. 293-0211.

Black & White prom dress for sale. Size 6 worn once. 655-9462.

Bahamas Cruise. 5 days/4 nights. Under booked. Must sell \$279/couple, limited tickets. 407-767-6100, ext. 6205. Monday-Saturday. 8:00am-9:00pm.

Bech trumpet TR 300 with case. \$200.00. Hammon Piper II organ with bench and music. \$350.00. 655-1822.

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COUNTRY LIVING. State Owned Repo Land (Randall County). 4% simple interest. \$105 per month. 5.062 acre home site (lakeside estates) with well and septic. 6 miles north of Canyon off 87-60 and I-27 on Bell Street (paved). Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. 1-800-275-7376 (Agent).

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