

By Jan Rahn

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It was 107° on Monday of last week. On Tuesday, June 19 it dropped to 96° before beginning to climb again, and on Saturday the temperature spiked to 102°.

Farmers in Perkins County have their eyes on the skies. There has not been measurable precipitation for weeks.

However, there is hope. According to Extension Educator Robert Tigner of Chase County, “We could be okay” if the dry pattern ends by mid-July. Tigner had a recent conference call with Nebraska’s state climatologist Al Dutcher who indicated farmers could end up with average dryland corn yields—but it needs to be soon.

Tigner said corn prices strengthened in the last 10 days due to weather east of here. In his home state of Iowa, which produces 25 percent of U.S. corn, severe drought creates a more fortunate scenario for Nebraska producers.

“Nebraska is in for a ride as far as prices,” he said.

Jeff Wallin, local agent for Western Insurers, said it’s hard to believe there can be such a change from one year to the next.

“This heat and lack of rain is taking its toll on the crops and pastures,” said Wallin. “Irrigators are running as much as they can to stay on top of watering and the dryland is showing signs of stress earlier (during) each day that we miss a rain.”

Nebraska is not the only state in a predicament. Hot weather patterns are being reported across the country by the National Weather Service (NWS) —some noted as “exceptional drought” in areas of the southeast such as Georgia.

Records are being broken, crops are stressed, and the state’s residents are suffering under intense heat and lack of moisture.

“Dryland needs help, said Tigner, “and 110 to 112 degree temperature is not going to help.” Though it’s hard to predict due to varying soil types, he said it’s close to being too late for corn in Dundy County if rain isn’t received in a week or so. For Chase County and areas of Perkins County it could be a bit longer, but not much, said Tigner. Venango is pretty much out of time, he indicated.

Last year’s total rainfall on June 25 recorded by Adams Lumber in Grant was 17.51 inches—this year’s total so far is only 2.37.

Most of western and north central Nebraska is suffering a “moderate drought” according to U.S. Drought Monitor data released by the NWS. Locations across western portions of Garden County are experiencing “severe drought” conditions, according to the monitor.

U.S. Climate Analysis—May

The average temperature for the United States during May was more than 3° F above the long-term average, making it the second warmest May on record.

The month’s high temperatures also contributed to the warmest spring, warmest year-to-date, and warmest 12-month period the nation has ever experienced since record keeping began in 1895.

Twenty-six states had May temperatures ranking among their 10 warmest. The first five months of 2012 have also become the warmest January through May period on record for the contiguous United States, with temperatures 5° F above the long-term average.

This was over 1° F warmer than the previous record set in 2000.

Twenty-nine states, all east of the Rockies, were record warm for this five-month period, and an additional 14 states had temperatures for the period among their 10 warmest.

These warmer than average temperatures combined with ongoing drought and windy conditions create ideal wildfire environments.

Additionally, warm temperatures so early in the growing season promote an early emergence of plants and crops along with the pests and weeds that plague them.

This vast departure from normal temperatures is stressing every system from water supplies to energy management and more.

These climate statistics are part of the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) monthly climate report for the United States, which describes the temperatures of the nation as well as the precipitation conditions. This monthly analysis is part of a suite of climate services NOAA provides government, business, and community leaders so they can make informed decisions.