OKLAHOMA **CROP WEATHER SUMMARY**

1999 CROP WEATHER REVIEW

Burt Bartlett

January: Mild, wet weather helped wheat to maintain its good condition rating. Temperatures were above normal for the 9th consecutive month while precipitation was greater than average for the 4th consecutive month. Southern Oklahoma received less rainfall than the rest of the State which put a strain on wheat, hay, and pasture supplies. Fluctuating warm/cold, dry/wet weather caused stress-related problems for young calves.

February: One of the warmest February's on record stimulated growth of wheat and many native grasses. Only on one day (February 12th) did all Mesonet stations record minimum temperatures lower than 32 degrees. Soil moisture was predominately short across southern Oklahoma. The warm weather reduced the need for already short hay supplies. Wheat began to joint earlier than usual so cattle were beginning to be removed from wheat pasture.

March: Heavy snowfall, measuring as much as 22 inches, blanketed northern Oklahoma and curbed insect infestations on wheat and alfalfa crops. Temperatures warmed during late-month which improved wheat growth and condition. Some wheat in the Southwest district began to head by the end of the month. Warm season grasses began to break dormancy in western Oklahoma. Ample moisture caused cool season grasses to show marked growth.

April: Cool temperatures and mostly adequate soil moisture aided the development of wheat heads. Some wheat in southern Oklahoma began to enter the soft dough stage by the end of the month. Corn planting was nearly finished but planting of all other row crops had only begun. Many ranchers stopped supplemental feeding of livestock because of the pasture growth and green-up. Ticks appeared earlier than usual on cattle and horses in the South Central district.

May: A devastating tornado outbreak on May 3 and 4 killed at least 44 people and damaged several farm structures. Researchers clocked winds at a record-high 318 mph. Frequent rainfall and abundant cloudiness held temperatures down. Wheat harvest began on May 21st in Cotton county. Root rot disease and cheat pressures lowered the quality in several counties. Forage supplies were still short in the south where last year's drought continued to show its affect.

June: Continued wet weather kept wheat harvest one week behind the 5-year average. Several farmers expressed concern that wheat might suffer from sprout damage since fields were too wet to harvest the crop. Early squaring was reported on cotton. Grasshopper populations plagued southern Oklahoma pastures. Moderate to heavy insect infestations troubled livestock in southern areas of the State.

July: A late-month heat wave caused soil moisture supplies to dwindle to their lowest level in nearly a year. Temperatures hit 109 degrees at several western Oklahoma towns on the 30th. Some farmers began early preparations for planting the new wheat crop. Row crop and pasture conditions slipped because of the hot, dry weather. Grasshoppers remained troublesome in southern Oklahoma. Flies and ticks were moderately heavy across most of the State.

August: Hot, dry weather stifled growth and development of many dryland crops, especially across southern Oklahoma. Triple digit temperatures were present somewhere in the State on every day in August. Guthrie recorded the highest temperatures with 111 degrees on the 27th. Most of the corn in the Southwest district was plowed up because of the drought. Many herds were culled because of the lack of adequate pastureland.

September: Rainfall during the second week of the month improved conditions for wheat planting and row crop maturity. Wheat seeding approached the halfway mark by the end of the month. Cotton and peanut harvest commenced in southern Oklahoma while corn harvest was rapidly coming to an end. Kenton experienced the first freezing temperature of the season on the 29th with an overnight low of 29 degrees.

October: Scant precipitation, especially in southern Oklahoma, caused wheat pasture to slip to poor-to-fair condition but allowed excellent harvesting weather for row crop producers. A "million dollar" rain which occurred during the last weekend of the month saved many wheat fields from drought across the state. Four small tornadoes struck during this storm, raising the number to a record 140 for the year. The previous record of 107 was set in 1957.

November: Exceptionally warm weather and below normal rainfall boosted row crop harvest well ahead of the 5-year average. Weather conditions helped produce an upsurge in greenbug and aphid infestations on wheat and hay acreage and many growers applied pesticide applications. Cattle producers in western Oklahoma were fighting sickness in stocker cattle because of dry, dusty conditions.

December: Lack of precipitation during the last three weeks of December resulted in dwindling soil moisture supplies. Wheat slipped from fair-to-good condition at the beginning of the month to only fair condition by the end of the month. Mild weather was beneficial for cattle but also aided in the increase in greenbug populations. Ranchers in western Oklahoma with no wheat pasture were well into their hay supplies.

OKLAHOMA ANNUAL PRECIPITATION, 1920-1999

MEAN PRECIPITATION = 34.23