Drought predicted for great plains

TEXARKANA, Tex. — What regional fluctations in weather are on tap for the near future?

Next summer may see another drought in the Great Plains as severe as the 1980 summer's, and it could be even more destructive in the Corn Belt.

The West, too, may be drier than normal next summer, but the Ohio River Valley may have a wetter than usual spring.

The southern Plains should have good weather in June for harvesting the winter wheat but significantly lower rainfall in May — not good for filling out the grain

These predictions come from the Climate/Food Project at the University of Wisconsin.

Reid Bryson, director of the Institute for Environmental Studies there and head of the project, says the predictions have a 65 percent chance of being accurate

The Climate/Food Project prepares long-range forecasts to help predict famines around the world It forecasted a year in advance the 1980 drought and the severe cold of this winter in the East.

"Our predictions are based on physical forces as far as we know them and the thermodynamic effects of carbon dioxide and other particles in the atmosphere which we link up with statistics, recorded climate patterns, or how the atmosphere has responded to these physical forces in the past," Bryson explained "We may finally be getting a handle on long-range forecasting."

Waiting for rain, a Texas farmer looks over his drought-stricken cotton fields. Water shortages plagued the fragile ecology of the Great Plains for the past few years and continued this winter. Forecasters predict last summer's severe drought will be matched again this year.

Lime soils to their safety zone

LANCASTER — To what pH should you lime your soil? Fortunately plants have a wide pH tolerance range. However, the best pH range will vary somewhat with the crop to be grown and soil type.

Most crops do best on well-limed soils. Alfalfa is very sensitive to soil acidity and produces best within a pH range of 6.5 to 7.0. Other forage legumes such as the clovers, birdfoot trefoil and the vetches are somewhat less sensitive than alfalfa to soil acidity. These legumes do well within a pH range of 6.0 to 7.0.

Small grains are generally considered to have a wide range of tolerance to soil acidity. Oats seems to produce well as a pH as acid as 5.5 or on well limed soil. Wheat does well within a pH range of 6.0 to 7.0.

Barley, however, is almost as sensitive to soil acidity as alfalfa and should be grown on soil limed to pH 6.5 to 7.0.

Corn also has a wide range of tolerance to soil acidity. Although, on many soils, it will produce well on soils as acid as pH 5.8, it is better to keep corn land above pH 6.2 for good weed control.

Consideration should also be given to soil texture. In general, sandy soils should not be limed as heavily as loams or clay loams. Micronutrient deficiencies may be a problem on sandy soils when limed to pHs above 6.5.

There are some acid loving plants. Soils for blueberries, rhododendron and azaleas very rarely need to be limed. These soils should be kept within a pH range of 5.0 to 6.0.

Whatever crop you are growing, lime the soil to the safety zone. Don't shoot for the razor's edge Lime at least to the middle of the desirable pH range. By liming to the high side, you can wait several years before reliming. Your liming practice is no place to try to economize.

FFA teams compete in athletic tourney

LITITZ — The Lancaster County FFA spring athletic tournament was recently held at Warwick High School.

Championship trophies were won by Garden Spot and Lampeter-Strasburg FFA teams.

In the basketball competition, Lampeter-Strasburg won the championship by defeating Penn Manor. Third place was won by the Warwick team

In a hard fought contest, Garden Spot outlasted Pequea Valley. By winning the best of three competition, two games to one, Garden Spot won the volleyball championship.

In addition to the five schools listed above, FFA chapters from Ephrata, Brownstown Vo-Tech and Manheim also took part in the tournament.