

SCRIBE NOTES
OALP Class 15, Seminar 10
October 5 - 7, 2011
“Southeastern Oklahoma Agricultural and Industry”

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Scribe: Job Springer

The bus departed Stillwater at 7:30 a.m. and arrived in Seminole at 9:00 a.m. Rodney Sutterfield gave the class a tour of his meat processing facility. On average there are 600 to 800 head processed each year with a one-time hanging capacity of 30 carcasses. The facility is usually booked solid for four to six months out. The freezers are kept at 10 below zero Fahrenheit. The business is organized as a corporation and has a breakeven at 5,000 pounds.

We arrived at Harbin Fish Farm at 10:00 a.m. and were greeted by owner Spencer Harbin. Mr. Harbin is 24 years old and he does not have a degree in aquaculture. He purchased the property a few years ago and it has 90 acres of water. Spencer's grandfather started the business in Kansas many years ago. The impoundments are each operated under a closed system. The farm contains many different varieties of fish that are trained to eat pellets. Each species of fish has a different diet based on its nutritional needs and how much Spencer would like them to gain. The business is busy most of the year except from December through February. During the heat of the summer, there is a reduced amount of oxygen in the ponds, especially at night. A paddle wheel is run at night and a dissolved oxygen meter is checked each day at 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Water for the ponds comes from rain and from a nearby creek. Spencer told the class about placing spawning cans in the impoundments and eggs being collected from the cans. He said a ten pound fish gives three pounds of eggs. Competition to his business is the fiercest from other countries that import into the United States of America with no regulations. Most of the sales from the fish farm are to the federal government that purchases them for stocking ponds. Some fish are taken to Kansas in trucks with either a 1200 gallon or 600 gallon capacity. The fish are hauled at a water temperature of 56 degrees Fahrenheit at four pounds of fish per gallon. Largemouth bass are sold by the pound. A bass weighing 1-2 pounds will be sold for \$7 dollars per fish, a bass weighing 2-3 pounds will be sold for \$9 per fish, and a bass weighing more than 3 pounds will be sold for \$12 per fish.

The class reached the Red Barn Christmas Tree Farm at 12:00 p.m. and enjoyed a box lunch while Mr. Steve Bruckner provided insight into the history of his business. White pines work best in the northeastern part of the state while Virginia pines work best in the southeastern part of the state. A few trees are planted each year and individuals from the community pick a tree to be harvested. The trees normally sell for \$6 to \$7 per foot of height. Trees are planted approximately 10 feet apart from February through May and no fertilizer is applied. After eating lunch, we walked around his farm. A new building was recently constructed and Christmas trees from North Carolina will be sold out of the building.

We arrived for the Community Service Project at Buffalo Valley Public Schools at 3:15 p.m. The school grounds were mowed and trimmed, and trash was picked up.

The class reached the Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch at 5:15 p.m. and enjoyed a lovely meal prepared by Mrs. Darlene Shaw and family. Mr. Dave Shaw provided details about the guest ranch. The ranch is nestled in the mountains of beautiful southeastern Oklahoma. Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch offers a unique blend of a lodge-type, outdoorsman adventure with an authentic ranch experience in a comfortable and cozy bed and breakfast environment. The ranch is an all-inclusive retreat that allows visitors to relax, have fun and let their stress evaporate into the fresh mountain air. Take a trail ride on horseback to explore the area, take a hike through the scenic landscape or for a faster pace, hop on a mountain bike or ATV. Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch offers wagon and hay rides, and also gives visitors the chance to learn

how to operate a tractor. Other activities include fishing in private ponds, target and skeet shooting, and swimming. Stay in the lodge at Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch, boasting first-class amenities. Each room features a gas log fireplace and double whirlpool tub, as well as a flat-screen TV with DVD player and satellite. All guests have access to the projection TV theater room, and a 1,100 square-foot party barn is available for large groups. Wireless Internet is available throughout the lodge. During your stay, don't miss the "Ultimate Dining Experience," a delicious meal including hors d'oeuvres, spirits, a main course and dessert. More information can be found at <http://www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.15774>

We departed Buffalo Creek at 7:00 p.m. and drove to the Quality Inn in Idabel for our overnight accommodations.

Thursday, October 6, 2011 a.m.

Scribe: Rhonda Regier

Thursday, October 6th began with a tour of Tyson Foods in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. We were greeted by Beth Blocker, Employment Manager and taken into a conference area to learn more about Tyson and also don our safety clothing and equipment. We learned that this plant:

- Processes 280 chickens per minute on two separate lines.
- Has the largest profit on claws or chicken feet; they lose money on breasts.
- Has \$1.42 per pound in every breast and sells it for \$1.20 per pound, which significantly increased from 2009 with \$0.72 per pound costs in every breast, mainly due to feed costs
- Processes 1.3 million chickens per week.
- Has an average size chicken of 7.3 – 8 pounds, but can handle up to 10 pound chickens
- Recently went from 700 workers to 1700 workers 6 months ago.
- In McCurtain County, has 9.7% unemployment but Tyson has to recruit employees from other areas to fill positions.
- Hired over 150 employees from northwestern Arkansas with refugees from Marshall Islands
- Has very high longevity of employees; one gentleman from the dark room, where they hang the live chickens had not missed work in over 26 years and had been with Tyson for 32 years.
- Keep their live chickens in relative darkness during processing to keep them calm and after they are hung by their feet, they ride along with their breasts near a warmed metal plate also to calm them.
- Has USDA inspections every 30 minutes; Tyson inspects every 15 minutes
- Debones both white and dark meat; dark meat has more value in Asian markets
- Is non-union with a starting pay of \$9.25 per hour. Bonuses are dependent on performance by the line determined by weight extracted from the bones.
- Has cutters who make the most money with the bonus structure.
- Raises all its chickens within 70 miles of the plant and are 56-57 days old.
- Blends their own feed and provides it to their contracted growers.
- Processed 30 chickens per man hour.
- Has a plant manager who started out as a chicken hanger.

Next we rode the bus with Brad Bain, Extension Agent for McCurtain County. He shared that McCurtain County is the 2-3rd largest county for agriculture production, with the northern area in forests, the middle area with livestock on improved pastures of bermudagrass and dallisgrass, and the lower areas of the county in crop production. The county growers raise 17,000 acres of corn,

which goes to the Tyson Feed Mill in Broken Bow. We were then introduced to Mr. Tommy McCain at his poultry farm, near Idabel.

- McCain is a second generation grower, with over 20 years of experience.
- Tyson pays growers with tournament contract where the best growers get the best price based on Sunday through Friday competition. Their base price is 5 cents per pound and depending on where they finish in the tournament determines if their final price will be higher or lower than the base price. Price will never be lower than 3.9 cents per pound. Mr. McCain consistently finished very high.
- After chicks are 3 hours old, they are moved and started on feed. It takes 48 days to get them to 9½ to 10 pounds; they have a feed conversion of 1.95 pounds feed to 1 pound live weight.
- Living conditions or environment is very important and since Tyson provides the chicks and the feed, the grower can only control the environment.
- Factors influencing profits: high propane costs, high electricity costs, high water costs, and high insurance costs.
- Tournament equation is gross weight divided by cost of feed = cost factor. The least amount of costs get most dollars per pound.
- Mr. McCain had much to say about personal attitude and how that mirrors or determines your success. He tries to learn new information all the time.
- McCain checks his houses 8-9 times per day around the clock.
- Four factors that determine your success: two Tyson controls – good chicks and good feed; and 2 grower controls, good equipment and good management.
- McCain wants to thank Tyson for the opportunity to make money producing poultry.
- McCain spoke briefly on GIPSA and how it would destroy his industry.
- There are 17,500 chickens in each house, within 10 minutes at the stage we saw them, almost harvestable; 80% would die if the electricity was off and the fans did not run for 20 minutes.
- Chicks have 97½ to 98% livability.
- All chickens are caught by hand when going to the plant; mechanical catchers tore up too many wings of the chickens.
- All his litter goes to his pastures, at 2½-3 tons per acre.
- Soil samples are taken each year since he is in Red River Valley.
- He used 2.3 million gallons of rural water on the last batch of chickens because of extreme heat.

Thursday, October 6, 2011 p.m.

Scribe: Rodney Sutterfield

After lunch, the OALP Class XV visited with members of the Weyerhaeuser team. We were first introduced to the safety aspects to which we were required to adhere while traveling and watching the various activities on Weyerhaeuser land. Rick Harder gave the class an overview on Weyerhaeuser operations. Four years ago, Weyerhaeuser employed 55,000 people in the U.S. but today due to the recent decline for wood products, Weyerhaeuser employees about 13,000. Weyerhaeuser manages about six million acres in the U.S. Worldwide, Weyerhaeuser manages 21 million acres. Business sectors in Weyerhaeuser are timberland, building products, pulpwood, and real estates, just to name a few.

Weyerhaeuser prides them self in sustainable forest management. Weyerhaeuser does this by following major environmental focus areas: putting sustainable forestry, completing a certificated program,

reducing pollution, and conserving material resources. Weyerhaeuser also works to protect endangered species. In addition, they work to identify and protect unique or sensitive sites or historically important areas. After the overview, we were given appropriate safety equipment including safety goggles, hard hat, and a bright orange vest to be worn while watching the various operations on the Weyerhaeuser property.

We were taken to a harvest site where we were able to watch firsthand trees being mechanically harvested at a very rapid rate. The operator stopped and turned off his equipment so we could take a closer look at the equipment and how it worked. The estimated cost of a tree harvester was approximately \$246,000. Next we visited what is called the landing site. The landing site is where the trees are brought tafter being cut down. There they are sized, trimmed, and loaded onto trucks to be hauled to the mill. Nothing is wasted on a tree. The main trunk of the tree is used for lumber, while the limbs and tops of the trees are sent to the pulp mill to be used for paper products. It is also important to note that the harvester is responsible for cleaning up the harvest area including creeks and roadways back to a state that is compatible with nature and the environment. Also, the harvester is given a quality assessment on his efforts to restore the land and work area back to a normal state. The harvester must score a 95% in this area to be acceptable. Any harvester not meeting the quality assessment will be given an unsatisfactory report and are financially penalized.

Next we went to a site that was being prepared for planting. Weyerhaeuser plants about 435 trees per acre about 20 feet apart. In twelve years the trees will be thinned to about 300 trees. It is estimated that it costs between \$250-350 per acre to prepare and plant the trees with additional costs at thinning, pruning, and fertilizing the trees over the next 25-30 years.

Our next stop was at a site where the trees were approximately 14 years old and needed to be pruned and thinned. The pruning is done to 21 feet to remove the limbs to improve the quality of the lumber. It is estimated that on properly pruned trees the value increases about 24-28%. Trees that are not acceptable at this stage are harvested and sold to lumber mills and pulp mills. It is Weyerhaeuser's goal to have 115 full-grown harvestable trees per acre at twenty-five years with an estimated value of \$2,000 worth of lumber per acre.

Fifteen years ago, Weyerhaeuser employed over 2,000 people in a four state area encompassing Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Today, that number is around 130. Many of these jobs have not disappeared but have been contracted out to entrepreneurial business owners. Also, Weyerhaeuser negotiated with the wildlife department to put a percentage of their land into public hunting areas. At this time, that land area encompasses about 200,000 acres. The wildlife department then charges a fee of \$40 per person to hunt in these areas. The amount and the location of the land that the wildlife department has is renegotiated every three years. It is of special note that Weyerhaeuser leases the rest of their land for hunting at a rate of between \$2-4 per acre per year.

Weyerhaeuser has approximately 505,000 acres in a four state region in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, with combined paid property taxes of about \$750,000 per year.

Weyerhaeuser harvests about 10-15,000 acres each year. It is estimated that if Weyerhaeuser did not replant the harvested acres it would take approximately 35-50 years to grow a tree big enough to harvest. Weyerhaeuser replants about 70% of harvested land.

Weyerhaeuser deals with multiple issues, but fire is the primary concern especially during periods of drought. This year alone it has already lost over five million dollars. Weyerhaeuser has spent over one million dollars fighting these fires. In addition to the raising of trees Weyerhaeuser manages and maintains over 35,000 miles of gravel and dirt roads. Weyerhaeuser believes in sustainable agriculture that works in harmony with nature and its surroundings.

After a very enlightening tour and demonstrations of how lumber is harvested, planted, grown and managed throughout its life cycle, we were then treated to a fried catfish dinner at Beavers Bend State Park with time for more questions and answers. Mr. Fallis told us that Weyerhaeuser had invested over one billion dollars in the welfare of the forest and land that it occupies. He also stated that Weyerhaeuser works fully with the SFI program (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) to correct and solve any potential problems that may arise from Weyerhaeuser operations.

Overall, it was a very good tour; very educational and enlightening with a lot of hands on teaching and learning.

Friday, October 7, 2011

Scribe: Todd Love

The morning started early with a 6:30 a.m. departure from Idabel. After a 2 hour drive, we meet Kevin Dale at the Colbert Post Office and traveled to our first stop of the day at Terry Beal's operation which was a Bermudagrass Hay Operation near Colbert. Terry bales small square bales which average 60 to 65 pounds per bale. These bales are mainly sold to horse people in the surrounding area and northern Texas. Terry cuts and bales every 28 days during the season. The area that he farms for this bermudagrass hay is on 55 acres. He averages 50 bales per acre, but this year due to the weather he was only able to average 30 bales per acre. Normally, he cuts and bales six times per year, but due to the weather, he will only cut and bale 4 to 5 times this season. Terry irrigates the field with water that he pumps out of the Red River and averages 1.5 inches of water applied on a weekly basis. After Terry explained his operation, he showed us how his accumulator worked and how he is able to use a grapple on his loader to move the bales. Both of these machines allow Terry to gather, move, and stack the bales by himself; two great labor saving tools for small square bales. After asking several questions, it was time to load the bus and move to the next stop.

The next stop was Weger Farm in Hendrix. Gary Weger met us at the office and machinery shop. Gary gave us an overview of his operation that included the history since he purchased the sod operation in 2001. Gary grows sod, corn, and peanuts on his farm. He grows 250 acres of sod. All of the sod is harvested every year and most of it is sold to landscapers in the metropolis of Dallas and Fort Worth. He is able to get 1.5 cuttings of the sod per year. He has to apply fertilizer and water during the growing season to be successful with the growth required to harvest quality sod. His water comes from the Red River and he uses a center pivot to irrigate the sod fields. Part of the maintenance that must be done is mowing the sod. In season, he will have to mow the sod every other day to stimulate lateral growth. After explaining his operation and the requirements to grow sod and answering questions from the group, he showed us the sod harvesting machine and gave us a demonstration. This was an excellent stop as it allowed the class to see a not-so-standard crop being grown and harvested. After the demonstration, the class loaded the bus and departed for Mike Dyson's Hunting Lodge.

The group arrived at Lake Rosetta Wildlife Refuge and Mike Dyson's Hunting Lodge near Yarnaby. As lunch was being prepared, the class was given a presentation by Mike Dyson the owner of the lodge and Terry Dupee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mike has established a wildlife refuge with the help of Terry by using programs designed to establish and enhance wetlands. The habitat that was created allows for many wild species of birds and mammals to live and thrive in the refuge. This stop provided

the class to see what one individual was doing to improve the wildlife habitat on his property. After the presentation, lunch was ready and the class sat down to an excellent meal of BBQ.

After lunch, the class had synthesis and discussion about the last three days in southeastern Oklahoma. Announcements were made and the session was dismissed.