

2001 Year at McNay Research Farm

L. James Secor, superintendent

The year 2001 proved to be another challenging year in south central Iowa. It was wetter and slightly cooler than normal (tables 1 and 2). After a colder than normal winter, April and May proved to be good for calving. May and June were very difficult months to get crops planted. Corn was planted either the last week in April or in mid-June. Soybeans were planted after June 10, mostly during the last week of June. Corn yields were average where stands were good. The overall farm average corn yield was 112 bushels/acre. Late in the season, acres intended for corn were planted to forage sorghum to be chopped for silage. Soybean yields would have been 30–35 bushels/acre had it not been for a late season hail storm that left 10 bushels/acre on the ground. Hay-making also was very difficult.

The farm experience for area third graders continued in 2001. We hosted almost 400 third graders on five different days. A program that started as a second use for the demonstration garden has proven quite successful. The kids enjoy a field trip with various activities, and the area teachers have been very supportive.

The research farm saw several changes in 2001. The ewe flock went from lambing three times/year to once/year. We continue to have a spring and fall cow herd but no longer feed out the calves. Calves are moved to different locations for finishing, but the farm retains ownership in order to evaluate our breeding program.

The long-term year-round grazing experiment was completed in 2001. At this time, there is no new grazing research planned. Instead, the entire farm will adopt an extended grazing program. This will take more than a year to plan and implement, with the first steps to be taken in 2002.