

2025 Wheat Crop harvest is now into full swing in Ness County

by Jerry Clarke

The Ness County wheat harvest is just beginning in most parts of the Ness County. Gary Gantz, manager/owner of Bon-durant Grain in Ness City, reported that he had the elevators' first load of wheat taken in on Wednesday, June 18. Gantz stated that this is very near the average date of harvest starting in the area. Brad Cowan of Cooperative Grain & Supply in Bazine reported that their first load of wheat was brought in the following day, on Thursday.

Early reports from the area elevators are much the same. Some of the farmers are not cutting yet due to having to replant their 2025

fall milo crop. Recent rains in some areas have forced the farmers to replant. With this task being taken care of, they will begin cutting the wheat crop later this week.

Since last Thursday, the area has had some perfect drying days for the crop. Winds have been darn right nasty! +40 m.p.h. Winds for the past four days, even throughout the overnight hours, have dried down the wheat crop.

Early test weights brought into the elevators have been above the 60-pound average, except for a few fields that had some mosaic, which has affected the test weights.

For some farmers, it's still a waiting game to see how much wheat there is in the fields.

Most areas in the county experienced above-average rainfall throughout May. This has helped with their kernel filling.

For some of the farmers who had these conditions, they are experiencing a very nice crop.

There are fewer and fewer custom cutters in the area. Most farmers nowadays are cutting their own crops.

At this time, I was unable to talk with the elevator managers in northern Ness County. By next week, I will have this done to discuss their harvest!



While coming back from Garden City late Sunday evening, I took this photo of some wheat being cut SE of Ness City on High 283. The ground according my latest plat map is owned by the Stum Living Trust. Its so nice to see the green in the grass just to the south of the wheat field.

Investing in the history and identity of your home town

Editor's note: The following article is courtesy of Melanie Latamondeer, owner/editor The Chariton Marquee based in Salisbury MO.

We asked to publish her story here, not only because it highlights the importance of having a local newspaper, but speaks from experience to what is truly lost when a county becomes a news desert. More than that, it chronicles the herculean task of starting a newspaper from scratch, something so rare, improbable even, that, as she notes, the experts didn't know how to help her.

For years, I heard the same complaints about local newspapers: "There's never anything in the paper" or "Why print a paper when everything is online?" But when Chariton County, Missouri, lost its over 100-year-old community newspaper in February 2022, the reality of what was lost became evident. Once home to multiple weekly publications, the county had already seen its newspapers consolidate, and when the final paper closed, it left a gap that couldn't be easily filled. The county's residents soon realized that without a local newspaper, the central resource that once gathered news from schools, county and city governments, and community organizations was gone. The shift forced people to visit multiple websites, struggle with social media algorithms, and deal with the frustration of piecing together information from scattered sources.

The loss of the local paper underscored a deeper truth: small communities need to work together for the common good. Rural areas offer families a safe place to live and retirees the social connections they seek, but without a way to unify and share information, those communities can struggle. The local paper had once been the glue holding it all together providing everything from legal notices to event announcements, from community stories to updates

on local businesses. A single print edition had consolidated all of this into one place, something that online sources couldn't replicate. A printed paper, placed on the dining room table, became an easily accessible reference for important details, whether for a school event or a local business phone number.

When I was approached in February 2022 about the possibility of starting a newspaper from scratch, I point blankly told my friend on the other end of the phone he had lost his mind. Starting a new paper seemed impossible. But as I reflected on all that had been lost, I realized just how important it was to try. I thought about the scrapbooks I had from my high school days, the laminated sports stories, and the feature articles that had helped launch local foundations. After several days of considering the reality and the challenges, I decided to take action. In March 2022, I filed for an LLC and began reaching out to former newspaper owners and editors for help.

The process was anything but easy. To say it was a breeze would be laughable—it was an overwhelming challenge, and to this day, I'm not sure how I managed to pull it off. But somehow, the first issue was ready by the last week of April 2022. I distributed 1,000 free copies that first week, just to show people what was coming. There was only one copy left by the end of that week and I have it framed on my office wall as a reminder of that milestone. In the next two weeks, I sent over 3,000 copies to every mailbox in the county, plus a few outside its borders. By week four, I had 250 subscriptions, and the number was growing fast.

Behind the scenes, the work was grueling. When I applied for a new media permit, I was only the second person in the nation to do so in 2022. I faced weeks of unreturned phone calls and soon learned the reason: the person at the St.

Louis office who was supposed to issue new permits had no idea where to start and wasn't responding to my inquiries. During the first week of mailing subscriptions, I found myself standing in the post office lobby in tears. My permit had not yet been approved, and I was mailing 250 papers at \$1.15 each instead of the media rate. It took a direct call from my local postmaster to St. Louis, a few heated words between him and that contact person, and a week of back-and-forth before I finally received the necessary forms. By the time the second week's mailing rolled around, I had everything in place.

By the end of year one, I was at 700 subscriptions and weekly newsstand numbers of 200. In a county of 7000 people, that was nearly a 30% household reach. A percentage most websites can only imagine.

The legal hurdles were significant. To publish legal notices—essential for the paper's success—our paper needed to be in print for three years, have a verified subscription base, and serve the local governmental entities. In the meantime, the county had to spend thousands of dollars placing legal notices in papers from neighboring areas, which didn't serve the local community as effectively. The information was still available online, but many residents, particularly older ones, found it difficult to navigate, and they weren't interested in online sources. It became clear that the absence of a local paper created a massive gap in community services.

Despite these challenges, the county's business community rallied behind the paper. Many businesses, even those with strong online presence, recognized the value of a local newspaper that would cover events, feature local stories, and promote community engagement. One business owner shared with me that he did very little print advertising because he served

a niche market and could reach potential customers through emails and personal visits. His salespeople made those personal calls, which was a key part of his strategy. However, he also understood the importance of a local newspaper and wanted to ensure his business was represented whenever possible.

He regularly sponsored community events, often contributing nothing more than a simple business card ad with his logo and phone number. As a parent with kids involved in high school sports and activities, he knew that such stories would never be covered by larger publications or conglomerates, which weren't interested in our community. His support of a local paper wasn't just for his business, it was vital for ensuring that local stories were told. He was the first of many local business owners who recognized this, and their support has been the cornerstone of the paper's success.

The financial side of running a paper was tough. Rising overhead costs meant I had to raise subscription rates, which caused some pushback. But even as people resisted the price increase, they made it clear they preferred a print version to an online-only subscription. The operational costs—including electricity, insurance, skilled labor, print costs, and postage—were high, and the need to keep up with technology was constant, with software and subscription services adding to the monthly expenses.

As the internet continues to dominate much of our lives, the convenience of online access often overshadows the value of a local, printed paper. The loss of a local newspaper can be devastating for a small town—it's not just the loss of stories or information, but a piece of history and a sense of community. Local papers preserve this history in a way digital archives can't. When a paper closes, the stories it told are often lost to time, unless they

are physically archived in local museums or community spaces. A parent or grandparent's ability to brag on the recent success of their offspring just isn't the same on a phone screen versus a scrapbook that can be shared over generations.

In Chariton County, the loss of the local paper had a significant impact. Supporting a local paper ensures that communities stay connected, history is preserved, and people have a reliable source of information. The local newspaper may seem like a relic of the past, but its importance has never been clearer. For anyone who doubts this, ask the people in Chariton County, MO about the events, stories, and connections they missed in just the two months their local

paper closed. The value of supporting such a publication is immeasurable.

For many, picking up a newspaper to glance at the headlines or pictures is a reflex—something they do without even thinking. It's not until the paper is gone that they realize how much they miss it. There's an old saying that we should learn from others' mistakes, and in this case, we have the chance to avoid one. Don't let your small town lose its local paper. Once it's gone, it's incredibly difficult to replace, and even rarer for it to be revived. The community's connection to its history, its events, and its stories is at risk. Supporting and preserving your local paper is an investment in the identity and future of the town itself.

Needing 1 more Ness City School Calendar sponsor

The Ness County NEWS is looking for 1 more Ness City School Calendar sponsor for the upcoming school year. First come, first serve! For more information contact NEWS office at 798-2213.

Need help with the carnival rides!

The Ness County Amusement company will be running the rides on Thursday, July 3, from 6:30 to 9:30 out at the Ness County fairgrounds.

We are again in need of help for both shifts. If you are available to help, please get in touch with me at 785-798-0080. Thank you, Faye Pool.

Ness County commissioners met in regular session

The Ness County Board of Commissioners met in regular session Monday, June 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Ness County Commissioner Chambers.

Chairman Dave Albers called the meeting to order with Commissioners Mark Davis, Travis Petersilie, and County Clerk Hertel in attendance.

Minutes and Correspondence

Minutes of the Regular Meeting held June 9, 2025, were approved as presented. Correspondence was reviewed and acknowledged.

Road and Bridge

Ness County Road and Bridge/Landfill Supervisor Ron Johnson, Assistant Supervisor Bryan Whipple, and Colby Butler from Kirkham Michael met with Commission.

Butler presented a recap of Kirkham Michael's activities since May 19, 2025. Discussion on progress of bridge repair projects and inspection of bridges.

Road concerns were reviewed.

\$160.00 was received in tipping fees June 3 – June 7, 2025

(to be continued on page 5)