

## The BIG unknown - Coronavirus pandemic in the U.S.

### ▲ How COVID-19 affects us all

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, began in Wuhan, China, in December, 2019. As of Monday, the death toll from the disease is now around 7,074 worldwide.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 continues to grow in the U.S. Vice president Mike Pence is overseeing the U.S. response to the coronavirus. So far, 80 percent of patients experience a mild form of the illness, which can include a fever and pneumonia and many of these cases require little to no medical intervention. That being said, elderly people and those with underlying conditions such as diabetes or heart and lung issues are the most vulnerable. The coronavirus death rate in China for people 80 or over, in the government's study of more than 72,000 cases, was 14.8 percent.

The spread of the new disease, COVID-19 has started to take a toll in the United States in both large and small ways.

In rural South Dakota, at this time, the fear of the unknown, coupled with countless cancellations, a stock market crash and prescribed precautionary measures, everyday life has been affected, like no other event in recent history.

All events involving substantial

numbers of people have been shut down and there is no recipe or direction for what comes next. Social distancing with what is best for the individual and family has been the prescribed priority for the 330,000,000 Americans, regardless of geographic locale.

On all levels the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), South Dakota Department of Health (SD DOH) and local authorities are working to manage coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Last Wednesday, President Donald Trump, in an Oval Office address, took the opportunity to explain what action needed to be taken against the current COVID-19 crisis. He suspended all travel from Europe to the United States for the next 30 days.

The next 48 hours saw a full-blast fire hose for journalists trying to cover the breaking news. It seemed as if every hour there was a new development.

On Friday, President Trump declared a Federal Emergency. Within hours all schools in South Dakota, by order of the Governor have shut down for at least a week and some speculation is that postponements could stretch out, even upwards of months, not weeks.

New federal guidelines have also been put into place, limiting gatherings to 10 people or less.

Recession talk has abounded as the stock market has lost roughly 7,000 points in a matter of 10 days. The federal government includ-

ing Congress and the White House are eyeing a massive \$850 billion stimulus package to help the financial crisis.

Getting COVID-19 testing mainstream is the first step nationally the government is doing to bring

about a coronavirus curve which will stabilize the coronavirus cases.

Social distancing is not just a buzz word with coronavirus, it is a new way of life for all Americans. Different states have shut down all bars and restaurants. The Millennials are being targeted as the primary group to get under control to get the 'curve' to stabilize. COVID-19 numbers are expected to climb throughout the week as testing is just beginning.

Large groups are not allowed. Because of this, everything in America is pretty much coming to a standstill.

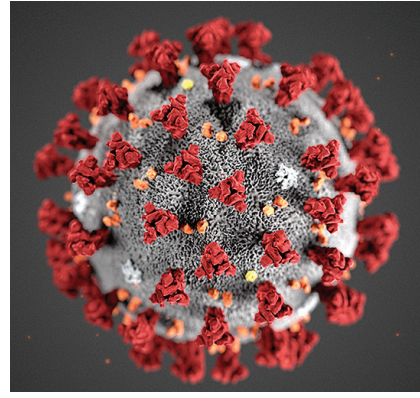
Sporting events have been hit hard, from national events all the way down to the local level.

The NBA has suspended the rest of the season after a Utah Jazz player(s) tested positive for the virus. The NCAA March Madness is now March Sadness, as it has been canceled. The Masters Golf Tournament also has been canceled.

Baseball is not starting until mid-May at the earliest. The high school basketball state tournaments have been postponed indefinitely.

#### Global Pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a glob-



al pandemic due to the spread of COVID-19. "In the past two weeks the number of cases of COVID-19 outside of China has increased 13-fold and the number of infected countries has tripled," said Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the WHO.

"We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and the alarming levels of inaction. COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic," he said.

The disease has spread to more than 100 countries.

Globally, more than 162,000 people have contracted the disease and at least 7,074 deaths have occurred according to the New York Times.

COVID-19  
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## City council sits as Board of Equalization

The city of Clark equalization meeting, along with a city council meeting, was held Monday at the Ullyot Building.

The third Monday in March is Equalization Day in South Dakota, when municipalities sit as a Board of Equalization to review the assessment role and hear appeals.

Because of the coronavirus outbreak in America, steps are taken on all levels to prevent the spread of this disease and city finance officer Jackie Luttrell was farsighted in moving this meeting from the council room into the community room so those in attendance could have more room between them and the next person.

Clark School Board representative Robert Steffen sat on the board

of equalization. In attendance at the meeting was Les McElhany, Watertown, who recently purchased five apartment complexes in Clark, previously owned by the Clark Development Corporation. McElhany wanted to put a face to the name in front of the council and spoke briefly of his background, business and plans going forward.

This past year, Vanguard Appraisals has done an entire county-wide valuation of all non-ag property. The reason for this valuation process is to get all real property within the state of South Dakota prescribed - 85 percent of true value. Therefore all (most) property in the county has increased in value.

Seventeen Vanguard clerical errors were discussed Monday by the

city equalization board and eventually approved, with corrections.

Loren Stanley and Charlene Hamann attended the meeting to appeal their property on N. Commercial St. They said the valuation had more than doubled and felt the increase unfair.

After a lengthy discussion, comparing similar structures in Clark and abstract correctness, the consensus of the board 'was that the valuation was too high'. The board voted to leave the land valuation, as is and lower the house valuation down approximately \$10,000 to \$58,350 or 85 percent of full and true value.

The board then adjourned and opened the city council portion of the meeting.

Coronavirus was discussed and the city has closed the door of the finance office, but the office remains open. Residents are urged to use the slot by the front door for paying water fees.

The second reading of both pet licensing and 'snow bird parked car' ordinances were approved.

The next Clark City Council meeting will be Monday, April 6.

Council members present included chair Dennis Larson, by speaker phone, Kerry Kline, Belinda Hanson, Terry Schlagel and Andrew Zemlicka. Harvey Spieker was absent. Also present were Mayor John Pollock and finance officer Luttrell.

## 35th annual Pro Pheasants banquet has been postponed

The Clark County Pro Pheasants 35th annual banquet scheduled for Friday, March 27, has been postponed, due to COVID-19 precautions.

"At this time we are postponing this community event, with a date to be determined," said Clark County Pro Pheasants Club president Robert Steffen.

"We will be meeting later this week to decide what decisions need to be made," Steffen continued, such as hens, hats and food plots. "At this time we are keeping memberships as is."

Clark County Pro Pheasants Club president Robert Steffen said that the organization is committed to working with their members to

increase the pheasant population in Clark County.

"At this time I can't tell you what I don't know, but we did decide to postpone the banquet," said Steffen.

In 2019 the organization enrolled 391 acres in the food plot program in Clark County. "These acres are stable with 2018," said Steffen.

The club also helped members in releasing over 2,500 fertile hens in Clark County in the spring of 2019. Steffen said, "We have secured hens for the spring 2020 release. We also have a live trap program we subsidize. We have a limited number of traps available to members on

Pro Pheasants  
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In rural South Dakota, this time of year we celebrate National Ag Week, March 22-28, along with National Ag Day on Tuesday, March 24. Farming is a way of life in this part of the United States and in Clark County. Part of Bob Benson's cow herd, just north of Clark posed for the camera last Friday.

March has been warmer than normal and fairly dry, allowing for calving season to be pretty good up to this point this spring/late winter. Spring begins tomorrow and National Ag Week is celebrated along with spring.

## We are due for a drier spring than 2019

Every farmer in the United States produces enough food to feed 165 people every day. Whether one produces the food and fiber, or just consumes it, pride should be taken in American agriculture.

This coming week, March 22-28, is National Agriculture Week. Tuesday, March 24 is when Ag Day is celebrated.

There are around 2.2 million farms in the United States. Pork is the most widely eaten meat in the world. Approximately 97 percent of U.S. farms are operated by families,

family partnerships or family corporations. Farmers today produce 262 percent more food with two percent fewer inputs than they did in 1950.

David Karki, South Dakota State University Extension Agronomy Field Specialist, had the coronavirus pandemic on his mind, as he said the longest conference call ever, detailed this subject, but he switched gears to talk Ag Week.

"2019 was the worst planting season I've ever seen," remarked Karki and he then noted that the snow



piles are being reduced at a timely rate. "It is melting very slowly. That is a good thing."

Karki continued that March, to this point, has been warmer than normal and the water is soaking in, not causing a flood effect.

"Out west, where they have had 60° temperatures and not much snow, the winter wheat is coming up," he said. "We are a couple weeks away, weather permitting, around here. I am hoping that the weather holds so we can get small grains planted in mid-April, as is

the norm."

With the abnormal wet planting season last year and the abnormal wet harvest season, Karki stated that depending on what is being planted and what was planted last year, it is very important to check labels, after last year's spraying.

"If they were cover crops, let them grow a little bit this year and plant later. This is a good time to think, plan and prepare, regarding crop rotation.

By Governor request, SDSU, including extension specialists, are

not in the office this week. "This coronavirus disease prevention alert is directly affecting folks," he said and reported that the application training that was to be yesterday, in Watertown has been postponed to April 16 at the Codington County Extension Complex. Regarding this shutdown, "It's easy to cancel, hard to re-schedule, but needs to be done," he closed.