Fire destroys Hutterite hog barn

By Michelle Martin and Lana Haight
of The StarPhoenix

Six thousand hogs were killed in a double barn fire at the Riverbend Hutterite colony.

The barn blaze, which erupted Thursday night, caused about $4 million in damage and destroyed 70,000 square feet of building, said Waldheim fire chief Chris Enns.

"I think it's the biggest we've had in our history," he said of the fire. "It's not everyday that you have buildings of this magnitude go up in flames."

While the facility is insured, the fire has devastated the 14 families who live at the colony, located 60 kilometres north of Saskatoon.

"It's not that easy. There's been years of work in there," said Sam Gross, manager of Riverbend Farms, noting none of the pigs survived.

Some boys from the colony were first to notice the fire around 6 p.m.

"They saw smoke coming out of the exhaust fans," said Gross.

The Laird fire department was dispatched to the blaze after a 911 call at 6:10 p.m., and the Waldheim and Hepburn fire departments soon joined the efforts. Enns said the fire was fully involved shortly after their arrival.

Enns had been in North Battleford — more than an hour's drive away — when he received the call. He immediately began driving on Highway 40 toward the blaze.

"As soon as I got out of the city I could see the plume of smoke," he said. "It was huge. It billowed into the sky."

The 20 firefighters and six trucks that responded to the fire set up a perimeter, which helped save surrounding buildings, including a feed mill.

The strong wind, which was blowing from the southwest, also aided the firefighters' efforts.

"It saved a lot of the other buildings in the colony . . . and allowed the firefighters to get close to the building to contain it," he said.

Once the fire was under control, it was left to burn itself out through the night under the watchful eye of colony members.

The colony, established in 1992, is an off-shoot of the colony at Leask. The barn was built a year later. In addition to being a pork producer, Riverbend Farms is also a grain and poultry operation.

Starting this morning, help from other colonies around Saskatchewan is expected to arrive at Riverbend to begin the cleanup.

"We'll take it one day at a time and try and work it out," said Gross, who is relieved that the pigs, which died of smoke inhalation, died peacefully.

The fire is under investigation by the fire commissioner and the RCMP.

TRUE PATRIOT LOVE

Judy Denham, owner of The Flag Shop on 33rd Street West, has been busy sewing flags and selling Canada souvenirs the last few weeks in their busiest time of the year leading into Canada Day Sunday. She has sold more than 100 of the large-sized flags in June. (SP Photo by Greg Pender)

LOCAL

IN BRIEF

Driver injured in crash with truck

A man is in hospital after a serious collision between a Ford Mustang and a tandem axel gravel truck at 8:57 a.m. Friday at the intersection of Idylwyld Drive and 71st Street.

When fire crews arrived on the scene, they found the 20-year-old male driver trapped in the car. His 19-year-old male passenger exited the vehicle on his own.

The driver was taken to Royal University Hospital and is in critical condition. The passenger suffered minor injuries. The driver of the truck was not injured.

Body of P.A. man pulled from lake

The body of a 62-year-old man from Prince Albert was pulled from McPhee Lake by the RCMP on Thursday.

At about 6:20 p.m., Waskesiu RCMP received a report of a body floating in Lake McPhee near the shore. An empty powerboat was found nearby and police are presuming the man likely fell from the boat earlier in the day. The man was not wearing a life jacket when his body was found.

Police have not released the man's name, pending notification of next of kin. RCMP continue to investigate.

Regina judge to head provincial court

REGINA (SNN) — A Regina judge has been appointed as the new chief judge of the provincial court of Saskatchewan.

Judge Carol Snell will take over the position from Chief Judge Gerald Seniuk when his term is completed at the end of this year. Snell's appointment will begin on Jan. 1.

Snell began her law career in 1978 and worked with Saskatchewan Justice for more than two decades, first as a Crown prosecutor and Crown solicitor and later as director of special projects for the public prosecutions branch.

Snell has been a provincial court judge since 1999, and has been associate chief judge and administrative judge for southern Saskatchewan since 2005.

(REGINA LEADER-POST)

Haverstock named to Order of Canada

Three people with ties to Saskatchewan — Pamela Wallin, Jean-Baptiste Arcand and Lynda Haverstock — have been appointed to the Order of Canada.

Wallin, of Wadena, spent four years from 2002-06 as Canada's Consul General in New York City after a long career in journalism, much of that time spent working for the CBC. She is also known for speaking publicly about her battle with colon cancer. She was one of 17 appointees to the officer position made Friday by Gov. Gen. Michaelle Jean.

Seven companions and 47 members were also announced. Arcand, of Saskatoon, known as "master of the Metis fiddle," was appointed a member, as was Haverstock, former lieutenant-governor of Saskatchewan.

Water leak, mould force bank closure

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce at 3124 Eighth St. East is closed for repairs after moisture and mould was found in the walls during a routine inspection last week.

The water and small amount of mould were caused by a leak in the roof, CIBC spokesperson Rob McLeod said from his Toronto office.

The non-visible spores were away from areas where customers and employees work and do their banking, he said. CIBC does not own the building. The company closed the branch on Friday, June 22, so customers would not be disturbed by construction work, and repair crews would have the space to fix the problem.

McLeod said the bank should re-open in two to three weeks depending on the length of time it takes to complete the job.

For more information visit us at gmcanada.com, drop by your local Chevrolet dealer or call us at 1-800-GM-DRIVE. We'd like you to know more: †† Offers based on 2007 Cobalt LS Coupe or Sedan (R7B), Aveo 5-Door or Sedan (R7A), Malibu LS Sedan (R7B), Impala LS (R7A), Uplander LS (R7B), Equinox (R7B), Colorado LT EXT Cab (R7B), Next Generation Silverado Crew Cab (R7A) as indicated and includes freight of $1,095/$1,045/$1,250/$1,250/$1,300/$1,150/$1,170/$1,270. License, insurance, registration, administration fees, PPSA and taxes are not included. 2. Based on available 2007 competitive website information. 3. Consumer Guide® is a registered trademark of Publications Ltd. Inc. 4. U.S. government ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA's) New Car Assessment Program (NCAP). For more information go to www.safercar.gov. 5-star safety rating for the driver and front passenger during frontal crash tests and for the front and rear passengers during side impact tests for the Equinox. Malibu. and Uplander. 5. Loyalty based on customer retention: 2006 large car model-year purchase/lease activity. Source: R. L. Polk & Co. Manufacturer Loyalty Excelerator™ Report – Owner loyalty in the U.S. for the 2006 model year. 6. 0% purchase financing available on select 2007 models for up to 60 months on approved GMAC credit only. Down payment and/or trade may be required. Monthly payment and cost of borrowing will vary depending on amount borrowed and down payment/trade. Example for a representative credit agreement: $10,000 at 0% APR, the monthly payment is $166.67 for 60 months. Cost of borrowing is $0. Total obligation is $10,000. 0% purchase financing for 36 months is available on 2007 Silverado Classic Light Duty Pickups. 0% purchase financing for 48 months is available on 2007 TrailBlazer. 0% purchase financing for 60 months is only available on 2007 Impala, Monte Carlo, Uplander EWB, Uplander Cargo, Equinox, Colorado, Silverado Classic HD. Offers are unconditionally interest-free. Offers apply as with other offers. 7. Whichever comes first. Applies to 2007 models. Excludes Medium Duty Trucks. See dealer for limited warranty details. ††Offers apply to qualified retail customers in the Prairie Chevrolet Dealer Marketing Association area only. Dealers are free to set individual prices. Limited quantities available/while supplies last. Limited time offer which may not be combined with other offers. See your Chevrolet dealers for conditions and details.