



Farm Rescue a 'Godsend' for farmers in distress

By SUE ROESLER
Farm & Ranch Guide

HAZEN, N.D. – The sky turned from blue with clouds to overcast grey as Farm Rescue volunteer Dale Lamphere from New York hurried to seed canola on the Bob and Del Ree Kilber farm north of Hazen in west central North Dakota on April 23.

The 9630 John Deere tractor, donated from RDO Equipment, along with the air seeder and cart, had sat in the Kilber yard for a week while rain came and went. More rain and strong winds were predicted for later in the week so the Farm Rescue crew was scurrying to finish.

Volunteer Charlie Bartsch, who was busy running errands in the Farm Rescue pickup, and taking turns seeding with Lamphere, said they had been able to plant 400 acres of spring wheat for Kilber the week before.

"We're trying to get the canola in before the rain hits again," said Bartsch.

Bob Kilber pulled up in his small pickup, saying he had arranged to have some fuel brought out to the farm for the tractor in about an hour.



Farm Rescue volunteer Dale Lamphere in the cab of RDO Equipment's JD tractor.

Kilber, 50, injured his lumbar vertebrae in a serious car accident last fall when his vehicle went off I-94 just west of Exit 120, crossed the oncoming traffic and went over the county road viaduct.

"I veered off over the road into a field, and hit hard, but it stayed upright on its wheels," Kilber said.

Although he's still in a lot of pain, Kilber can use arm crutches to get around, albeit very slowly.

"I'm getting stronger, but if I go all day, I can definitely feel it," he said.

Kilber's son, Darnel, had been farming with him for the second year. However, they both worked at the gas plant nearby, so were only able to seed 500 acres of Striker green peas before time began running out this year.

"I was glad Farm Rescue was able to help us seed before it got too late to plant," Kilber said. "It's a Godsend for us."

This year, the Kilbers are seeding spring



Farm Rescue volunteer Dale Lamphere seeds canola at the Kilber farm near Hazen, N.D.

wheat, canola, sunflowers, green peas. They put in 600 acres of winter wheat last fall. He and his wife have four kids: Darnel, Brooke, Destie and Robby.

While Bartsch waited to relieve Lamphere, he talked about the farm Rescue program for which he has been a volunteer for five years.

"I really enjoy helping people, and when I'm not here, I miss them – both the farmers we are helping and the other volunteers. They become like family to me," he said.

Bartsch got started with Farm Rescue when he attended a farm show where his neighbor, Gene Spitchke (a volunteer from around the Minot, N.D., area) suggested he sign up and volunteer.

"Since I had retired eight years ago from farming, I said 'okay,' and I've been volunteering ever since," he said.

Bartsch said he enjoys learning about operating the new equipment and found it was basically the same as when he had been farming near Bergen, N.D. He farmed the same farm his parents'

farmed, growing barley, wheat, sunflowers, peas and canola.

"We didn't have auto steer back then but I'm learning these new machines. A lot of it is the same, just more technology – and it's fun," Bartsch said, adding it took awhile to learn to calibrate the machine, but now, it is second-nature.

When Lamphere stopped the tractor to check on the fuel situation he took on this writer as a passenger. He answered questions as we took a ride around the field as he seeded.

Lamphere, from Canajoharie, N.Y., in the central region of the state, said he was on a "forced vacation" from the Department of Transportation. "(They) gave us a few days of unpaid leave" due to budget cuts, he said, with a smile.

Lamphere was born and raised on a dairy farm in New York and had helped a few farmers in the area.

He heard about Farm Rescue from a

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Bob Kilber, right, and Farm Rescue volunteer Charlie Bartsch at the Kilber farm north of Hazen, N.D.

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brochure at the New York State Fair and was instantly excited about the opportunity to farm. He applied to be a volunteer last year.

Last September, he had his 50th birthday and his wife, Randie, surprised him with a cake with a tractor on it. She told him he had been accepted at Farm Rescue and gave him the tickets to fly out to North Dakota. Lamphere was here for harvest last fall.

Now he is out here planting and loves it.

"This is my dream, to be able to farm," Lamphere said, adding he would someday like to do it full-time. "I'm learning a lot, but basically I just watch and make sure the drill is working and the seed and fertilizer are going in and I can check my monitors and make sure I'm not overlapping fields."

When he gets to the end of the field, Lamphere grabs the steering wheel and slowly turns the tractor around.

"See, it's pretty easy," he said, with a smile.

At the end of the season, his wife is coming out and they are both going to tour the Badlands near Medora together. "I'm looking forward to that and to going to the next farm. This is a great time and I like the idea of helping others who need it." *

REGIONAL NEWS

Neighbors lending a hand: Volunteers come to the 'rescue'

By SUE ROESLER
Farm & Ranch Guide

HAZEN, N.D. – With the sun peeking out of the clouds after some rain showers over the April 21-22 weekend and the ground drying out, Farm Rescue volunteers were finally able to finish seeding at one of their first farm locations for the 2012 season.

Farm Rescue, an all-volunteer organization, seeds and harvests for farmers struck by illness, disability or natural disaster.

While that date seems late for this unusually warm spring, Farm Rescue actually has three planting systems seeding in different locations for the first time ever this year. Two of those systems had already begun seeding before the volunteers arrived in Hazen in west central North Dakota.

RDO Equipment has donated the use of two 60-foot John Deere air seeders and a 24-foot John Deere corn and soybean planter, along with three tractors and carts for the 2012 planting season, according to Rita Jarrett at Farm Rescue.

Jarrett said the corn planter was already at its third location in Minnesota. Volunteers have finished planting corn in Clarksfield, Madison and Ulen, Minn., and were headed to Aneta, N.D., on April 19.

"We had a lot of applications for help from corn farmers, and in the past we had to turn them away. This year, we're able to help seed corn thanks to the corn planter from RDO," Jarrett said.

Volunteers with the second planting system started in Java, S.D., seeding wheat and then went to Driscoll, N.D., to plant barley, and then on to Glenfield, N.D., to seed spring wheat. They were heading to Edmore, N.D., to plant wheat and canola on April 19, Jarrett said.

The first air seeder started in Robinson, N.D., then went on to Hazen, N.D. When volunteers finish in Hazen, they will head to Carson and Flasher, N.D., to seed wheat. After that, they will go down to South Dakota.

Jarrett said there were no applications from Montana farmers for this year.

Injuries and disabilities to producers receiving assistance from Farm Rescue this year ranged from car and four-wheeler accidents, to a farmer who broke a leg when he fell from a sprayer, to several incidences of cancer.

"We have from 25-30 volunteers helping this year," Jarrett said. "In addition, some local businesses will bring out food, fuel or offer lodging facilities to the volunteers."

Volunteers are mainly from North Dakota, but some come from other parts of the country and spend vacation time to help seed or harvest crops for farmers in need.

Many have been with Farm Rescue for a couple of years, but some like Warren Zakopyko, Gene Spitchke and Charlie Bartsch, all from an area around Minot, N.D., have been long-time volunteers with the organization.

Farmers provide seed and fertilizer, and help with the planting as much as they

are able. In addition, relatives often fix lunch or dinner for the volunteers.

Farm Rescue, which was founded in 2005 by Bill Gross, a UPS pilot who

grew up in Cleveland, N.D., has been growing by leaps and bounds ever since.

Jarrett said any farmer who still needs help with seeding and who is located

along the Farm Rescue's planned route can still apply for help by going to www.farmrescue.org or calling 1-701-252-2017. *