

Firefighters douse hay bale fire after battling blaze for more than 48 hours

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Two excavators push large mounds of burning hay down Saturday at the Heifer Source facility 6 miles east of Liberal to allow oxygen to get in the middle. This increases the burn rate and spreads the fire out to allow easier access, according to authorities. The fire started Friday and engulfed 5,200 bales of cattle feed and 20 truck loads of tires and could be seen for miles. Photo courtesy Southwest Kansas Incident Management Team

By LARRY PHILLIPS

• Leader & Times

Over the weekend, firefighters were finally able to douse the hay bale fire east of Liberal. In a statement released by Southwest Kansas Incident Management Team Public Information Officer Darcy K. Gollhofer, she said large excavators had been used to assist fighting the fire.

“Nineteen firemen are on scene, along with two excavators, which are pushing the large

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mounds of hay down to allow oxygen to get in the middle," Gollhofer noted Saturday afternoon. "This increases the burn rate and spreads the fire out to allow easier access."

Gollhofer noted Saturday that firefighters were working in shifts and reported that Greg Standard, incident commander on the scene, predicted the fire would be put out by Sunday.

Standard confirmed earlier today it was, indeed, put out early Sunday afternoon.

Approximately 5,200 bales of cattle feed and 20 truck loads of tires went up in flames Friday afternoon at the Heifer Source facility located at 14826 Road 4, 6 miles east of Liberal," Gollhofer noted Friday in a release. "No people or livestock were injured; the fire is contained to five stacks of hay on the southeast portion of the facility."

The site of the fire was at the former location of Cattleco feed lot on Bluebell Road.

Gollhofer reported Friday that Heifer Source's Director of Public Affairs Bill Harke estimated "3,100 bales of corn stalks; 2,100 bales of wheat hay; and 20 truckloads of tires were lost. Fortunately, Heifer Source has enough corn stalks and wheat hay on site to cover them in the short term and they have already been in contact with their current suppliers whom have assured them they can supply enough to cover their loss."

No exact cause of the blaze has been determined by authorities, according to Standard.

"It could have been simultaneous combustion, or it could have been someone throwing a cigarette out the window, too," Standard said. "I don't know if we'll ever know exactly, now."