

## **Be On The Lookout For Ag Vehicles On The Roadways**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

One of these days it will stop raining. When it does, wheat harvest will be just around the corner. While we don't grow as much wheat as we once did, it is still a busy time in a hot part of the year. If you are spending any time on the road, especially outside of town, you are going to encounter ag vehicles that are involved in harvest (or maybe even trying to get planting finished.) Hardly a month goes by that I don't see a potentially dangerous situation or hear about one from friends. Too many accidents involving agricultural equipment occur because the individual driving the other vehicle had no idea what they were encountering.

First and foremost, agricultural vehicles are entitled to that roadway just like you are in your car, van, SUV, truck, whatever. They may not be going as fast as you are, but they have a legal right to be there. If you are approaching a piece of equipment and you see that orangish red reflective triangle sign on the back of that vehicle, start slowing down immediately. That sign is displayed on vehicles that are traveling less than 25 mph. If you are traveling at 55, 60, 65, or faster, you are going to catch up with that vehicle very quickly so start slowing down as soon as you see it.

Secondly, that vehicle does not handle the same way that your vehicle does. It's big, and it's heavy. It takes longer to get across an intersection. It takes longer to turn a corner and often, just like a semi-truck, it has to swing wide to make it around the corner. You just need to slow down and give this equipment plenty of room to maneuver.

When you are following agricultural equipment, all the rules of the road are still in order. If you are following them up a hill and there is a solid yellow line, **YOU DO NOT PASS**. It doesn't matter how fast you think you can get around the equipment, it is illegal and unsafe. "I thought I had enough room" is never a valid excuse. Slow down, be patient and wait for the equipment to pull off or you have a clear legal passing zone.

If traffic starts to back up behind a slow moving vehicle, Kansas law does require the vehicle to pull over and let traffic around when it is safe to do so. If there's no shoulder, intersection, driveway or pullout, the traffic will continue to pile up until the vehicle can pull over safely. You may be impatient and stuck behind 30 other cars, but until there is a passing lane or a place for the equipment to pull over, by law, you are stuck there!

Farming is dangerous work. It recently passed mining as the most dangerous profession. One of the reasons it is so dangerous is because it takes place all over the country and so many factors are out of the control of the farmer. If you are on the roadway and driving erratically, then you become one more risk factor that the farmer can't control. Just like all the rules of the road, all of us being safe depends on each one of us abiding by the rules and expectation of our vehicle based society.

As the coming weeks approach, and really all through the year, be aware of agricultural equipment on the road. Observe the presence of those ag vehicles and respect their rights to the road. Slow down, be patient and give them space. Waiting until it is safe to pass may cause you to be two or three minutes later arriving than you'd planned on. But no time or money is more important than any one life. And that life, may be yours!