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Wheat covers a portion of the Nebraska plain.

Nebraska livin' rated best

By Lynn Roberts

When Nebraskans hear the familiar chant "we're number one," football usually comes to mind, but in recent study done by a New Jersey newspaper, Nebraska came out as the top place to live in the U.S.

The study, conducted by the Record in Bergen County, rated each of the 50 states in 14 categories ranging from the cost of living index to suicide and divorce rates.

John Walcott, the Record's environmental writer, coordinated the study which gathered statistics from sources including the Bureau of Census, U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Public Health Service.

Available statistics used

Each state received points for their ratings in every category, and although Nebraska didn't reach the top spot in any category it placed among the top in seven of the categories.

Record reporter Jon Clemens admitted that math was loose, and added that only things that were measurable by available statistics were used.

"It's hard to measure people's feelings so these statistics need to be taken at face value," he said.

Clemens said the paper had received more reaction to the study than it had anticipated. He added that Nebraskans had been more vocal than New Jersey residents whose state had placed number 21 in the study.

Categories studied

Other categories in the study were: median per capita income, unemployment rate, crime, education spending per pupil, Army mental test failures, climate, air quality, traffic deaths per 100,000 population, square feet of parkland per resident, museums per million residents

and five-star hotels and restaurants per million residents.

Nebraska rated in the top ten, favorably, in the following categories: unemployment rate, Army mental test failures, air quality, suicide rate, divorce rate, square feet of parkland per resident and museums per million residents.

Other midland states occupying top places in the study were: South Dakota, number two; Wyoming, number three; lowa, number four; North Dakota, number

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Rural population increase is greater than city's

By Lynn Roberts The lure big cities have had on U.S. population has decreased since 1970 and people are returning to a quieter life in the country, according to U.S. Department of Commerce statistics.

Nonmetropolitan counties increased in population by 4.2 per cent while metropolitan counties (population more than 50,000) grew 2.9 per cent on a national level from 1970 to 1973.

Certain Nebraska counties have joined the renewed interest in rural living, said Duane Olsen, UN-L agricultural economics professor.

3.2 increase estimated

The U.S. Bureau of Census has estimated a 3.2 increase in Nebraska population from 1970 to 1973 and 45 Nebraska counties have shown indications of population increases for this time, Olsen

A report prepared by Calvin Beale of Economic Research Service, a division of the Commerce Department, indicates some reasons for migration to rural areas.

Retirement communities, and especially those in scenic parts of the country have added to the increase according

State universities have also boosted rural population by increasing population with students and also by making the town more attractive, thus encouraging further development in the town, Beale stated.

Counties with more than 40% manufacturing have added to rural attractiveness, according to Beale.

Migration prevalent

Olsen said it is hard to determine all the reasons for movement to rural areas.

In the 50s and 60s migration from rural areas was prevalent, Olsen said. Many people felt economic conditions or job opportunities would be better in the cities, he added.

A consolidation of farms at that time also added to reasons for people leaving rural areas, he said.

He attributed the recent switch of returning to rural areas partly to a change of values of life style.

"Society has to have a wide array of goals and these goals are constantly shifting for both the individual and society," Olsen said.

Research important

He said he thinks research to determine moving changes are important because "We need to find the right kind of environment to help people fulfill their potential.

"We know that life in a rural area is different than a city, but it would be nice to define those differences," Olsen said.

He added that the rising cost of energy may have an effect on future migration, possibly adding to an increase in self-sufficiency.

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