



NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8
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Weatherlore in Nebraska

Selections from *Signs Omens and Portents in Nebraska Folklore* by Margaret Cannell, 1933.

Margaret Cannell was a graduate student of Dr. Louise Pound's. She notes in the introduction to her chapter on weather signs that they constitute a large and important category of Nebraska folklore. Signs that have to do with predicting rain are especially numerous because rainfall has often been a concern in our drought-prone state. Most of the information in the publication was gathered from Nebraskans over the years by students in Dr. Pound's classes. Louise Pound was born and raised in Lincoln. She was a nationally famous author, English professor, folklorist and athlete. (See Resources for her publications on Nebraska folklore.) Her brother, Roscoe Pound, also was a noted educator and served as dean of the Harvard Law School.

1. If the rooster crows when he goes to bed, he will get up with a wet head.
2. Red sky in the morning,
Sailors take warning.
Red sky at night,
Sailors' delight.
3. Rainbow in the east,
Sign of a farmer's feast.
Rainbow in the west,
Sign of a farmer's rest.
4. At the beginning of the year, take a Bermuda onion, cut it into twelve equal parts, and sprinkle them with salt. The water drops which appear on the parts foretell the distribution of the rainfall throughout the months of the year. (This is an example of divination [fortune telling].)
5. When the rain crow (a mourning dove) calls, it is a sign of rain.
6. If it rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain on seven Sundays after.
7. If the sun is red when it rises, you may expect rain.
8. If your hair curls, expect rain.
9. If the moon is tipped over, it is a dry moon; if straight, a wet moon.

10. Mackerel sky, mackerel sky
Never leaves the ground dry.
11. If the sun shines when it rains, it will rain tomorrow.
12. Rain before seven,
Dry before eleven.
13. Mare-tail clouds signify rain within three days.
14. If the wind blows from the east for three days, it is a sign of rain.
15. When a snake is killed and hung up, it will rain. The higher the snake is hung, the harder it will rain.
16. The croaking of frogs is a sign of rain.
17. The rainbow is a sign the rain is over.
18. Large drops of rain indicate that it will not rain long.
19. If the leaves on a maple tree turn in the wind so that the white side can be seen, it is a sure sign of rain.
20. When the flies bite, expect a rain.
21. If a cat eats grass, it is a sign of rain.
22. A dog sitting with crossed forepaws indicates rain.
23. If the smoke comes down, it is going to rain.
24. If the smoke goes straight up, it is a sign of clear weather.
25. If the smoke falls to the ground, it is a sign of a storm.
26. A ring around the moon is a sign of a storm.
27. If there is a circle around the moon, the number of stars within the circle indicates the number of days before the storm.
28. If pigs gather straw, it is a sign of a storm.
29. Frost may be expected six weeks from the time the goldenrod first blooms
30. Heavy coats of fur on animals portend a cold winter; light coats indicate a warm winter.

31. If February 2 is a bright day, so that the groundhog can see his shadow, there will be six more weeks of cold weather.
32. When there is an early Easter, there will be an early spring; when Easter is late, the spring will be late.