

INSIDE WLJ

PENDING VOTE — Former congressman for New Mexico inches closer to leading BLM. Page 12

ONE STEP CLOSER — Proposed farm bill gains bipartisan support to pass House Agriculture Committee. Page 19

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

"Kroger Co. has halted the purchase of ground beef products packaged with low-oxygen, modified atmosphere packaging containing carbon monoxide (CO). The chain said it was acting because of the 'ambiguous' nature of information about the safety of meat product packaged with CO which extends the bloom, or red color, of meat while eliminating the oxygen found in most packaging," read the March 6, 2006, *WLJ* "Beef Bits" article.

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USFWS delists lesser prairie chicken from ESA

— Ag groups celebrate decision

Federal protections for the lesser prairie chicken are being lifted after a court order forced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to remove the species from the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

USFWS is removing the northern and the southern distinct population segments (DPS) of the lesser prairie chicken and rescinding the Section 4(d) rule for the Northern DPS. The 4(d) rule allows the agency to establish special regulations for threatened species.

Background

In 2016, USFWS received a petition from WildEarth Guardians, Defenders of Wildlife and Center for Biological Diversity to list the lesser prairie chicken as an endangered species throughout its entire range or in three DPS under the ESA.

In 2022, the agency published a final rule listing the Northern DPS of the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened species and the Southern DPS as an endangered species. The Northern DPS was located in southeastern Colorado, western

Kansas, western Oklahoma and the northeast Texas Panhandle. The Southern DPS was located in eastern New Mexico and the southwest Texas Panhandle.

The final rule became effective in March 2023. Shortly before the rule

went into effect, the states of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas filed a lawsuit challenging the agency's final listing and the protective regulations of the 4(d) rule for the Northern DPS. Several cattle industry groups and oil and gas organiza-

tions filed a similar lawsuit, which was consolidated with the states' lawsuit. Later in the summer, an additional lawsuit led by the Kansas Natural Resource Coalition

See PRAIRIE CHICKEN on page 18



Grayson Smith/USFWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is removing the northern and the southern distinct population segments of the lesser prairie chicken. Pictured here, a male prairie chicken booms to attract females during mating season.

Mexican wolf population climbs to 319 wolves

— Recovery spurs debate

The Arizona Game and Fish Department and the New Mexico Department of Wildlife, working through the Mexican Wolf Inter-agency Field Team, have completed their 2025 annual count of Mexican gray wolves, documenting a minimum of 319 wolves in the wild across the two states.

The total marks an increase from 286 wolves counted at the end of 2024 and continues a steady upward trajectory that has defined the recovery effort.

According to the agencies, the new total moves the recovery program closer to meeting criteria for downlisting the Mexican wolf under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The current benchmark calls for a four-year average of 320 wolves to support reclassification from endangered to threatened. Although that four-year average has not yet been met, reaching 319

wolves would trigger the timing for downlisting to be considered.

A key element of that process would be the development of a 4(d) rule under the ESA, which would provide Arizona and New Mexico with greater management flexibility to address wolf-livestock conflicts while continuing recovery efforts.

Environmental groups, however, urge caution. "As with any endangered species, especially one that was totally eradicated from the wild just a few decades ago, an increase in population is worth celebrating," said Leia Barnett of WildEarth Guardians. "But 319 wolves does not guarantee a healthy, thriving population."

Advocates argue that removals tied to livestock conflicts continue to strain a gene pool that traces back to just seven founding wolves. They point to research

See WOLVES on page 12

Hammond Ranches files partial protest to OR grazing decision

— Challenges boundary changes

Hammond Ranches Inc. (HRI) filed a partial protest to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Jan. 30 Proposed Decision and accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Bridge Creek Area Allotment Management Plan near Steens Mountain in southeastern Oregon.

The Feb. 20 protest, filed by HRI legal counsel W. Alan Schroeder and provided to *WLJ*, makes clear that HRI does not oppose the agency's selection of Alternative 2, but objects to specific boundary adjustments and range improvement provisions.

Boundary adjustments

A primary focus of HRI's protest involves allotment and pasture boundary corrections across the Hammond FFR, Hammond, Mud Creek and Hardie Summer allotments. The ranch argues that while the Proposed Decision acknowledges some mapping inaccuracies, it fails to fully correct longstanding discrepancies between maps and on-the-ground fence and pasture locations.

For example, HRI supports BLM's proposal to move certain pastures—such as Knox Pond, Baca Lake and Kern Reservoir—from the Hammond Allotment into the Hammond FFR Allotment,

and to remove Dust Bowl #1 from any BLM allotment due to minimal federal acreage. However, it contends additional adjustments are necessary, including the incorporation of the Olson Acquisition Pasture into what it proposes could be a reconfigured "Hammond-Hardie FFR Allotment."

The protest also challenges how the Mud Creek Allotment boundary is depicted in Map B of the Proposed Decision, arguing the northwestern boundary of the Lower Field Pasture is inaccurately shown south of Bridge Creek when the actual boundary lies on the north side of

See PROTEST on page 20

Cattle markets remain firm amid cautious trade

The cattle market moved cautiously over the week as traders continue to weigh uncertainty from outside pressures.

Live cattle futures traded modestly higher over the week. The April contract gained about \$2 to close at \$238.57, and the June contract also gained about \$2 to close at \$235.35.

"The live cattle complex is trading mildly higher following Wednesday's sizeable surge," wrote ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, in her Thursday comments. "Traders are cautiously advancing the spot April contract above its 40-day moving average, but it's not come without some worry as traders question whether or not they're overdoing the upward trend right now."

She added, "If we had seen some stronger trade in the fed cash cattle market, then there likely wouldn't be any worry amongst traders; but we've yet to see any cash trade develop."

Cash trade through Thursday totaled about 1,000 head. There was no trend noted on live steers. Dressed steers sold from \$375-376.

Cash trade for the week ending March 1 totaled 51,189 head. Live steers averaged \$242.78, and dressed steers aver-

aged \$382.63.

The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for the week of Feb. 23 to Mar. 2 was the following on a live basis:

- Negotiated purchases: \$242.86.
- Formula net purchases: \$251.42.
- Forward contract net purchases: \$239.45.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: \$256.47.

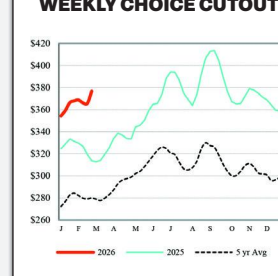
On a dressed basis:

- Negotiated purchases: \$382.60.
- Formula net purchases: \$393.32.

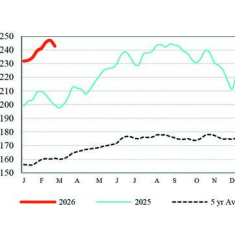
See MARKETS on page 23

Time Sensitive
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WEEKLY CHOICE CUTOUT



5 AREA WEEKLY WTD AVERAGE STEER PRICE



LIVE STEERS N/A	DRESSED STEERS N/A	CME FEEDER \$368.93
WEEK ENDING: 3-5-26		

COMMENTS

Apex problems



IPSEN

California Senate Bill 1305 proposes to reintroduce grizzly bears to the state. Currently, the only grizzlies in the state are those flown on the flag. At the time of the Gold Rush, it was estimated that over 10,000 grizzly bears called California home. The bill supports reintroducing 1,000 bears into the state and is backed by a study identifying three areas in the state as potential recovery areas: the Klamath Mountains and surrounding areas, the Sierra Nevada mountains and the Los Padres backcountry. The same study claims bears could be sourced from the Rocky Mountains or British Columbia.

Last spring, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) pushed out a study released by the California Grizzly Alliance, which included a 200-page study promoting the idea that grizzly bears could refill a role they played in the ecosystem before the state became home to 40 million people. The man behind the initial study hails from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Peter Alagona, an environmental studies professor, founded the California Grizzly Research Network (CGRN) in 2016.

In 2024, the California Senate declared it as the “Year of the California Grizzly Bear” to commemorate the last credible sighting of a grizzly bear in the state in 100 years. That same year, the California Fish and Game Commission passed a resolution for the centennial mark and calling for studies to inform “any considerations of the future of the grizzly bear in California.”

The CGRN, which conducted the initial research, touts several reasons for why now is a good time for reintroduction, starting with the increasing number of grizzlies in the northern Rockies. They cite the “success” of wolf reintroduction as another reason. Finally, they say the growing “tolerance” for large carnivores in California is another reason for their views.

The CGRN mentions 330 records of grizzly sightings in California, of which 136 included references to grizzlies eating. From these sources, the CGRN built a “menu” for grizzlies that resulted in the following breakdown: 43% livestock, 5% terrestrial mammals, 4% marine mammals, 1% fish, 27% wild plants and 18% honey, crops and unspecified others.

The report then goes on to say, “Habitat loss did not kill off CA’s grizzlies; a small group of white men armed with guns, traps, and poisons did it (before modern laws that would have stopped them).”

Keep in mind that the CBD was a major driver in the wolf reintroduction effort. They have somewhat of a blueprint and the connections in Sacramento to push this through.

In January, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) appointed Meghan Hertel as the director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Before this position, Hertel was deputy secretary for biodiversity and habitat for the California Natural Resources Agency. In this role, Hertel “leads the Agency’s efforts to conserve biodiversity and improve habitat across the state through ... efforts including the Cutting Green Tape initiative and supporting the implementation of large-scale habitat projects.”

The idea clearly is getting resistance across several fronts. In an interview with Action News Now, Howl For Wildlife Founder Charles Whitwam said of the reintroduction idea, “Always with apex predators, you have to consider not can you do it, you have to consider should you do it.” Howl For Wildlife is an advocacy group that defends hunting, fishing and science-based wildlife management.

Whitwam continued, “The problem with rewinding is you can’t rewind. We’re not going back to 200 years ago. Habitats are different. Infrastructure is different. We have roads. We have trains. We have buildings. All the human things. So right, wrong, or indifferent, we have to take that into consideration ... to add another predator, this time a grizzly bear, an apex predator, on top of all the other species, it’s frankly something that the state cannot handle.”

In 2023, CDFW Deputy Director for Communications, Education and Outreach Jordan Traverso said, “We already have conflicts with mountain lions and livestock and humans ... and now we’ve got wolves. To think about bringing another predator into the state that we would have to manage ... does not seem feasible for us. With wildfires erupting throughout the state, there are enough issues to solve. Why do this now?”

California Cattlemen’s Association Vice President of Government Affairs Kirk Wilbur told *WLJ*, “Wolves killed or injured 196 livestock animals in California last year, and there’s every reason to think grizzlies could be just as destructive. Ranchers and CDFW are struggling immensely—now is not the time to introduce another apex predator on the landscape. That’s doubly true if the state is serious about protecting wolves: grizzlies and wolves compete for prey, and grizzlies have been frequently observed stealing kills from wolves.”

After seeing the complete debacle and management with the wolf population and reintroduction, the state has utterly failed its citizens time and time again. Now, once again, advocates who study from a suburban location are forcing ideas and beliefs across mass populations. These same advocates don’t have their livelihoods or families under the constant attack from apex predators. This is yet another example of the ideological lawfare producers who represent less than 1% of the population have to endure for making a living feeding, clothing and providing for the other 99%. — **LOGAN IPSEN**

GUEST OPINION

Some of the most popular television shows of the last few years take place within family businesses. Whether it’s Paramount’s “Yellowstone” or HBO’s “Succession,” or going back a few decades to “Dallas” or “Dynasty,” family-owned companies seem ready-made for drama.

Even if your family company isn’t characterized by billion-dollar deals, land grabs, fancy cars and airplanes, or attempted murder (do you remember who shot J.R.?), there are still plenty of power dynamics at play. Consider the different ways power is expressed in your family business.

Power as a legal authority.

One clear way power is expressed in a business is through a company’s legal entities. According to your bylaws, trust document or operating agreement, you may be the president or CEO. You might have power of attorney, be a trustee or have enough ownership to control the direction of the business. You have a legal right to make certain decisions affecting how the company operates.

Power as a generational or gender authority.

A more subtle way power is expressed is through age or birth order. Parents may control the business, even if they have transferred ownership to the next generation, simply because the younger generation respects them and defers to them on key decisions.

An older sibling might be seen as the leader because he or she came back to the business first, regardless of whether that person is the most qualified to make certain decisions. Sometimes, power goes to men in the family business even though a woman might be the better leader.

Information as power.

Another form of power is one’s proximity to important information. Knowing what is going on strategically or financially can be an advantage. For example, the sibling who knows the parents’ plan for dividing their estate can use that information to prepare for the future in ways other siblings cannot.

POWER IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Proximity as power.

Related to informational power is the emotional distance between family members. A family partner may share detailed information with his or her spouse at home in the evenings, where other family members can’t hear the discussion. Or key decisions may get made without the participation of all owners because of how close some partners are to one another.

Money as power.

An obvious form of power lies in who controls the checkbook. The ability to disperse or withhold funds, make purchases, take on debt or sell assets or grain has the power to commit the business to significant future liabilities. When this power is coupled with poor communication, the results can be disastrous.

Chaos as power.

My final observation about power ties back to the television shows I mentioned but is also alive and well in most “normal” family businesses: Power is the ability to create chaos. The person who causes drama by throwing a fit, initiating a lawsuit, speaking inappropriately to a customer, vendor or employee, blowing up at an in-law, withholding support or declining to participate in any family decision but still does whatever he or she wants holds a certain power over the rest of the participants in a family business.

Their power comes from the idea that we have certain expectations for how family members should relate to one another, and when they violate those expectations, we don’t know how to respond.

To navigate some of the power struggles in family businesses, create clear lines of authority, specify your expectations of others, talk about the future and communicate regularly about important decisions.

There will always be power dynamics at work in a family-owned company, but those dynamics can often be more effectively managed toward a successful future. — **Lance Woodbury, DTN farm business adviser**

GUEST OPINION

CONGRESS MUST ACT ON THE FARM BILL

The House Agriculture Committee was marking up a new farm bill during the first week of March. This is an important step forward, but farmers know real progress is measured by results, and it’s time for Congress to deliver on a new farm bill.

At Farm Bureau, we’ve dug through and analyzed the bill, and we’re following amendments closely and providing input to congressional leaders and their staff. This is all part of a critical first step in the process. With a new farm bill, farm families will have access to critical programs ranging from conservation and rural development to research and energy. While the One Big Beautiful Bill Act made an important investment in strengthening the farm safety net, it did not replace the need for a new, modernized farm bill.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn “GT” Thompson for a roundtable discussion with farmers in Texas. Hearing directly from farmers about the challenges they’re facing reinforced why getting a new farm bill across the finish line matters so much. Every delay leaves farmers facing more uncertainty at a time when agriculture can least afford it—and Congress has an opportunity to act now.

The farm bill is more than a piece of agriculture legislation. As I have said before, it’s a food and farm bill that impacts every American, whether you live in a rural town, a suburb or the middle of a major city. It helps ensure a stable food supply, supports conservation and research, strengthens rural communities, and provides farmers with the tools they need to manage risk in an increasingly unpredictable world.

The last farm bill was written for a very different economic environment nearly a decade ago. Since 2018, agriculture has endured a pandemic, runaway inflation, rising interest rates, and historic supply chain and market disruptions. Costs for fuel, fertilizer, equipment and labor have surged, and margins have narrowed. The pressure on farm families has only intensified.

According to USDA, we’ve lost over 175,000 farms since 2017. That trend should concern anyone who cares about food security and the future of American agriculture. Passing a modernized farm bill is about keeping farmers in business, so they can continue doing what they do best—producing safe, abundant food, fiber, and renewable fuel for our country.

America’s food security depends on a strong farm economy. When farmers succeed, consumers benefit from a reliable,

domestic food supply, and rural communities remain vibrant.

Chairman Thompson’s leadership in releasing bill text and advancing to a committee markup shows Congress can still work toward solutions. We appreciate the work that has gone into moving this process forward, and we support efforts to pass a bipartisan farm bill that reflects today’s realities in agriculture.

As this process moves forward, it’s critical that lawmakers hear directly from the people living with these decisions every day. I encourage farmers and ranchers to visit Farm Bureau’s Action Center and make their voices heard as Congress works to finalize a farm bill.

This recent action shows the farm bill is moving, but movement alone isn’t enough. Congress must finish the job and deliver a modern farm bill that keeps American agriculture strong and our food supply secure for years to come. — **Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau Federation president**

HOOVES & HORNS BY A.W. ERWIN



“IT WAS NOT! What? Are yew a weather cow now?? There’s no way you’d still be here if that was an F-5!”

WLJ

Letters to the editor: Letters for publication must be no longer than 675 words and must include the writer’s name, location and phone number. Phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be shortened for space requirements. Obituaries must be no longer than 700 words. Send a letter to the editor or obituary by emailing editorial@wlj.net or mailing to Western Livestock Journal, Attn: Editorial Dept., 6021 S Syracuse Way, Ste #103, Greenwood Village, CO 80111.

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REG# 21474968



RISE ABOVE X QUARTERBACK
 BW:0.6 WW:87 YW:138 MILK:27

REG# 44634893



MONUMENT X SLEEP ON
 BW:-0.9 WW:69 YW:105 MILK:40

REG# 44635713



TH EXECUTIVE X EARLY VOTING
 BW:2.4 WW:78 YW:116 MILK:27

REG# 21476634



BELOW ZERO X GUARANTEE
 BW:0.9 WW:56 YW:100 MILK:26

REG# 44634890



MONUMENT X MASTERPLAN
 BW:-1.3 WW:69 YW:111 MILK:38

REG# 44634967



PREMIER X ROLL TIDE
 BW:5.0 WW:77 YW:123 MILK:31

REG# 21476516



BELOW ZERO X THEDFORD
 BW:-1.1 WW:55 YW:101 MILK:24

REG# 21474965



RISE ABOVE X SUB ZERO
 BW:0 WW:73 YW:118 MILK: 26

REG# 44634913



MONUMENT X JOINT VENTURE
 BW:0.0 WW:75 YW:116 MILK:39

REG# 21476553



BRICKYARD X GUARANTEE
 BW:1.8 WW:82 YW:153 MILK:36

REG# 21412168



CRAFTSMAN X IRONCLAD
 BW:2 WW:62 YW:111 MILK: 29

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Maloy, Lee take steps to rewind Grand Staircase management plan

Utah Rep. Celeste Maloy (R-02) is working on a proposal to undo a Biden-era plan for managing southern Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Maloy confirmed her plan to Politico's E&E News on Feb. 25. The same day, Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) kickstarted a process for lawmakers to consider her proposal by submitting a report on the monument's management plan to Congress.

The moves alarmed conservation groups. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alli-

ance called them an attack on the monument spanning 1.9 million acres. The protected land encompasses the ancestral homeland of the Southern Paiute Native American tribe and features arches, waterfalls and sweeping vistas.

"This wild landscape is quintessential southern Utah redrock country with its stunning geology, irreplaceable cultural resources, unique fossils, and wide-open spaces," said the alliance's legal director, Steve Bloch. "All of that is at risk if this attack succeeds and the

monument management plan is undone."

The monument was created by former President Bill Clinton in 1996, over the objections of Utah officials. Clinton used his power under the Antiquities Act, a century-old law giving presidents authority to declare monuments to protect places of cultural, historical and scientific significance.

Lee, chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, said the law was designed to "protect specific objects and to reserve only the smallest

area compatible with their protection."

But instead, he said in a statement to Utah News Dispatch, Grand Staircase has a "sweeping land-use regime." The steps he and Maloy are taking would not shrink the monument's boundaries, but would roll back the current plan's halt on mineral leasing, along with its limits on grazing and camping.

In 2017, during his first term, President Donald Trump came to Utah and downsized the monument to 229,000 acres and similarly reduced nearby Bears

Ears National Monument, which had been preserved by former President Barack Obama. Former President Joe Biden later restored both monuments to their original size. His administration finalized the Grand Staircase management plan prioritizing conservation in the last days of his presidency.

Utah's congressional delegation condemned the conservation-focused plan as federal overreach, saying it limits grazing and recreation. They also called it bad for business in neighboring communities.

Over the summer, Maloy asked the independent Government Accountability Office to determine whether the plan is subject to review by Congress. The office concluded that it is and released its report in January. Lee submitted those findings to the congressional record on Feb. 25—the first step in a process allowing lawmakers

to overturn certain actions by federal agencies.

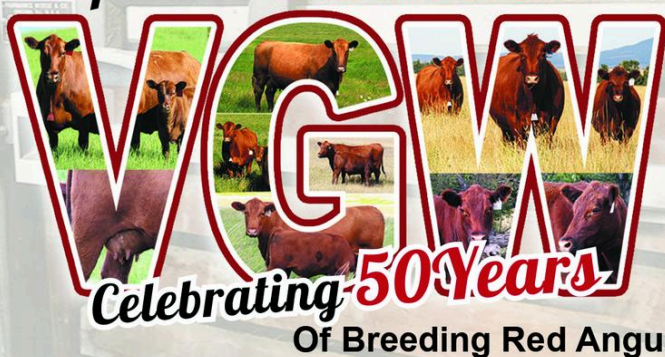
Under the Congressional Review Act, Maloy's proposal could be considered by the U.S. House and Senate in an expedited process and passed by simple majority votes. If the president signs it into law, conservation groups pointed out, federal land managers would be barred from issuing any future plans mirroring the Grand Staircase framework.

Environmental advocates say they'll fight to keep that from happening.

"We'll use every tool we have to fight this reckless effort and defend these beautiful lands," Taylor McKinnon with the Center for Biological Diversity wrote in an email.

Maloy did not provide comment in response to a request from Utah News Dispatch. She was expected to next submit her proposal to the U.S. House. — **Annie Knox, Utah News Dispatch**

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More greens file lawsuit to protect wolverines

Another conservation group has filed a lawsuit challenging the federal government's delay in determining critical habitat for wolverines, a federally listed threatened species. It says without a habitat designation, the government can't begin the process of protecting the rare, high-elevation carnivores, which number less than 300 in the lower 48 states.

Last month, a group of more than a dozen organizations and individuals filed a similar motion, alleging that the government had designated the wolverines as threatened in November 2023, and had a year to determine their critical habitat, with an additional year's worth of time, if necessary. However, that meant the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) should have published or even approved the habitat by November 2025.

On Feb. 26, the Center for Biological Diversity filed suit in federal court in Missoula, MT, asking magistrate Kathleen L. DeSoto to force the government to come up with a date-specific plan to protect the wolverines.

In its suit, which is similar to another filed last month, the Center for Biological Diversity argues climate change and global warming are rapidly shrinking wolverine habitat, which requires high-elevation snow to reproduce and thrive.

"When a species is listed as 'threatened' or 'endangered,' it receives a host of key protections designed to prevent its extinction and support its recovery, including one of the most crucial protections—the designation and safeguarding of critical habitat," the lawsuit said.

The USFWS has a policy of not commenting on pending lawsuits.

The habitat designation isn't just important because it outlines where the spe-

cies—in this case, the wolverines—currently live, but it also determines other areas that could play a role in future conservation of the species.

"The Endangered Species Act does not safeguard a species' critical habitat until the Service designates it," the lawsuit said. "Accordingly, it is vital that the Service meticulously follow the Endangered Species Act's procedures and deadlines to ensure it designates critical habitat in a timely manner."

The change in climate—and continuous warming—is a huge threat to the species, the lawsuit said.

"Wolverines require deep snow that persists into the spring for natal denning during the denning season (February to May)," the lawsuit said. "These dens consist of a network of tunnels throughout landscape featuring boulders, avalanche debris, and downed logs. Wolverines also use persistent spring and summer snow beds at high altitudes for caching food in rendezvous sites for breeding females and kits."

"Because snowpack is key to wolverine survival, impacts from climate change are and will continue to be a significant stressor on vulnerable wolverine populations."

The lawsuit asks DeSoto to force the USFWS to designate wolverine habitat by a specific date (to be set by the court) as well as attorney's fees.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service's delay in protecting the wild places that wolverines call home threatens to push them closer to extinction," said Andrea Zaccardi, carnivore conservation legal director at the center. "In the face of climate change, it's crucial to protect the rugged, snowy areas that the wolverines need to survive." — **Darrell Ehrlick, Daily Montanan**

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US, Indonesia sign trade agreement

On Feb. 19, the U.S. and Indonesia signed a trade agreement that will expand the U.S.' market access into the country.

"This landmark Agreement breaks down trade barriers while advancing the economic and national security interests of the American people," said U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. "I am glad to sign this historic Agreement with Indonesia and I thank Indonesian Minister Airlangga Hartarto for his commitment to rebalancing our trade relationship."

Deal details

Under the U.S.-Indonesia Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, Indonesia will elimi-

nate barriers on more than 99% of U.S. products, including agricultural products. The U.S. will maintain a 19% reciprocal tariff rate for imports, except for certain products, such as apparel and textiles.

As part of the deal, Indonesia will purchase at least 50,000 metric tons of U.S. beef annually. In addition, the country will recognize USDA's authority on food safety and animal health.

While the Supreme Court's decision to strike down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs came shortly after the Indonesia trade deal, the agreement remains intact. However, there could be implementation implications following the uncertainty of future tariff actions.

Industry support

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) applauded the announcement.

"With this agreement, American cattle producers now have access to the fourth most populous country, the largest halal beef market in the world, and more opportunities for producer profitability," said NCBA President Gene Copenhaver on Feb. 20. "When combined with the Taiwan trade deal signed last week, U.S. cattle producers now have more market access than they have had in decades."

The U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) said the deal offers "tremendous market access" for U.S. red meat.

"Especially without access to China, the U.S. beef industry needs to be able to serve the Indonesian market, which demands similar items as China and other Asian destinations," said USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom. "The new agreement addresses the many barriers maintained by Indonesia, and successful implementation will allow Indonesian importers and consumers to have meaningful, consistent access to U.S. beef for the first time."

The organization estimates export value could reach \$400-500 million following implementation. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor**

LEGAL LEDGER

USDA launches 'One Farmer, One File' initiative

USDA is announcing a new initiative intended to streamline records for farmers and ranchers. "This modernization of old, duplicative, wasteful systems has one goal in mind, improve our customer service so the people we serve are able to farm and feed America and the world," said USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins in a statement. "One Farmer, One File" prevents our farmers from duplicating tasks while increases their productivity and time in the field." The goal of 'One Farmer, One File,' is to create a single, streamlined record that follows an individual regardless of where they go in the USDA system. The initiative is part of a broader effort to unify all Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency systems.

Lawsuit claims fish harm in CA Delta

A trio of environmental groups is suing the Bureau of Reclamation, alleging excessive pumping out of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta that harms fish species. San Francisco Baykeeper, Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of the River allege Reclamation violated the Endangered Species Act by exceeding regulations to limit the Central Valley Project's impacts on Central Valley steelhead, North American green sturgeon and Chinook salmon. "The Bureau continues to violate the water export rules it proposed as recently as 2024," said Eric Buescher, managing attorney for San Francisco Baykeeper. "Those rules, which were embedded in permits to operate the Central Valley Project, are inadequate to protect San Francisco Bay's endangered fishes."

Bill would add tariff to sheep imports

In late January, Rep. Mark Amodei (R-NV-02) introduced H. R. 7276 to add a 30% tariff on sheep and lamb products from Australia or New Zealand. "The legislation introduced by Amodei and cosponsored by (Rep. Celeste) Maloy and (Rep. Burgess) Owens is intended to reverse the alarming contraction of the domestic sheep industry by offsetting the artificial economic advantages that Australian and New Zealand sheep producers gain in the U.S. market due to their weaker currencies and lower production costs associated with weaker production standards, such as their more liberal use of chemical-based predator controls that are restricted in the United States," said the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, USA (R-CALF) in a statement. In 2023, R-CALF initiated an effort seeking an investigation to determine if imported lamb products are a substantial cause of serious injury to the U.S. sheep industry.

Groups sue EPA over approval of dicamba

A coalition of environmental groups is suing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after its reapproval of the pesticide dicamba. The Feb. 6 EPA order authorized the use of over-the-top (OTT) dicamba application on dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybean crops. "When applied according to the new label instructions, EPA's analysis found no unreasonable risk to human health and the environment from OTT dicamba use," the agency said. Environmental groups allege otherwise. "Lee Zeldin's hollow promises that new restrictions on dicamba will prevent damaging drift to nearby farms and backyard gardens are totally unsupported by the facts or common sense," said Nathan Donley of the Center for Biological Diversity. The lawsuit was filed by the National Family Farm Coalition, Center for Biological Diversity, Pesticide Action & Agroecology Network and Center for Food Safety.

Newsom launches California Water Plan 2028

California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) on Feb. 25 announced the launch of a multi-year effort to develop the California Water Plan 2028. The California Water Plan is updated every five years, but Senate Bill 72 mandated the modernization of the water plan by setting measurable water supply targets. "For the first time in state history, California has a statewide water supply target: 9 million acre-feet by 2040," Newsom's news release read. "The California Water Plan 2028 is an action-oriented blueprint that will be built by voices from across the state and designed to close the water gaps that climate change, including extreme swings between drought and floods, is widening every year." The Department of Water Resources will convene an advisory committee to shape the plans for both the 2028 and 2033 water plans.

BLM approves NV lithium mine expansion

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the expansion of the Silver Peak lithium mine near Silver Peak in Esmeralda County, NV. The authorization will allow the mine to operate on 8,058 total acres, including 1,601 public acres. "The mine has been in operation since 1965 and is currently the only producing lithium mine in the United States," BLM said. "The expansion allows for use of new technologies expected to increase lithium recovery by up to 100% from the same amount of raw materials." More information can be found at tinyurl.com/462mts95.



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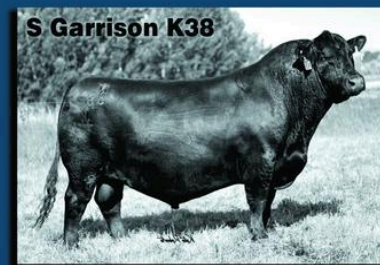
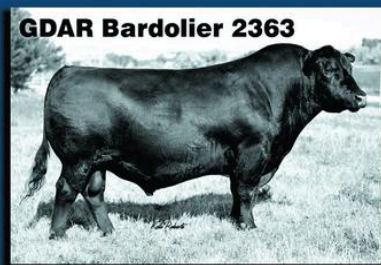
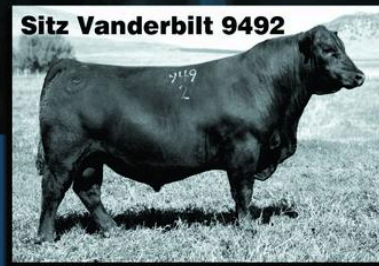
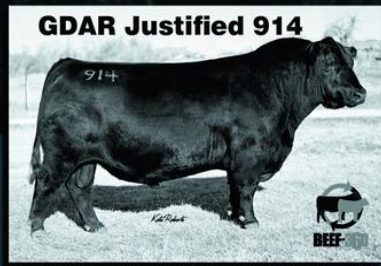
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Regional beef herd liquidation and rebuilding potential

The Jan. 1 beef cow inventory was 27.607 million head, down 1% from one year ago. The beef cow herd has decreased a total of 4.033 million head since the cyclical peak in 2019, a decrease of 12.7%.

The beef cow herd may be at a cyclical low in 2026, though it is uncertain and likely depends on weather conditions in coming weeks. A slight increase in beef replacement heifers in the latest data raises hopes that some momentum for heifer retention is building that would lead to eventual herd rebuilding. This raises questions about where the most herd liquidation has occurred and where herd rebuilding might be most likely.

A proportionally larger share of herd liquidation has occurred in the heart of beef cow production regions. In 2019, 13 states in the middle of the country accounted for 64.6% of the total herd but by 2026, the share had dropped to 63.1%. The herd inventory change in these 13 states in the past seven years totaled 3 million head, 74.3% of the total herd decrease.

Table 1 shows more detail for the current top 10 beef cow states. The top five states remained in the same rank order though all have significantly lower beef cow inventories in 2026. Among the top five states, Texas decreased the most in absolute terms, but South Dakota lost the larg-

est percentage, followed closely by Nebraska.

Oklahoma decreased the smallest amount, in part due to a small increase in the beef cow inventory from 2025 to 2026. Kansas experienced the largest percentage decrease among major beef cow states and dropped from No. 6 to 7 in the top 10 rankings. Montana, though down 14.9%, moved ahead of Kansas into the No. 6 place.

The North Dakota beef cow inventory is currently down 8.6% from 2019 and puts the state up one place from No. 9 to 8. North Dakota, along with Oklahoma and Florida, was one of three top 10 states that showed an increase in the

beef cow inventory from 2025 to 2026. Florida, with just a 4.6% decrease in the beef cow herd, moved into ninth place, while Kentucky dropped from eighth to 10th place. Arkansas was No. 10 in 2019 and dropped to 11th in 2026.

There is little doubt that drought from 2021-25 prompted much of the beef cow herd liquidation in major beef cow states. Continuing drought conditions and drought threats are likely to keep cattle producers cautious and hesitant to aggressively restock in much of the region and in other areas.

Changes in crop production and land use are also a factor in some areas. From 2019 to 2025, corn and soybean planted acreage in the U.S. increased by 8.6%, an increase of 14.2 million acres. In South Dakota, planted crop acreage increased by 3.38 million acres, up 24.5% from 2019 to 2026, with corn and soybean acreage up by 52.2%.

Simultaneously, hay acreage in the state decreased by 710,000 acres. It appears increased crop production is likely to limit herd rebuilding in South Dakota. Increased crop production may limit herd rebuilding in the Midwest and eastern regions of Great Plains states including Kansas, Nebraska and

North Dakota, along with South Dakota. Ongoing weather conditions and longer-term structural adjustments in agriculture suggest that beef cow herd

rebuilding will continue to be a slow process. — **Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist**

Bull selection strategies

Making sound bull purchasing decisions can be one of the most important management choices a cattle operation makes, according to experts speaking on Kansas State (K-State) University's Beef Cattle Institute (BCI) "Cattle Chat" podcast.

The team sat down with K-State Purebred Beef Unit Manager Christian Magana and Jason Warner, cow-calf Extension specialist, to discuss bull selection strategies producers can use to improve herd performance.

Magana emphasized the importance of defining clear breeding objectives before making a purchase. "A bull should match the goals of your operation—whether that's maternal performance, calving ease, or terminal traits—because genetics are a long-term investment," he said.

Warner and Magana

highlighted that K-State's Legacy Bull Sale magazine offers EPD that can aid the producer in making the decision for their operation, rather than overwhelming producers with so many numbers.

Warner added that fertility and soundness need to be prioritized alongside genetic potential.

"Breeding soundness and structural soundness are fundamental; if a bull can't do his job physically or reproductively, all the genetics in the world don't matter," he said.

The BCI team also highlighted the upcoming Legacy Bull Sale, stressing that producer preparation and a clear understanding of herd goals can make the difference between a good purchase and an outstanding one. — **K-State Research and Extension**

Table 1. Beef Cow Inventory and Change, Top Ten (2026) Beef Cow States

State	2019 Inventory	2019 Rank	2026 Inventory	2026 Rank	Change	% Change
	1000 Head		1000 Head		1000 Head	
Texas	4,655	1	4,045	1	-610	-13.1
Oklahoma	2,150	2	1,966	2	-184	-8.6
Missouri	2,059	3	1,806	3	-253	-12.3
Nebraska	1,941	4	1,560	4	-381	-19.6
South Dakota	1,818	5	1,450	5	-368	-20.2
Montana	1,448	7	1,232	6	-216	-14.9
Kansas	1,529	6	1,145	7	-384	-25.1
North Dakota	975	9	891	8	-84	-8.6
Florida	914	11	872	9	-42	-4.6
Kentucky	1,007	8	862	10	-145	-14.4
Top Ten (2026)	18,496		15,829		-2667	-14.4
U.S.	31,640.7	Total	27,607.2	Total	-4,033.5	-12.7



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JBS breaks ground on Texas expansion

JBS USA broke ground on a \$150 million expansion at its beef production facility in Cactus, TX. The project includes constructing a fabrication floor and an expanded ground beef room to increase production and support plant operations. Construction has begun and completion is expected in early 2027. The facility employs more than 3,600 workers and purchases about \$3.3 billion in cattle each year from producers. "This ground-breaking marks an important moment for JBS USA, our team in Cactus, and cattle producers," said Wesley Batista Filho, CEO of JBS USA. Texas state Rep. Caroline Fairly (R-87) said the project shows continued investment in the Texas Panhandle workforce, agriculture, and the region's economy.

USDA plans disposal of DC buildings

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins and Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden announced plans to dispose of the USDA South Building and Braddock Place facilities in the Washington, D.C., area as part of a broader departmental reorganization. Rollins said more than 85% of the South Building is unoccupied and the facility has a \$1.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog. She said disposing of the buildings will reduce costs and redirect resources toward the department's work with farmers and ranchers. Vaden said the move aligns with a directive from President Donald Trump to relocate federal agencies outside the National Capital Region and to reduce federal real estate holdings. He said the decision marks the start of a wider USDA restructuring aimed at operating within existing financial resources.

Zinke announces he will not seek reelection

In a March 2 letter to constituents, Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-01) announced he will not seek reelection at the end of his fourth term. Zinke reflected on a career of public service that included roles as a U.S. Navy SEAL commander, Montana state senator, member of Congress and secretary of the Interior. He highlighted efforts to expand American energy production, reduce regulations and taxes, pass the Great American Outdoors Act and secure funding for infrastructure and conservation projects across Montana. Zinke said the decision was influenced partly by his long-standing belief in term limits but also by ongoing health challenges tied to injuries from his military service. He explained that upcoming surgeries and recovery time would make it difficult to maintain full representation for Montana in Congress.

Canadian livestock inventory up 2.5%

Cattle and sheep inventories in Canada increased on Jan. 1 compared to the same date a year earlier. Statistics Canada reported 11.1 million cattle and calves on farms, up 2.5% year over year and marking the first annual increase since 2018. The agency reported that inventories rose across all cattle categories, including beef heifers for breeding (up 4.8%) and beef cows (up 1.9%). Producers held 3.6 million calves, up 4.3%, supported by a 42.7% rise in calf imports during the second half of 2025. Statistics Canada also reported that cattle slaughter declined 6.5% and exports fell 8.9% during the period. Sheep and lamb inventories increased 3% to 833,000 head.

USDA opens value-added applications in OK

USDA Rural Development Oklahoma State Director Zachary Swartz announced the agency is accepting applications for the Value-Added Producer Grant program from Oklahoma farmers and ranchers. The program supports producers who create new products from their commodities, expand marketing opportunities and increase income through product value and market reach. Swartz encouraged producers to consider the program to expand marketing options for agricultural products. Applications are being accepted through April 22. Information on eligibility and matching requirements is available through the program website at tinyurl.com/4eska8p9 or by contacting the Oklahoma Rural Development office.

BOR announces initial CA water allocations

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) announced initial 2026 water supply allocations for users of the Central Valley Project based on reservoir storage, precipitation and Sierra Nevada snowpack conditions. Current data show statewide snowpack at about 59% of the historical average after a dry January. North-of-Delta irrigation and municipal contractors along the Sacramento and American rivers received 100% allocations. In-Delta municipal contractors also received 100%, while Cross Valley irrigation contractors were allocated 15%. South-of-Delta irrigation contractors were allocated 15%, while municipal users received 65% of historic use or public health needs. Friant Division contractors received 100% of Class 1 water and 0% of Class 2 supplies. BOR said allocations may change as hydrologic conditions develop.

High demand dwindles hay supplies

Dry conditions prevail across Texas, and rainfall outlooks are raising concerns about hay supplies and grazing in the near term and production potential this coming season, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Vanessa Corriher Olson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension forage specialist and professor, Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, said livestock producers continue to deplete hay supplies and the verdict is still out on warm-season haying prospects.

"Folks likely have supplies left over from last year, however the quality might be questionable," Corriher Olson said. "We are currently dry with some parts of the state in a drought, so things don't look very promising now. Looking at the long-range forecast, it appears we should expect above-normal temperatures and below-normal rainfall."

Beyond drought, an invasive pest found in South Tex-

as pastures—the pasture mealy bug—is raising concerns among hay producers.

"If it spreads, it could be devastating to a lot of forage and hay producers," she said.

Surplus drawdown

Though 2025 was a bumper hay crop for most, that initial surplus has proven to be a salvation for drought-plagued regions of the state. Some AgriLife Extension agent reports in drier areas of the state indicate tightening hay supplies, while other areas remain well stocked.

Round bale pricing varies from \$75-85 on average for Texas, according to a recent USDA Direct Hay Report. Premium round bales were between \$110-145.

"We still have a surplus of hay from the major hay providers," said Shane McLellan, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent, McLennan County. "Most livestock people have dipped fairly deep into their

hay supplies, but I know there's a lot of hay left over and prices are reduced drastically. We just made so much hay last summer that it's expected to carry over into next year."

Drought influences grazing

McLellan said the Central Texas region is 8 inches below normal rainfall since September. Lines of recent moisture helped some but were not enough to significantly improve early spring grazing outlooks and pasture recovery.

"We did receive 0.6 to 0.7 of an inch over much of our area," he said. "That helped a lot as pastures are trying to green up and there is available moisture for planting. As you get into Bell County they are in better shape, moisture-wise, and the same as you go east."

He said McLennan and Limestone counties "are kind of on the edge of the drier area as you head east."

"We need a multi-inch rain to break this cycle of dry weather," he said.

South Central Texas hay conditions

Hay supplies remained in good shape in Brazos County and surrounding areas, but lack of rainfall and freeze damage in January have set winter forages back. These forages are bouncing back with recent rain and sunshine, but hay will be needed to supplement cattle diets until warm-season forages kick in, said Chadd Caperton, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent for Brazos County.

Looking ahead, Caperton said supplies are likely to tighten further.

"The weather outlook isn't strong so we're expecting hay supplies and new cuttings to be below," he said. "We hope the pattern changes, but it's not been encouraging so far." — Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

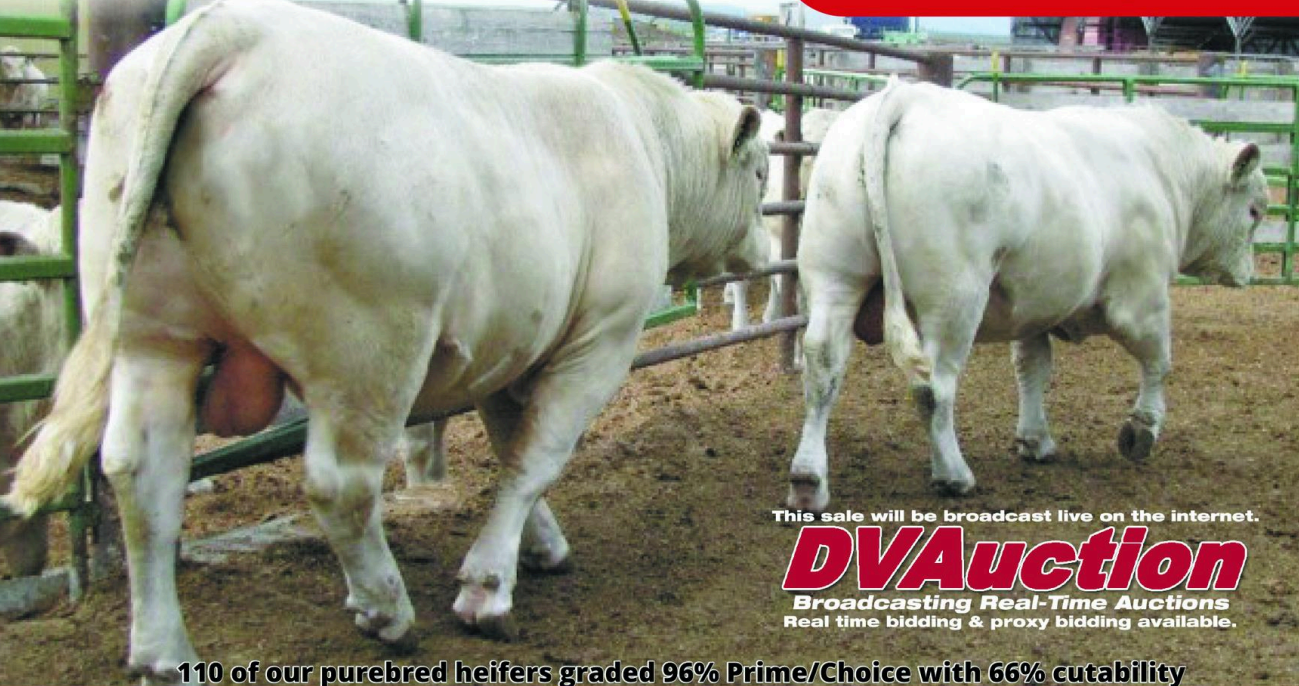
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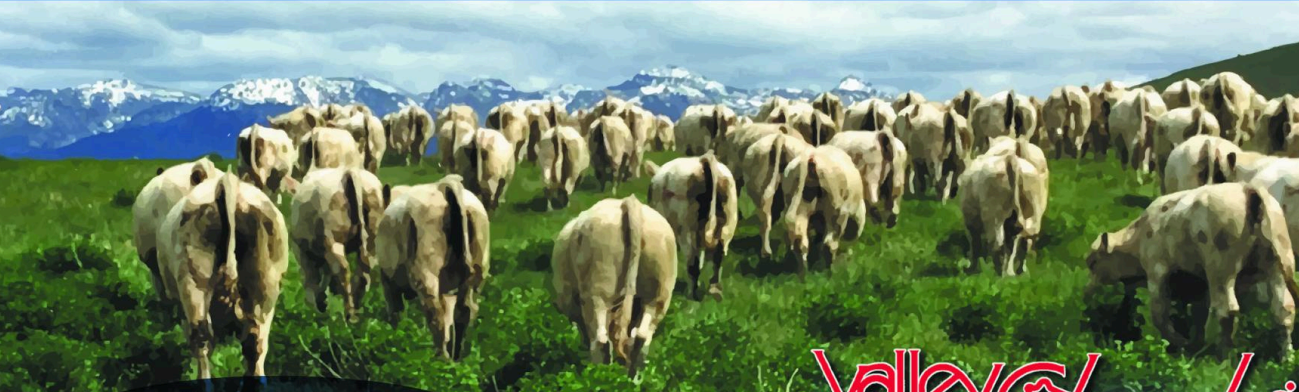
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Study links cattle feed efficiency to heat stress, grazing behavior

A new University of Idaho-led study explores the scientific reason why some cows spend hot summer days lazing along a shady streambank while others brave the heat and graze the hillsides.

The study suggests cattle that inefficiently convert feed into body mass are more apt to struggle with heat stress while grazing rangeland in hot weather than their efficient counterparts. Consequently, efficient cattle tracked for the study took fuller advantage of the forage throughout their range, including on steep slopes, dur-

ing hot days while their inefficient counterparts hunted in lowlands and were more apt to trample riparian areas.

"There are adaptations that cows take to adapt to their environment, and it's different between the efficient and inefficient cattle," said Jim Sprinkle, a University of Idaho (U of I) Extension beef specialist and principal author of the study. "They adapted their grazing differently, and it's influenced by their physiology."

The researchers conducted the experiment in 2016,

closely tracking 12 efficient and 12 inefficient 2-year-old Hereford-Angus cross cows on rangeland at U of I's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in the Wood River Valley of central Idaho. They followed the cattle over four days in June and for four more days in August.

Unlike in a feedlot, where ration sizes can be controlled, it's extremely difficult to estimate how much forage cattle consume on rangeland. The team devised a creative method to quantify rangeland grazing—adding a small amount of a marker molecule

to the rumen before starting the trial. The researchers followed each cow and collected its manure throughout the experiment to calculate forage consumption based on the dissipation of the marker in the manure over time.

To validate estimates from their marker-based approach, they conducted the same analysis with cattle given the same marker and fed a known amount of forage in a feed intake monitoring system known as a GrowSafe unit. Those calculations enabled the researchers to create a table for adjusting for-

age-consumption estimates obtained from the rangeland trials.

Cattle in the study were classified as efficient or inefficient as yearlings, based on the amount of feed they consumed in a GrowSafe unit.

As expected, inefficient cattle spent more time grazing to meet their nutritional requirements.

"The efficient cows are more purposeful about how they graze. They get in and get it done," Sprinkle said.

In June, when forage was lush and easily digestible, efficient and inefficient cows grazed rugged terrain and slopes. In August, however, efficient cattle continued grazing the hillsides, but inefficient cattle stuck to the lowlands, near shade and water.

Sprinkle and his colleagues discovered inefficient cows had significantly more undigested forage in their rumen than their efficient counterparts during August grazing,

when vegetation was dry and full of less digestible fiber. The inefficient cows were driven to keep eating to gain adequate nutrition and became overwhelmed by the combination of the summer heat and the heat generated inside of their rumen as forage accumulated.

Based on the study results, Sprinkle advises ranchers who graze on rugged terrain in the summer to consider selecting their replacement heifers with efficiency in mind.

"The majority of ranchers are not going to test their cows. However, you can buy bulls that have been tested for feed efficiency," Sprinkle said. "You could do some selection over time to try to get some of those efficient cattle that presumably would use more of the rugged terrain."

The paper was published in the Dec. 13, 2025, edition of *Journal of Animal Science*. — **U of I Extension**

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Managing nutrition during pasture recovery

Persistent drought has already tested ranchers across western Kansas this winter—and now, prairie fires have added another layer of strain for cattle operations working to protect both land and livestock.

During a recent segment of "Agriculture Today," Justin Waggoner, Kansas State (K-State) University beef cattle expert, shared practical recommendations for caring for cattle after wildfire events.

"The first priority is to make sure cattle are in a safe environment with access to clean water and feed," Waggoner said.

"You may not be able to graze that burned grass for a while," Waggoner said. "So, the focus shifts to maintaining those cattle efficiently. Most of the time, it's not just about having feed—it's about using it smart."

Waggoner noted that in many wildfire situations, fellow producers step up to donate hay and supplemental resources—a gesture he says is deeply appreciated.

"It's always appreciated when farmers donate hay," he said. "But once those donations arrive, we have to be strategic in how we use them so we stretch those resources as far as possible."

To help producers make informed decisions, donated hay is often separated into four quality categories based on nutrient content.

"The first category is low-quality hay, typically containing less than 7% crude protein," Waggoner said. "That type of hay works well as a replacement for dormant native range. It can fill cows up, but it won't provide a lot of additional nutrients."

Moderate-quality hay includes forages such as brome or wheat hay, which offer improved protein levels and energy content.

"Moderate-quality hays step up the nutrient profile a bit," he said. "They're often a

good fit for maintaining mature cows, depending on their stage of production."

Higher-quality forages, such as alfalfa, are more nutrient-dense than most cows require on their own. Because of that, Waggoner recommends blending when possible.

"Alfalfa and other high-quality hays contain more nutrients than a dry cow may need," he said. "That makes them excellent blending options. You can pair them with lower-quality forage to create a balanced ration and use your resources more efficiently."

The final category includes higher-risk forages that may pose potential concerns, such as nitrate accumulation.

"Some forages can be higher risk, especially if there are nitrate concerns," Waggoner said. "In those cases, you may want additional testing and more information before feeding. It's better to know what you have than to guess."

With spring calving underway or approaching for many Kansas operations, maintaining body condition is particularly important. Nutritional shortfalls during late gestation and early lactation can have long-term impacts on cow performance and reproductive success.

"In the spring, it's calving time, and you have to be mindful of getting those cattle the nutrients they need without letting them lose body condition," Waggoner said. "If cows lose too much condition now, it can affect them long term—from milk production to rebreeding."

As producers navigate pasture recovery and feed inventories, Waggoner encourages them to work closely with local extension agents and nutritionists to evaluate forage quality and develop strategic feeding plans. — **K-State Research and Extension**

Understanding and preventing calf scours

Neonatal calf diarrhea, or scours, is a common concern among cow-calf producers. Understanding why scours occur is the first step in preventing the problem.

Calf scours outbreaks are the result of a contaminated calving and nursing environment. This environmental contamination develops following a period of pathogen (germ) buildup, or amplification. Cows shed relatively small amounts of these bacteria and viruses into the environment often without showing any clinical symptoms.

Other scours-causing pathogens, such as coccidia, can persist in the environment year after year. As calves are born, they are exposed to these pathogens and begin the cycle of replication and shedding of disease potentials. They shed many times more germs than they were originally exposed to, which is why we call this "amplification."

The first calves born may not show clinical symptoms of scours because the pathogen load may not be high enough to overwhelm the immune system. How-

ever, as more calves are born and stocking density increases, the pathogen load can become too much. This is when a scours outbreak occurs.

How to reduce the risk of scours

Reducing the risk of scours can be accomplished by addressing different areas of management. One way to do this is by following the Sandhills calving method, or a modified version of it. The concept is to place calves into similar age groups, calving on clean environments with each group.

Ideally, calves should be within 10-14 days of age in each calving area. Late gestation cows will then be moved away from new babies to calve in a fresh environment and begin another age group, and so on. This will allow reduction of pathogen shedding and exposure dose. The original concept can be modified to fit most operations by having an idea of calving dates and a little creativity.

Limiting stress during calving is another preventative measure. One ex-

ample of stress includes weather concerns. Having a place for calves to get out of storms and mud may help. This can be accomplished by utilizing shelters or creating a calf escape area by adding a hot wire in the corner of the lot where calves can freely enter but cows remain outside the space. Shelters can become sources of contamination if left unclean and wet. Because ventilation and sunshine are vital factors in keeping calves healthy, moving shelters or utilizing open air concepts have been shown to be beneficial.

Testing is necessary to get a final diagnosis on what pathogens are causing problems and often the condition contains two or more species of bacteria, viruses, or protozoa. Age of calf is helpful in knowing what may be causing the problem as each pathogen affects calves at different time frames.

Understanding crucial management areas and establishing prevention protocols with your veterinarian are essential for your operation's calf health plan. — **Nebraska Extension**

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BW	WW	YW	M	REA	MB
3.3	70	116	38	.65	.26

FULL PIGMENT, LONG BODIED, SOGGY MADE



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BW	WW	YW	M	REA	MB
3.6	64	101	32	.50	.17

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 DOMINATOR

DOMINO 993-942

BEEF MAKER
 STARDANCE
 EXPEDITION
 ARLO



LOT 5018 — STANFIELD DAUGHTER

BW	WW	YW	M	REA	MB
4.1	73	122	44	.83	.13

LONG, DEEP, CORRECT



LOT 5003 — TRANSLATOR DAUGHTER

BW	WW	YW	M	REA	MB
2.7	73	123	34	1.03	.31

DEEP, THICK, LONG, CORRECT



Lot 137 — FALL SON OF STARDANCE

BW	WW	YW	M	REA	MB
2.5	59	97	44	.44	.48

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Roundup settlement gets early approval

A state circuit court in Missouri on March 4 granted preliminary approval to Bayer's proposed \$7.3 billion national settlement in Roundup cancer litigation, according to a court order.

The order from the Missouri Circuit Court 22nd Judicial Circuit in St. Louis triggers a nationwide notice program and sets a July 9 fairness hearing. It requires Bayer to deposit \$500 million into the settlement fund within 10 business days.

Christopher A. Seeger, the proposed class counsel for the glyphosate-based Roundup settlement, said in a statement the settlement will be good for all parties involved.

"Today's ruling is an important step for Roundup cancer victims who have been waiting more than a decade for a just resolution," he said.

"This settlement was reached amid the threat of a

Supreme Court ruling that could eliminate their claims entirely and a potential Monsanto bankruptcy that would leave claimants with nothing. It represents the best path to compensation for all plaintiffs and we look forward to working with the court and all stakeholders to address concerns and see this through to final approval," Seeger said.

Bayer announced the settlement on Feb. 17 to benefit current and future non-Hodgkin lymphoma injury claims against Roundup, to include a long-term claims program.

Recently, Bayer also filed its opening brief in the Supreme Court case Durnell v. Monsanto, set for oral argument on April 27.

Bill Doderer, senior vice president and general counsel for Bayer, said the settlement and pending Supreme Court case are both important steps for the company.

"The proposed class, combined with Supreme Court review in Durnell, are independently necessary and mutually reinforcing steps in the company's multipronged strategy to significantly contain the Roundup litigation," Doderer said.

Bayer said in a news release on that the "expectation of Supreme Court review of the cross-cutting question in this litigation—whether state claims based on failure-to-warn theories are preempted by federal law—helped make this settlement possible."

In addition, Bayer said the Supreme Court case is "unaffected" by the settlement and is "critical to resolving substantial outstanding damage awards" subject to pending appeals, which are not covered by the settlement.

"The Supreme Court case is also critical to resolving the regulatory uncertainty which jeopardizes the availability of current and future agricul-

tural innovations, with potentially severe consequences for farmers and the American food system," Bayer said.

The next step in the settlement involves notice to potential class members and a 90-day period ending on June 4, during which members of

the class can opt out or file objections.

Once the next phase is complete, Bayer said the court will consider granting final approval after the July 9 fairness hearing. The settlement is then subject to potential appeals.

All Roundup lawsuits in Missouri brought by class settlement members are stayed, except for opt-outs, until the court reaches a final judgment on the class settlement, according to Bayer. — **Todd Neeley, DTN environmental editor**

Bill to delist the Mexican wolves advances in House

WOLVES (from page 1)

showing that releasing bonded male-female pairs with pups has produced higher survival rates than cross-fostering captive-born pups into wild dens, where many have disappeared.

The population gains have also fueled political debate.

In 2025, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ-09) introduced House Resolution 4255, the Enhancing Safety for Animals Act, which would delist the Mexican wolf from the ESA and delink the U.S. and Mexican populations.

"Since being reintroduced to the wild in Arizona, Mexican wolves have preyed on cattle, livestock, and even family pets, causing significant financial losses and economic hardship on family-run ranches," Gosar said.

The bill received a favorable recommendation from the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources on a largely party-line 23-13 vote on Jan. 22.

In 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released its 5-Year Evaluation of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Strategy, assessing progress in both the U.S. and Mexico. The agency reported that interim five-year abundance targets were 145 wolves in the

U.S. and 100 in Mexico. By 2022, the U.S. population had reached at least 242 wolves—well above its interim target—while Mexico documented 35 wolves, falling short of its benchmark.

USFWS also reported that both populations surpassed projections for gene diversity over the five-year period, with the U.S. and Mexico populations retaining more than 90% of the captive population's gene diversity.

The current recovery strategy calls for establishing and maintaining two resilient, genetically diverse populations distributed across ecologically and geographically diverse areas within the subspecies' historic range in both countries. While the U.S. population has exceeded interim targets, growth in Mexico has not kept pace with projections, nor has it met abundance and release goals. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

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For More Information Contact.....

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Pearce sent for full Senate vote

New Mexico Republican Steve Pearce, a former congressman for the state, is one step closer to leading the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) following a March 4 party-line vote in a U.S. Senate committee.

Senators on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee voted 11-9 to advance Pearce's confirmation to the full U.S. Senate. The vote occurred without debate, though senators had a chance a week earlier to question Pearce about his record and public lands views.

If confirmed by the Senate, Pearce, who represented New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District from 2011 to 2019, would lead an agency that oversees 245 million acres of public lands, including for recreation, cattle grazing and extraction of oil and natural gas.

A hearing date for Pearce's Senate Floor confirmation has not yet been set. A spokesperson for the committee told Source New Mexico that Senate Majority Leader U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-SD) decides the schedule.

On March 4, Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM), the committee's ranking member, was the first to vote "no," followed by eight other Demo-

crats. After the vote, Heinrich reiterated his opposition to Pearce's nomination, reading from a statement he issued earlier in the week that notes Pearce's previous support of public land selloffs and opposition to the 2014 designation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument east of Las Cruces.

"Like my constituents, I cannot ignore Congressman Pearce's record," Heinrich said.

State and national environmentalist groups swiftly denounced Pearce's nomination to the BLM post right after President Donald Trump put his name forward in November. After the vote March 4, groups including the Center for Western Priorities and the Wilderness Society urged the Senate to reject his confirmation.

"New Mexicans overwhelmingly believe these lands belong in public hands, not on the auction block," said Michael Casaus, New Mexico state director of the Wilderness Society, in a statement. "Pearce's record raises serious doubts about whether he would defend our national monuments or resist efforts to sell off our shared lands." — **Patrick Lohmann, Source New Mexico**

Prepare now in case of drought conditions

This winter has been open and dry across most of Nebraska and according to the Drought Monitor, many areas are increasing in their drought classification intensity. We are a few weeks away from another growing season and who knows how much moisture lies ahead. Here are some ways you can limit the forage problems drought could cause.

Drought is likely to be a problem again this summer, at least somewhere. Because hay can be costly when pastures are short, we need to consider ways to minimize damages if we receive less-than-average rainfall. Fortunately, early spring is a time you can take action that can minimize some of drought's problems.

For starters, prepare a strategy for using any remaining hay. One of the better options

is to feed hay a bit longer into spring before turning cows out to permanent pasture. This action is exactly opposite of the usual recommendation to graze more and feed less hay. But, allowing pastures to accumulate a bit more growth before grazing begins will provide more total grazable forage if drought prevents much regrowth later on. Leftover hay also can be used later during the grazing season to give pastures more time to recover between grazings.

Another strategy is planting annual forages for pasture or hay. Some excellent choices are oats planted as early as possible or summer annual grasses like sudangrass, sorghum-sudan hybrids, and pearl millet planted once soils are good and warm. Late May or early June usually is best for these

grasses.

So, reserve some ground now for these drought-insurance grasses, before you plant

everything to corn, beans and other crops. And don't forget about possibly planting these grasses or even some fall cover

crop forages into wheat stubble as a double crop after harvest.

If the rains don't come, planning and acting now to reduce

potential forage losses from drought will pay big dividends.

— Jerry Volesky, Nebraska Extension

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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

(In an effort to serve the next generation of livestock producers, WLJ's Youth Opportunities calendar lists internship and scholarship information for agricultural- and livestock-focused students, listed by application deadline. If you have an internship or scholarship to announce, please email it to editorial@wlj.net.)

March 13 – The Livestock Marketing Association has announced that applications are now open for its 2026 scholarship programs, offering two distinct opportunities to support students pursuing education and careers connected to the

livestock marketing industry. Details: lmaweb.com.

March 15 – The Montana Stockgrowers Foundation is encouraging students to apply for scholarships through its Heritage Scholarship Program. Applications: mtbeefoundation.org.

March 15 – The Montana Stockgrowers Association is now accepting applications for the 2026 Young Cattlemen's Conference. This national leadership and advocacy program will be held May 28 through June 4. Details: mtbeef.org.

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McBee legal drama deepens as feds seek to claw back assets

Attorneys for Steve A. McBee and his sons have argued the transfer of assets to his sons was part of the normal course of business for a family trust, but U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys countered in a court brief the transfer was fraudulent and the case against the family should continue.

The star of reality television series "The McBee Dynasty: Real American Cowboys," pleaded guilty to crop insurance fraud and is serving a two-year prison sentence in South Dakota.

The government later filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Western Missouri, alleging the Gallatin, MO, farmer transferred assets to two of his sons, Cole and Jesse, to avoid surrendering the businesses as part of paying a still-outstanding \$4 million judgment in the crop insurance fraud case.

McBee's attorneys argued in a motion to dismiss in

February that the trusts for the two sons were created more than a decade before a transfer of assets was made in 2024 and were part of established practice of the trusts.

In response to the motion to dismiss, the DOJ said the McBee claim about the trust is irrelevant to the case.

"Fraudulent conveyance law looks at substance, not form," the DOJ told the court. "In other words, in what form McBee made his fraudulent transfer does not matter. What matters instead is whether the transfers were actually or constructively fraudulent as of the time of the transfer."

In its lawsuit, the government offered a timeline of events to make its case.

In June 2023, Steve A. McBee was notified about the federal investigation. In December 2023, McBee's attorney met with prosecutors and on Jan. 7, 2024, McBee transferred owner-

ship interests in three family LLCs to his sons. Then in November 2024, McBee pleaded guilty.

Aside from proving actual intent to commit a fraudulent transfer, the government argues fraud is established because the transfers were made without consideration and McBee could not pay his debts.

The DOJ said the essence of its case against McBee is he made the transfer "without receiving a reasonably equivalent value in exchange when the transfer would reasonably be expected to cause the debtor to incur debts beyond his ability to pay them as they become due."

Restitution still unpaid

The government said although it has been months since McBee's sentencing, he has yet to pay any of the restitution.

"The judgment ordered McBee's \$4 million restitution debt be paid immediately," the DOJ said in its filing. "Yet, in the four months since his sentencing on Oct. 16, 2025, McBee has paid his victim nothing, leading to the reasonable conclusion that the restitution debt exceeded his ability to pay."

Though the government asked the court to deny the McBee motion to dismiss entirely, it did request the court to allow for an amended complaint to be filed.

The DOJ argues its complaint satisfies the heightened standards for fraud claims.

"Specifically, the United States alleges that (1) the transfers to the trusts were made in anticipation of a criminal conviction against McBee that resulted in the imposition of a multi-million dollar restitution debt; (2) the trusts were used to shield McBee's assets from the collection efforts of the

United States; (3) McBee made the transfers to the trusts with actual intent to hinder, delay and defraud creditors; (4) the transfers were made without receiving reasonably equivalent value; and (5) the transfers were made to insiders (i.e., his children and co-owners of the defendant companies)," the government said in its motion.

McBee argues key facts missing

McBee's attorneys have argued key facts needed to establish fraud are missing from the complaint. That includes that he was insolvent at the time of the transfers, believed he could not pay his debts, received notice of any specific amount owed, attempted to conceal assets and the asset transfers departed from his established estate planning pattern.

"These were gifts to inheritance trusts for the debtor's children—trusts established in December 2012, over a decade before the transfers," the McBee motion to dismiss said.

"The absence of consideration is inherent in a gift; it does not, standing alone, establish fraud. When the government's unsupported and conclusory allegations are stripped from the complaint, all that's left is the 'mere possibility' that the transfers were fraudulent. That does not satisfy the rigorous demands for pleading fraud under (fed-

eral law). It's tilting at windmills."

McBee transferred his ownership interests in three companies to his sons Jesse and Cole. That includes 39% interest in McBee Properties L.C.; 99% interest in Rock Bluff Development LLC; and 99% interest in S&K Enterprises LLC. According to the lawsuit, Steve McBee split those interests evenly between Jesse and Cole.

The federal government alleges the transfers occurred while McBee was under federal investigation and he received no payment in exchange.

The federal government's lawsuit includes six claims for fraudulent conveyance under both federal and Missouri state law. The U.S. argues the transfers were made with actual intent to defraud the federal government, and the transfers were made without equivalent value when McBee knew he would face debts he couldn't pay.

In addition, the government asked the court to file an injunction preventing anyone from selling, mortgaging or disposing of the business assets. The U.S. also is seeking money judgements against Jesse McBee and Cole McBee, for the value of the transferred interests.

As part of Steve McBee's plea agreement, the U.S. government agreed to not charge anyone in his family with crop insurance fraud. — **Todd Neeley, DTN environmental editor**

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American Prairie obtains wetland habitat

American Prairie has acquired 2,082 acres of "high-value wetland" and grassland habitat in Phillips County, MT—an area renowned as one of the most important waterfowl breeding regions in North America.

Located south of Dodson, and locally known as "Pintail Flatt," this property comprises 1,762 deeded acres and 320 leased Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acres. The acquisition strengthens a growing corridor of conserved habitat, as it is adjacent to American Prairie's existing Wild Horse unit and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Korsbeck Waterfowl Production Area.

This latest acquisition brings American Prairie's total habitat base to 605,739 acres, which comprises 168,832 deeded acres and 436,907 leased public acres.

"Phillips County sits within the famed prairie pothole region, an area that is often called North America's duck factory," said Garrett Budds, chief conservation officer at American Prairie. "This region's extraordinary ecological value has been well documented as the Montana Hi-Line boasts some of the highest wetland densities

on the prairies. Pintail Flatt lies at the heart of this landscape and is a key breeding ground for several species of waterfowl."

Wetlands make up 142 acres of Pintail Flatt—approximately 8% of the property.

The property is protected by an existing conservation easement managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), ensuring long-term safeguards for wetlands and bird habitat while maintaining public access for hunting and recreation. American Prairie will continue working closely with FWP to steward the property.

Beyond waterfowl, Pintail Flatt supports high-quality habitat for mule deer, white-tailed deer, and pronghorn, along with thriving prairie dog colonies. The area was previously designated by the BLM as a "Prairie Dog Towns Area of Critical Environmental Concern."

The property is currently leased to a local rancher for cattle grazing, and that partnership will continue. American Prairie leases land across 10 of its 12 management units to 25 ranchers running more than 8,000 head of cattle. — **Daily Montanan**

Consumers want beef, but they're asking more questions

Beef producers can take heart: Americans still love beef and are willing to pay for it. But the modern consumer is far from a single, predictable buyer.

"Today's marketplace includes more distinct generations than ever before," said Mandy Carr Johnson, Ph.D., senior executive director of scientific affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

Generation Alpha is just entering its teen years. Gen Z runs up to about age 30. Millennials typically span 30 to about 45 years, and Gen X is from about 45 to 60 years. And, baby boomers and the silent generation are still buying groceries, she said.

The generation with the greatest current buying power is Gen X, Johnson noted, but millennials and Gen Z make up a massive population that will soon hit their peak earning and beef-buy-

ing years. Understanding what influences each group's food decisions is important for producers and everyone along the supply chain.

A changing landscape

NCBA, on behalf of the Beef Checkoff, surveys thousands of shoppers every year to track those decisions. Beef remains a strong second to chicken as the nation's top protein, but consumers now mix and match proteins throughout the week. Roughly 71% say they eat beef at least once a week.

"Choice is the word," Johnson said. "People want variety, and they're spending more of their food budget on protein than ever before."

Another shift: where people buy. While most beef still moves through traditional grocery stores, younger shoppers are far more comfortable

ordering online for home delivery or curbside pickup. Beef must be easy to find and buy on a smartphone app, as well as in the traditional retailer meat case.

Drivers of beef purchases

Taste continues to be beef's ace in the hole. In consumer testing, beef wins by 25 points as the best-tasting protein. Eating experience—tenderness, juiciness and flavor—ranks as the top purchase driver, followed by convenience, price, how the animal was raised and nutrition.

The industry has come a long way since the early 1990s, when one in four steaks failed tenderness standards. Today, 90% of consumers give beef high marks for eating satisfaction whether at home or in restaurants.

Price, however, is a growing concern. Retail beef values are strong, with ground beef and steaks leading sales, but willingness to pay is be-

ginning to lag behind actual prices. Johnson warned that some shoppers may "trade down" within the beef case—choosing ground beef over steaks, for example—if budgets tighten.

"We don't want them to trade out of beef altogether," she said.

Chicken maintains an edge on affordability and the "healthy" image it gained decades ago. Consumers watching their budgets also buy pork and fish, and about one-quarter will sample plant-based options in a typical week—usually in addition to animal protein, not instead of it.

That competition means beef must keep proving its value. Promotions that highlight versatility—think economical roasts, bulk ground beef or creative meal ideas—help families stretch their dollars without leaving the beef category.

The good news: America's protein craze plays directly into beef's strengths. High-

protein and low-carb diets remain popular, and doctors increasingly recommend protein, especially for patients using new GLP-1 weight-loss medications. Surveys show consumers recognize beef as a top-quality protein, even if chicken still scores slightly higher on "healthy" perceptions.

Education is key, Johnson said. Lean beef cuts and modern trimming practices mean today's beef is far leaner than it was in the 1970s, but that message takes time to sink in.

Trust and transparency

Beyond taste and nutrition, consumers want to know how cattle are raised. Yet only about one-quarter say they're truly familiar with beef production. Concerns center on animal welfare and environmental sustainability, but most people remain neutral and are open to information rather than hostile.

"For those who are not sure how cattle are raised for food, they want to hear from someone directly involved—farmers, ranchers, veterinarians," Johnson emphasized.

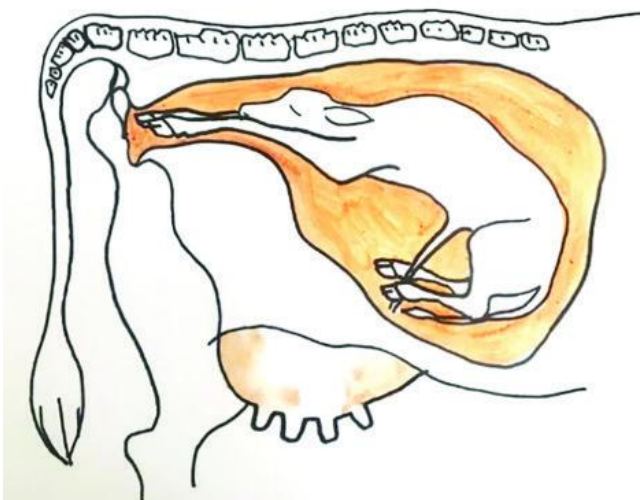
Programs like Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) help bridge the gap. Simply showing shoppers that producers voluntarily follow BQA guidelines measurably improves their confidence in beef safety and welfare.

Authenticity matters more than marketing polish. Whether through social media, local farm tours or one-on-one conversations, producers who answer questions honestly make the biggest impact.

"Just showing that you care and explaining what you do every day goes a long way," Johnson said.

Meeting consumers where they shop—online or in person—and being ready to share your story keeps beef at the center of the plate for every generation. — **Beef Improvement Federation**

Dystocia and abnormal presentations



Dystocia is calving difficulty. The term applies to an abnormal or difficult birth. Dystocia can be a major cause of calf loss and a serious issue for the beef industry, especially when calving first-calf heifers.

What are the causes of dystocia? Most common is relative fetal oversize, which could be defined as a calf too big, pelvis too small, or both. As for calving difficulty, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Proper sire selection is vital to preventing calving difficulty. Underdeveloped heifers and heifers bred to bulls with large birth weights are both factors that cause increased incidence of calving difficulty.

The second most prevalent cause of dystocia is an abnormal presentation of the fetus. The normal presentation in cattle is an anterior presentation with front legs and head extended into the pelvic canal as shown in the figure.

Any position that is different from the included illustration, such as forelegs or head turned back, breech, rear end position, sideways or rotated, etc., is an abnormal presentation of the fetus. A normal delivery cannot be achieved unless the head and both front limbs are presented into the pelvic canal and on through the vulva. If the calf is normally presented and the pelvic area is large enough, the vast majority of animals will

give birth without assistance.

On average, about 5% of all calves are in abnormal positions at birth. When this occurs, correcting the problem will require an experienced herdsman (or assistance of a veterinarian) to position the fetus correctly prior to delivery. If fetal position cannot be corrected, it may be necessary to perform a caesarean section.

Abnormal presentations during calving are considered extremely low heritability and are considered random events. Unlike Birth Weight, with a heritability of 46%, and Calving Ease Direct, with a heritability of 19%, abnormal presentations are rarely inherited. Thereby, genetic selection to avoid abnormal presentations in beef cattle is ineffective.

Even when selection pressure has effectively been applied to traits influencing calving ease in sire selection, abnormal presentations can still occur during calving. It is advised to observe the cow herd closely during calving season, especially first-calf heifers because they will require the most assistance. Observation permits cattlemen to detect abnormal fetal presentations in the early stages of delivery and increases the likelihood of calf survival. — **Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**



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California Women for Agriculture marks 50 years

In 1975, several women involved in agriculture gathered in California's Coachella Valley to discuss how they could educate policymakers and consumers about the needs of California agriculture.

Since those beginnings 50 years ago, California Women for Agriculture (CWA) has grown to become the most active all-volunteer agricultural organization in the state. Its 1,500 members represent farmers, ranchers, bankers, lawyers, marketing professionals and food producers from Butte County to the Mexican border.

Sharron Zoller, a Lake County walnut grower who served as CWA's president from 2022-24, said the group exists to advocate for, promote, and educate the public about California agriculture.

"Our name was carefully chosen," Zoller said. "They chose for instead of in to be sure everyone who believed in the mission would join."

To mark the milestone anniversary, CWA recently held

a Golden Weekend Celebration in La Quinta, near Coachella, where the founding women met to launch the organization. While they celebrated, Cherry Ishimatsu, the group's first state president, was also celebrating her 100th birthday.

"We're proud to salute California Women for Agriculture for its great work in promoting our state's farmers and ranchers during its first 50 years," said Keith Hesterberg, president and CEO of Fresno Madera Farm Credit. "These women have spent countless hours over the years educating consumers and decision-makers alike about the importance of agriculture in the Golden State, and we look forward to supporting their work in the years to come."

Heather Lemos, relationship manager with American AgCredit, added that CWA also helps keep the state's ag community connected.

"As a statewide organization, CWA helps tie together the broad and diverse sectors of California's farming commu-

nity," Lemos said. "Their members learn about different challenges farmers and ranchers have in different parts of the state, and their networking helps spread information about best practices in advocacy as well."

She added that many Farm Credit employees are CWA members, including CoBank's Farm Credit Banking Group Vice President Sara Reid, who served as CWA's president for two years.

Five Farm Credit organizations serving California—Ag-West Farm Credit, American AgCredit, CoBank, Colusa-Glenn Farm Credit and Fresno Madera Farm Credit—have supported CWA for some 20 years. They are all part of the nationwide Farm Credit System—the largest provider of credit to U.S. agriculture.

Many of the group's 19 chapters have "showcase" events, such as Zoller's Lake County chapter's AgVenture program (now in its 14th year) as a proven educational program.

"We have a class of 12 area

leaders each year, including county supervisors, city council members, business leaders and government department heads, who get a deep dive into how our four main crops—pears, walnuts, grapes and olives—are grown and processed," she said.

During the trips, the participants learn about each crop's regulatory issues, market trends and labor issues, and they get to see a farm in action.

"The first class focuses on pears and is scheduled during the harvest," she said. "We visit an orchard to see the pears harvested, then go to the pear shed where the crop is delivered, processed and boxed, and put into cold storage ready for market."

"A field trip for each crop provides the participants with first-hand views that are paired with in-depth information—the science behind growing crops, U.S. and global economics, labor dynamics, regulatory burdens, and the political issues—that each farmer must contend with."

"Many of the participants say that although they've lived in Lake County all their lives, they had no idea about everything that goes into a local farming operation."

Advocacy in a state that Zoller delicately noted is "not always user-friendly" to agriculture is a crucial focus. CWA encourages members to form relationships with their local decision-makers, along with state and federal legislators.

The state organization hosts an annual two-day event in Sacramento to discuss legislation and hold conversations with lawmakers. On the federal level, CWA partners with American Agri Women, a coalition of other states' advocacy groups, to travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress and officials with government agencies.

"We have been able to educate decision makers, most of whom are several generations away from a farm, to frame some of their proposed legislation into a real-life understanding of the consequences for the ag community and blunt the impacts," she noted.

Zoller predicted that in the years to come, CWA will continue to "help shape decisions that secure our food supply, strengthen rural communities, and build our economies. We know—and we have shown—that when women speak together, the world listens differently."

She added that Leona Lewis, one of the founding members and a former state president, recalled at the 50th anniversary celebration that she and two other women who met to organize the group went into the fields to pick lettuce to show their support for growers, who were facing headwinds at the time.

"Lewis said the person directing them said they were doing it wrong—that harvesting has to be done 'butts up.' So, they repositioned themselves and continued picking until they were told, no, you have to put the lettuce butts up in the carton. The story was greeted with much laughter and applause," Zoller said.

"Those women won't fade into the background. They are rooted in the rich earth of our identity." — Farm Credit




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RODEO STANDINGS



March PRCA world standings

The top five contestants and earnings are listed as provided on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) website, www.prorodeo.com, as of March 4.

All Around

1. Stetson Wright, \$87,280.64, Beaver, UT.
2. Wacey Schalla, \$62,344.15, Arapaho, OK.
3. Brushton Minton, \$26,246.52, Witter Springs, CA.
4. Marcus Theriot, \$23,754.70, Lumberton, MS.
5. Paden Bray, \$23,311.60, Stephenville, TX.

Bareback Riding

1. Wacey Schalla, \$62,035.75, Arapaho, OK.
2. Jacob Lees, \$55,145.17, Caldwell, ID.
3. Bradlee Miller, \$47,238.94, Huntsville, TX.
4. R.C. Landingham, \$38,218.38, Hat Creek, CA.
5. Cooper Cooke, \$36,043.27, Victor, ID.

Saddle Bronc Riding

1. Rusty Wright, \$97,129.22, Milford, UT.
2. Wyatt Casper, \$61,744.63, Miami, TX.
3. Stetson Wright, \$59,614.69, Beaver, UT.
4. Chase Brooks, \$51,261.92, Deer Lodge, MT.
5. Kade Bruno, \$49,894.69, Challis, ID.

Bull Riding

1. Mason Moody, \$61,747.86, Letcher, SD.
2. Boudreaux Campbell, \$55,616.54, Crockett, TX.
3. Tristen Hutchings, \$51,144.07, Montevideo, ID.
4. Luke Mackey, \$49,836.42, Ignacio, CO.
5. Cooper James, \$48,321.97, Erda, UT.

Steer Wrestling

1. Tyler Waguespack, \$45,360.53, Gonzales, LA.
2. Stetson Jorgensen,

3. \$37,588.03, Blackfoot, ID.
3. Bridger Anderson, \$31,135.50, Carrington, ND.
4. Justin Shaffer, \$30,349.75, Hallsville, TX.
5. Tyke Kipp, \$29,736.11, Lordsburg, NM.

Team Roping (Headers)

1. Kaleb Driggers, \$33,862.52, Hoboken, GA.
2. Corben Culley, \$30,661.72, Lawton, IA.
3. Lightning Aguilera, \$26,545.00, Athens, TX.
4. Tanner Tomlinson, \$25,671.94, Mineral Wells, TX.
5. Tyler Tryan, \$25,652.69, Lipan, TX.

Team Roping (Heelers)

1. Trent Vaught, \$41,120.22, Mena, AR.
2. Junior Nunes Nogueira, \$33,862.52, Presidente Prudente, SP.
3. Ross Ashford, \$27,682.01, Lott, TX.
4. Carson Johnson, \$27,338.35, Casper, WY.
5. Will Woodfin, \$27,056.00, Marshall, TX.

Tie-Down Roping

1. Kincaid Henry, \$65,057.90, Mount Pleasant, TX.
2. Haven Meged, \$38,978.25, Miles City, MT.
3. Riley Webb, \$36,721.91, Denton, TX.
4. John Douch, \$34,557.75, Huntsville, TX.
5. Marty Yates, \$34,015.26, Stephenville, TX.

Steer Roping

1. Cody Lee, \$16,703.78, Gatesville, TX.
2. Troy Tillard, \$16,695.53, Douglas, WY.
3. Cole Patterson, \$14,815.08, Pawnee, OK.
4. Kelton McMillen, \$14,212.59, Weatherford, OK.
5. Chet Herren, \$12,079.37, Pawhuska, OK.

Barrel Racing

1. Kassie Mowry, \$32,594.90, Dublin, TX.
2. Acey Pinkston, \$25,145.29, Stephenville, TX.
3. Tricia Aldridge, \$24,346.12, Sanger, TX.
4. Gracen Harman, \$23,057.41, Hempstead, TX.
5. Blake Molle, \$21,130.16, Chauvin, AB.

Breakaway Roping

1. Jill Tanner, \$27,191.67, Stephenville, TX.
2. Shelby Boisjoli-Meged, \$20,467.12, Miles City, MT.
3. Martha Angelone, \$18,531.38, Stephenville, TX.
4. Karrigan Graves, \$17,163.17, Kentwood, LA.
5. Suzanne Williams, \$16,322.68, Standish, CA.

Will MT deer populations decline from CWD?

For decades, wildlife managers in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah have been grappling with the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), a neurodegenerative disorder that sickens and ultimately kills ungulates such as deer, elk and moose over a period of months or years.

The disease is now well established in Montana, according to wildlife managers. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) told state lawmakers recently that the infection curve is climbing, particularly among white-tailed and mule deer. According to FWP's analysis, the disorder, first detected in 2017, is spreading in the Treasure State.

"We now know that chronic wasting disease is found in 33% of hunt districts in Montana, it's found in all susceptible species, and as of the end of our last hunting season, the data showed that our highest three-year prevalence was 39% in white-tailed deer and 23% in mule deer," FWP wildlife biologist Bevin McCormick told lawmakers.

So, will we see a decline in Montana's deer and elk populations?

McCormick said there isn't enough data to conclude with certainty if CWD is contributing to the decline in eastern Montana mule deer populations, but that the state is doing its best to manage the disease by increasing monitoring efforts, expanding hunting opportunities where it has been found, and educating hunters on proper carcass disposal.

Even if it's too early to tell if hunters and other wildlife stakeholders should prepare for a sustained deer population decline, neighboring Wyoming's experience with the disease offers a cautionary tale about what happens when the disorder becomes endemic, or consistently present, in a given region.

CWD is believed to have originated in the 1960s or 1970s from a USDA facility in northern Colorado where scientists were researching a related disease called scrapie that infects sheep and goats, according to the National Institutes of Health.

In a recent conversation with Montana Free Press (MTFP), leading CWD researcher Peter Larsen described Wyoming and Colorado as the "epicenter" of CWD in the U.S. That's because the disease, which is caused by a highly transmissible misfolded protein called a prion, has been present there for decades.

Wildlife researchers in 2017 estimated that a 20% CWD infection rate among mule deer in southeastern Wyoming would lead to a 21% population decline. According

to a related paper published the year prior, CWD-infected white-tailed deer were 4.5 times more likely to die in a given year than those without the disease. Under a worst-case scenario, chronic levels of CWD in that area of eastern Wyoming could lead to the "possible extinction" of that particular population within five decades, researchers concluded.

Larsen, who co-directs the Minnesota Center for Prion Research and Outreach, underscored that risk. He told MTFP that Montana wildlife managers and other stakeholders should prepare for a future with fewer ungulates and possibly CWD transmission to other species. That's due, in part, to the fact that the disease often progresses slowly—it's not uncommon for an animal to carry CWD for several years before succumbing to it—but disperses widely.

"CWD is spreading fast throughout the U.S., but we're really only at the very beginning," Larsen said. "The way this disease spreads and how those infections spread make it really difficult to manage."

CWD is highly infectious, in part because the prions that cause it can continue to sicken animals long after the carrier has died. A study in Wisconsin has demonstrated that the prions that cause CWD, which an infected animal sheds in its bodily fluids and tissues, can persist in the environment for 16 years, Larsen said.

"In a late-stage white-tailed deer with CWD, there are enough prions in that brain to kill all deer in North America," he added. "We're starting to get worried about accumulation in the environment and other species coming into contact with it."

As the disease becomes more widespread, the risk that it will jump the species barrier and infect other animals, such as mountain lions or coyotes, increases, Larsen said. While humans can't contract CWD, the disease poses a "non-zero" risk to them, he said. "Some studies show there's a really strong species barrier. Other studies show it's not 100%, and there may actually be potential [for] crossover."

Researchers trying to learn more about whether the prions become more or less infectious as they move through the food chain, according to Larsen, are grappling with a "dynamic" situation. It's possible, he said, that movement through an animal's gastrointestinal tract can change the prions' shape in a way that increases the infection risk for other species.

"It's really difficult to know whether or not predators are going to be an effective way to manage it," Larsen continued.

"I don't think it hurts anything ... but it's still going to be spreading during that long incubation time."

Asked about the most effective tools to limit the spread of CWD, Larsen responded, "hunting, hunting, hunting." Culling is another management approach, though Missouri's experience with that strategy has demonstrated that taking such an aggressive approach to CWD can invite controversy.

FWP spokesperson Greg Lemon said Montana's approach centers on enlisting hunters to help with monitoring and hunting efforts.

"If we can keep prevalence low where it exists, we can hopefully limit the disease's ability to spread to other herds that might not have CWD yet," Lemon said. "And if we can do that with the help of hunters ... then we can protect the herds and the hunting heritage that we value in Montana." — Amanda Eggert, MTFP

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Reg. 21442918

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A A R Bridger-5403

Lot 43
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-0.9	+67	+32	+118

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COMING EVENTS

(Send calendar of events information to editorial@wlj.net.)
April 21-22 – Registration is now open for the Public Lands Council 2026 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Details: tinyurl.com/5cwkxaj7.
May 21-22 – The Stockmanship & Stewardship event in Farmington, NM, will help ranchers gain practical, hands-on knowledge that strengthens animal care,

enhances cattle handling skills and supports the sustainability of their operations. Details: stockmanshipandstewardship.org.
June 1-3 – The International Year of the Woman Farmer ACE Summit in Washington, D.C. will empower, equip and connect women farmers, ranchers and agribusiness professionals. Details: tinyurl.com/2unspzen.

Bill Clark receives Oklahoma Leopold Conservation Award

Bill Clark of Roff, OK, has been selected as the recipient of the Oklahoma Leopold Conservation Award.

The \$10,000 award honors farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners who go above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat on working land.

Clark, the owner of Rising Sun Ranch from Pontotoc County, was revealed as the award's recipient at the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Meeting on March 2.

Sand County Foundation and national sponsor American Farmland Trust present Leopold Conservation Awards to private landowners in 28 states. In Oklahoma the award is presented with ITC Great Plains, Noble Research Institute, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes landowners who inspire others to consider conservation opportunities on their land. In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold advocated for "a land ethic," an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage.

Oklahoma landowners were encouraged to apply, or be nominated, for the award. Applications were reviewed by an independent panel of agricultural and conservation leaders from Oklahoma.

About Bill Clark

Clark wanted to be a rancher ever since he was tall enough to feed calves at his grandfather's dairy farm. He met the love of his life, a rancher's daughter named Betty, in the sixth grade. Over the course of their 55-year love affair, Bill and Betty's dreams took root at



Bill Clark

Courtesy photo

Rising Sun Ranch.

In each other they had found someone equally committed to leaving their land and livestock better than they found them. Their ranch grew to about 5,800 acres of native rangelands

with the help of their sons, Will and Garrett.

Bill has been lauded as an innovator for adopting prescribed burning and rotational grazing practices while providing leadership to conservation organiza-

tions. However, he says none of it would have been possible without Betty, who died tragically in 2024.

The Rising Sun Ranch's welcome sign matches its cattle brand, four rays atop a rising sun: one for Betty, Bill and their boys.

It was 20 years ago that Bill came to appreciate how fire could rejuvenate native grasses. A friend who was an experienced practitioner of prescribed fire wrestled the drip torch from Bill's hesitant hand and ignited the prairie at Rising Sun Ranch. Ever since, Bill has been a proponent of preserving prairie by setting it ablaze every few years. He has hosted workshops and field days for conservation professionals and fellow ranchers through his involvement with the Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burning Association.

Following a spring burn, Bill uses a retrofitted Great Plains drill to seed Eastern Gamagrass. The "ice cream grass," as it's known, is a nutritious, highly palatable, forage for grazing livestock and wildlife. Its deep root system improves soil health, retain moistures and supports beneficial fungi. It also provides crucial habitat and food for birds and insects. In recent years Bill has documented the repopulation of Texas horned lizards, quail and turkeys to Rising Sun Ranch.

Drilling wells and installing about 30 watering facilities allowed the Clarks to divide their ranch into

60-100-acre paddocks. Cattle and sheep are rotated to a fresh paddock twice weekly during the growing season, and once per week during the dormant season.

Instead of applying herbicide to control weeds, Bill has found the grazing sheep and cattle works as a tag team against invasive species. Another way the Clarks use livestock to work with the natural ecosystem has been by breeding their cows with Lowline American Aberdeen bulls. Their moderate framed and maternally focused offspring require less grass and feed.

Bill knows that his efforts to rejuvenate grasslands look inefficient to some, but he sees agricultural conservation as the pathway to returning the landscape to how it was "before county roads, barbed wire and rural fire departments."

Others have taken notice of how Bill has navigated increasingly volatile weather, embraced new ways of grazing livestock and controlling invasive species. In its nomination of Bill for the Leopold Conservation Award, the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts wrote, "Bill's pursuit of knowledge about the living world around him and willingness to try new practices is unwavering."

Rising Sun Ranch is more than an oasis of lush green prairie and pastures in south central Oklahoma. It's the living embodiment of one couple's dream. — Sand County Foundation

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PRAIRIE CHICKEN (from page 1)

challenged the 4(d) rule for the Northern DPS.

Last March, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas vacated the 4(d) rule for the Northern DPS, ruling that the species should no longer be listed as threatened because USFWS failed to consider the economic implications of the listing. In August, the same court issued an order vacating the final listing rule for both the Northern DPS and Southern DPS.

The USFWS' Feb. 26 action is a response to the court orders. As the court orders had legal effect immediately, the USFWS' decision is effective immediately.

Industry support

The NCBA and the Public Lands Council (PLC) filed litigation to remove the listing when the lesser prairie chicken was first listed in 2022, calling the protections legally and scientifically flawed.

"The ESA listing of the lesser prairie-chicken, coupled with the designation of critical habitat across cattle country, created an unnecessary and unlawful burden for ranchers," said NCBA Presi-

dent Gene Copenhaver. "Established science has repeatedly proven that healthy rangelands maintained by cattle grazing is exactly where the lesser prairie-chicken thrives."

PLC President Tim Canterbury said that the ability for ranchers to carry out voluntary conservation efforts was constrained when the lesser prairie chicken was listed with two separate designations.

"This delisting is welcome news for ranchers across the region, and we will continue to work with our state and federal partners to create and conserve habitat," Canterbury said.

Environmental groups expressed disappointment about the decision.

"It's shameful that the Trump administration sees fit to sacrifice these magnificent birds for oil and gas industry profit," said Jason Rylander of the Center for Biological Diversity.

The group alleged the species has declined as a result of the "degradation and fragmentation of the southern Great Plains," including oil and gas drilling, cropland conversion, cattle grazing and drought. — Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor

House Ag Committee advances farm bill package

The continuing partisan divisions within the House Agriculture Committee flared again as lawmakers worked through a full day of marking up the latest attempt by Congress to pass a farm bill.

And yet, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA-15) was able to advance the "Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026" early Thursday morning of March 5 on a 34-17 vote with seven Democrats siding with all 27 Republicans on the committee who voted. Each side had one lawmaker missing because of family deaths. The "skinny" farm bill dealt with most of the titles that were not addressed last summer in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

After debating late into Tuesday night, the House Agriculture Committee spent all of Wednesday wading through proposed amendments for the "Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026," which would provide a full reauthorization of the 2018 farm bill.

The markup was livestreamed throughout Wednesday and into early Thursday morning.

Ranking Member Angie Craig (D-MN-02) said early Thursday morning, "This bill doesn't meet the moment. This bill doesn't lower input costs or stabilize our export markets." She added, "And it's going to have challenges getting broad bipartisan support on the House floor, if it makes it there."

Thompson rejected Craig's view, saying the bill meets broad objects and said, "You're not going to find in construction a more bipartisan bill." Thompson added, "Pure and simple, this is a great farm bill. Let's focus on the people we're supposed to be focusing on, and that's the hard-working farmer, the ranchers, the foresters of this nation. This is what they've asked for."

Heated debate on solar

The Trump administration has set a hard rule against providing USDA incentives for solar projects on farmland. The House bill would allow USDA Rural Development funds for solar panels on five acres without any restrictions or allow solar on up to 50 acres if a majority of the power is being used on the farm.

Rep. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13) introduced an amendment to reestablish USDA funds for other solar projects on farms but withdrew the amendment after a protracted debate. Budzinski said solar only accounts for about 3% of farmland loss, "far less than urban and residential development."

Craig called the restriction on federal incentives for solar a "poison pill" that would "limit farmer options at a time when they are facing an economic crisis." Craig also noted the farm bill restricts solar incentives while at the same time ordering a study of the impacts of solar farms on agriculture and rural America. Craig said solar should be considered as a way to expand and diversify energy markets.

Republicans pointed out the provisions in the bill don't pre-

vent landowners from installing solar projects but prevents USDA taxpayer dollars from supporting them.

Rep. Dave Taylor (R-OH-02) was among those who strongly opposed reinstating taxpayer incentives for large-scale solar farms.

"By allowing solar farms to proliferate across our country, we are inherently limiting the ability of our next generation of farmers to get into the business," Taylor said.

Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL-12) also criticized solar panel companies for taking land out of production. Bost said the Department of Energy has projected more than 10 million acres of land will be needed for solar farms by 2050.

"The federal government should not be using taxpayer dollars to incentivize taking our best land out of production," Bost said.

Budzinski added, "I don't think we should be freaking out that solar is going to take all of the most productive farmland in this country because I just don't think that's the real accurate picture."

Pesticide language

Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01) introduced an amendment to strike language in the bill that would give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) exclusive authority to regulate pesticide labeling requirements. The provision in the bill limit states and cities from regulating pesticides and gives pesticide manufacturers immunity from lawsuits as well. Pingree's amendment would have stripped that provision from the bill.

"I just have deep concerns about language being placed in the farm bill that would preempt states' rights in the way this does and also gives such a liability shield to the chemical companies that have acknowledged through their settlements," Pingree said. "The fact is, there have been over 200,000 claims against just one chemical alone—that's Roundup (glyphosate)—that there are serious health risks to this, and broadening it to all pesticides, and making this kind of exemption or this kind of immunity in the bill, is just extremely dangerous to human health," Pingree said.

Rep. Jim Rose (R-TN-06) said the pesticide provisions in the bill would keep crop yields high, and ensure people are fed. Without approved pesticides, producers would not be able to meet production demands, he said. Further, EPA approval of pesticide chemicals is not a rushed process but are rigorously reviewed.

"The science is there and we should trust it," Rose said. "Pesticide labeling uniformity is not a liability shield; it is about making sure these products remain on the shelves for farmers who rely on this provision."

Several Democrats weighed in supporting Pingree's amendment. Rep. Jill Tokuda (D-HI-02) told the committee about importing milk for schools because Hawaii dairies had to dump 36 million gallons of contaminated milk after cows consumed pineapple tops that had been

sprayed with the now-banned pesticide Heptachlor.

"So, when we talk about the impacts of pesticides, Hawaii literally has a history of this going back generations," Tokuda said.

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case in late April on Bayer's arguments to end state "failure-to-warn" lawsuits against glyphosate lawsuits. Bayer's legal briefings argue that Congress intended to give EPA oversight of pesticide labels. A state court in Missouri also has given preliminary approval of a proposed \$7.3 billion national settlement in Roundup cases.

Pingree's amendment lost on a 28-22 vote with one Democrat voting with Republicans.

Proposition 12

The bill includes a provision that would eliminate state laws that restrict the sale of meat products from other states if they don't meet an individual state's livestock standards. The provision directly targets Cali-

fornia's Proposition 12, which restricts pork imports from states that don't meet California's swine space requirements.

Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA-21) introduced an amendment to remove that provision from the bill. Other Democrats said there is no consensus in the House or Senate to eliminate state authority over livestock production standards. Democrats also argued the provision has created a niche market for producers willing to adhere to

California's standards. Costa then withdrew the amendment, saying he believed the Senate would address it.

Partisan fragments continue

Late Wednesday, Craig introduced the "Farm and Family Relief Act," a bill she and other Democrats introduced in January that would provide another \$18 billion in economic aid to farmers but would also delay state mandates for the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Countering Craig and some other comments, Republicans rattled off provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, highlighting the \$15 million estate-tax exemption and other tax provisions in the legislation. Republicans said the provisions would make farmers more profitable but also noted the farm bill is needed because farmers need economic certainty. — Chris Clayton, DTN ag policy editor

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Fourth year of drought in the Yakima Basin is likely

The Yakima Valley of Washington hasn't experienced four consecutive years of drought since record-keeping began in the late 19th century. That could change this year, as the window closes for snowpack to build across the Cascades.

Snow cover and snow depth have been at their lowest levels in decades across the western U.S., raising concerns about water shortages and wildfires this summer. While some officials remain hopeful for snow in the late winter and early spring, others are sounding the alarm about the drought already.

Based on historical records, the snowpack is unlikely to be made up in the coming months, Deputy Washington State Climatologist Karin Bumbaco told reporters during a news conference on the snowpack drought on Feb. 12.

"If the Upper Yakima was to receive normal snow every day, it would only receive 50% snowpack by April," Bumbaco said.

Snowpack is the third-lowest on record in Washington,

after the drought years of 2005 and 2015, Bumbaco said. December precipitation was high, coming as a heavy rain that flooded many parts of the state.

The situation puts more attention on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, a long-term framework for water management in Kittitas, Yakima and Benton counties. It involves collaborative work by federal, state and local officials, along with the Yakama Nation, irrigation districts and conservation groups.

A number of multimillion-dollar projects are underway to prepare for a new future with less water.

The drought

This winter's forecasted La Niña conditions, which often translate to snow, have been weak. The first four months of the water year, which begins in October, were the warmest on record, Bumbaco said.

The signs also point to a longer fire season, she said.

"Once it dries out, we have a

bigger window of opportunity for fires to start," she said. "It's not great news for fires later in the summer."

The five reservoirs that make up the Bureau of Reclamation's Yakima Project quickly filled with the high December rainfall. But the amount of snowpack and the timing of snow melt are key factors to a drought. The reservoirs hold around 1 million acre-feet, but there are 2.4 million acre-feet in allotted water rights.

"It's getting real. There's no way around it, it's not good," said Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District manager. He is communicating with growers about the prospects of another drought year, which may mean more and longer system shut-offs.

It's a problem that will only become more common moving forward. Climate models predict that by 2050, snowpack drought will occur in Washington 40% of the time.

A decades-long partnership in the basin has yielded projects that are expanding water

storage capacities, conservation measures, habitat restoration and fish passage, all in anticipation of a water-scarce future.

"The benefit that the 30-year integrated water management plan has for farms and fish is tremendous and it is recognized as such. The model for partnering together is also recognized," said Chad Stuart, Yakima Field Office manager of the Bureau of Reclamation. "Much like building a cathedral, this is a decadal project," said Larry Mattson, Office of the Columbia River director.

Talks of an integrated plan began in 2008, when members of the Roza Irrigation District and the Yakama Nation came together to come up with an alternative to a large-scale proposed reservoir project, and set aside decades of legal conflict.

Projects in the Yakima Basin are organized around seven elements: fish passage, structural and operational changes, surface water storage, groundwater storage, watershed protection, water conservation

and water market reallocation. The effort is the third phase of the Yakima River Basin Watershed Enhancement Program, which Congress created in 1979.

Many projects affiliated with the integrated plan have already been completed.

That includes miles of canals being lined or converted into pipe to conserve water and hundreds of acres of habitat and floodplain being restored. Growers have taken water conservation measures upon themselves, such as expanding drip irrigation and building their own storage ponds.

Basin-wide conservation efforts have achieved over 70% of the required 85,000 acre-feet in conserved water, according to a 2025 water report from Ecology.

"The past few years, we've seen some tremendous effort in conservation work, which is providing tens of thousands of acre-feet for fish flows in the Yakima Basin, which has been critical in times of drought," Stuart said.

\$330,000 for the Kachess project for 2026, Reclamation spokesperson Erika Lopez said in an email.

The economic consequences of drought are high in the Yakima Basin.

The total estimated cost for the 30-year plan as a whole is around \$4 billion, Mattson said. It's received just over \$1 billion so far. That's compared to the \$4.5 billion annual value of the agricultural production in the valley.

A drought that results in 70% of normal water supply could impact up to 6,000 jobs and result in up to \$424 million in direct losses, according to a state Department of Agriculture study. In a year with 50% water supply, direct losses could reach \$668 million with 10,309 jobs lost. The total economic impact could be \$1.1 billion.

This past year, non-senior water rights holders in the Yakima Basin received 40% of their estimated allotment.

Revell, of the Roza district, is communicating with growers about the drought. He's also talking to lawmakers about the effect and why solutions are needed.

"I often tell legislators, 'If you have beer or wine in your fridge, they're probably made with Roza hops or Roza grapes,'" Revell said. — **Questen Inghram, Washington State Murrow Fellowship**

The path ahead

Integrated water plan projects continue to receive federal and state support, despite widespread belt-tightening in government budgets.

Recent allocations include \$2.5 million for the Cle Elum Fish Passage project and

HRI: BLM delay has led to infrastructure decline

PROTEST (from page 1)

the canyon rim. HRI further notes that nearly all of the Mud Creek Allotment lies within the Bridge Creek Wilderness Study Area, contending that previous agency descriptions understated that extent.

The protest states BLM should give full consideration to the significant private land, water rights and related infrastructure within the Bridge Creek Area that are owned or controlled by HRI. While the agency acknowledges the presence of private land, HRI argues the FEIS fails to recognize that much of the private property, associated water rights and certain public land range improvements are owned, controlled or assigned to HRI—an omission the ranch contends materially limits the range of reasonable grazing alternatives and undermines the decision-making process.

HRI also urges BLM to more thoroughly consider a proposed land exchange involving private lands in the Hardie Summer Allotment and the Mud Creek Pasture of the Hammond FFR Allotment in exchange for certain BLM-administered lands in other pastures. HRI urges BLM to "clean up these problems now" in the final decision, asserting that boundary ambiguities have persisted for nearly 12 years and materially affect grazing administration.

Range improvements and maintenance

In addition to boundary issues, HRI protests provisions

in the Proposed Decision regarding fence construction, relocation and maintenance responsibilities. The decision requires permittees to maintain developments unless documented as a BLM responsibility and to sign an Assignment of Range Improvements form prior to permit issuance.

HRI argues it already holds assignment rights to many public land range improvements and that the 2014 permit denial did not extinguish those interests. The ranch maintains it should only be responsible for improvements it was previously assigned and contends BLM should bear responsibility for reconstruction where infrastructure has deteriorated during the 12-year period of largely ungrazed conditions.

Specifically, HRI said that BLM's delay in renewing the grazing permit since 2014 has allowed pipelines, troughs and other developments to fall into disrepair, shifting maintenance needs into reconstruction. It argues that such deterioration should not be attributed to the ranch.

Despite its objections, HRI reiterates that it supports selection and implementation of Alternative 2, which BLM determined best meets the purpose and need of the project. However, the ranch maintains that final boundary corrections, allocation of forage consistent with its 2020 application, and clarification of range improvement responsibilities must be resolved before issuance of a final Record of Decision. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**



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Summer pasture rental rates on a price per ton basis

Pasture rental rates in Nebraska continue to be at a premium compared to the rest of the country. This author is unaware of anywhere else that has a higher price per pair per month, when compared to Nebraska's summer grazing rates.

This means that summer grass in some parts of Nebraska is actually more expensive on a per ton basis than current hay prices this spring. This article shows how to compare apples (summer grazing) to oranges (baled hay), by converting both into air-dried forage per ton.

Nebraska pasture rental rates continue to be higher in the eastern Sandhills area compared to other parts of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln conducts yearly surveys of cash rental rates across Nebraska. The report for 2025 pasture rental rates can be viewed at cap.unl.edu/realestate.

Estimating pair consumption

When grass is readily available, of excellent quality, and the rate of passage is rapid, consumption of grass will be higher as a percentage of a cow's body weight than later in the grazing season when quality declines. Grass consumption by calves generally increases throughout the grazing season as calf size and rumen capacity increase. This occurs simultaneously while cow milk production decreases.

Estimating the amount of forage consumed by the cow is just that, an estimate. Recent research from Oklahoma State University of cows eating medium quality grass hay has shown tremendous variation in forage consumption within a herd, even when cows are of similar size and weight.

Estimating the value of

the grazed forage on a per-ton basis allows a person to compare grazed grass directly to what it would cost to buy hay. In this calculation, no labor, waste or machinery cost is accounted for when moving, storing or feeding the hay.

Let's use an example to value the grazed air-dried forage going into the cow on a per ton basis. For our example, the following assumptions are used.

- One animal unit month (AUM) is an estimate of how much a 1,000-pound bovine would eat in a month, and the estimated consumption is 780 lbs. of air-dried forage per month.

- A cow-calf pair is made up of a 1,350-lb. cow and 400-lb. calf. These weights convert to 1.75 AUM, averaged over the five-month summer grazing period.

To figure the pounds of air-dried forage consumed in one month of summer grazing, take 1.75 AUM multiplied by 780 lbs. of forage to get 1,365 lbs. of air-dried forage per pair. (1.75 x 780 = 1,365).

Table 1 shows the price of summer grazing per pair and what the estimated hay price would be per ton. (Remember our pair is a 1,350-lb. cow and 400-lb. calf).

Considerations

Currently, hay can be bought in Nebraska for a cost per ton equivalent, that in many cases is equal to or less than the cost per ton for grazed forage rates paid for cow-calf pairs.

The quality of grazed grass early in the grazing season will likely be equal to or better than good quality hay that can be purchased. In the later summer and fall, the quality of the hay based on energy and protein basis may be better than grazed forage.

If hay is to be fed versus grazing pastures, most medium quality hays will not meet the nutrition require-

ments of a milking cow with a calf. Another feed resource that would enhance the quality of a roughage diet, and readily available in Nebraska, are ethanol coproducts. Currently, dried distillers grains can be purchased at approximately \$160/ton at the plant. Distillers grains supplemented with medium quality hay could meet a milking cow's nutritional requirements.

On a dry basis, a pound of distillers grains will have almost twice the energy and will be more than twice the protein of most hay sources. That means that a pound of distillers grains has about the same energy and protein as 2 lbs. of an average quality hay. Using a combination of hay and distillers grains could be an economic and feasible option to develop a balanced ration for many operations.

When feeding hay and distillers grains, the additional costs of labor, equipment and waste during storage and feeding need to be considered. However, when hay or distillers grains are purchased and fed, nutrients are brought in that have value as fertilizer (once the feed passes through the animal onto

the ground), when they are captured and utilized effectively.

Summer pasture rental rates in Nebraska have seen significant increases over the last few years with wide ranges being paid per pair per month depending upon a variety of factors. Current market prices for harvested feed are com-

petitive in many cases with pasture rental rates when compared on a price per ton basis. The quality and value of forage consumed, whether by grazing or as hay, need to be considered as producers evaluate grazing and feeding options for the cow herd this spring and summer. — **Nebraska Extension**

Table 1: Converting Summer Grazing Rates to Equivalent Hay Price

Summer Grazing Rate Per Pair (1.75 AUM)	Estimated Equivalent Price for Hay (per ton)
\$50 per pair/month	\$73 per ton
\$60 per pair/month	\$88 per ton
\$70 per pair/month	\$103 per ton
\$80 per pair/month	\$117 per ton
\$90 per pair/month	\$131 per ton
\$100 per pair/month	\$147 per ton



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MARKET NEWS

MARKET SITUATION REPORT

WLJ compiles its market reports, ODJ stories and statistics from USDA and independent marketing organizations.

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 3/5/2026	Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	N/A ▲	245.00	195.79
CME Feeder Index	368.93 ▼	374.79	277.87
Boxed Beef Average	386.89 ▲	377.89	313.12
Average Dressed Steers	N/A ▲	N/A	310.00
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,469 ▲	1,468	1,440
Weekly Slaughter**	516,000 ▲	516,000	566,000
Weekly Beef Production***	461.7 ▲	461.2	494.4
Hide/Offal Value	12.22 ▲	11.96	11.80
Corn Price	4.42 ▲	4.34	4.53

*Average weight for previous week. **Total slaughter for previous week. ***Estimated year-to-date figure in million pounds for previous week.

BEEF REPORT: Weekly Composite Boxed Beef												
WEEK ENDING	COMPREHENSIVE Loads/Price		PRIME Loads/Price		BRANDED Loads/Price		CHOICE Loads/Price		SELECT Loads/Price		UNGRADED Loads/Price	
February 27	6,133	373.86	316	385.27	1,188	376.42	1,864	371.62	488	364.17	2,277	351.53
February 20	6,294	367.12	257	381.45	1,190	369.97	2,014	365.62	516	358.29	2,317	343.67
February 13	6,409	366.87	275	380.68	1,214	368.66	1,895	365.30	512	360.11	2,513	345.19
February 6	6,607	366.50	272	379.84	1,170	371.37	2,102	362.90	587	359.82	2,475	346.06

CUTOUTS						FED BOXED BEEF							
DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT		50% LEAN	90% LEAN	DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT		50% LEAN	90% LEAN
March 5	386.89	380.61	334.99		159.30	432.09	March 5	386.89	380.61	334.99		159.30	432.09
March 4	388.57	380.35	334.90		159.00	436.10	March 4	388.57	380.35	334.90		159.00	436.10
March 3	388.05	378.58	332.22		159.68	429.52	March 3	388.05	378.58	332.22		159.68	429.52
March 2	381.34	378.21	331.47		164.85	430.83	March 2	381.34	378.21	331.47		164.85	430.83
February 27	379.84	374.31	333.90		159.03	N/A	February 27	379.84	374.31	333.90		159.03	N/A

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle							
	2/27	3/2	3/3	3/4	3/5	High*	Low*
Feb.	24400	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24775	16853
Apr.	23223	23310	23475	23900	23995	24830	16668
Jun.	22915	22965	23093	23590	23648	25018	17005
Aug.	22780	22818	22908	23408	23433	25093	18068

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle							
	2/27	3/2	3/3	3/4	3/5	High*	Low*
Mar.	35543	35728	35868	36448	36443	38103	21920
Apr.	35120	35333	35470	36123	36160	38280	22268
May	34720	34948	35043	35743	35780	38020	22460
Aug.	34733	34938	35068	35713	35765	37860	24118

*High and low figures are for the life of the contract.

FED CATTLE TRADE	Head Count	Avg. Weight	Avg. Price
WEEKLY WEIGHTED AVERAGES			
Live FOB Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Live FOB Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	248	898	380.00
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	510	1,650	245.00
Live FOB Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	896	1,381	195.79
Live FOB Heifer	1,230	1,348	196.37
Dressed Del Steer	208	921	310.00
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: MARCH 2, 2026		
	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	41,304	4,520
Formula	227,499	1,543
Negotiated Cash	62,507	435
Negotiated Grid	19,228	1,916
Packer Owned	9,437	N/A
Total	359,975	8,414

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS			FORWARD BEEF SALES			
Delivery Month	Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,727	Neg. Sales 21+ days	691	Formula sales	3,651
Mar. '26	146,644		691		3,651	
Apr. '26	183,477					
May '26	84,134					
Jun. '26	99,113					
Jul. '26	66,882					

CANADIAN LIVESTOCK PRICES & FEDERAL INSPECTED SLAUGHTER FIGURES			
Alberta Direct Sales (4% shrink)	Price	Weekly Change	
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs	230.23	+1.71	
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	228.58	+1.54	
Ontario Auctions			
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs	232.37	-0.95	
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	231.96	+0.58	
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs	150.73	+2.61	

*Price comparison from one week ago.

Average feeder cattle prices (GND) for week ending Tuesday, March 3, 2026				
Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario	
501-600 lbs	506.29	523.47	441.58	
601-700 lbs	461.24	446.89	400.88	
701-800 lbs	407.48	402.14	378.31	
801-900 lbs	368.81	365.82	364.50	
Heifers:				
401-500 lbs	511.47	514.20	405.89	
501-600 lbs	462.44	465.09	383.99	
601-700 lbs	417.62	408.72	364.67	
701-800 lbs	374.71	372.99	302.91	

USDA MEXICO TO U.S. WEEKLY LIVESTOCK IMPORTS				
Species	Current Week	Previous Week	Current Year-to-date	Previous Year-to-date
Feeders	2/23/2026	2/16/2026	0	230,638

IMPORTS SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE			
March 5, 2026			
Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary			
Receipts EST: N/A	Week Ago EST: N/A	Year Ago Act: 9,450	
THIS REPORT WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED AFTER MAY 12TH 2025. THE BORDER WILL BE CLOSED FOR LIVESTOCK IMPORTS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.			

Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2		Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2	
500-600 lbs	N/A	500-600 lbs	N/A
600-700 lbs	N/A	600-700 lbs	N/A
700-800 lbs	N/A	700-800 lbs	N/A
Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2		Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2	
500-600 lbs	N/A	500-600 lbs	N/A
600-700 lbs	N/A	600-700 lbs	N/A
700-800 lbs	N/A	700-800 lbs	N/A

(slide 10 cents on steers and heifers basis 300 lbs. All sales fob port of entry.)

Selected Auctions Week Ending March 5, 2026

DATE MARKET	200-300 lb.	300-400 lb.	400-500 lb.	500-600 lb.	600-700 lb.	700-800 lb.	800 lb. - up	SLAUGHTER COWS	PAIRS	
Feeder prices for steers & heifers reflect medium and large 1 cattle, unless otherwise noted; * Indicates medium and large 1-2										
No report available Blackfoot, ID										
March 5 Burley, ID	269	637.50	532.50	501	452	400-430	364	232-318	154-178	185-199
No report available Emmett, ID										
February 28 Eugene, OR	1,122	365-552*	390-517.50*	335-500*	340-420*	304-389*		149-168	169-189	2,900-4,000
March 2 Madras, OR	534	500-560	546-577	452-485	416-455	360-390	360-375	170-190	171-190	
March 4 Vale, OR	565	610	500-583	432-493	415-436			175-192	181-213	
March 3 Davenport, WA	203	550-600	325-350	270-471	280-450	210-406	173-323	172-329	111-219	4,050-4,550
February 26 Toppenish, WA	885		565*	500*	450*	397.50*		155-160	166-195.50	
February 26 Orland, CA	740		400-582	380-525	400-520	350-464	325-400	300-338	155-177	3,000-5,200
No report available Escalon, CA										
March 2 Famoso, CA	150	440-560	425-550	380-485	350-440	320-350	270-320	125-250	125-178	
March 4 Galt, CA	414	530-600	450-505	400-490	370-460	330-405	270-335	100-174	150-246	3,300-4,800
March 3 Turlock, CA	406							135-179	164-197.50	
March 3 Salina, UT	987	505-635	450-625	375-575	360-484.50	350-414	335-385	300-350	149-177.50	3,000-3,233.33
March 2 Iowa	11,693	500-612.50	500-595	430-570	459-535	380-492.50	348-424.50	298-383.50	125-290	165-258
March 3 Miles City, MT	722		490-525		390-502.50	462.50	327.75-430	294-380	125-182.50	2,650-5,400
No report available Bassett, NE										
February 28 Ericson, NE	3,690	660	550-615	429-485	472.50-542	420-485	373-432	315-376		
No report available Imperial, NE										
February 25 Kearney, NE	4,200		586-590	501-541	424-469.50	382.50-420	322.25-385.50	168-183.50	184-201	
February 27 Lexington, NE	3,255	660	547-559	542.50	530	445-470	370-439.50	310-367		
February 26 Ogallala, NE	5,562	685	645	492.50-559	433-482	385-431	333-386	323.50-382		
February 26 Valentine, NE	1,070		515-612.50		456-516	396.50-443	357-402			3,700-5,000
February 27 Herreid, SD	4,127	670	530-585	485-551	400-469	367-427	336-376			
March 4 Torrington, WY	2,111	575	485-510	438-483	377-429	341-421	325.50-348			
February 26 Willcox, AZ	N/A	513.50-630	532-569	427-490	399-418	352-380		135-190	160-183	3,750-4,250
March 2 Colorado	2,833	560-645	512.50-580	442-530	366-406	365-400	302.50-362.50	150-178	2,900-3,575	
February 25 La Junta, CO	1,322	507.50-540	425-530	391-477.50	367.50-449	337.50-375	305-347.25	159-209	2,650-3,625	
No report available Loma, CO										
March 4 Dodge City, KS	5,154	632.50	570-584	480	456	409-473	364-406	317-378	136-180	3,275-4,275
February 26 Pratt, KS	1,505	640-700	589-638	521-538	415-468	368-407	320-361	160-182.50	160-207	2,175-4,000
March 5 Salina, KS	2,267	570	512.50-590	494-535	391-414	365-400	310-350	168-203		3,000-3,800
March 5 Clovis, NM	1,860	635	505-640	475-665	445-525	394-428	365-379	224-346	161-206.50	2,700-6,000
March 4 El Reno, OK	7,986	620	445-580	450-525	320-382	332-342	290-346			1,625-4,150
March 3 McAlester, OK	499	560-640	480-590	430-490	370-440	367-400	290-376			
March 3 Oklahoma City, OK	5,946	553-670	435-520	375-480	344-422.50	325-365	275-341			
February 27 Cuero, TX	1,155	650	563-670	428-510	400-445	350-390	324	157-193		
February 26 Dalhart, TX	2,142	625	490-605	420-500	375-460	320-350	260-315	183-201		
February 26 San Angelo, TX	560	617.50-670	490-600	452.50-540						

Taking stock of feed resources this spring

In Nebraska, February is usually the halfway point of winter. And since we're on the back side of the season now, this is a good time to take stock of your feed resources—especially hay.

First, how is your hay stockpile looking today? An open winter can reduce hay use, but don't assume you're in the clear. The goal, even in a tough year, is to avoid buying hay late in the game just to reach spring.

If you're short, make a plan now, and then ask the bigger question: how do we keep this from happening again next winter? Annual forages can provide quick yield, and if this is a repeat problem, it may be time to look at expanding grass or alfalfa acres—keeping in

mind moisture and the forecast, especially on dryland.

Next, think about last year's perennial forage yields. Did your grass or alfalfa fields perform the way you needed? If renovation is coming, the planning starts now. For example, if an old alfalfa stand needs to come out and you want that rotation "rest year" before re-seeding, don't wait until summer to decide. Even interseeding legumes into grass should be on the early-season calendar.

Maybe you don't need a full renovation, it could be a look at fertility will boost yields. If you didn't soil sample last fall, plan your sampling soon so plant needs match what you are providing. And don't forget to

match fertilizer timing to your dominant species; not all plants grow at the same time of year.

Finally, take a hard look at

the forage budget. Do you need new equipment—and can you justify it? Or does it make more sense to buy hay, or hire custom harvesting? Costs matter,

but so do labor, timing, and forage quality.

Winter gives us a chance to take stock and plan ahead. A quick check on hay inventory,

last year's yields, and the economics can make a big difference in how smoothly you hit spring. —Ben Beckman, Nebraska Extension

Boxed beef prices find seasonal gains

MARKETS (from page 1)

- Forward contract net purchases: \$368.09.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: \$381.56.

Slaughter through Thursday totaled about 433,000 head, compared to 427,000 head a week earlier. Slaughter for a week earlier is estimated at 516,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending Feb. 21 was 517,132 head. The average steer dressed weight was 983 lbs., down 1 lb. from the previous week.

"The packers are deploying the only weapon they have to restore margins—sharply downsize the slaughter," the Cattle Report wrote on Thursday. "The sharp decline for two weeks running will send a jolt through the retail trade and has already set the stage for higher box prices."

Boxed beef prices climbed higher over the week. The Choice cutout gained \$9 to close at \$386.89, and the Select cutout gained about \$10 to close at \$380.61.

"Beef demand will now transition from a historically soft seasonal period to the spring period that has featured improved demand," the Cattle Report said.

Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures traded mostly sideways over the week. The March contract gained about a dollar to close at \$362.85, and the April contract gained about 40 cents to close at \$359.12.

"The live cattle complex is pushing its spot April contract above the 40-day moving average, but the feeder cattle complex isn't seeing the same level of support as traders aren't comfortable pushing above their 40-day moving average at this time," Stewart said.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index lost more than \$5 to close at \$368.93.

Corn futures traded higher over the week, up 8 cents on the March contract to \$4.41 and up 10 cents on the May contract to \$4.53.

Colorado: Winter Livestock in La Junta sold 1,169 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 700 lbs. sold unevenly steady and over 700 lbs. sold \$10-11

lower. Feeder heifers sold mostly sharply lower across all weight classes. Benchmark steers averaging 713 lbs. sold between \$379-380, averaging \$379.25.

Iowa: Russell Livestock in Russell sold 3,611 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, steers sold mostly \$2-21 lower. Heifers sold mostly \$3-20 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 715 lbs. sold between \$388-412, averaging \$402.17.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 10,000 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, at the mid-session, feeder steers under 550 lbs. sold \$10-30 lower and heavier weights sold \$2-8 lower. Feeder heifers under 650 lbs. sold steady to \$10 lower, and heavier weights sold \$5-25 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 759 lbs. sold from \$360-375, averaging \$371.66.

Nebraska: North Platte Stockyards in North Platte sold 2,705 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, steers and heifers sold mixed. Benchmark steers averaging 777 lbs. sold between \$379-386, averaging \$384.53.

New Mexico: Roswell Livestock in Roswell sold 788 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, steer calves sold steady to higher, with a few \$5 lower. Feeder steers sold steady to lower. Heifer calves sold lower with no comparable sales in heifer yearling sales. Benchmark steers averaging 712 lbs. sold between \$357-365, averaging \$363.11.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 5,500 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, at the mid-session, feeder steers sold \$2-8 lower and feeder heifers sold \$4-10 lower. Steer calves sold \$5-15 lower, and heifer calves sold \$10-20 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 756 lbs. sold from \$349-373.50, averaging \$369.40.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 3,322 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers sold \$10-15 lower, except 600-700 lbs. sold steady to \$5 lower. Feeder heifers sold \$10-15 lower, except 500-600 lbs. sold up to \$10 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 781 lbs. sold from \$355-392, averaging \$367.04. — Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor

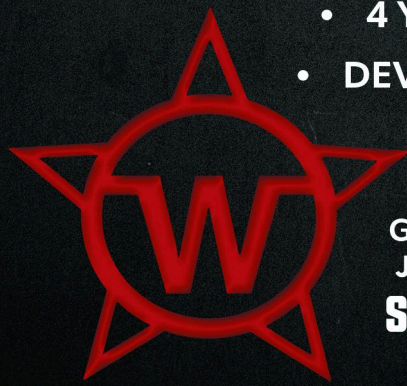
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AXTELL CRAFTSMAN 5311
Lot 14



AXTELL BOXER 5204
Lot 1



AXTELL WIDESCREEN 5835
Lot 3



AXTELL BOXER 5103
Lot 34

AXTELL CATTLE COMPANY

Annual Production Sale

March 30, 2026

1:00 p.m. (MST)

Sterling Livestock Commission
Sterling, Colorado

Sale offering includes:
69 Yearling Red Angus Bulls
6 Black (Red Gene) Yearling Bulls
PLUS
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SALE REPORTS

TC RANCH BULL SALE
Feb. 25, Franklin, NE
71 Angus bulls \$9,563
8 Angus open

heifers 4,250
Auctioneer: Joe Goggins
TOPS: TC Bold Ruler 4112,
9/11/2024 by BA7 Oaks Bold

Ruler; to Poss Angus, Scotia,
NE, \$37,000. TC Great Lakes
4101, 9/8/2024 by Marda
Great Lakes 370; to OK Bar

Ranch, McPhearson, KS,
\$20,000. TC Great Lakes 596,
2/5/2025 by Marda Great
Lakes 370; to Werth Farms,

Ellis, KS, \$19,500. — **TY GROSHANS**

**MEYRING CATTLE CO.
PRODUCTION SALE**
Feb. 26, Alliance, NE
55 Simmental
bulls \$10,690
18 Simmental total
registered
females 10,966

Auctioneer: Jered
Shipman
Sale Manager: Innovation
AgMarketing
TOPS—SimAngus bull:
MCC - Right Time 0840M,
8/15/2024 by ES Right Time
FA 110-4; to Shorter Ranch,
Dexter, KS, \$19,000. **Sim-**
mental bulls: MCC - Anthem
R944N, 3/11/2025 by LCDR
Anthem 33K; to Werning
Cattle Co., Emery, SD,
\$25,000. MCC - Anthem
B977N, 3/2/2025 by LCDR
Anthem 33K; to Windy Creek
Cattle Co., Spencer, SD,
\$19,000. — **TY GROSHANS**

**RS ANGUS PRODUCTION
SALE**
Feb. 27, Dodge City, KS
79 Angus older
bulls \$15,050
14 Angus yearling
bulls 11,607
10 Angus bred
heifers 14,200
8 Angus open
heifers 9,187
Auctioneer: Dustin Layton
Sale Manager: Layton
Auction Services

TOPS—Angus bulls: RSA
True Balance 4126, 8/27/2024
by RSA True Balance 1311; to
Grimmius Cattle Co., Hanford,
CA, \$75,000, 2/3 interest.
RSA True Balance 4160,
9/15/2024 by RSA True Bal-
ance 1311; to Max Louderback,
Liberal, KS, \$25,000, 2/3 inter-
est. RSA True Balance 4157,
9/13/2024 by RSA True Bal-
ance 1311; to 3 Lazy T Ranch,
Tryon, NE, \$22,500, 2/3 inter-
est. **Open heifer:** RSA First
Lady 4210, 8/17/2024 by RSA
True Balance 1311; to IO Angus,
Springville, CA, \$50,000. — **TY
GROSHANS**

**HINTON RANCH
SIMMENTALS BULL SALE**
Feb. 15, Online
53 SimAngus
bulls \$6,943
3 SimAngus open
heifers 3,833
Sale Manager: M3
Marketing

**TEIXEIRA CATTLE CO.
BULL SALE**
Feb. 16, Terrebonne, OR
166 Angus
bulls \$10,496
5 Angus bred
heifers 5,950
29 Commercial bred
heifers 4,585
Auctioneer: Trent Stewart
TOPS: TEX Republic 5033,
1/3/2025 by TEX Republic
1413; to Ed Snook, Salmon, ID,
\$18,000. TEX Identified 4643,
9/10/2024 by SS Identified
7551; to Simplot Land & Cattle,
Grandview, ID, \$18,000. —
JARED PATTERSON

**KESSLER ANGUS BULL
SALE**
Feb. 17, Milton-Freewater,
OR
102 Angus bulls. . . \$12,738
2 Angus bred
cows 9,875

Auctioneers: Butch
Booker & Cotton Booker
TOPS: Kesslers Keystone
5552, 12/31/2024 by Basin
Keystone 2021; to Baker An-

gus, Vale, OR, \$24,000. Kes-
slers Keystone 5574, 1/2/2025
by Basin Keystone 2021; to 5A
Land & Cattle & Kessler Live-
stock, Cottonwood, ID,
\$20,000. Kesslers Keystone
5554, 12/31/2024 by Basin
Keystone 2021; to Brad
Thompson, Jerome, ID,
\$19,500. Kesslers Keystone
5580, 1/3/2025 by Basin Key-
stone 2021; to Stokrose Ang-
us, Warden, WA, \$18,500.
Kesslers Keystone 5529,
12/29/2024 by Basin Key-
stone 2021; to Pleasant Hill
Ranch, Creswell, OR, \$18,500.
Kesslers Prolific 5508,
12/25/2024 by Ellingson Pro-
lific; to TFI Inc., Meridian, ID,
\$18,000. Kesslers Deluxe
4380, 10/5/2024 by Kesslers
Deluxe K188; to CT Livestock,
Walla Walla, WA, \$18,000. —
JARED PATTERSON

**V-A-L CHAROLAIS RANCH
BULL SALE**
Feb. 17, Nyssa, OR
96 Charolais
bulls \$7,870
13 Brangus bulls . . . 6,538
7 Angus bulls 6,000
Auctioneer: Trent Stewart

SHAW CATTLE BULL SALE
Feb. 18, Caldwell, ID
23 Red Angus
bulls \$14,543
294 Angus bulls . . . 11,786
166 Hereford
bulls 10,811
Auctioneers: Rick
Machado & Trent Stewart
TOPS—Angus bull: Shaw
Republic 44512, 9/6/2024 by
Raven Republic 1564; to Pat
Hendren, Monteview, ID,
\$25,000. **Hereford bulls:** /S
On Demand 44338 ET,
8/30/2024 by Bar JZ On De-
mand; to Sonoma Mountain
Herefords, Bodega Bay, CA,
\$23,000. /S Identity 55094
ET, 1/15/2025 by R Identity
6112; to Oliver Brothers Here-
fords, Levan, UT, \$22,000. —
JARED PATTERSON

**SMALL LIVESTOCK BULL
SALE**
Feb. 19, Winnemucca, NV
47 Angus bulls . . . \$10,415
54 SimAngus
bulls 9,689
17 Red Angus x Charolais
bulls 8,588
88 Charolais
bulls 8,272
Auctioneers: Jake Parnell
& Dennis Metzger
Sale Manager: Parnell
Dickinson Inc.

**TRUE WEST GENETICS
BULL SALE**
Feb. 21, Moro, OR
12 SimAngus
bulls \$8,937
21 Angus bulls 8,059
13 Gelbvieh bulls . . . 6,480
Auctioneer: Zack
Zumstein
TOP: Fields Monumental
M154, 12/1/2024 by Corsair
Monumental 2214; to John
Flynn, Plush, OR, \$13,750. —
JARED PATTERSON

**BUCHANAN ANGUS BULL
& FEMALE SALE**
Feb. 22, Klamath Falls, OR
50 Angus bulls . . . \$13,910
11 Angus open
heifers 6,886
Auctioneer: Butch Booker
Sale Manager: M3
Marketing

TOPS: Algoma Golden Her-
cules 29B, 12/21/2024 by
Cherry Crk Blue Collar G275;
to Kauboi Ranch, Redmond,
OR, \$50,000. Algoma

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YW 134

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YW 130

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BW 1.8
WW 76
YW 129

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Obsidian 34B, 12/22/2024 by Cherry Crk Blue Collar G275; to Seven Mile Ranch, Eagle Point, OR, \$27,500. Algoma BackUpPlan25B, 12/20/2024 by Connealy Craftsman; to Russell Chriss, McDowell, CA, \$20,500. Algoma Gold Commissioner 72B, 1/1/2025 by Crouch Congress; to Russell Chriss, McDowell, CA, \$19,500. Algoma Golden Bull-leit 41B, 12/23/2024 by Basin Jameson1076; to Rick & Linda Anderson, Eagle Point, OR, \$18,000. — **JARED PATTERSON**

COLYER HEREFORD & ANGUS BULL SALE
Feb. 23, Bruneau, ID
82 Angus bulls ... \$12,835
114 Hereford bulls 12,774
15 Hereford open heifers 5,850
13 Angus open heifers 4,447
2 Hereford flushes 13,750
6 Hereford pregnancies 15,417
Auctioneers: Butch

Booker & Kyle Colyer TOPS—Angus bulls: C 8140 Legion 5020 ET, 1/15/2025 by SHF Legion L060; to Sommers Herefords, Pinedale, WY, \$65,000, 3/4 interest. C Reign Maker 5166, 1/12/2025 by C Reign Maker 3210 ET; to Lawson Ranch, New Pine Creek, OR, \$25,000. CCC Republic 4215, 8/25/2024 by Raven Republic 1564; to Wooden Shoe Farms, Blackfoot, ID, \$27,500. CCC Republic 5192, 1/1/2025 by Raven Republic 1564; to Wakely Ranch, Deeth, NV, \$20,000. **Hereford bulls:** C 8140 Legion 5216 ET, 1/12/2025 by SHF Legion L060; to Lawson Ranch, New Pine Creek, OR, \$30,000. C 1030 Denali 4345 ET, 8/24/2024 by C Denali HD 2135 ET; to Warren Ranches, Cheyenne, WY, \$25,000. C 1262 Arlo 5018 ET, 1/5/2025 by C Arlo 2135 ET; to Dudley Brothers, Comanche, TX, \$19,000, 3/4 interest. — **JARED PATTERSON**

44 FARMS SPRING BULL

SALE
Feb. 28, Cameron, TX
636 Angus bulls \$16,897
200 Commercial bred heifers 4,862
Auctioneers: Steve Dorran, Trent Stewart
Sale Managers: Cotton and Associates
TOPS: 44 Old Faithful 4458, 12/4/2024 by 44 Faithful 2764; to M Farm and Ranch, LTD, Waco, TX, \$120,000. 44 Faithful N059, 1/17/2025 by 44 Faithful 2764; to Grimmus Cattle Co., Hanford, CA, \$50,000. 44 Jonesboro 5701, 1/2/2025 by Williams Jonesboro 700-602; to M Farm and Ranch, LTD, Waco, TX, \$40,000. 44 Cool Hand Luke 4130, 12/7/2024 by 44 Victory; to Circle F Farms, Baxley, GA, \$36,000. 44 Good Faith M338, 12/18/2024 by 44 Faithful 2764; to Circle S Land and Cattle Co., Bentonville, AR, \$35,000. 44 Preeminent 13600, 11/2/2024 by B&B Preeminent; to Sleepy Creek Farms, Forsyth, GA, \$35,000. — **LOGAN IPSEN**

Tips to prevent problematic barn swallow nests before they appear

Spring migration is sweeping across Texas, and barn swallows are already scouting porches, barns, overhangs and eaves for nesting sites. Whether you love watching barn swallows up close or dread the mess they leave behind, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert encourages you to take preventative action before the birds begin nesting.

Once they build and lay eggs, homeowners are legally barred from disturbing them, so the window for action is now, said AgriLife Extension's Liz Tidwell, wildlife program specialist in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management.

According to Tidwell, barn swallows will typically enter the southern U.S. until mid-April. Of the eight species of swallows in North America, the two species most likely to nest on houses, barns and other structures are barn and cliff swallows. Barn swallows tend to nest as single pairs, while cliff swallows can nest in colonies of up to several hundred pairs.

These birds prefer nesting on overhangs, covered ledges or other suitable surfaces, using mud to build their nests. If your property meets these conditions, you may find swallows returning every year unless you take preventative action.

Intervene before nests are occupied

"If you don't want barn swallows on your property, you must immediately take action before any nests are built and occupied," Tidwell said.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 makes it a federal crime to hunt, kill, capture, sell or otherwise hurt migratory birds, which includes destroying nests in use. In other words, once a bird lays eggs in a nest, it is considered in use, and it is illegal to remove it.

"The main reason people want to remove barn swallow nests is aesthetic," Tidwell said.

"Mud nests on the side of your house or structure, along with the bird droppings underneath, can be unsightly and even pose health concerns due to the droppings."

Additionally, nests by entryways may also be a nuisance if swallows act territorial and "divebomb" homeowners to protect their nest and young.

"Luckily, swallows are not as aggressive as blue jays or mockingbirds," she said. "Often, once swallows get used to your presence and know you aren't going to harm the nest, they will stop swooping down on you."

How to prevent nest building

Tidwell shared advice for preventing unwanted swallows.

- Cover nesting areas: Use netting or wire mesh to cover areas where swallows could build nests—typically areas like an eave or where a roof and wall meet.

- Hang vinyl strips: Vinyl plastic hung in overlapping vertical strips may be used for places with an open entryway.

- Install bird spikes and barriers: Bird spike sticks and barriers can be purchased and installed to prevent birds from building nests.

- Remove old nests: Knock down old, empty nests. Birds will reuse nests from previous years if available.

- Interrupt construction: When you see signs of new nest construction, knock down the mud daily until the birds give up on their build.

Tidwell said trapping or shooting the birds is illegal, and attempting to scare the birds away is usually ineffective.

How to remove a nest

Old, empty nests and the mud placed at the beginning of construction can be removed several ways.

- Use a pressure washer or hose.
- Use a pole or scraper, but

use protective gear like gloves and a respirator mask.

- Use caution if handling an empty nest. Parasites and mites can persist in nests as long as three years after a bird leaves. — **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension**

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Justin Ramos 209-344-6372	John Luiz 209-480-5101	Bud Cozzi 209-652-4480	
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ALL BREEDS

Mar. 18 – Western Breeders Association, Bull Sale, Eltopia, WA

ANGUS

Mar. 9 – Dal Porto Livestock, Bull Sale, Anselmo, NE
Mar. 9 – Pine Coulee Angus, Bull Sale, Hardin, MT
Mar. 9 – Spring Cove Ranch, Bull Sale, Bliss, ID
Mar. 10 – Wagon Wheel Ranch, Bull Sale, Yuma, CO
Mar. 11 – Hornung Livestock, Bull Sale, Stratton, CO
Mar. 11 – Udy Cattle, Bull & Female Sale, Rockland, ID
Mar. 12 – Leadore Angus, Bull Sale, Dillon, MT
Mar. 12 – Sunny Okanogan Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Omak, WA
Mar. 12 – Wheeler Mountain Angus, Bull Sale, Whitehall, MT
Mar. 13 – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bull Sale, Pilot Rock, OR
Mar. 13 – SHB Angus & GPAR, Bull Sale, Rearden, WA
Mar. 13 – Thomson Land & Livestock, Bull Sale, Blackfoot, ID
Mar. 14 – Koberstein Farms Angus, Ogallala, NE
Mar. 14 – Riverbend Ranch, Bull Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Mar. 14 – Yardley Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Beaver, UT
Mar. 16 – JR Ranch & Sackman Cattle, Bull Sale, Othello, WA
Mar. 16 – Rancho Casino/Cox Ranch, Bull Sale, Purdum, NE
Mar. 16 – Whistling Winds Angus, Bull Sale, Hingham, MT
Mar. 17 – 7n7 Ranch & Curtiss Cattle, Bull Sale, Enterprise, OR
Mar. 17 – Bartels Angus, Bull Sale, Riverton, NE
Mar. 17 – ELK Angus, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
Mar. 18 – Lufkin Cattle, Bull Sale, Tendoy, ID
Mar. 19 – Carter Cattle, Bull Sale, Pingree, ID
Mar. 19 – Oft Angus, Bull Sale, Vale, OR
Mar. 20 – Caywood Angus, Bull Sale, Tendoy, ID
Mar. 20 – Montana Performance Co-op, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Mar. 21 – Chundy Land & Cattle, Bull Sale, Ogallala, NE
Mar. 21 – Nelson Angus Ranch, Bull & Female Sale, Salmon, ID
Mar. 21 – South Montana Angus Association, Bull Sale, Butte, MT
Mar. 24 – Bar JV Angus, Bull Sale, Fairview, MT
Mar. 25 – Peterson Grain and Cattle, Bull Sale, Havre, MT
Mar. 26 – Vermillion Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Mar. 28 – Basin Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Klamath Falls, OR
Mar. 28 – Diamond Peak Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Loma, CO
Mar. 28 – Sinclair Cattle, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
Mar. 28 – Star Gate Ranch, Bull Sale, Twin Falls, ID
Mar. 30 – Silver Bit Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, May, ID
Apr. 1 – Nissen Angus, Bull Sale, Chinook, MT
Apr. 2 – Arntzen Angus, Bull

Sale, Hilger, MT
Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Apr. 4 – Botts Angus, Bull Sale, Huntley, MT
Apr. 4 – Brooks Chalky Butte, Bull Sale, Bowman, ND
Apr. 6 – Brent Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Maywood, NE
Apr. 6 – FBA Ranch, Bull Sale, Havre, MT
Apr. 7 – Hinman Angus, Bull Sale, Malta, MT
Apr. 13 – C Spear Angus, Bull Sale, Billings, MT

BALANCER

Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT

CHAROLAIS

Mar. 24 – Romans Ranch, Bull Sale, Westfall, OR
Mar. 28 – Valley View Charolais, Bull Sale, Polson, MT
Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Apr. 3 – Brevig Charolais, Bull Sale, Lewiston, MT
Apr. 11 – Hebbert Charolais, Bull Sale, Hyannis, NE

HEREFORD

Mar. 9 – Holden Hereford, Production Sale, Valier, MT
Mar. 9 – Northwest Hereford Breeders, Bull Sale, Stanfield, OR
Mar. 10 – Cooper Herefords, Production Sale, Willow Creek, MT
Mar. 11 – Udy Cattle, Bull & Female Sale, Rockland, ID
Mar. 19 – Bar Star Cattle, Bull Sale, Musselshell, MT
Mar. 25 – NJW Polled Herefords, Production Sale, Decker, MT
Apr. 6 – Stuber Ranch, Bull Sale, Bowman, ND

LIMOUSIN

Mar. 21 – Ochsner Limousin, Bull Sale, Kersey, CO

LIM-FLEX

Mar. 21 – Ochsner Limousin, Bull Sale, Kersey, CO

MAINE ANJOU

Mar. 14 – Yardley Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Beaver, UT

OPTIMIZER

Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Apr. 7 – Doubet Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT

RED ANGUS

Mar. 10 – Loosli Red Angus, Bull Sale, Ashton, ID
Mar. 11 – Udy Cattle, Bull & Female Sale, Rockland, ID
Mar. 13 – Leland Red Angus, Bull Sale, Sidney, MT
Mar. 18 – Klompein Red Angus, Bull Sale, Manhattan, MT
Mar. 21 – Iron Lorenzen, Bull Sale, Madras, OR
Mar. 25 – Westphal Red Angus, Bull Sale, Grass Range, MT
Mar. 30 – Axtell Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Sterling, CO
Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Apr. 2 – Northern Lites Red Angus, Production Sale, Glasgow, MT
Apr. 11 – Redd Ranches, Bull Sale, Paradox, CO

SALERS

Apr. 2 – Midland Bull Test, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Apr. 7 – Doubet Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT

SIMANGUS

Mar. 11 – Hornung Livestock, Bull Sale, Stratton, CO
Mar. 13 – Powerline Genetics, Bull Sale, Arapahoe, NE
Mar. 14 – Yardley Cattle Co.,

Bull Sale, Beaver, UT
Mar. 19 – Western Cattle Source, Bull Sale, Crawford, NE
Mar. 20 – Black Summit Cattle, Bull Sale, Powell, MT
Mar. 21 – Chundy Land & Cattle, Bull Sale, Ogallala, NE
Mar. 24 – Open Gate Simmentals, Bull Sale, Augusta, MT
Mar. 28 – Diamond Peak Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Loma, CO
Mar. 28 – Star Gate Ranch, Bull Sale, Twin Falls, ID
Apr. 4 – Big Country Genetics, Bull Sale, Cody, WY

SIMMENTAL

Mar. 13 – Powerline Genetics, Bull Sale, Arapahoe, NE
Mar. 14 – Yardley Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Beaver, UT
Mar. 19 – Western Cattle Source, Bull Sale, Crawford, NE
Mar. 20 – Black Summit Cattle, Bull Sale, Powell, MT
Mar. 24 – Open Gate Simmentals, Bull Sale, Augusta, MT
Apr. 4 – Big Country Genetics, Bull Sale, Cody, WY

STABILIZER

Mar. 23 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Meriden, WY
Apr. 11 – Bar T Bar, Bull Sale, Winslow, AZ

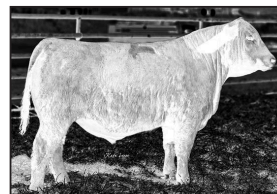
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Mar. 20 – Western Video Market Auction, Cottonwood, CA
Apr. 10 – Western Video Market Auction, Cottonwood, CA

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 MGS: N Bar Emulation EXT



SINCLAIR GRASS RANGE 0201
 REG: 21436501 DOB: 3/13/25
 Sire: Sinclair Grass Range J476
 MGS: Sinclair Shadow Rider 6S8



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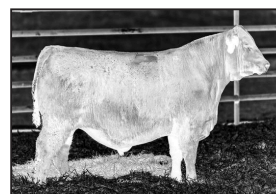
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 MGS: Sinclair Emperor 6X02



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 REG: 21250473 DOB: 2/22/25
 Sire: Sinclair Justified K507
 MGS: Sinclair Black Iron 7UR26



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 REG: 21251532 DOB: 2/28/25
 Sire: A A R Essential
 MGS: N Bar Shadow X4124

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LOT 1 Vermilion Unified N141



AAA 21293320

DOB: 2/15/25 Sire: Circle L Unified
BEPD +3.6 WEPD +102 YEPD +176 MILK +33
MARB +0.61 RE +1.15 \$M +87 \$C +328

LOT 11 Vermilion Unified N322



AAA 21301284

DOB: 3/12/25 Sire: Circle L Unified
BEPD +3.1 WEPD +85 YEPD +135 MILK +37
MARB +0.85 RE +0.92 \$M +91 \$C +308

LOT 45 Vermilion Jameson N347



AAA 21301308

DOB: 2/20/25 Sire: Basin Jameson
BEPD +1.3 WEPD +94 YEPD +149 MILK +37
MARB +1.43 RE +0.72 \$M +104 \$C +357

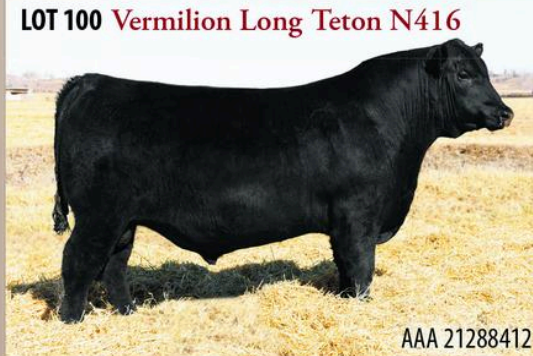
LOT 70 Vermilion Riverside N329



AAA 21301291

DOB: 2/25/25 Sire: Vermilion Riverside
BEPD +1.1 WEPD +89 YEPD +141 MILK +20
MARB +0.13 RE +1.29 \$M +103 \$C +292

LOT 100 Vermilion Long Teton N416



AAA 21288412

DOB: 2/9/25 Sire: Long Teton 107
BEPD +2.2 WEPD +105 YEPD +191 MILK +37
MARB +1.12 RE +0.86 \$M +80 \$C +355

LOT 137 Vermilion Congress N190



AAA 21326877

DOB: 2/8/25 Sire: Deppe GAR Congress 3044
BEPD +1.3 WEPD +96 YEPD +163 MILK +33
MARB +0.61 RE +1.09 \$M +61 \$C +276



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