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PERMIT RULING — Court affirms ruling that upheld USFS' cancellation of a Arizona rancher's grazing permit. Page 3

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

"Leaders in all types of business are thinking more and more about what is termed 'public relations.' Farmers and stockmen have long been aware of the need for better understanding between themselves and the people who buy their products. Just a few days ago, this write sat in on sessions of the American StockYards Assn., and it was interesting to hear these stockyard owners and managers place 'public relations' right at the top of their agenda," read the May 1952 *WLJ* article.

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House passes farm bill, advances livestock priorities

— Contentious debate

The U.S. House of Representatives on April 30 passed the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567) in a 224-200 vote, moving forward a long-overdue farm bill that touches everything for livestock producers, including conservation, disaster assistance and meat processing.

The bill passed with support from 209 Republicans and 14 Democrats, while three Republicans broke ranks and voted against it, bringing an end to a long, and at times heated, floor debate. Before final passage, lawmakers worked through a series of amendments, ultimately stripping out provisions tied to pesticide regulation and dropping language that would have allowed year-round sales of E15 fuel.

Livestock provisions in bill

For cattle producers, the House-passed bill includes several provisions to strengthen livestock operations and reduce regulatory uncertainty.

Among the most notable is language directing the USDA to expand the use of grazing as a wildfire fuels reduction tool on federal lands, a provision strongly supported by the Public Lands Council. The bill also includes an amendment revising USDA standards for confirming livestock depredations by Mexican wolves.

The bill includes language from the Grasslands Grazing Act, opening the door to more grazing access on federal lands while still maintaining conservation protections. It also stipulates that states cannot set production standards for livestock raised in other states, a move industry groups say helps address a patchwork of regulations, such as California's Proposition 12.

At the same time, the legislation keeps key livestock priorities in place within conservation programs. It maintains the 50% funding set-aside for livestock in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and adds additional support for precision agriculture tools that can improve on-the-ground efficiency. The measure reauthorizes the Conservation Reserve Program through 2031 and holds the acreage cap at 27 million acres.

The farm bill strengthens disaster assistance programs, a critical issue for producers facing drought, wildfire and disease outbreaks. Updates expand eligibility for assistance and streamline delivery timelines, while also allowing for more consistent federal responses.

See FARM BILL on page 7

Lance Cheung

The House of Representatives passed the farm bill on a 224-200 vote, sending it to the Senate for consideration.

DOJ confirms antitrust probe into meatpackers

— Agri Stats settlement expected soon

The Department of Justice (DOJ) officially confirmed it is investigating the nation's largest meatpackers for possible antitrust violations.

At a May 4 press conference, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said President Donald Trump asked the DOJ last November to investigate the costs and prices of beef, and as a result, the department has been actively investigating the cattle and beef industries. In December, Trump signed an executive order to investigate price-fixing in the food supply chain.

The purpose of the Monday press conference, Blanche said, was to talk about the investigation's progress and to "hold meatpackers accountable," though he did not specifically name companies.

See PACKER PROBE on page 12

Maintaining a healthy range, value-added feeds for restocking the cow herd

— Part one

After the past drought, the beef herd was decimated and we have dropped to a 70-year low in cow inventory with approximately 27.5 million head. This is down from a high of 33 million cows in the mid-1970s. Although few people believe we will rebuild the cow herd back to previous levels, it is important to the health of our range, maintenance of our infrastructure and well-being of our rural communities that our cow herd does rebuild, with many industry leaders hoping we will see a 30 million head cow herd again.

This article will focus on the role beef cattle play in maintaining the health of our grasslands, but it is important to remember that a strong beef cattle industry also supports the local feed mill, implement dealer, cattle haulers, sale barn, order buyers, stocker operations, backgrounding operations, feedlots, packing plants and the whole host of local businesses where the employees of these operations shop.

The good news is the beef we are producing is of record-high quality, including an all-time high amount of USDA Prime and premium Choice beef, and a negligible amount of USDA Select. The result is we have won back consumers after a long decline, so the demand is definitely there to support a larger cow herd.

The majority of the U.S. and the world's agricultural land highest and best use is for forage production, and the only way to convert this forage into food for humans is to feed it to ruminant livestock such as cattle.

See HERD REBUILDING on page 5

Cattle futures ease resistance, trade steady early week

(Editor's note: This report contains market data available as of Wednesday, May 7 due to an earlier* WLJ *press schedule.)

After a slight pullback late the prior week and into Monday, cattle futures closed modestly lower and backed away from nearby resistance, while early cash trade showed limited activity at prices generally steady with the previous week.

Live cattle futures closed mixed, with the June contract down 53 cents to $253.47 and the August contract 23 cents higher to $248.90.

Cash trade through Wednesday totaled about 2,000 head. Live steers sold for $255, and dressed steers sold for $400.

Cash trade for the week ending May 3 totaled 91,765 head. Live steers averaged $254.88, and dressed steers averaged $399.21.

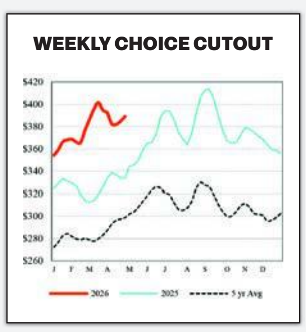
"Though it's early for the negotiated fed cattle trade to get underway, there was some $256 trade reported on the Fed Cattle Exchange and a $255 bid has been noted in the South," wrote Cassie Fish, market analyst, in The Beef on Wednesday. "The USDA negotiated fed cattle trade report shows a smattering of activity of under 2k head for the week at generally steady money with last week."

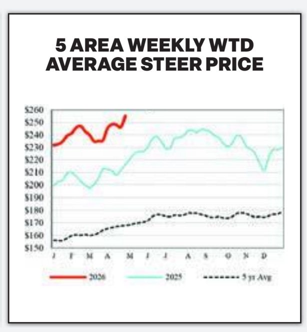
The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for the week of April 27 to May 4 was the following on a live basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $254.83.
- Formula net purchases: $250.61.
- Forward contract net purchases: $239.01.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: $250.73.

On a dressed basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $399.27.
- Formula net purchases: $392.53.





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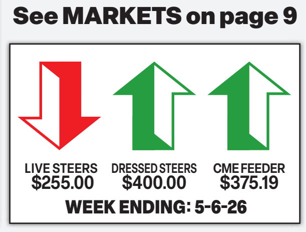


PERIODICAL : Time Sensitive Priority Handling

COMMENTS

Food security is national security

IPSEN

It was a very interesting week in the headlines as two major stories broke in agriculture, signaling what looks like a major shift to move away from big ag. For far too long, monopolies and oligopolies have controlled major sectors of the farming and ranching communities, but a major shift was felt as the spotlight is now directly on how these situations carry more long-term risk and expose how that risk puts producers directly in the crosshairs should market shifts expose positions.

Monette Farms, one of the largest farming operations in North America, recently filed for creditor protection under Canada's Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, a restructuring process similar to Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States. The Saskatchewan-based operation cited mounting financial pressure caused by rising interest rates, increased input costs, volatile commodity markets, and significant debt obligations tied to rapid expansion across Canada and the United States.

Court filings show the Monette Group owes nearly $900 million to secured creditors after years of aggressive growth that expanded the company's footprint to roughly 400,000 acres of owned and leased farmland, as well as large cattle, seed and produce divisions. The company reportedly defaulted when a major credit agreement totaling more than $829 million matured in April 2026, leaving the operation without sufficient liquidity to continue normal business operations.

Despite the filing, Monette Farms has emphasized that the company is not entering liquidation and intends to continue operating while restructuring its finances under court supervision. The court approved initial debtor-in-possession financing to help fund the 2026 spring seeding season and stabilize operations while negotiations continue with creditors.

The filing has drawn widespread attention throughout all agricultural industries, serving as a cautionary example of how large-scale expansion, combined with tightening margins and higher borrowing costs, can place even major agricultural enterprises under severe financial strain. According to an AgWeb article, the group's reliance on cheap capital (approximately 3% interest rates) and rising real estate valuations proved successful in a low-rate environment. However, the convergence of flat property values, persistent inflation, and high interest rates has rendered the current capital structure unsustainable.

While exploding from 97,000 acres in 2017, the group now farms over 400,000 acres in Canada and the United States. Revenue followed right along, more than quadrupling. Since current conditions abruptly flip-flopped, revenue dropped by nearly 50%, putting a major strain on the company's finances. They had projected that in 2025, they'd produce $72 million EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization), but after closing out the year, they only reached a $31 million due to a perfect storm of poor crop prices, high input costs and yield losses, citing the same Ag Web article. Add this to current interest rates and taxes, and the group is under a huge cash strain and was forced to make the filings.

From a beef producer's perspective, last week brought a major announcement as USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins and Acting Attorney Todd Blanche announced an investigation into the Big Four meat packers for antitrust violations. These announcements come after years of frustration that's led to a mass exodus of producers—nearly 17% of producers just in the past decade and nearly 50% of producers since the late 1980s.

Rollins made a major statement signaling the follow-through from President Trump's direction to investigate market control and manipulation by the Big Four. Blanche followed her statements calling for whistleblowers to come forward. He also stated that the Department of Justice has reviewed over 3 million documents surrounding the issue.

"As ranchers face fewer options for selling their animals, the Big Four grow stronger and stronger; these companies now have an unprecedented ability to wield market power and influence prices paid for cattle, definitely more so than if we had greater competition," Rollins said during the announcement.

Farming operations across North America are facing one of the most difficult years on record. The skyrocketing of fertilizer and seed costs being controlled by only a few suppliers is now exposed. Machinery costs and repair control, like John Deere's policies, are now exposed as well. When these input suppliers are structuring their pricing based not only on commodity pricing but also on factoring in subsidies, farmers don't stand a chance.

From an investigative perspective, one would think it shouldn't take too long when the Big Four are now under investigation. Just think back to all the settlements they've agreed to since 2015. Now, input suppliers to farming operations are about to be exposed as well. As Rollins said, "food security is national security," but I hope it isn't too little, too late for farmers. The bright side is that change is coming for agriculture because it must, and for the sake of survival, it can't come soon enough. This past week showed just how detrimental consolidation and competition removal can be in a market sector, but for now, it appears things are about to change. — **LOGAN IPSEN**

GUEST OPINION

FERTILIZER PRICES FORCING TOUGH DECISIONS

Recently, I made a difficult decision that no farmer wants to make. I chose not to buy commercial fertilizer for my hay fields this year. It wasn't an easy call. Like so many farmers across the country, I've been looking at rising fertilizer costs and trying to make the numbers work. And this year, they just didn't.

That decision doesn't stay on paper. It shows up in the field. Spring is usually when we see our healthiest and most abundant hay crop. Without the commercial fertilizer we rely on, and facing extreme drought on top of that, I know we're going to come up short. I've turned to substitutes like chicken litter where I can, but it's not a full replacement.

That means lower yields, fewer bales of hay, and a more difficult road ahead when it comes time to feed my cattle through winter. And unfortunately, my story isn't unique, it's happening on farms across the country.

To find out whether farmers have what they need for this growing season, our team went straight to the source. In just nine days, more than 5,700 farmers from every state and Puerto Rico responded to a Farm Bureau survey on fertilizer costs, and the results speak for themselves.

Seventy percent of farmers who responded to the survey say they won't be able to afford all the fertilizer they need this year. Many are already making tough decisions by cutting back on fertilizer use or reducing planted acres altogether. When that happens, we risk lower yields and less food moving through the supply chain.

This struggle is driven by factors far beyond the farm gate. Global disruptions have tightened fertilizer supplies and driven up costs. At the same time, fuel prices continue to rise, further tightening our balance sheets.

Farmers are price-takers. We don't get to set what we earn, but no matter the returns, we still have bills to pay. And right now, those bills are getting harder to cover. It's no surprise that 94% of farmers from our survey say their financial situation has worsened or stayed the same compared to last year. Farm families have been facing tightening margins for years, and the pressure is only building.

What gives me hope is the strength of our Farm Bureau family across our federation. They quickly came together to tell this story. Our staff at the national and state level stepped up to build the survey and get it out the door, and our grassroots responded, sharing real-time feedback from thousands of farmers across the country.

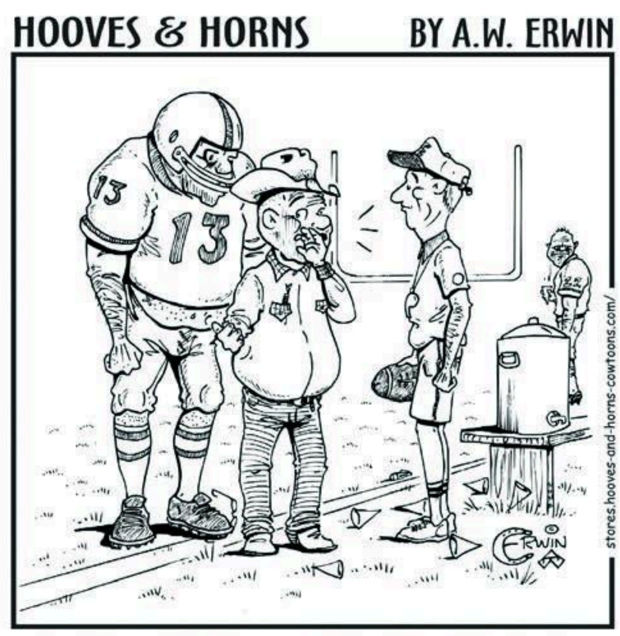
Our team went to work, digging into the numbers to make sure we captured a clear and accurate picture of what farmers are facing. Then we packaged it up for media and generated nearly 250 articles in 24 hours and more than 500 articles in a few days. That's the strength of our federation.

When farmers need a voice, we make sure it's heard. This survey is a direct result of that effort, and it's helping us deliver a clear message to policymakers about what's happening in the countryside.

Now, we're taking these results to leaders in Congress and the administration. Farmers need reliable access to fertilizer and tools to manage rising costs. That means strengthening supply chains, ensuring products can move efficiently and providing support when global disruptions ripple through the farm economy.

That also means providing certainty for farmers and ranchers across the country by passing a new, modernized farm bill. Because when volatility like this sends farmers on a roller coaster ride, farm bill programs are the steadying force farmers rely on.

Decisions like the one I made on my farm shouldn't be the norm. Farmers are used to making tough calls, but we need policies that ensure we can keep producing the food, fiber and renewable fuel that American families rely on. With the strength of our grassroots behind us, we'll keep working to make sure agriculture's voice is heard. — **Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau Federation president**



"Coach,... I know this boy,....If yew'll dress that football up as'a BBQ chicken, *he'll always catch it an'never drop it!"*

OBITUARY

Peggy Donnell Brown; 1937-2026

Peggy Ray Donnell Brown passed away peacefully April 21 at her home in Throckmorton, TX. She was born March 15, 1937, to Polly (Ray) Donnell and Alfred Donnell. Peggy was raised on the Clearfork of the Brazos River near Eliasville, TX, on her family's ranch, which the Donnell family established in 1876.

Peggy made her mark as a woman in agriculture at a young age. Growing up, she raised and showed Hereford steers. At the time, girls were not allowed to show in the youth stock shows. So young Peggy, sporting her pigtails, showed against grown men in the open division. Peggy met the love of her life, R.A. "Rob" Brown Jr., when she was 14 years old. She graduated from Breckenridge High School in 1955 and attended Texas Tech University from 1955-58.

Rob and Peggy were married June 14, 1957. In 1958, they returned to the R.A. Brown Ranch in Throckmorton and raised their four children.

Ranch life is all she ever knew, the life she loved and preferred. Born the daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter of ranchers, she went on to raise children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren on the ranch. Peggy's fortitude, intellect, support and grit shaped the R.A. Brown Ranch into the industry leader it is today. Her job description over the last nearly seven decades was "anything that needs doing."

Peggy and Rob were true partners on the ranch. Their hard work and vision earned the ranch many honors and recognitions in the ranching industry over the years including Texas Simmental Family of the Year, Texas Family Land Heritage Award, National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Cattle Business of the Century, NCBA Vision award, AQHA Best Remuda and many others.

While managing the ranch office and raising a family, Peggy also spent her time in service to others. She taught Sunday School at the Throckmorton Methodist Church for 28 years and served on the Throckmorton school board. She was an active volunteer for FFA and 4-H, being honored with the 4-H Distinguished Service Award and Honorary American FFA Degree. Peggy served on the Texas Tech Human Sciences Dean's Advisory Board and National Ranching Heritage Board of Directors. Most recently, Peggy was honored with the Texas Tech Outstanding Agriculturalist Award.

Peggy's greatest joy was always her family. She was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmom, great-grandmom, sister and aunt. Peggy was a loyal wife to Rob for 68 years. Together they built a beautiful family and successful business. Peggy's children are grateful for the high expectations and work ethic she instilled in each of them. Sharing meals around the table as a family was of highest priority to Peggy as a mother. Just as she loved adventures with her brother, George, as a child, she shared this love with her grandchildren; checking mares and foals, picking wild plums, building forts in the mesquites, making mud pies in the sandpile and more. Grandmom was always up for an adventure.

Anyone who knew Peggy called her friend. Peggy loved people well and had a unique talent of finding "small world" connections no matter where she went. She had a gift for lovingly intertwining her life with all of those she came in contact with.

Her love for the Lord was most evident in her life. Peggy was a mighty prayer warrior. She was full of wisdom; wisdom rooted in scripture. In 2023, Peggy suffered a life-altering stroke. Her speech and motor skills were severely affected, but even through these trying circumstances her faith and prayer life were steadfast.

Peggy's hard work ethic and love for others made an impact on everyone around her. Anyone who knew Peggy was inspired by her. She loved the Lord, loved her family and brought joy to all who knew her. Peggy Brown truly embodied the Proverbs 31 woman.

Peggy is preceded in death by her parents, and husband, R.A. "Rob" Brown Jr. She is survived by her children, Betsy Bellah and husband Jody of Throckmorton, Rob A. Brown and wife Talley of Stinnett, TX, Marianne McCartney and husband Todd of Throckmorton, and Donnell Brown and wife Kelli of Throckmorton. She is also survived by 17 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, brother George Donnell, and many beloved nieces, nephews and friends. The family expresses gratitude for the love and care provided to Peggy by her caregivers Rachel, Sarah, Monna and Jackie.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to First Methodist Church PO Box 686 Throckmorton, TX 76483, Ranching Heritage Association 3121 Fourth St. Lubbock, TX 79329, or West Texas Rehabilitation Center 4601 Hartford Abilene, TX 79605.

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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9th Circuit upholds cancellation of AZ grazing permit

— Cites evidence of noncompliance

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit has affirmed a lower court ruling upholding the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) cancellation of a grazing permit held by an Arizona rancher, finding the agency's decision was supported by substantial evidence and complied with federal law.

The case stems from the agency's 2022 decision to cancel rancher Silkie Perkins' term grazing permit for the Antelope Hills Allotment in Arizona's Prescott National Forest, following documented instances of unauthorized grazing.

Case background

According to the district court order, Perkins was issued a 10-year term grazing permit in 2016, authorizing livestock use on approximately 14,397 acres of federal land, with about 7,700 acres considered suitable for grazing.

The permit required compliance with an allotment management plan and annual operating instructions, which set stocking levels, grazing seasons and resource protections. The allotment management plan specifically closed the Verde River corridor to livestock grazing to protect riparian habitat.

Perkins signed the plan, though handwritten notes on the document indicate she did so "under duress due to issues concerning river grazing," reflecting disagreement with those restrictions.

Under the 2021 annual operating instructions, drought conditions shortened the grazing season to March 1 through April 30, after which all livestock were required to be removed from USFS lands.

After the April 30 deadline passed, USFS personnel began documenting multiple instances of cattle tied to Perkins' permit grazing where they were not authorized. According to court documents, that included livestock in the Verde River corridor and the Jerome Allotment, an area closed to grazing since 2008.

Investigators pieced together the record using trail camera images, on-the-ground inspections and reports from a nearby cement plant. Plant employees said cattle repeatedly wandered onto the property, leading them to call Perkins or her associates to come retrieve them. Visitor logs reflected those interactions, with entries such as "Silky to get cattle" appearing multiple times.

The district court order notes that Perkins, her son or individuals linked to them, visited the plant more than 20 times in 2021 to deal with the cattle. USFS also documented broken fencing and ongoing livestock access into restricted areas over several months.

Based on that record, the agency issued a notice of noncompliance in February 2022 and later moved to cancel the permit in August, citing unauthorized grazing and a failure to keep livestock under control.

Court rulings

Perkins challenged the cancellation under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), arguing the decision was arbitrary, unsupported by evidence and contrary to law.

The district court granted summary judgment to the federal defendants, finding USFS had relied on sufficient evidence and followed proper procedures. The court pointed to repeated instances of unauthorized grazing and concluded that livestock associated with Perkins' permit had been present on federal lands beyond authorized periods.

The court also rejected Perkins' argument that she was not responsible for cattle owned by her son, noting that those animals had been authorized under her permit and that she retained responsibility for compliance.

On appeal, the 9th Circuit reviewed the case under the APA's deferential standard, meaning the court would only overturn the agency's decision if it was arbitrary, capricious or not supported by the evidence.

The panel first considered whether the case was moot, noting that Perkins' permit expired in 2025. However, the court found the dispute was still active because federal law gives existing permit holders priority for renewal if they remain in compliance, so the outcome could still affect her future grazing opportunities.

Looking at the merits, the court concluded the agency's decision was backed by substantial evidence. The opinion noted that this standard does not require overwhelming proof—only enough relevant information that a reasonable person could rely on to reach the same conclusion.

The panel pointed to several pieces of evidence tying Perkins to unauthorized grazing, including testimony that her cattle repeatedly entered a nearby cement plant property and that she or her representatives were called to remove them. The court also agreed it was reasonable for the agency to determine that cattle associated with her operation had grazed on the Jerome Allotment, given its proximity to the plant and evidence showing cattle moving between the two areas.

The 9th Circuit also upheld the decision to hold Perkins responsible for cattle belonging to her son. The court noted that those animals were allowed to graze under her permit during the 2021 season and that she remained responsible for ensuring they were removed once that authorization ended.

Finding no abuse of discretion and no violation of law, the 9th Circuit affirmed the district court's judgment, leaving the permit cancellation in place. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

Using flash grazing this spring

As pastures green up this spring, there may be an opportunity for producers to get some early forage and manage weeds, flash grazing. This can be particularly beneficial for early weeds like cheatgrass or downy brome. Especially problematic in the western parts of the state, cheatgrass greens up early, outcompetes native species and creates fine fuels that increase wildfire risk.

Targeted flash grazing—short-duration, high-intensity grazing—can suppress cheatgrass if timed right. The best window is during the elongation phase, just before seed set. This is when animals prefer it. Nutritional value is fairly high, before it robs your pastures of moisture and nutrients, and most importantly, before it reseeds itself for the next year.

Flash grazing doesn't have to be limited to cheatgrass. In eastern Nebraska, pastures hit by drought last year can expect a flush of spring and summer weeds. Flash grazing offers a chance to control those weeds while providing valuable early forage—especially if you're delaying full pasture turnout to allow for regrowth.

Similarly in native pastures being invaded by cool-season introduced species like smooth brome and Kentucky bluegrass, flash grazing can be a useful tool. Turn out early, before warm season species begin their growth (before late-May) and graze hard. The cool season grasses will be targeted, and warm season natives will have a chance to better compete for resources later.

Strategic spring grazing won't solve every weed problem, but it can jump-start your pasture's productivity. — **Ben Beckman, Nebraska Extension**

Utah heading into an 'especially dangerous' wildfire season

Conditions are ripe for an intense summer of wildfires, state leaders say, with blistering temperatures in the forecast and dry brush across the state. The last thing Utah needs is for people to let their guard down and send sparks and embers into the mix.

"We're begging Utahns everywhere this year to please use your common sense," Gov. Spencer Cox (R) told reporters recently at a May 1 news conference. "One small mistake, like dragging a trailer chain, a poorly extinguished campfire, or a spark from target shooting can lead to just devastating consequences."

Utah has recorded 115 wildfires so far in 2026, and more than 84% were caused by humans, Cox said. None were still burning April 30 after recent rains and cooler weather. But that trend is likely to change, Cox said.

The risk is so high that officials are urging Utahns to think very carefully long before the state sees widespread burning restrictions.

"I would even say, for this year, ask yourself the question, is it even worth me having a campfire?" State Forester Jamie Barnes said in a recent interview.

April 1 brought depressing news after a winter of record warmth. The measure of the water contained in Utah's snowpack, known as snow-water equivalent, registered at about 1/5 the normal amount.

"We're seeing historic lows in rivers and lakes, I mean, something we've never seen before here in Utah," Barnes said.

As a result, Cox said, "We know that the wildfire season will be especially dangerous this year."

He touted Utah's recent moves to build up its wildfire response budget. In the last five years, lawmakers set aside more than $150 million, with the pot growing gradually on a yearly basis. They also freed up millions of dollars for prevention and mitigation efforts.

"We've been putting money aside for bad fire, and so we're ahead of the game," Cox said.

The governor said he plans to issue a drought declaration "fairly soon," and a state committee on drought will discuss the plan soon The grim outlook extends to the Great Salt Lake, which Cox noted is vital to Utah's economy and long-term health but "is not recovering at the pace that we need it to" despite a modest rise since the fall.

Cox said President Donald Trump's $1 billion proposal to help the lake "recognizes what we've been saying now for many years—that this is not just a Utah problem, but a national priority."

Cox said the money would help boost river flows, restore ecosystems and address issues like invasive plant species and dust from the exposed lakebed containing toxic, heavy metals. But it's not certain Congress will approve the request for the new budget year starting in October.

Southern Utah's Lake Powell is already getting some federal assistance to keep its levels high enough to generate power. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced its plan in April to send more water to the lake from Flaming Gorge, a reservoir more than 450 miles upstream on the Colorado River.

Utah and the six other states along the river have blown past deadlines to reach a deal on how to manage its dwindling supply, but Cox said this year's drought may help them get to an agreement.

"I think it helps sharpen, a little bit, the debate and potentially the solutions, to say, 'OK, what do we do in a year like this? And can that be the basis of an agreement?' And that's where I do have a little bit of hope." **— Annie Knox, Utah News Dispatch**

LEGAL LEDGER

PRCA HQ move to WY approved

The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) and the ProRodeo Hall of Fame Trustees recently voted in favor of moving forward with relocating the PRCA offices and the ProRodeo Hall of Fame and Museum of the American Cowboy to Cheyenne, WY. "As the PRCA celebrates our 90th year as the premier sanctioning body in Western sports, this is an exciting evolution that will give our membership the best chance at success for the next 50 years," PRCA CEO Tom Glause said. The Wyoming Legislature, Cheyenne city officials and Cheyenne LEADS have continued to codify funding for the project over the past three months. Project partners are now able to pursue fundraising efforts to support the overall advancement of the development coined the Hitching Post District.

Grazing allotments open in the Book Cliffs area

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field office in Vernal, UT, is accepting applications through July 31 for 11 grazing allotments in the Book Cliffs area of Uintah County and nearby areas. The allotments were previously relinquished, BLM said, and are now open to qualified livestock operators. The available allotments include Atchee Ridge AMP, Birchell, Brewer, Green River AMP, Hatchbroome Bartholomew, Lower McCook, Sand Wash, Santio Sibello, Sunday School Canyon, Sweet Water and Thorne-Ute-Broome. For more information, visit tinyurl.com/a4bfb2es.

BLM seeks input for NV horse management areas

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking public comment on the proposed management of wild horses in the Eagle Complex and the Silver King Herd Management Area (HMA) of Nevada. Horses in the Eagle Complex total more than 2,000 head in comparison to the appropriate management level (AML) of 145-265 horses. Comments for the Eagle Complex are due by May 21 and may be submitted at tinyurl.com/3x6am2te. Horses in the Silver King HMA total about 595 head compared to the AML of 60-128 head. Comments for the Silver King HMA are due by May 29 and may be submitted at tinyurl.com/4f3xbb9f.

Rollins releases fire memo ahead of fire season

USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins issued a new Secretarial Memorandum and letter on April 29 directing the U.S. Forest Service to heighten national wildfire readiness, increase community-based risk reduction and strengthen firefighter health and safety for the 2026 fire year. "Proper forest management remains central to this effort—reducing wildfire risk, strengthening rural economies, providing affordable, high-quality lumber for American homes, and preserving the nation's landscapes for generations to come," Rollins wrote. The USDA said the memo advances President Donald Trump's directives to streamline federal wildfire prevention and response.

Lexington to acquire some Tyson Foods assets

The city of Lexington, NE, is pursing a deal to acquire and manage some of Tyson Foods assets, according to the April 28 meeting minutes of the Lexington City Council. The move follows the company shutting down its beef packing plant earlier this year, ceasing operations for its 5,000-head-per-day facility and laying off about 3,000 employees. Negotiated agreements include the acquisition of property east of the Tyson plant, west of the Tyson wastewater facility and the Tyson wastewater facility. The agreements also include access to the rail spur connected to the Union Pacific railway. "I'm encouraged to hear the City of Lexington will acquire and manage Tyson-owned assets to boost economic and job opportunities in the area," said Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer (R) in an X post. "I look forward to seeing this plan move forward and working with the city to build a strong future."

BLM approves grazing in NV allotment

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a decision for the Flanigan Grazing Allotment Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment. The allotment is about 50 miles north of Reno, NV, and encompasses 55,071 acres of BLM-managed public lands and 41,414 acres of private land, totaling 96,592 acres. Renewing a 10-year grazing permit on the allotment was found to have no significant impact, and up to 4,843 animal unit months were authorized for year-round grazing across the allotment's three pastures.

FAIR Labels Act reintroduced into Congress

The Fair and Accurate Ingredient Representation on Labels (FAIR Labels) Act was reintroduced into the House and Senate, which would mandate certain labeling requirements for cell-cultivated and plant-based meat products. The legislation has the backing of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). "For far too long, lab-grown protein companies have exploited the use of terms like 'meat' and 'beef' to describe their products, creating the potential for consumer confusion through misleading marketing," said Gene Copenhaver, NCBA president. "The FAIR Labels Act will establish a federal guideline for labeling cell-cultivated and plant-based alternative protein products, ensuring consumers can easily differentiate these products from real beef products produced by U.S. cattlemen and cattlewomen."

Economics, strong market will help rebuild the cow herd

HERD REBUILDING
(from page 1)

In addition, most of this land in forage production has a topography that the most efficient, and often only way, to harvest it is by grazing. In turn, harvesting these forages, primarily through grazing, is necessary to maintain healthy grasslands, which also support a wide variety of wildlife. This symbiotic relationship between grasslands, ruminants—which once included a herd of over 60 million bison—and humans has existed for thousands of years.

The consequences of not harvesting grasslands differ depending on the region of the country; however, in all cases, a vast amount of our agricultural land stops producing food for humans. Part of the evolution of grassland has always involved it being harvested through grazing, whether we are talking about wildlife, bison, feral Spanish cattle or today's beef cattle. When grasslands are left feral, the results will vary by region.

For instance, in arid land, feral grasslands will revert to an unproductive desert, losing biodiversity, and will partially defoliate, which lowers carbon sequestration and exposes the land to erosion. Meanwhile, unharvested grasslands in the cooler, wetter eastern U.S. will result in the land returning to forest. The woodlands in southern New England contain a patchwork of stone walls from when the land was once farmed or grazed.

The bottom line is healthy, well managed grasslands are good for the environment, support a flourishing wildlife population and produce an abundance of nutrient-dense food for people in the form of beef and other meats.

Not only do cattle convert forage into nutritious beef, but they also value-add a whole host of byproducts, which can be incorporated into their rations. Cows graze corn stalks in the winter, and rations often contain brewers or distiller's grains, cull potatoes and potato waste, cotton seed and cotton seed hulls, beet or citrus pulp and the list goes on.

The author of this article worked with one feedlot whose ration contained candy waste, pasta waste and corn screenings, and built a highly effective ration for another feedyard based on bakery waste and hardwood shavings. Ruminants are truly a wonder, and without cattle to value-add these byproducts, much of it would turn from being an asset in a cattle ration to becoming a major disposal problem.

The industry does face challenges in restocking the cow herd. The cost of land and pasture leases have greatly inflated, and finding experienced labor gets harder every year. The cost of replacement heifers has understandably risen. However, there are many good ideas that will help spur restocking.

For instance, Gordon Philip—who is now in his mid-80s but is still running about 500 commercial cows with just one hired hand—thinks the government should enact a $500 per head tax credit for heifers retained as breeding stock as an incentive to rebuild the herd.

Our current federal executive branch is much more pro-livestock in terms of access to grazing permits on government land, but that can change quickly depending on who is in power. One has to wonder why the land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program doesn't become part of the permanent grasslands used for livestock production after being converted out of crop production.

In the end, a strong beef industry is an important component in maintaining the majority of the country's agricultural land in production, as well as providing consumers with an abundant, safe and affordable source of nutrient-dense food. However, it will be economics and a strong market that will result in restocking our cow herd. — **Dr. Bob Hough, *WLJ* correspondent**

(Editor's note: This article is part one of a three-part series about rebuilding the cow herd. Parts two and three will appear in the May 18 and May 25 issues of* WLJ. *A comprehensive feature article may also be found in the spring edition of* The Wire *on page 24.)

US beef returns to Australia after absence

For more than two decades, following the first detected case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the U.S., the beef industry and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) have worked diligently to regain access to the Australian market. In 2025, U.S. beef and beef products were officially declared eligible for importation into Australia—a significant milestone for the U.S. beef industry.

To commemorate and publicize this renewed market opportunity in Australia, the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) organized a U.S. beef launch event in Sydney, supported by USTR, USDA and the U.S. Embassy in Australia. The guest of honor was Ambassador Julie Callahan, U.S. chief agricultural negotiator. Australian importers, distributors, hoteliers and restaurateurs also attended the reception.

USMEF expects the foodservice sector will serve as a primary entry channel, as retail penetration may be challenging due to strong local loyalty to Australian beef. USMEF looks to develop niche opportunities in high-end steakhouses, premium Western restaurants, and American-themed barbecue or burger concepts.

To sustain momentum beyond the launch event, USMEF hosted a U.S. beef masterclass for importers, distributors, retail and foodservice operators and food media representatives. Held at Hurricane's Grill, one of Sydney's well-known steakhouse chains, the session covered U.S. beef production, corn-fed flavor differentiation and cut utilization for the Australian foodservice format.

"Importers showed interest in branded, bone-in beef cuts for sharing menus, while smaller muscle cuts such as striploin are viewed as more suitable for standard portion control," said USMEF ASEAN Regional Director Sabrina Yin. "Brisket and chuck roll also present good opportunities, given the growing trend of American barbecue and authentic burger concepts."

U.S. beef for the launch event was contributed by USMEF members True West Beef and Tyson Foods.

Funding for the launch event and masterclass was provided by USDA's Market Access Program and Regional Agricultural Promotion Program. — **USMEF**

THE VIEWPOINT
with Glynn Tonsor

This exclusive column found only in WLJ features unique perspectives from some of the nation's top producers, marketers, animal health experts, economists and more.

For Glynn Tonsor, understanding the cattle market starts with a simple premise: producers cannot control the market, but they can understand it. As a professor at Kansas State (K-State) University and a leading voice behind the Meat Demand Monitor, Glynn has built his career helping cattlemen interpret demand, consumer behavior and price signals to support better decision-making on the ranch.

Missouri roots

Glynn grew up on a hog farm in northeast Missouri near Hannibal, where daily chores included pressure washing barns and caring for livestock in a farrow-to-finish system.

In the late 1990s, the hog market collapsed. Prices fell so sharply that hogs briefly had no value, forcing producers across the country to make difficult decisions. Glynn's family was no different.

"In high school, my dad had to sell the breeding stock as part of a market response to keep the farm," Glynn told *WLJ*. "There was a week where hogs were zero," he recalled.

Watching his father and grandfather navigate that downturn shaped how he thinks about agriculture today.

"I saw how hard they worked, and I saw what markets can do," Glynn said. "That will shape a person."

That moment formed his outlook. By the time he graduated high school, he knew he wanted to stay connected to agriculture, but in a different way.

Glynn attended Missouri State University, which was then Southwest Missouri State University, working manual labor jobs, including roofing, to pay his way through school. As a first-generation college student, he stayed close to home financially, but his academic focus gradually narrowed toward agriculture and economics.

Glynn's academic path eventually led him to K-State in 2002, where he pursued a Ph.D. in agricultural economics. A major reason for that move was the opportunity to work with economist Ted Schroeder, who became both a mentor and a collaborator.

"About 90% of the reason I came here was to work with him," Glynn said.

While his background was in hog production, Kansas steered his work toward cattle. The state's industry structure—dominated by beef production and feeder cattle—offered a different set of opportunities.

"There's a much larger presence of cattle here," he said. "And the feeder cattle side, especially, has always interested me."

The structure of the cattle industry offered a unique opportunity. Compared to pork and poultry, which are more vertically integrated, the cattle sector still includes a large number of independent producers making relatively few but significant marketing decisions each year.

"You've got a lot of producers who may only sell cattle once or twice a year," Glynn said. "Understanding those marketing decisions matters."

Glynn saw that as a gap worth addressing.

Courtesy photo

Glynn Tonsor

Building the Meat Demand Monitor

Glynn's most widely recognized contribution is the Meat Demand Monitor, launched in 2019 to address a critical information gap in the industry.

He explained that traditional data sources, such as USDA reports, provide broad, aggregated metrics, such as total consumption and average prices. While valuable, they lack the granularity needed for targeted marketing and product decisions.

Glynn identified a particularly important gap in food service. Prior to the pandemic, a growing share of food dollars was spent away from home, yet the industry had far less insight into restaurant demand than into retail grocery purchases.

The Meat Demand Monitor was built to close that gap by digging deeper into consumer behavior. It gives a clearer picture of preferences, habits and attitudes, and whether people are shopping at the grocery store or eating out. Instead of just looking at total beef consumption, it helps the industry understand what people are choosing, when they're choosing it and how sensitive they are to price.

"It helps dissect the aggregate story," Glynn said, noting that while broad trends often align across data sources, the details matter when making decisions.

Demand, protein and GLP-1

A key theme in Glynn's work is the distinction between consumption and demand. While consumption measures how much beef is eaten, demand reflects both volume and price—essentially the value consumers place on the product.

That distinction is especially important today. Beef consumption per capita has remained relatively steady over time, but demand has increased significantly, supporting higher prices.

"The beef industry is benefiting from demand growth, not just consumption," Glynn said.

One of the biggest drivers behind that demand is the broader shift toward protein-focused diets. Glynn said consumers are increasingly prioritizing protein across a wide range of products, from traditional meals to snack foods and beverages.

He continued that beef benefits from that trend, but it is not the only protein source competing for those dollars. According to his research, what sets beef apart is taste. Data from the Meat Demand Monitor consistently shows taste as the top factor influencing purchasing decisions, often ranking above price.

At the same time, emerging trends, such as GLP-1 medications, are adding new complexity to consumer behavior.

"We're seeing about 12 to 14% of U.S. adults using GLP-1s," Glynn said.

While these drugs reduce overall calorie intake, they do not necessarily reduce protein consumption. In many cases, users prioritize protein even more, shifting their diets toward nutrient-dense foods.

Glynn said that the long-term effects remain uncertain. Adoption rates, insurance coverage and evolving product options could all influence how widespread these changes become. But within the current environment, Glynn continued, GLP-1 use appears to reinforce, rather than undermine, the broader protein trend.

Challenges and opportunities

Glynn sees strong consumer demand as the industry's greatest opportunity, but he also points to several challenges that could shape the years ahead.

At the top of the list is production risk, particularly weather. Drought remains a persistent concern across many cattle-producing regions, affecting forage availability, water supplies and ultimately herd size.

"That's something we can't control, but we have to manage around," Glynn said.

At the same time, limited cattle supplies are creating pressure across the supply chain. Glynn said that while high prices benefit cow-calf producers, they can create challenges for feeders and processors facing tight margins and underutilized capacity.

Efficiency gains also present a double-edged sword. The industry is producing more beef per cow than ever before, reducing the number of animals needed to meet demand.

"The fact that we can produce more with fewer cows is a success story," Glynn said. "But it also changes how the industry looks going forward."

For Glynn, today's strong cattle prices and demand are not an accident. They are the result of decades of improvement across the beef industry, from genetics to production practices to product quality.

"The value consumers place on beef today is the result of long-term industry adjustments," he said.

Glynn said maintaining demand will require continued focus on quality and consumer preferences. Competing proteins, economic pressures and changing dietary trends all have the potential to influence future demand.

Glynn's role in the industry is rooted in helping producers navigate these complexities with clear, analytical insights.

"I try to be a data-driven, documented truth teller," he said.

That approach is not always easy, particularly when market conditions are challenging, but it reflects his belief that informed decisions lead to better outcomes.

"If I'm helping producers make better decisions, I'm doing my job," Glynn said. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

Farm bill likely to face further revisions in the Senate

FARM BILL
(from page 1)

The legislation also establishes authority for block grants to states to deliver disaster aid more quickly, giving producers faster access to support during emergencies. Risk management tools are further enhanced through updates to commodity programs and loan limits. The bill increases access to Farm Service Agency loans and expands eligibility for beginning, young and veteran producers.

Addressing concerns about processing capacity and market access, the bill includes several provisions to strengthen the meat supply chain.

It authorizes grants for new and expanding meat and poultry processors and supports investment in smaller-scale facilities to increase competition and improve regional capacity.

The legislation also allows livestock auction operators to invest in packing plants processing 700,000 head or fewer annually. It creates a pilot program enabling custom-exempt processors to sell beef directly to consumers within their state, subject to labeling and reporting requirements.

SNAP, E15 and pesticide provisions

The bill includes changes to nutrition programs that drew criticism from some lawmakers and advocacy groups.

The legislation makes targeted changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to align nutrition policy with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The bill prioritizes incentives for whole, unprocessed foods and animal proteins, while expanding access and program integrity measures.

During floor consideration, lawmakers adopted an amendment allowing SNAP benefits to be used to purchase hot rotisserie chicken, which passed by a 384-35 vote. A separate amendment that would have made soda ineligible for purchase failed on a 186-238 vote.

The debate over energy policy also played a role in the bill's development. Lawmakers ultimately did not include language allowing year-round sales of E15 fuel.

Additionally, the House voted to remove provisions that would have granted the Environmental Protection Agency exclusive authority over pesticide labeling and limited state-level regulations. The amendment to strip that language passed with bipartisan support.

Industry reaction

Agricultural groups largely welcomed the bill's passage, while signaling areas for improvement as the bill moves to the Senate.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association thanked House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (PA-15) and lawmakers from both parties for advancing legislation that includes "essential programs and tools for cattle producers," and said it would continue advocating for final passage.

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) described the vote as an important step toward providing certainty after years of short-term extensions, particularly as U.S. cattle numbers remain near historic lows. However, the group said it would push for stronger animal health provisions, improved risk management tools and expanded processing capacity in the Senate.

USCA also noted the absence of mandatory country-of-origin labeling for beef in the House bill and said it would continue advocating for its inclusion as the legislative process moves forward.

The Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) highlighted several provisions in the House-passed bill, including the PRIME Act to expand local processing and direct-to-consumer sales, new transparency requirements for commodity checkoff programs and restrictions on foreign adversaries purchasing U.S. farmland. The group noted that an amendment to repeal USDA's electronic identification requirement for certain cattle movements failed on a 69-355 vote, leaving the rule in place.

R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard said that while the bill includes some beneficial provisions, more work is needed to rebuild the nation's cattle herd, adding the organization will now focus its efforts on the Senate.

With House approval secured, the legislation now moves to the U.S. Senate, where it faces a higher 60-vote threshold and the likelihood of further revisions. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

Parasite season ramps up for sheep and goats

With the beginning of spring, Kansas State University (K-State) Extension small ruminant specialist Kelsey Bentley warns that parasite pressure in sheep and goats is entering a critical season, putting flocks and herds at heightened risk for health and production losses.

She says the most common internal parasites include gastrointestinal worms in adult animals and coccidia in young lambs and kids. Among these, Haemonchus contortus, commonly known as the barber pole worm, is the most economically damaging, causing rapid blood loss and severe anemia.

Other common worms, including the black scour worm and brown stomach worm, often occur alongside barber pole infections, compounding production losses.

In young animals, coccidia are the primary concern. These microscopic parasites damage the intestinal lining, especially in overcrowded or damp environments and during stressful events, such as weaning.

"Producers should be watching closely for signs like anemia, weight loss, diarrhea and overall unthrifty appearance," Bentley said. "In severe cases, animals may decline quickly or even die before obvious symptoms appear."

Effective parasite control requires a combination of management strategies. Bentley recommends maintaining proper pasture rotation, avoiding overgrazing and ensuring animals receive adequate nutrition to support immune function. Tools such as FAMACHA scoring, body condition evaluation and fecal egg counts can help identify animals that truly need treatment.

Rather than routine whole-herd deworming, experts emphasize targeted treatment to slow the development of drug resistance. Oral dewormers are preferred for gastrointestinal parasites, as they are more effective than injectable or pour-on formulations in small ruminants.

To prevent coccidiosis, Bentley says keeping pens clean and dry, minimizing overcrowding and reducing stress are critical steps. In some cases, medicated feeds containing approved coccidiostats may be used under veterinary guidance.

Treatment options such as amprolium or sulfa-based medications should also be used in consultation with a veterinarian.

Bentley cautions producers to only use products that are approved or prescribed for sheep and goats. Certain medications, such as toltrazuril-type products, are not labeled for use in these species in the U.S. and should be avoided.

"Working closely with a veterinarian is key to developing an effective parasite control program," Bentley said. "They can help with diagnostics, treatment plans, and ensuring proper product use and withdrawal times."

Producers seeking additional resources can visit the American Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control at wormx.info or contact their local Extension office for guidance. — **K-State Research and Extension**

MARKET NEWS

MARKET SITUATION REPORT

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

MARKET AT A GLANCE

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 5/6/2026		Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	255.00	▼	255.01	219.39
CME Feeder Index	375.19	▲	372.47	293.41
Boxed Beef Average	389.62	▲	389.52	347.89
Average Dressed Steers	400.00	▲	399.03	355.06
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,472	▼	1,473	1,436
Weekly Slaughter**	534,000	▲	529,000	559,000
Weekly Beef Production***	480.4	▲	475.9	489.5
Hide/Offal Value	14.21	▲	13.96	11.10
Corn Price	4.53	▼	4.69	4.40

*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	COMPREHENSIVE Price	PRIME Loads	PRIME Price	BRANDED Loads	BRANDED Price	CHOICE Loads	CHOICE Price	SELECT Loads	SELECT Price	UNGRADED Loads	UNGRADED Price
May 1	6,360	390.40	309	401.87	1,105	392.83	1,945	387.84	574	384.97	2,428	364.53
April 24	6,572	386.90	350	398.38	1,230	390.37	2,076	383.75	450	379.46	2,467	365.98
April 17	6,365	385.95	311	399.89	1,343	389.11	1,863	382.30	461	379.82	2,387	364.11
April 10	6,325	390.15	291	401.48	1,271	394.06	1,961	386.41	413	385.52	2,389	365.80

Cutouts — FED BOXED BEEF

DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT	50% LEAN	90% LEAN
May 7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
May 6	389.62	389.63	355.54	N/A	455.81
May 5	392.34	392.24	352.11	187.03	450.61
May 4	391.56	390.60	349.46	190.79	448.85
May 1	389.11	387.05	356.49	188.94	N/A

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle

	5/1	5/4	5/5	5/6	5/7	High*	Low*
Jun.	25300	25333	25408	25468	N/A	25873	16853
Aug.	24783	24828	24898	25000	N/A	25598	16668
Oct.	24245	24263	24388	24520	N/A	25120	17005
Dec.	24185	24193	24330	24468	N/A	25093	18068

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle

	5/1	5/4	5/5	5/6	5/7	High*	Low*
Apr.	37403	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38103	21920
May	37140	37180	37250	37418	N/A	38280	22268
Aug.	37218	37253	37328	37488	N/A	38020	22460
Sep.	37070	37085	37150	37328	N/A	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	123	1,450	255.00
Live FOB Heifer	243	1,240	255.88
Dressed Del Steer	438	1,037	400.00
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	30,024	1,571	255.01
Live FOB Heifer	11,224	1,394	254.73
Dressed Del Steer	7,832	1,023	399.03
Dressed Del Heifer	2,783	908	398.57
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	7,317	1,428	219.39
Live FOB Heifer	8,107	1,269	218.70
Dressed Del Steer	1,445	930	355.06
Dressed Del Heifer	190	848	352.00

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: MAY 3, 2026

	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	42,145	2,011
Formula	219,896	2,327
Negotiated Cash	79,442	232
Negotiated Grid	26,516	1,253
Packer Owned	10,743	N/A
Total	**378,742**	**5,823**

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS / FORWARD BEEF SALES

Delivery Month			
		Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,678
May '26	110,386	Neg. Sales 21+ days	817
Jun. '26	129,995	Formula sales	3,818
Jul. '26	91,060	Forward contract sales	46
Aug. '26	137,868	Domestic sales	5,665
Sep. '26	80,228	NAFTA Exports	87

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	243.68	+0.34
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	239.91	-1.22
Ontario Auctions		
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs	241.35	-0.71
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	239.41	-0.79
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs	168.55	+3.31

*Price comparison from one week ago.

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	515.56	521.45	502.98
601-700 lbs	448.31	451.86	466.05
701-800 lbs	414.96	411.33	412.59
801-900 lbs	365.94	372.10	370.75
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	510.83	N/A	489.29
501-600 lbs	461.11	465.06	449.06
601-700 lbs	413.65	410.57	401.99
701-800 lbs	369.79	375.49	358.02

USDA MEXICO TO U.S. WEEKLY LIVESTOCK IMPORTS

Feeder cattle imports weekly and yearly volume.

Species	Current Week	Previous Week	Current Year-to-date	Previous Year-to-date
	4/27/2026	4/20/2026		
Feeders	IMPORTS SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE		0	230,638

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE

May 6, 2026

Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary

Receipts EST: N/A **Week Ago EST: N/A** **Year Ago Act: 4,850**

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 May 6, 2026

Feeder prices for steers & heifers reflect medium and large 1 cattle, unless otherwise noted; * Indicates medium and large 1-2

NORTHWEST

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
May 1 Blackfoot, ID	N/A		450-522	480-600 420-490	410-522 380-487	370-467 340-444	320-404 310-388	290-360 280-360	153-186 187-225.50	
April 30 Burley, ID	356			545-606 477	499-504 446-474	438	380-418	290-295	151-202 205-217	
No report available Emmett, ID										
May 2 Eugene, OR	862		400-502*	425-497* 350-455*	360-431* 325-420*	335-391* 330-367*	265-335*	240-315*	168-192 195-236	2,200-4,650 1,900-2,400
May 4 Madras, OR	183		575-630 575-630	560-620 490-630	500-545 410-505	405-455 380-432.50	380-412.50 327-385	335-362.50 300-326	150-180 190-215	
No report available Vale, OR										
No report available Davenport, WA										
April 30 Toppenish, WA	1,624				470-560* 440*	440* 341-417.50*			164-196 203-229	3,250-4,300

FARWEST

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
April 30 Orland, CA	2,722		500-645 480-617	400-600 380-575	350-500 330-512	350-453 330-425	300-410 280-365	285-365 280-350	165-192 160-211	2,500-4,900 2,500-4,000
No report available Escalon, CA										
May 4 Famoso, CA	553		455-645 380-600	440-601 380-520	390-545 335-500	365-445 315-405	315-375	280-350 290-338	70-240 135-212	
No report available Galt, CA										
No report available Turlock, CA										
May 5 Salina, UT	1,125	635-700 450-655	500-625 435-632.50	449-575 422.50-520	435-536 345-477.50	420-454 305-412.50	322.50-416 290-405	295-373 237.50-355	149.20-201.50 197-286.65	2,000-4,275

NORTH CENTRAL

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
May 4 Iowa	9,168	600-720 610-670	520-710 520-625	475-655 445-587	445-539 390-481	415-485 347.50-423	370-423.75 330-396	337.50-377.50 306-356.50	150-305 160-269	
May 5 Miles City, MT	670					365-407.50	383 335-356		130-193 160-236.50	3,300-3,600
May 6 Bassett, NE	1,547		555	572.50-599 480-525	491.50-545 435-479	452.50-505 382.50-432	385-400 354-396	340-396		
May 2 Ericson, NE	4,190		610-630 565	550-580 495-545	490-560 432.50-480	421.50-492.50 405-431	382-424 350-384	307.50-382 292-354.50		
No report available Imperial, NE										
No report available Kearney, NE										
May 1 Lexington, NE	2,652		546-569.50	537-541 490	476-488 476.50-495	411-475 409-435	362-432 384	343-385.50 314-351		
No report available Ogallala, NE										
No report available Valentine, NE										
May 1 Herreid, SD	2,079			593 492.50-557.50	488.50-545 490	460-487 425-434	439 381-402.75	341.50-391		
May 6 Torrington, WY	900									4,200-5,400 3,450-4,250

SOUTH CENTRAL

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
April 30 Willcox, AZ	N/A	525-540	516-575 484-495	496-548 451-492	456-495 393-420	389-429 357-370			150-200 186-222	3,300-3,650 2,250-2,650
No report available Colorado										
April 29 La Junta, CO	1,140		602.50-665 560-602.50	575-625 452-545	452.50-542.50 412.50-482.50	382.50-445 385-400	347.50-377.50 322.50-367.50		171-193 200-223	
May 4 Loma, CO	584		575-650 520-620	520-590 465-590	440-525 425-465	385-460 360-425	350-405 330-370	250-360 250-340	175-200 195-250	4,100-5,400 4,114.80-5,000.70
May 6 Dodge City, KS	1,780		585-607.50 522.50-527.50	507-513 487.50-578	467.50-500 396-441.50	429-452 222-391	380-384.50 346-349.25	330.50-364.50 321-332	137.50-194 177.50-247	3,025-4,850 2,300-3,550
April 30 Pratt, KS	3,720	637.50	617.50-652.50 495-595	525-615 320-492.50	459-527.50 401-452.50	396-465 375-392.50	377-418 339-377	324-378 313-351.50	160-288 181-238	3,650 1,850-3,950
April 30 Salina, KS	2,847	702.50 690	635-680 547.50-620	550-610 480-535	465-550 420-515	402-475 375-407	376-415 345.50-370	330-385 315-349		
May 7 Clovis, NM	1,934		560-690 510-590	520-575 427-510	442-502 372-415	362-445 355-390	354-394 305-366	300-354 290-310	160-188.50 170-234	2,200-4,800 1,400-3,550
May 6 El Reno, OK	11,061	650 560-660	540-710 490-550	530-560 450-505	450-555 360-450	400-470 335-412.50	377-410 330-364	274-379 275-350		
May 5 McAlester, OK	730		615-680 470-635	490-588 463-540	425-518 373-473	387-450 350-408	375-398 330-350		170-197 201-227	2,400 1,950-3,150
May 5 Oklahoma City, OK	6,402	755-760 585-625	590-725 525-577.50	512.50-627 449-542	462-530 397-442	412-458 354-397	375-414 340-363	279.50-380 296-344		
May 1 Cuero, TX	732	672-780 561-820	569-740 523-710	498-600 466-575	452-525 427-500	423-450 400-450	354-370 460		153-185 200-222	2,500-4,100
April 30 Dalhart, TX	1,188		647	607.50-610 490-532.50	442.50-522.50 410-483	437.50-455 350-425	373-426 332.50-355	210	151-187.50 180-226	3,100-3,500
April 30 San Angelo, TX	657	725-735 605-770	570-650 450-530	500-630 450-495	450-510 385-440	367-460 337.50-390	365-370 298-336	275-320	149-177 172-215	4,100-4,675 2,900-3,700
April 30 Tulia, TX	991		595	535-565 470-525	400-477	427-450 367-427	376-382 339-360	314.50-339 290-322	160-175	2,900-3,600 3,000-3,300

EAST

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
May 1 Alabama	8,114	600-720 530-600	540-660 475-580	485-560 440-505	435-515 385-500	380-450 350-405	345-415 315-353	347.50-350 300-327.50	144-197 164-224	1,700-4,800 1,340-5,100
May 4 Lexington, KY	824	510-635*	522.50-635* 480-595*	510-579* 393-499*	451-533* 390-463*	383-457.50* 333-404*	282.50-388* 339-370*	310-352* 264-309*	167-186 180-238	5,050 1,950-3,950
May 4 Joplin, MO	7,321		600-740 540-620	530-610 465-550	457-550 405-485	410-470 372-430	377-428 342-370	321-374 312-337		
May 4 Tennessee	7,760	585-860 500-740	475-725 442.50-645	434-585 385-535	385-540 340-460	355-470 320-550	332.50-400 305-355	297-372.75 255-340	146-207 152-240	2,200-5,300 1,400-4,000
May 4 Virginia	3,804	425-540	520-680 385-570	450-562.50 325-505	360-515 330-429	329.50-446 310-360	335-391 275-345	272.50-357.50 235-332.50		

CANADA

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 SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
May 6 Lethbridge, Alberta	413			725-820	670-780 580-660	545-640 560-635	527-595 519-560	464-524 476-519	210-257 272-292	

American Royal leaves West Bottoms for new home in Kansas City

After 127 years of the American Royal being in the West Bottoms of Kansas City, MO, events will be held to the north at the new facility in Kansas City, KS.

"This moment marks a meaningful step forward for the American Royal and the people who make it what it is," said Pat Macy, CEO of the American Royal, in a news release. "These events have such deep roots, and being able to bring them to our new home is something we've been working toward for a long time."

Events at the new facility will start with the Royal Showcase Horse Show from Sept. 12-13. That will be followed by the Cutting Horse Show, Sept. 18-21; the World Series of Barbecue, Sept. 30-Oct. 4; and the Fall Livestock Show, Oct. 9-25.

The new American Royal facility is located near the Kansas Speedway at State Avenue and 118th Street in Kansas City, KS. Groundbreaking happened in November 2023 on the estimated $375 million campus with funding coming from charitable contributions, private financing and public commitments.

Construction restarted in mid-April after the first round of Kansas STAR (Sales Tax and Revenue) bond funding closed in early March. STAR bonds are a financing tool that allows Kansas municipalities to issue bonds for projects such as this, with repayment coming from future state and local sales tax revenue, according to Kansas Commerce.

Current construction is focused on the completion of the barns and exhibition hall by September for the fall events. Macy told DTN the barns and exhibition hall are 390,000 square feet and include cattle ties for 3,700 head and small animal 6-by-6-foot pens for 2,500 head at the same time. Horse stalls, 10-by-10-foot in size, can be placed in this barn to house 1,740 horses.

"During the fall 2026 events we will have two showrings set up in the barns and bleachers in the area," Macy said. "These will be removed once the arenas are complete by 2029."

The American Royal organization has a plan for loading and unloading livestock around the barns and will be able to change and adapt that plan as needed, according to Macy. Tie-out stalls for cattle will be set up near the barns with a more permanent location later in the construction design.

The current staff offices will stay in the West Bottoms location until the arena and engagement centers are complete at the new campus. Macy said the barn area does have rooms that can be used during the events, and these also provide space for other educational purposes.

"We will start taking applications next month for booking events in 2027," Macy added. "Having a campus with this kind of scale and flexibility allows us to build on what the American Royal has become over the past 127 years. This is the beginning of the American Royal's next chapter."

Full transition to the new facility is expected by March 2029. The American Royal facilities located in the West Bottoms are owned by the City of Kansas City, MO, and will continue to be used until the transition is complete. — **Jennifer Carrico, DTN senior livestock editor**

Downturn in corn futures

MARKETS
(from page 1)

- Forward contract net purchases: $378.57.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: $388.23.

Slaughter through Wednesday was estimated at 313,000 head, down from 324,000 a week earlier. Total slaughter for a week earlier is projected at 534,000 head.

Actual slaughter for the week ending April 25 was not available by *WLJ* press time.

"Slaughter remains and will remain well below any other May in history, so from a supply standpoint for fed cattle subprimals, offerings are tight from a historical standpoint," Fish wrote on Wednesday. "The industry may not see a weekly slaughter above 550k head at all this month, thanks to tight fed cattle supplies."

Boxed beef prices were higher, with the Choice cutout 10 cents higher to $389.62 and the Select cutout $1.46 higher to $389.63. The Choice/Select spread is negative 10 cents.

Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures were lower. The May contract lost 25 cents to $372.40 and the August contract was down 47 cents to $373.05.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index was $5.53 higher to $375.33.

Corn futures closed lower, with the May contract down 12 cents to $4.64 and the June contract down 6 cents to $4.74.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 6,500 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, at the mid-session, feeder steers sold steady to $10 higher. Feeder heifers sold steady to $12 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 763 lbs. sold from $377-403, averaging $385.76.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 7,000 head on Monday. Compared to the last sale, at the mid-session, feeder steers sold steady to $4 higher. Feeder heifers were not as active and sold steady to $2 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 766 lbs. sold from $381-399, averaging $388.99.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 1,893 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers and heifers sold mostly steady, except steers 950-1,000 lbs. sold up to $6 higher and heifers 900-950 lbs. sold $8-10 higher. A group of benchmark steers averaging 778 lbs. sold for $385.

Texas: Giddings Livestock in Giddings sold 843 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers were steady to $4 lower. Feeder heifers sold $2-6 lower. A group of steers averaging 613 lbs. sold from $400-435, averaging $412.74. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

COMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

(Send calendar of events information to editorial@wlj.net.)

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.

May 27-29 – Registration is open for the 142nd Montana Stockgrowers Association MidYear Meeting in Great Falls, MT, at the Great Falls Civic Center. Details: mtbeef.org/event/midyear-meeting.

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.

June 16-18 – Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, USA will host its 2026 National Convention and Trade Show at The Monument in Rapid City, SD. Details: rcalfconvention.com.

June 24-25 – The California Cattlemen's Association 2026 Midyear Meeting will be at the Atlantis Casino Resort in Reno, NV. Details: tinyurl.com/mvmds854.

Sept. 15-17 – The Stockmanship & Stewardship event in Grand Island, NE, 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.

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WEEKLY NEWS UPDATES ON SOCIALS

Common Ground Coalition kicks off first of four regional summits

The Common Ground Coalition kicked off the first of four regional summits in Reno, NV, gathering western livestock perspectives to bolster the industry's future. This event launches a nationwide effort to strengthen rural communities and secure the U.S. food supply.

Fueled by shared conviction, enthusiasm and commitment to the industry, attendees arrived ready to engage in the hard work of identifying positive solutions for the industry.

While new to the Common Ground effort, Nevada rancher Sam Mori quickly recognized the potential it presents.

"This is an opportunity to make a real difference," Mori said. "Success and survival depend on our willingness to work together and take shared responsibility for the future of our industry."

Building on momentum from the coalition's inaugural event in April 2025, attendees engaged in candid, solution oriented discussions rooted in shared experiences and a commitment to action.

Participants explored a growing set of challenges, including constrained access to land, capital, labor and effective risk management tools, particularly for young and emerging producers. In the West, these challenges are intensified by rising predation pressures, overzealous implementation of the Endangered Species Act and historic public lands policies that have limited access to grazing allotments. Left unaddressed, these pressures threaten the long-term viability of family operations and rural economies.

The 33 attendees advanced a set of recommendations to help guide the next phase of the Common Ground Coalition's work. Through respectful discussion, participants offered ideas on issues they believed the group could ultimately agree on. While differing viewpoints were represented—both at the table and in small-group discussions—items without consensus did not move forward. This approach has been foundational to the Common Ground Coalition, and these outcomes will be aligned with findings from the coalition's remaining regional summits.

Western region recommendations

- Improve access to land by simplifying bureaucracy and developing incentives that encourage sellers and landowners to keep land in production agriculture. Protecting and restoring grazing acres, including public and deeded land, is essential for young and emerging producers and for the long-term viability of all livestock operations.
- Advocate for capital access and financing reforms, with the goal of expanding and streamlining access to capital for livestock production.
- Develop mentorship, succession and ownership pathways by creating models that connect established operations with young and emerging producers.
- Add a focus on predation issues and Endangered Species Act reforms to the coalition's foundational work, with the goal of defending producers' right to protect private property. This includes addressing misuse of the act to restrict producers' ability to protect livestock and homes, as well as seeking to improve transparency and collaboration from enforcing agencies.
- Advocate for reforms to the Equal Access to Justice Act to prevent its weaponization against the industry.
- Add a focus on reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act through policy initiatives, education, and efforts to correct misinformation in the public arena.
- Increase adoption of risk management programs through improved education, expanded coverage and tools that support cow-calf revenue streams.
- Continue pursuing labor program reforms and workforce development, including access to healthcare and other rural community needs, with the goals of increasing access to labor and improving long-term stability in rural communities.

These recommendations reinforce existing coalition priorities while encouraging expanded focus on issues impacting western producers.

Moderator and founding coalition member Jake Parnell said the event focused on results rather than just dialogue.

"This summit wasn't about talk for talk's sake," he said. "It was about coming together, recognizing the work already happening across the industry and carrying that momentum beyond this room. By aligning these discussions with broader efforts and the outcomes of future Common Ground Coalition summits, we can turn shared priorities into action."

Western region summit attendees

Those participating in the summit included:

- California: Erin Borror, Joe Fischer, Pat Kirby, Bert Lefty, Deirdre Lefty, Duane Martin Jr., Jake Parnell, Rick Roberti, Debbie Wise and Geordy Wise.
- Colorado: Christie Gabel, Jim Gies and Jordan Levi.
- Idaho: John Dickinson, Tom Houret, Broden Mathews and Jared Patterson.
- Montana: Joe Goggins, J.M. Peck, Greg Putnam and Darrell Stevenson.
- Nevada: John Hays, Sam Mori, Colton Oney, Cara Small, Wade Small and Chad Turner.
- Oregon: Bob Harrell, Paul Houret and Blake Knowles.
- Wyoming: Jack Berger, Brad Boner and Brett Crosby.

Oregon rancher and founding member Paul Houret said the coalition's strength lies in its ability to unite diverse perspectives under a single mission.

"We all come at this from different angles," he said. "But if this group can come together and be an example of collaboration for the industry—and I think we've already seen some success—we can start fixing some of the issues that frustrate so many people. We just have to get started."

To learn more or to sign on to the Common Ground Coalition, visit commongroundcoalition.net. — **Common Ground Coalition**

SUPERIOR Livestock Auction VIDEO AUCTION

Hudson Oaks, TX, April 30
Superior Livestock Auction hosted their video auction live April 30 from the Superior Livestock Auction Studio in Hudson Oaks, TX. Cattle producers sold 23,954 head of calves, yearlings and bred stock totaling 203 lots from 17 states for this offering. Strong buyer participation from several bidders throughout the auction resulted in 83 different successful buyers. Cattle were sold on contract to deliver immediately through November. Another round of precipitation and record highs on cash slaughter cattle trade produced a bullish market report for the April 30 video auction. Regions 3/4/5/6 feeder steers saw increased buyer participation at $10 higher than last auction. Feeder heifers from the same regions were only moderately tested at $5 higher but saw strong demand for replacement quality heifers moving out at as much as $20 higher. Regions 1/2 feeders were only lightly tested but comparable trades were $5-10 higher. Regions 3/4/5/6 calves were $10-15 higher than the last offering. Bred stock was only lightly tested, but first-calf heifer pairs were well received.

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ANGUS

Jun. 1 – TK Angus, Bull & Female Sale, Valentine, NE

WAGYU

May 23 – Bar R Wagyu, Production Sale, Pullman, WA

COMMERCIAL

May 20 – Cattlemen's Livestock Market, Pair & Bred Cow Sale, Galt, CA
May 20 – Western Video Market Sale, Galt, CA
Jun. 12 – Western Video Market Sale, Cottonwood, CA
Jun. 17 – Cattlemen's Livestock Market, Pair & Bred Cow Sale, Galt, CA
Jun. 20 – Visalia Livestock Market, Female Sale, Visalia, CA
Jul. 13 – Western Video Market Sale, Reno, NV
Jul. 7 – Turlock Livestock Auction Yard, Female Sale, Turlock, CA
Jul. 25 – Cattlemen's Livestock Market, Bred Female Sale, Galt, CA
Aug. 1 – Turlock Livestock Auction Yard, Bred Female Sale, Turlock, CA

HORSE

May 16 – Feather River College, Horse Sale, Quincy, CA
May 16 – Top Gun Horse Sale, Twin Falls, ID
Jun. 6 – Rancher's Horse Sale, Juntura, OR
Jun. 13 – Shelman Family, Horse Sale, Burns, OR
Jul. 11 – High Desert Quarter Horse Sale, Redmond, OR

Timeline not announced for meatpacker investigation

PACKER PROBE
(from page 1)

Through the DOJ's investigation, the department has reviewed more than 3 million documents and contacted hundreds of ranchers, cattlemen and processors, Blanche said.

"Later this week, we will be announcing a historic settlement that will directly affect the prices of proteins like chicken, pork and turkey," he said.

DOJ and USDA are working closely together to protect competition in agricultural inputs, but Blanche called on the public to share additional information about potential antitrust crimes such as price-fixing, bid rigging, market allocation or procurement fraud. Those who submit information through the DOJ's Antitrust Division's Whistleblower Rewards Program may be financially rewarded.

"Whether you're a farmer, a purchaser, a processor—you can help protect food security in America by reporting these types of violations and potentially criminal conduct," he said.

USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins also spoke at the news conference, highlighting challenges in the cattle industry, beginning by noting the lowest cattle herd inventory since the 1950s.

"We are making big changes to incentivizing the growth of our cattle herd and to get out of this current situation we're in," she said. However, she continued, consolidation in the meatpacking sector has led to four packers monopolizing about 85% of the processing market today.

"This has led to a frightening landscape for cattle ranchers," Rollins said. "Industry consolidation reduces options for our ranchers looking to sell their cattle. It weakens their negotiating power and it risks reliance upon a single buyer."

Rollins also addressed the foreign ownership of meatpackers. "More U.S.-owned packers in more American regions of the country provides more opportunities for our ranchers and stronger food security for our country," she said. "This strengthens ranchers' ability to market their cattle in a way that makes the most business sense to them. When small and mid-size processors around the country succeed, the communities they serve and the ranchers they support will also succeed."

White House senior trade adviser Peter Navarro also spoke at the conference, noting that Blanche's allusion to an incoming settlement was about Agri Stats.

In 2023, the DOJ filed a civil antitrust lawsuit against Agri Stats, alleging anticompetitive practices in the chicken, pork and turkey industries. Agri Stats said the lawsuit threatens consumers because protein producers depend on Agri Stats' reports to keep prices low.

"That case, I believe, is going to be settled well or at trial in a way which not only will take care of that problem, but implicate some of the bad actions that we've seen by the two American companies, Tyson and Cargill, and JBS on the Brazilian side along with National Beef," Navarro said.

Shad Sullivan, Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, USA property rights chairman, represented the group at the press conference.

"Farmers, ranchers, and American consumers have suffered for too long at the hands of consolidated power," Sullivan said. "Unrestrained market control by these powerful corporations has increased input costs for producers, decreased profitability, and forced many to become price takers. While at the same time, this market control drives up costs for consumers."

At the closing of the press conference, officials were asked why a 2020 meatpacker investigation was closed last year, and what was different about the new investigation.

"These investigations, at the risk of saying the obvious, are difficult," Blanche said. "I'm not going to explain or justify why a different administration shut down a different investigation, but this investigation, like we talked about, is being done, I assure you, for the right reasons."

The upcoming Agri Stats settlement, Blanche continued, is going to "unleash a set of forces that are going to ripple through this industry rapidly and in a way which is going to allow us to get the bottom of this."

Blanche said there is not a timeline for charges or a civil suit in the meatpacker investigation. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, *WLJ* managing editor**

Impact of selection pressure applied to marbling

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of fed cattle in the U.S. reaching the USDA quality grade of Prime. This level of quality is driven primarily by the degree of marbling in the ribeye at the 12th-13th rib interface of a beef carcass.

Historically speaking, the beef industry routinely saw 1-2% of the youngest maturity groups of fed cattle reaching the Prime quality grade. March 2026 ended with 15% of the monthly harvest mix grading USDA Prime and only 8% grading Select. Of the 73-74% grading Choice, more are shifting into the upper two-thirds of Choice, the standard that needs to be reached for quality based, premium, branded beef products like Certified Angus Beef.

The quality grade of Prime indicates the highest level of tenderness, juiciness and flavor of cooked beef. Thereby, Prime indicates the greatest likelihood of a satisfying eating experience. It is apparent consumers have responded favorably to improving beef quality.

The beef industry is experiencing greater demand for Prime and the upper two-thirds of Choice. Greater supply of the higher-quality product has permitted more consumers to try it. Consumers like it and are willing to spend more to enjoy it. The phenomenon has increased demand and value across the entire beef industry.

Marbling is a high heritability trait and selection pressure applied to Marbling EPDs has resulted in an increased genetic potential of the U.S. cattle population to reach this level of quality. There is no doubt that the modern norm of finishing cattle longer and to heavier weights has helped to tap this genetic potential. That being said, the additive genetic potential had to be bred in before it could be tapped.

Selection tools such as EPDs, genomic testing, selection indexes and genetic merit scorecards make identifying high marbling genetics more dependable and more valuable than ever before. Selection for increased marbling has been driven by economics. Because marbling increases the value of carcasses and genetic potential for increased marbling increases the value of feeder cattle and breeding stock without raising production cost, cattle breeders and producers are incentivized for select for it. — **Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**

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.)

May 31 – Applications for the Sheep Heritage Foundation Scholarship are now open through the American Sheep Industry Association. This scholarship provides $3,000 in financial support for a graduate student that is pursuing a sheep-related study that will support the advancement of the U.S. sheep industry, lamb and wool. Details: tinyurl.com/4356awwv.