

INSIDE WLJ

WOLVES ON THE INCLINE — CPW report shows continued growth of the state’s wolf population. Page 6

INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT — Take a look at the U.S. beef packing infrastructure with a total of 937 plants. Page 11

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY — “The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has admitted to a second round of livestock producer information releases to activist groups, and senators in the hardest-hit states have come out with their boxing gloves on. On Feb. 10, EPA released information on 80,000 livestock operations across the United States, including 3,500 in Nebraska to activist groups like Earth Justice, the Pew Charitable Trust and the Natural Resources Defense Council following Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests,” read the May 13, 2013, WLJ cover story.

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BLM revokes American Prairie bison grazing permits

— Organization will appeal

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on May 8 revoked grazing permits held by American Prairie on seven allotments in Phillips County, MT, finding the organization’s bison operation does not meet the federal requirement for a production-oriented livestock operation.

The decision reverses a 2022 authorization issued by the BLM that allowed American Prairie to graze bison on federal allotments, including Telegraph Creek, Box Elder, Flat Creek, Whiterock Coulee, French Coulee and Garey Coulee. The 2022 decision authorized both cattle and bison grazing permits on several allotments and cattle-only permits on others.

In a press release announcing the decision, BLM stated that after reviewing the administrative record, applicable law and American Prairie’s public materials and statements, the agency determined the organization manages its bison primarily for conservation and ecological restoration purposes rather than livestock production.

“Public lands are central to the strength and success of America’s

ranching and livestock communities,” Acting BLM Director Bill Groffy said. “Consistent with the principles of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Department of the Interior is committed to responsible stewardship that keeps these lands

productive for grazing, supports rural economies, helps feed communities at home and abroad, and preserves the ranching traditions that have defined the American West for generations.”

The final decision follows a

lengthy administrative dispute that began after Montana officials, ranchers and agricultural organizations challenged the 2022 permit approval. According to the decision

See REVOCATION on page 4



Preston Keres
The Bureau of Land Management revoked American Prairie’s bison grazing permits on seven allotments in Montana, ruling the operation does not qualify as production livestock.

BLM rescinds Biden-era public lands rule

— Restores framework used

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a final rule fully rescinding the Biden administration’s Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, commonly referred to as the Public Lands Rule, restoring regulations the agency says better align with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act’s multiple-use mandate.

BLM stated the action “restores balance to federal land management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) by reaffirming the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, ensuring conservation does not restrict productive use of the public lands, and reducing regulatory burdens that impede efficient decision-making.”

The final rule, published May 12

in the Federal Register, takes effect June 11. According to the BLM, the repeal removes regulations the agency determined added “unnecessary complexity” and created operational constraints on grazing, energy development, mining and other productive uses of public lands.

The rule rescinds amendments that established new conservation leasing mechanisms, revised Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) regulations and expanded Land Health Standards requirements.

The BLM stated the 2024 rule treated conservation as a separate use of public lands rather than part of the agency’s broader responsibility under FLPMA to manage roughly 245 million acres for multiple uses and sustained yield.

See LANDS RULE on page 7

Infrastructure considerations when restocking the cow herd

— Part two

The beef industry is currently receiving record prices when marketing livestock, and current market signals point to these higher prices being sustained for a period of time longer than a typical cattle cycle would predict. However, it is critical that we maintain our infrastructure of livestock marketing, transportation, cattle feeding and packing plant rail space if we are to be profitable in the future with a larger cow herd.

We are currently seeing more feedlot bunk space being utilized than would be expected with a cow herd that has shrunk to a 70-year low. This is primarily due to manag-

ers keeping cattle on feed for more days, as well as many producers placing cull cows on feed prior to marketing them. The latter has been particularly profitable at current grain prices.

Feeding cows takes advantage of the tremendous compensatory gain a thin cow will experience. It also often moves cull cows out of the typical fall market slump and into a more favorable market window. In terms of price within a market window, feeding a cull cow can increase number of pounds marketed and value per pound. This is accomplished by converting thin cows from producing a yellow fat, low-yielding carcass destined to be

boned out for grind to a white fat “cutter,” whose loin and tenderloin can be pumped and served as steaks in low-end steak houses.

However, with the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer in southwest Kansas and West Texas, it is almost certain that region will retract in size in terms of crop production, cattle feeding and packing industries. Due to the low cattle inventory, we have also seen a modern packing plant shuttered in Nebraska. Thus, maintaining our infrastructure during the lag time involved in growing the nation’s cow herd is important in

See HERD REBUILDING on page 12

Volatile week ends with lower cattle futures

It was a volatile week for cattle markets as reports that beef import tariffs could be waived sparked market reaction before the plans were paused the following day, with cattle futures ultimately closing lower despite stronger cash trade.

“The market appears to be anticipating that more bearish news is coming—after all, the word delayed was used—between now and the mid-term elections and that beef prices won’t stay outside of the rhetoric,” wrote Cassie Fish, market analyst, in The Beef on Tuesday.

Live cattle futures were lower on the week, with the June contract down \$1.40 to \$252.07 and the August contract \$2.75 to \$246.15.

Cash trade through Thursday was 77,000 head. Live steers sold for \$260-266, and dressed steers sold for \$405-415.

Cash trade for the week ending May 10 was 107,454 head. Live steers averaged \$258.35, and dressed steers averaged 402.05.

“Northern dressed deals have traded in a range of \$400-410, mostly \$405-410, \$2-7 higher than last week’s weighted averages,” ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, wrote in her Thursday midday comments. “Southern live deals have

had a range of \$260-265, mostly \$260-262, \$3-5 higher than the prior week’s weighted averages. But thanks to the continued efforts of feedlot managers, the market is witnessing a true rally in the cash market, where price discovery is the main theme of this bullish run.”

Slaughter through Thursday is estimated to be 426,000 head. Last week’s estimated slaughter is 527,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending May 2 was 531,029 head. The average steer dressed weight was 978 lbs. Total beef production for the week ending May 9 was 473.8 million lbs., down 1.4% from the prior week.

Boxed beef prices were

See MARKETS on page 9



PERIODICAL : Time Sensitive Priority Handling

STORY SHORTS

Texas A&M expands meat center on campus

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved a \$133.36 million investment in a new Meat Science & Technology Center, moving the project to West Campus and adding \$18.76 million to its budget. Previously planned for the RELLIS campus, the facility will anchor a future agriculture district along Finfeather Road in College Station, TX. Board Chairman Robert Albritton said the location places the program at the center of the university's mission and industry impact. Chancellor Glenn Hegar emphasized its role in preparing future leaders. The 85,600-square-foot center will support teaching, research and industry engagement in meat and poultry science, with construction expected to be completed in 2028.

ND feedlot owner sues county over carcass case

A feedlot owner near Surrey, ND, has filed a civil lawsuit against Ward County following an investigation into hundreds of dead cattle, according to local news outlet KMOT. Authorities began investigating the operation run by Nathan Smith after a former employee raised concerns about the disposal of carcasses. Deputies later removed 479 carcasses, and prosecutors cited Smith for each count of improper disposal. KMOT reported that in Smith's complaint he argues the county violated his Fifth Amendment due process rights by not allowing him to address the issue before removal. He also disputes a \$15,700 disposal bill approved by county officials. Smith is seeking to pause payment requirements while the case proceeds. Separately, felony witness tampering charges have been filed against Nathan and Hannah Smith.

ASA research targets heart failure risk

The American Shorthorn Association is working with Simplot Land and Livestock to study bovine congestive heart failure (BCHF) in fed cattle. The project analyzes about 10,000 Shorthorn-influenced animals within a larger dataset of more than 35,000 head that includes genomic and phenotypic data. BCHF affects an estimated 4-5% of cattle at harvest and contributes to death loss and reduced efficiency. Early results show Shorthorn cattle may carry a lower genetic risk based on new EPDs. Researchers say accuracy will improve as more harvest data are added. The effort uses a multi-trait model combining heart and lung scores. Both groups say the work will continue as they refine tools to manage BCHF through genetic selection.

Halter expands virtual fencing with satellite

Halter has launched direct-to-satellite connectivity for its smart cattle collars, removing the need for cell towers or on-ranch infrastructure. Using Starlink, the system allows ranchers to manage cattle anywhere with a clear view of the sky. The update expands access to virtual fencing for operations in remote areas and comes amid labor shortages and rising costs. Halter estimates the technology could expand its U.S. market reach by 2.5 times. The release also includes new tools for heat detection, animal behavior monitoring and pasture management. Features include mapping, grazing controls and feed demand tracking. The company said the update is designed to improve decision-making and operational efficiency across pasture-based cattle systems. Interested ranchers can learn more at halterhq.com/beef.

AFBF farm dog contest open

The American Farm Bureau Federation is accepting nominations for the 2027 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest. The competition recognizes dogs that support farm and ranch families through helpfulness, obedience and personality. The grand prize winner will receive \$5,000 and a year's supply of Purina Pro Plan dog food, along with recognition at the 2027 American Farm Bureau Convention in Charlotte, NC. The contest also includes the People's Choice Pup award, which carries a \$2,500 prize and online voting component. Farm dog owners must be Farm Bureau members to participate. Nominations, including photos and optional video submissions, are due July 11, 2026. For more information, visit tinyurl.com/mr2mebe8.

Deadline extended in wage-fixing case

Workers involved in a wage-fixing class-action lawsuit against major red meat processors now have until March 26, 2027, to file claims for a share of \$202.8 million in settlements. The case involves non-managerial employees at companies, including Cargill, JBS USA, Tyson Foods and others, accused of suppressing wages. Attorneys said the settlements also include agreements intended to stop practices tied to alleged wage coordination. The final approval hearing is scheduled for Nov. 13, while deadlines for exclusions and objections run through Sept. 29. Eligible workers may still participate even if they did not receive notice. Claims and eligibility information are available through the settlement website at beefporkwages.com.

Darling Creek Ranch to receive South Dakota Leopold Conservation Award

Dan and Sharon Anderson's Darling Creek Ranch has been selected as the 2026 South Dakota Leopold Conservation Award recipient.

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

Sand County Foundation and national sponsor American Farmland Trust present Leopold Conservation Awards to private landowners in 28 states. In South Dakota, the award is presented with the South Dakota Grassland Coalition and South Dakota Soil Health Coalition.

The Dan and Sharon Anderson family owns and operates Darling Creek Ranch, located near Meadow in Perkins County. They will be formally presented with the South Dakota Leopold Conservation Award later this year.

The Andersons are cattle and sheep ranchers who showcase the regenerative

ability of rangelands and native grasses to improve soil health, water and air quality, and wildlife habitat while also profitably raising livestock.

"Conservation has always been on the forefront of how we manage our rangeland and our resources," Dan Anderson said.

Conservation is a family legacy for the Andersons. While ranching and grazing practices continue to evolve, a passion for the land they steward has burned strong for generations. Dan's father, Jim, served on the Perkins County Soil Conservation Board for 48 years.

Building organic matter in the soil, building litter as armor on the surface, and retaining soil moisture are all measurements for the Andersons' conservation practices. They rotationally graze beef cattle and sheep to pursue these improvements while also helping native grass populations reestablish their deep root systems.

"My dad improved the ground from when he bought



Courtesy photo

Darling Creek Ranch of Perkins County, SD.

it, we have improved the ground since we took over from him, and we hope the next generation improves it even more," said Anderson, who is a lifelong member of the Grand River Cooperative Grazing Association.

The Andersons' daughters, Danci, Danika, Dantae and Danessa, are all involved in the ranch's operation.

"These award recipients are

examples of how Aldo Leopold's land ethic is alive and well today," said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation president and CEO. "Their dedication to conservation is both an inspiration to their peers as well as a reminder to all how important thoughtful agriculture is to clean water, healthy soil, and wildlife habitat." — **Sand County Foundation**

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Bison are not domestic livestock for production

REVOCATION (from page 1)

document, the permits were appealed to the Department of the Interior’s Office of Hearings and Appeals shortly after they were issued.

The case remained pending for several years before Interior Secretary Doug Burgum assumed jurisdiction in December 2025 and directed the BLM to reconsider the permits. The agency subsequently issued a proposed decision in January 2026 to terminate the bison authorizations and received nearly 200 protest letters from American Prairie, Tribal organizations, conservation groups and other interested parties.

At the center of the dispute was the interpretation of the Taylor Grazing Act and whether American Prairie’s bison qualified as “domestic livestock” managed for production purposes. The BLM concluded they did not.

In its final decision, the agency said bison can qualify as livestock in some situations, but the key issue is how the animals are managed. The BLM pointed to American Prairie’s repeated descriptions of its herd as part of a broader conservation effort to restore wild bison populations and natural ecological processes across the landscape.

Under the final decision, the BLM rescinded permits authorizing bison grazing on the

affected allotments while issuing cattle-only permits where appropriate. The agency also set Sept. 30 as the deadline for removing bison from the relevant public lands.

The decision applies only to the seven allotments involved in the case and does not affect Tribal grazing authorizations, treaty rights or other bison operations. The BLM noted that it continues to permit more than 8,800 bison to be treated as domestic livestock on federally managed grazing allotments nationwide.

The agency also emphasized that the decision does not require American Prairie to remove bison from its private lands.

Reaction, appeal

Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte (R) praised the ruling, calling it a victory for ranchers and rural communities.

“This final decision is a victory for the rule of law and the generations of Montanans who have stewarded our lands with care,” Gianforte said. “For far too long, the Biden administration ignored the clear language of the Taylor Grazing Act in favor of an ideological experiment.”

Gianforte said the decision restores the intent of federal grazing law and protects Montana’s livestock industry.

The governor and several state agencies had opposed the permits since 2021, argu-

ing the authorization violated both the Taylor Grazing Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. State officials also raised concerns about economic impacts to local communities, fencing and containment issues, and the effect on Montana state trust lands fenced in common with BLM allotments.

The decision has drawn

criticism from conservation and Tribal organizations.

According to the final decision, Tribal governments and advocacy organizations argued the proposal undermined tribal bison restoration efforts and ignored cultural and treaty-related interests associated with bison management. Protesters also contend the BLM’s interpre-

tation of the Taylor Grazing Act conflicted with decades of agency practice and broader public land management objectives.

American Prairie has previously stated it intends to appeal the ruling and pursue further legal action if necessary.

Under the decision’s appeal provisions, American

Prairie or any adversely affected party may file an appeal with the Department of the Interior’s Office of Hearings and Appeals. Any notice of appeal must be filed within 30 days of the decision being received. Parties may also seek a stay pending the appeal review. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

US beef featured at prominent beef festival in Thailand

U.S. beef. Domestic beef production is flat and unlikely to increase while demand for beef continues to grow. According to Euromonitor International, Thailand’s overall beef demand is forecast to grow by an average of 6.1% annually through 2029. Thailand’s economy is Southeast Asia’s second largest.

Meanwhile, growth in Korean barbecue and Japanese yakiniku-style restaurant chains in Thailand continue to shape consumer expectations for marbling and tenderness, where U.S. beef excels. The U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) also sees expanding opportunities for steaks and premium burgers.

“U.S. beef already has a presence in premium segments of the foodservice and retail sectors in Thailand and opportunities are growing,” said USMEF ASEAN Director Sabrina Yin.

Yin and Marketing Manager Jonathan Neo attended Thailand Beef Fest—a three-day festival in Bangkok—to make sure U.S. beef stood out. An International Pavilion organized in collaboration with the embassies of four countries—the U.S., Brazil, Japan, and Australia—showcased world-class premium meats. The festival also featured a beef restaurant zone, which included more than 50 well-known, beef-oriented restaurants presenting their signa-

ture dishes.

“We are working to support U.S. beef importers by growing awareness of U.S. beef’s quality and its profit potential,” Yin says. “Thailand Beef Fest was an ideal opportunity to do that.”

A USA Pavilion featured product displays and samplings of U.S. beef striploin and ribeye for visitors. USMEF also held a seminar about U.S. beef production and quality, and utilized a guest chef from Thailand to conduct a live cooking demonstration with U.S. beef striploin.

Funding support for the festival was provided by the Beef Checkoff Program. — **USMEF**



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Tackling tetanus: A large animal owner's guide

A scorching day in the pasture often leads horses and livestock to find cooling relief in the mud. But while playing in the mud may seem harmless, large animals' attempts to cool off may offer up the opportunity for the bacteria that cause tetanus to creep into existing wounds.

Dr. Kallie Hobbs, an assistant professor at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, provides insight into how large animals contract tetanus and the preventive measures that can be taken to shield them from this toxic disease.

Hidden threats in the mud

Tetanus is caused by a bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, which can live in the soil and manure surrounding horses and livestock.

According to Hobbs, animals usually get infected when this bacterium enters their body through:

- Deep cuts or puncture wounds.
- Surgical sites (such as from castration and dehorning).
- Umbilical infections in newborns.
- Small wounds that owners may not even have noticed.

To safeguard against an infection, it's important to clean wounds right away and keep

an eye on how they heal.

"Because horses are especially sensitive to tetanus, even a minor injury should be taken seriously," Hobbs said. "For newborn animals, make sure birthing areas are clean to prevent infections through the umbilical cord."

A toxic encounter

Once a large animal has contracted tetanus, the bacteria's powerful toxin begins to take a toll on the animal's nervous system.

"The toxin from tetanus causes muscles to tighten and spasm," Hobbs said. "It blocks the signals that tell muscles to relax, so the animal becomes stiff and can't move normally. This can appear as a rigid 'saw-horse' stance, an elevated tail or wide eyes."

This blocking of signals can also lead to:

- Difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- Irregular heart rate.
- Digestive issues.

While internal factors are difficult for owners to detect, stiffness in the legs or neck is a red flag that there is an abnormality in their animal's health.

If tetanus goes untreated, it may also result in lockjaw, protrusion of the third eyelid, or a sensitivity to sound and touch.

"Without treatment these symptoms can quickly become life-threatening," Hobbs said.

Pinpointing the affliction

When diagnosing tetanus, veterinarians take symptoms and any recent injuries into consideration.

"While there are tests that can identify the toxin, they are not always necessary, as testing turnaround time can be several days," Hobbs said. "Early recognition is key to successful treatment."

Treating tetanus is intensive and includes:

- Cleaning the wound to remove infected tissue.
- Antibiotics (usually penicillin).

cillin).

- Tetanus antitoxin to neutralize the toxin.
- Muscle relaxants and supportive care.

- Keeping the animal in a quiet, dark space to reduce stress.
- Even with treatment, recovery can be slow and unpredictable, and an estimated 50% of animals do not survive, according to Hobbs.

Taking the tetanus initiative

While tetanus can be a seri-

ous threat, it's also easy to prevent. Protecting your animals from tetanus starts with vaccination.

"Horses should receive an annual vaccine that contains tetanus toxoid, which helps their bodies build protection against the disease," Hobbs said. "For cattle, sheep and goats, this protection is usually included in a CD&T vaccine, which covers bacterial diseases in the intestine that can lead to diarrhea caused by *Clostridium perfringens* types C and D, as well as tetanus.

"(In addition) If your animal has surgery or gets injured, ask your vet about giving a booster shot to reinforce their protection," Hobbs said. "Vaccination is affordable, highly effective, and truly the key to preventing tetanus."

Having a conversation with your veterinarian and planning an annual administration date of the vaccine is the first step in shielding your large animals from the threat of tetanus. — **Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences**

USDA updates rainfall data for crop insurance

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) announced it will transition several federal crop insurance programs to a new rainfall data source, replacing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) with data from the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI).

The change will begin on April 30, with the Tropical Storm Option under the Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index program. Additional programs affected include Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF), Annual Forage, Apiculture and Shellfish insurance programs, all of which use precipitation data to calculate coverage and indemnity payments.

PRF, Apiculture and Shellfish programs will move to the new dataset on Aug. 31, while Annual Forage will transition on April 30, 2027.

RMA Administrator Pat Swanson said the update is intended to improve transparency and access to rainfall information for produc-

ers and crop insurance agents.

According to RMA, the geographic rainfall grids and overall structure of the insurance programs will remain unchanged, helping minimize disruptions to producers. The agency also expects the updated system to speed up delivery of final grid index values and indemnity payments.

RMA said producers and agents have raised concerns about the current CPC dataset because it requires specialized software to access. The NCEI data will be available in more user-friendly formats, including Microsoft Excel.

The agency also said the transition creates opportunities to add more weather stations over time and provides more consistent technical support through a formal agreement with NCEI.

RMA plans to release updated producer tools and educational resources alongside each program transition date. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

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

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/4356awvv.

CPW report shows Colorado wolf population growing

—Agency identifies 32 wolves

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) reported continued growth of the state’s gray wolf population during the 2025-2026 biological year, with a minimum population count of 32 wolves statewide. The update was released on May 7 in CPW’s third annual gray wolf report covering April 1, 2025, through March 31.

Of the 32 wolves identified in Colorado, CPW said 24 were part of established packs while eight were considered dispersing wolves moving outside pack territories. During the reporting period, the agency recognized four packs—Copper Creek, King Mountain, One Ear and Three Creeks. Most wolf activity remained centered in northwest Colorado, although some wolves traveled into other areas of the state.

“This year’s annual report highlights CPW’s continued efforts to refine and improve our wolf program on all levels, ranging from monitoring to conflict minimization and compensation, and public engagement,” said CPW Director Laura Clellan.

CPW documented four litters born during the reporting year, a development officials said, indicating wolves are continuing to establish packs and reproduce in the state.

“Pup recruitment into the wolf population this year was very high, which is a sign of wolves’ ability to find one another, pair, reproduce, and make a go of it in Colorado,” said Wolf Conservation Program Manager Eric Odell. “While we do not know what the future will hold, this is an encouraging sign of the biological success of our program and displays a

positive trend in our wolf population size.”

The One Ear pack was the state’s largest, with a minimum count of nine wolves, including at least five surviving pups. The Copper Creek pack had six wolves, Three Creeks had five and King Mountain had four.

Mortalities and removals

CPW reported 10 wolf mortalities during the biological year, with an estimated adult survival rate of 61%. According to the report, one wolf died from natural causes, six from anthropogenic causes and three deaths remain under investigation.

Documented causes of death included legal shootings outside Colorado, a vehicle strike, entrapment, capture-related mortality and lethal removal tied to

livestock depredation management.

The report detailed the lethal removal of wolf 2405 from the Copper Creek pack after repeated livestock depredations in Pitkin County. CPW said several producers continued experiencing losses even after using nonlethal deterrents and removing potential attractants.

After consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency determined lethal removal was allowed under state and federal law and removed the wolf on May 29. Additional depredation incidents were later reported in the area, though attempts to remove another wolf were unsuccessful.

CPW also attempted to lethally remove an uncollared wolf linked to chronic depredation in Rio Blanco County, though those efforts were unsuccessful.

Compensation tops \$750,000

The agency emphasized continued investment in nonlethal conflict minimization efforts. During the reporting period, CPW conducted 78 site assessments, deployed more than 13 miles of fladry across 15 locations and used 61 scare devices statewide.

The agency also launched its Colorado Range Rider Program in partnership with the Colorado Department of Agriculture. Eleven contracted riders worked across northwest Colorado counties during the 2025 grazing season, assisting 34 livestock producers.

CPW confirmed 43 wolf depredation incidents during the reporting year involving 19 cattle, 23 sheep

and one working dog. The agency paid \$43,275.06 in direct compensation for those losses and approved more than \$709,000 in additional claims related to missing livestock, lower conception rates and reduced livestock weights.

Funding for nonlethal programs came from several sources, including Colorado’s “Born to Be Wild” license plate program, which generated more than \$1.8 million during the reporting period.

The report noted CPW continues working with state, federal, Tribal and university partners on wolf monitoring, conflict management and research as Colorado’s wolf restoration effort moves forward. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

Vaccine shows promise for bird flu in cattle

Researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have developed a vaccine approach that shows promise in protecting against highly pathogenic bird flu, demonstrating strong efficacy in both mice and cattle.

Avian influenza, or H5N1, has disrupted agricultural systems globally, leading to the culling of more than 166 million commercial poultry birds in the U.S. since 2022. In 2024, the virus spread to dairy cattle—an unprecedented interspecies transfer—and subsequently caused illness in about 70 farm workers with close contact to infected animals.

The vaccine research was led by virologist Eric Weaver, professor of biological sciences and director of the Nebraska Center for Virology, along with postdoctoral fellows Joshua Wiggins and Adthakorn Madapong in the School of Biological Sciences. Their findings are forthcoming in “NPJ Vaccines.” The new vaccine platform is designed to protect against multiple H5N1 strains and to generate immunity in both the bloodstream and the respiratory tract.

The vaccine was tested in mice and dairy calves, producing strong immune responses and complete protection against severe disease in preclinical models. The results suggest the approach could offer protection for livestock, particularly because there are currently no licensed H5N1 vaccines for cattle.

Weaver said the team built on earlier work from his lab when the cattle outbreak began.

“I had started working on this as a potential problem in 2005, but the last publication was around 10 years ago,” he said. “When the outbreak began, my

hope was that this would cycle through dairy cattle and be gone, but that didn’t happen. It got progressively worse, and I was worried.”

Working with the Animal Care Team at Nebraska, the researchers obtained calves for testing in early 2025. The calves were vaccinated at one week of age using a combination of intramuscular and intranasal delivery and received a booster four weeks later. In a separate experiment, vaccinated mice were fully protected against lethal infection from multiple H5N1 strains.

“The idea was that if we put it intramuscularly, we can prevent it from spreading in the body, and then a mucosal aspect, intranasally, would prevent it from spreading from animal to animal,” Weaver said.

With these new findings, Weaver is seeking funding and potential partnerships to further evaluate the vaccine, including development of a multispecies option. Protecting cattle from H5N1 could reduce economic losses for producers while limiting opportunities for the virus to adapt and spread to humans.

“We’d like to have a vaccine for the farm and the farmer, and everything shows that this would be an effective vaccine platform for humans, as well,” Weaver said.

As diseases continue to cross species barriers, Weaver said research like this will be critical to protecting Nebraska and the global community.

“Historically, these things will move into other species if there is extended contact long enough for the evolution to occur,” he said. “Influenza A viruses have never been an issue in cattle, but it is now, and it’s not going away.” — **Nebraska Extension**

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Livestock groups said the 2024 rule threatened grazing

LANDS RULE (from page 1)

A key part of the repeal eliminates restoration and mitigation leasing provisions created under the 2024 rule, with BLM concluding FLPMA allows public lands to be used and developed by third parties, but not set aside primarily for conservation purposes. The final rule also restores ACEC regulations to the framework used since 1983. According to the agency, the 2024 revisions introduced added complexity into land-use planning and allowed temporary management restrictions on nominated ACECs before the formal planning process was completed. The agency also removed expanded Land Health Standards provisions from the 2024 rule, saying the requirements created rigid timelines and added procedural hurdles that complicated grazing and land management decisions.

Livestock groups welcome decision

Livestock organizations praised the repeal, arguing the 2024 rule threatened grazing access and would have increased regulatory burdens for ranchers operating on federal allotments. “From Day One, public lands ranchers were clear with the Trump administration: we needed them to remove policies that illegally picked winners and losers in public land management, and we needed them to deliver on their commitment to

bring important reforms to the agency’s 35-year-old grazing regulations,” said Public Lands Council (PLC) President Tim Canterbury. Canterbury said the Public Lands Rule could have resulted in reduced grazing opportunities “under the guise of ‘conservation’ principles,” despite what he described as the demonstrated benefits of managed grazing on western landscapes. The organization said it has opposed the Public Lands Rule since it was finalized in 2024 through congressional resolutions, legal challenges and ongoing advocacy efforts. PLC argued the rule could have reduced livestock grazing on public lands while increasing wildfire risks by limiting active rangeland management. The group said it has pushed for greater flexibility in grazing policy since the 2020 scoping process, contending outdated regulations prevent land managers and producers from fully responding to changing land, livestock and multiple-use needs. According to PLC, updated regulations will strengthen wildfire mitigation, food and fiber production, biodiversity protection and overall public land management. The Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) also welcomed the final rule rescinding the Public Lands Rule. According to MSGA, the 2024 rule improperly placed “equal valuation of non-use of lands in the name of conservation” alongside traditional multiple uses such as grazing and mineral development. The organization also argued

the BLM failed to adequately address concerns raised by public land users during the original rulemaking process.

Conservation groups criticize

Conservation organizations sharply criticized the repeal of the Public Lands Rule. According to statements from the groups, the proposed

grazing changes would weaken oversight of public lands across the West while reducing public participation in grazing decisions. They argued the changes would prioritize extractive grazing uses, weaken environmental review and reduce protections for wildlife habitat, watersheds and public land health. “It’s galling that the agency is claiming that among the

reasons for revising the regulations is that grazing permittees have been ‘shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden’ in ensuring achievement of rangeland health,” said Chris Krupp, public lands attorney for WildEarth Guardians. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility also opposed the proposal, citing data showing that millions of

BLM grazing acres fail to meet land health standards, with livestock grazing identified as a major contributing factor. BLM stated existing land management authorities and planning processes remain sufficient to address conservation objectives without the framework established under the 2024 Public Lands Rule. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

Why timing and method matter in castrating bull calves

Castration remains one of the most important management practices in beef production, yet the timing and method continue to generate discussion among producers. Castration is a key component of calf preconditioning programs, which are designed to reduce stress, improve health and enhance performance after calves leave the ranch of origin. Allowing adequate healing time following castration and other procedures is essential to realizing the benefits of preconditioning. One consistent recommendation across research and veterinary guidance is to castrate calves as early in life as practical. Younger calves generally experience less stress, fewer complications and recover more quickly than older, heavier animals. Early castration is also associated with reduced risk of sickness, less shrink and im-

proved overall health during the receiving and back-grounding phases. In addition, performing the procedure when calves are small typically requires less labor and reduces safety risks for both cattle and handlers. From both an animal welfare and management standpoint, earlier is better. Bulls typically grow slightly faster and produce leaner carcasses than steers due to the effects of testosterone after the bull reaches puberty. However, those advantages come after the normal weaning time and with trade-offs. Bull carcasses generally exhibit increased toughness, less marbling and are more likely to result in dark cutters. The quality advantages of steers drives market demand for steers and consistent premiums compared to bulls. Recent data suggest steers commonly sell for \$6-15/cwt

more than comparable bull calves. For a fresh weaned calf, that can be a difference of \$50-100 per head or more, which quickly adds up across a calf crop. Selecting the appropriate castration method depends largely on calf size, labor availability and management preferences. Surgical castration is fast and reliable, but it creates an open wound and carries risk of bleeding or infection. Elastator banding uses a small latex band for young, light bull calves and other banding methods that use a larger robust band for bigger calves are bloodless alternatives to surgery. These banding methods restrict blood flow but require careful technique to avoid incomplete castration and may increase the risk of tetanus if proper vaccination protocols are not followed. Pain management is another consideration receiving

increasing attention from both producers and consumers. Surgical castration causes more immediate, short-term pain, while banding results in less acute but longer-lasting discomfort. Veterinary-approved pain mitigation strategies, such as anti-inflammatory medications or local anesthetics, can help reduce stress and improve animal welfare when feasible. Ultimately, there is no single “best” method for every operation. The most successful programs match the castration method to calf size, perform the procedure early in life whenever possible, and allow adequate recovery time before marketing. Done correctly, castration remains a foundational management practice that supports calf health, carcass quality, and long-term profitability in the beef industry. — **Paul Vining and Paul Beck, Oklahoma State University Extension**

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MARKET NEWS

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

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 5/14/2026	Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	262.30	▲	255.00227.68
CME Feeder Index	373.86	▼	375.19302.41
Boxed Beef Average	387.45	▼	389.62349.90
Average Dressed Steers	410.32	▲	400.00357.33
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,471	▼	1,4721,437
Weekly Slaughter**	527,000	▼	534,000559,000
Weekly Beef Production***	473.8	▼	480.4489.3
Hide/Offal Value	14.02	▼	14.2111.06
Corn Price	4.56	▲	4.534.50
*Average weight for previous week. **Total slaughter for previous week. ***Estimated year-to-date figure in million pounds for previous week.			

BEEF REPORT: Weekly Composite Boxed Beef										
WEEK ENDING	COMPREHENSIVE Loads/Price		PRIME Loads/Price		BRANDED Loads/Price		CHOICE Loads/Price		SELECT Loads/Price	UNGRADED Loads/Price
May 8	5,853	391.69	278	400.53	1,126	396.14	1,815	388.66	439386.31	2,195367.83
May 1	6,360	390.40	309	401.87	1,105	392.83	1,945	387.84	574384.97	2,428364.53
April 24	6,572	386.90	350	398.38	1,230	390.37	2,076	383.75	450379.46	2,467365.98
April 17	6,365	385.95	311	399.89	1,343	389.11	1,863	382.30	461379.82	2,387364.11
Cutouts			FED BOXED BEEF							
DATE	CHOICE		SELECT		COW BEEF CUTOUT		50% LEAN		90% LEAN	
May 14	387.45		389.00		358.58		188.12		458.24	
May 13	388.68		388.58		355.77		186.46		457.22	
May 12	390.73		391.27		353.27		192.50		448.62	
May 11	391.22		391.49		359.57		190.24		N/A	
May 8	388.39		385.01		358.53		191.66		N/A	

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle						
	5/8	5/11	5/12	5/13	5/14	High* Low*
Jun.	24890	25215	25300	25393	25523	2587316853
Aug.	24410	24700	24715	24758	24903	2559816668
Oct.	23830	24050	24003	23940	24063	2512017005
Dec.	23753	23953	23900	23843	23978	2509318068
CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle						
	5/8	5/11	5/12	5/13	5/14	High* Low*
May	36738	37125	37125	36823	36980	3810321920
Aug.	36423	36745	36750	36225	36455	3828022268
Sep.	36223	36568	36533	35940	36158	3802022460
Oct.	35980	36300	36250	35815	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	24,728	1,549	262.30
Live FOB Heifer	10,916	1,363	261.78
Dressed Del Steer	9,648	1,020	410.32
Dressed Del Heifer	2,476	894	412.96
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
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 YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	2,138	1,489	227.68
Live FOB Heifer	1,071	1,283	226.12
Dressed Del Steer	970	965	357.33
Dressed Del Heifer	20	762	350.00

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: MAY 10, 2026		
	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	31,870	2,466
Formula	214,635	2,165
Negotiated Cash	80,908	143
Negotiated Grid	26,905	1,872
Packer Owned	7,774	N/A
Total	362,092	6,646

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS		FORWARD BEEF SALES	
Delivery Month		Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,667
May '26	110,386	Neg. Sales 21+ days	671
Jun. '26	130,795	Formula sales	3,473
Jul. '26	91,758	Forward contract sales	41
Aug. '26	138,996	Domestic sales	5,326
Sep. '26	81,293	NAFTA Exports	82

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		245.85+2.17
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		244.79+4.88
Ontario Auctions		
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs		N/A N/A
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		241.55+2.14
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs		169.84+1.29
*Price comparison from one week ago.		

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, May 12, 2026			
Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	520.36	518.85	503.54
601-700 lbs	450.41	460.05	483.19
701-800 lbs	412.20	413.24	429.47
801-900 lbs	365.91	378.16	382.67
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	514.06	477.81	478.19
501-600 lbs	461.81	453.56	441.98
601-700 lbs	417.40	409.75	422.22
701-800 lbs	372.48	368.44	379.63

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
Feeders	5/4/2026	4/27/2026	0	230,638
IMPORTS SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE				

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE	
May 14, 2026	
Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary	
Receipts EST: N/A	Week Ago EST: N/A Year Ago Act: 5,450
THIS REPORT WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED AFTER MAY 12TH 2025. THE BORDER WILL BE CLOSED FOR LIVESTOCK IMPORTS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.	
Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2	Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2
500-600 lbs	N/A500-600 lbsN/A
600-700 lbs	N/A600-700 lbsN/A
700-800 lbs	N/A700-800 lbsN/A
Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2	Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2
500-600 lbs	N/A500-600 lbsN/A
600-700 lbs	N/A600-700 lbsN/A
700-800 lbs	N/A700-800 lbsN/A

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

Selected Auctions Week Ending May 14, 2026					Feeder prices for steers & heifers reflect medium and large 1 cattle, unless otherwise noted; * Indicates medium and large 1-2					
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
Noreport available Blackfoot, ID										
May 7 Burley, ID	293		602	516-540	478	419	373		141-249	
Noreport available Emmett, ID										
May 9 Eugene, OR	1,133		310-502* 360-492*	400-510* 350-430*	360-421* 300-417*	340-380* 320-366*	335-400*	330-355*	175-198 210-242	2,100-4,300 1,700-3,150
May 11 Madras, OR	280		500-550 450-500	525-555 455-487.50	485-507.50 347.50-430	415-470 370-425	365-425 340-370	345-365 300-340	160-190 180-232	3,250-4,000 3,000-4,000
May 6 Vale, OR	759			470-547.50	447-507 405-460	380-435 357-410			178-194 200-234	3,975-4,775
May 12 Davenport, WA	394		300-530 442.50-486	427.50-472.50 225-433	327.50-437.50 230-442.50	290-387.50 225-383	282.50-375 175-340	225-350 194-325	110-282.50 166-315	3,000-5,000 1,650-3,400
May 7 Toppenish, WA	1,079			465*		470* 350-401*	350*		158-183 175-226	4,800 3,475-3,575

May 7 Orland, CA	2,810			400-592 380-550	400-550 380-490	350-483 330-447	300-418 280-378	290-372 280-349	170-189 170-224	2,500-4,900 2,500-4,050
Noreport available Escalon, CA										
May 11 Famoso, CA	665		455-720 380-600	440-600 380-510	390-540 335-490	365-440 315-405	315-388	280-350 290-340	140-240 135-208	
May 13 Galt, CA	3,109			440-530	450-535 400-570	370-460 335-430	330-420 350-385	300-370 300-341	100-185 180-220	3,000-5,100
May 9 Turlock, CA	4,403		460-597 440-530	450-595 425-523	410-524 399-490	375-465 379-450	361-418 340-389	353-361 285-327		
Noreport available Salina, UT										

May 11 Iowa	6,154	680	585-660 500-610	522.50-600 467-545	465-538 400-500	385-474 320-427	380.50-423 300-374	356-388 285-341	147.50-247.50 175-251	
May 12 Miles City, MT	1,079				424	431-450 370-409	355-365		130-192.50 170-236	3,610-4,985 3,450
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		
Noreport available Ericson, NE										
May 8 Imperial, NE	882			488	493 454	422-427 423	343.50	328 335.50-337.50		
Noreport available Kearney, NE										
Noreport available Lexington, NE										
May 7 Ogallala, NE	2,681		640 625	550-591 521-532.50	508-529 447.50-491	422.50-478 388-448	390-418 361.50-398.50	327.50-387 305-344		
May 7 Valentine, NE	5,880			553-620 539-570	509-571 455-517.50	445-500 410-481	382.50-449 362-416	365-416.75 358-370		
Noreport available Herreid, SD										
May 13 Torrington, WY	6,593		550	555-620 525-565	500-570 465-475	425-502 375-433	397-436.25 359-382	299-375.50 306-363		

May 7 Willcox, AZ	800	1,200 1,000	471-560 421-490	490-528 415-472	401-470 383-408	386-415 339-378			140-204 190-207	3,750-4,250 2,950-3,250
May 11 Colorado	2,150									
May 6 La Junta, CO	870		552.50-630 507.50-580	487.50-545 470-510	472.50-527.50 402.50-422.50	387.50-427.50 380-387.50			171-191 201-227	2,825-4,225 2,700-3,325
No report available Loma, CO										
May 13 Dodge City, KS	3,688		613-682.50 555-635	537.50-624 460-534	465-520 407.50-457.50	433-467.50 354-415.50	364-401 344-368.75	331-369 297-336.50	147.50-195 201-272.50	3,050-4,200 2,100-3,550
May 7 Pratt, KS	5,294		457.50-532.50	487.50-545 457.50-505	462.50-492.50 392.50-452.50	389-447.50 356-400	350-390 331-369	309-362.50 295.50-339	165-297 187-238	1,950-4,500 2,150-3,200
May 7 Salina, KS	2,080	560 570-580	650-665 580-610	545-580 500-535	460-527 440-477.50	415-470 370-439	364-394 338.25-379.25	325-364 319-340		
May 14 Clovis, NM	1,814	620-670	610-665 410-595	500-565 402-505	432-525 342-425.50	370-420 342-400	320-393 320-359	265 311.50-335	2,000-3,900 1,700-3,550	
May 13 El Reno, OK	11,009	820-870 670-730	570-640 500-560	535-585 420-510	450-520 385-440	400-450 325-395	370-407.50 320-365	280-368 280-372.50		
May 12 McAlester, OK	680		560-670 505-610	475-558 405-505	398-490 370-460	398-440 355-409	390-393 337-410	290-325 325-364	168-198 195-236	2,600-3,800 1,725-3,400
May 11 Oklahoma City, OK	5,237	615	570-640 482.50-575	475-580 410-497.50	440-510 377-459	401-458 349-410	360-398 320.50-370	292-375 300-334		
May 8 Cuero, TX	1,031	668-820 581-715	565-740 513-610	485-620 464-545	436-515 400-540	414-470 376-430	371-408 339-380		161-188 203-218	2,500-3,550 2,200-3,000
May 7 Dalhart, TX	1,845		550-642.50 510-632.50	540-597.50 472.50-492.50	485-515 430-456	398-424 362.50-387	368-392	307-364	143-180 175-219	2,800
May 7 San Angelo, TX	509	600-605 600-690	530-555 515-520	520-546 442.50-500	469-515 393-432.50	395-452 320-375	361-395 274-337.50	294-320 240-315	142-175 190-220	3,050-3,250 2,500-2,800
May 7 Tulia, TX	918	685-790 640-690	600-685 545-680	555-590 480-495	467-520 442-485	430-440 372-407	367-395 310-334	332-355	155-184 190	

SOUTH CENTRAL

Trump delays plan to waive beef tariffs

—Bring down beef prices

After reports that President Donald Trump would suspend tariffs on beef imports from all major exporting countries, the White House delayed planned executive orders on the tariffs after push-back from ranch groups and others.

Trump was expected to sign an executive order Monday waiving annual tariff-rate quotas on beef imports—the volume threshold at which higher tariffs kick in. As of late afternoon Monday, the White House had not released specifics on the order.

According to the Wall Street Journal, tariffs on beef products would be suspended for 200 days, essentially through the end of November. Meanwhile, beef imports are already soaring compared to last year. Australia, Canada, Mexico, Brazil and New Zealand are the countries most likely to see export volumes to the U.S. jump as a result.

Bill Bullard, CEO of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America, criticized the proposal as an experiment that would give meatpackers and retailers greater control.

“At the very least, the White House should provide domestic cattle farmers and ranchers with the tools they need to mitigate the financial harm they will likely incur from an increase in price-depressing imports, and it should empower consumers to choose which countries’ beef they

wish to consume,” Bullard said.

Along with that, Bullard pressed for a return to country-of-origin labeling and for a stop to requiring domestic cattle producers to promote foreign beef through mandatory checkoff dollars.

Based on USDA data, beef imports are steadily rising and account for about 18% of domestic beef consumption. Removing tariffs for most of the year will likely push that volume higher.

Trump has repeatedly pressed for ways to lower beef costs. He raised the issue on social media last fall and has continued to press his administration to find some solutions. As of March, the Federal Reserve priced the average pound of ground beef at \$6.70/lb., up about \$1.15/lb. since Trump took office. Prices have steadily risen as the size of the U.S. cattle herd continues to decline.

Regulatory moves

To counter the likely complaints from cattle producers about higher imports, Trump was also expected to sign a second executive order seeking to reduce some regulatory issues for cattle ranchers. The White House moved to reduce protections for gray and Mexican wolves under the Endangered Species Act. That comes after Congress voted in December to delist gray wolves from protected status.

Along with that, the White House’s executive order would roll back mandatory electron-

ic identification (EID) ear tags for beef cattle. Since late 2024, livestock producers have been required to use EID tags for sexually intact cattle and bison over 18 months of age, as well as all dairy cattle and cattle or bison used for rodeos or exhibitions.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) also plans to expand access to loans for ranchers, though SBA and the White House made a similar announcement last month to open SBA loans to farmers and ranchers. By backing lenders with guarantees, producers can get higher loan amounts than offered by USDA loan guarantees, though SBA-backed loans can also come with higher interest rates than USDA loan guarantees.

The executive orders were scheduled to take effect just a week after Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins held a news conference with the Department of Justice (DOJ), an-

nouncing that DOJ continues to investigate potential anti-trust violations in the meatpacking industry. Rollins has criticized foreign ownership of packers by Brazilian companies and said more must be done to boost domestic beef production.

The White House’s executive order on beef tariffs was to come after the president, in February, waived tariff-rate quotas specifically on beef from Argentina.

Beef imports on the rise

USDA export-import data released last week showed beef imports at \$4.5 billion through March, up 28% from a year ago. That comes after a record \$13.75 billion in beef imports in 2025, up nearly \$2.5 billion from a year earlier.

In comparison, U.S. packers last year exported \$9.3 billion in beef, down nearly 11% from 2024. So far, the dollar

value of U.S. beef exports is down 13% for the first quarter of 2026.

USDA import data shows that import volumes continue to rise, including in the first three months of this year.

USDA’s Global Agricultural Trading System data shows import totals based on dollar values:

- Australia, \$3.6 billion total in 2025; \$1 billion in 2026, up 30% from a year ago.
- Canada, \$2.8 billion in 2025; \$730 million in 2026, up 4%.
- Mexico, \$2.2 billion in 2025; \$654 million in 2026, up 37%.
- Brazil, \$1.75 billion in 2025; \$795 million in 2026, up 21%.
- New Zealand, \$1.28 billion in 2025; \$465 million in 2026, up 18%.
- Uruguay, \$870.5 million in 2025; \$303 million in 2026, up 31%.
- Nicaragua, \$412 million in 2025; \$138.5 million in 2026,

up 69%.

• Paraguay, \$278 million in 2025; \$96 million in 2026, up 53%.

• Argentina, \$327 million in 2025; \$170 million in 2026, up 112%.

Farm Action criticism

The group Farm Action on Monday said the White House move is a failed approach because previous increases in beef imports have not lowered the prices for American consumers. Farm Action said consolidation in the meatpacking industry remains the central problem. Farm Action also said Brazilian packer JBS is likely to benefit from the expanded imports, given Brazil is now the world’s largest beef exporter.

Given the volume of imports, Farm Action also called for reinstating mandatory country-of-origin labeling on beef and pork. — **Chris Clayton, DTN ag policy editor**

Feeder cattle down triple-digits

MARKETS (from page 1)

lower, with the Choice cutout down \$2.17 to \$387.45 and the Select cutout 63 cents lower to \$389.

“Retail beef price data was released yesterday afternoon and is grabbing headlines, with all-fresh beef unchanged at \$9.64/lb., up 13.4% above a year ago,” Fish wrote on Wednesday. “Price inflation is rampant right now, driven by the energy price spike and services inflation. So beef isn’t alone.”

Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures were also lower, with the May contract down \$4.83 to \$367.57 and the August contract \$15.05 lower to \$358.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index was down \$2.10 to \$373.86

Corn futures were lower, with the May contract down 13 cents to \$4.51 and the July contract 7 cents lower to \$4.67.

Kansas: Winter Livestock in Dodge City sold 3,091 head on Wednesday. Compared to the last auction, steers and heifers over 550 lbs. sold steady, with a strong undertone noted. Steers and heifers under 550 lbs. sold \$20 higher to sharply higher. Benchmark

steers averaging 761 lbs. sold for \$364-388, averaging \$376.91.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 11,343 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers sold from \$3 higher to \$10 lower in uneven sales. Feeder heifers sold from \$7 higher to \$10 lower, also in uneven sales. Benchmark steers averaging 701 lbs. sold for \$400-405 and averaged \$402.73.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 5,237 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers sold \$5-10 lower. Feeder heifers sold steady to \$5 lower. Steer and heifer calves were not well tested, with very limited sales \$10-20 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 786 lbs. sold for \$360-384 and averaged \$367.57.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 5,675 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers and heifers sold \$2-5 higher, and \$15-20 higher on a very attractive long string of steers 1,000-1,050 lbs. Benchmark steers averaging 725 lbs. sold for \$390-439, averaging \$411.94. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**



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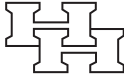
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U.S. beef packing industry structure

In 2025, total cattle slaughter was 29.252 million head, down 6.4% year over year and down 13.1% from the recent cyclical peak in 2022.

Cattle slaughter in 2025 was at the lowest level since 2015. Table 1 shows the breakdown of 2025 cattle slaughter by size categories of beef packing plants. This includes both fed and cow slaughter plants. Out of a total of 937 federally inspected packing plants, 94.8% (888 plants with capacity up to 100,000 head per year) accounted for 1.92 million head, 7.14% of total slaughter.

By contrast, a total of eleven plants, with capacity in excess of one million head per year, accounted for 13.834 million head, or 47.3% of total cattle slaughter. On average, fed slaughter is about 80% of total cattle slaughter. These eleven plants accounted for 58.1% of fed slaughter. Fed slaughter is currently 81.4% of total cattle slaughter, the highest percentage since 2007. Low cow slaughter since 2022 has increased the fed slaughter percentage.

The general structure of the beef packing industry has been in place for nearly 35 years. Figure 1 shows the four-firm concentration ratio for

beefpacking as calculated by the Packers and Stockyards Division of the USDA. Beef packing in the U.S. consolidated rapidly in the 1980s and early 1990s. By 1993, the industry had achieved a high level of concentration that has remained mostly constant since. The annual Livestock Slaughter summary first reported plants with a capacity of one million head or more in 1991. The number of large plants has varied between sixteen plants in 2000 to the current eleven plants in 2025. The closure of the Lexington, NE, plant this year will drop the number of one-million-plus head plants to ten.

Table 1 shows that the basic size structure in 2025 is not appreciably different than in 2000, the only year with 16 large plants. Fed slaughter was at a record level of 29.6 million head in 2000 and has decreased to 23.8 million head in 2025, a 19.5% drop. However, Figure 2 shows that large plants have accounted for a declining share of fed slaughter since 2019, with the current share the smallest since 1994.

Between 1991 and 2007, the total number of federally inspected beef packing plants decreased from 1,031 plants to 626 plants. Recent interest in small packing plants has resulted in the total number increasing since 2021 to 937 plants in 2025. Plants with less than 100,000 head capacity accounted for 3.9% of cattle slaughter in 2007 and have increased to 7.1% in 2025. — **Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist**

lion-plus head plants to ten.

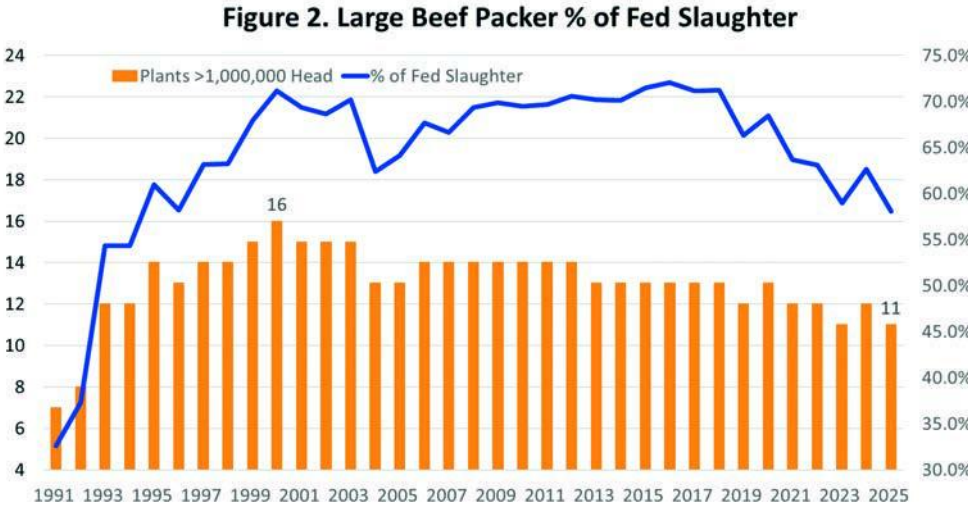
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Table 1. Beef Packing Industry Structure by Size, 2000 and 2025.

Size	2000				2025			
	# of Plants	Head	Avg Capacity	% of Total	# of Plants	Head	Avg Capacity	% of Total
	Head/Year	1000 HD	Head/Day		1000 HD	Head/Day		
1-999	546	160.2	1.15	0.4	677	223.7	1.30	0.8
1,000 – 9,999	99	329.4	13.1	0.9	174	408.2	9.2	1.4
10,000 – 49,999	27	644.3	93.6	1.8	25	586.4	92.0	2.0
50,000 – 99,999	11	786.2	280.3	2.2	12	869.3	284.1	3.0
100,000 – 199,999	15	2,277.3	595.4	6.4	11	1,630.3	581.2	5.6
200,000 – 299,999	6	1,483.3	969.5	4.2	7	1,773.7	993.7	6.1
300,000 – 499,999	9	3,590.0	1,564.3	10.1	13	5,119.0	1,544.2	17.5
500,000 – 999,999	9	5,297.5	2,308.3	14.9	7	4,806.6	2,692.8	16.4
>1,000,000	16	21,063.2	5,162.5	59.1	11	13,834.7	4,932.2	47.3
Total	738	35,631.4			937	29,252.0		

Source: Livestock Slaughter Summary, USDA-NASS, 2001 and 2026



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- 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
- HORSE**
- May 23** – Women of the Wild West Horse Sale, Gooding, ID
- Jun. 4** – Bowman Livestock, Horse Sale, Bowman, ND
- 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



COMING EVENTS

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

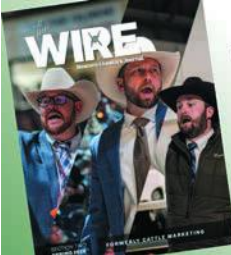
May 27-29 – Registration is open for the 142nd Montana Stockgrowers Association MidYear Meeting in Great Falls, MT, at the Great Falls Civic Center. Details: mtbeef.org/event/midyear-meeting.

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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Aligning cow herd rebuilding with the environment

HERD REBUILDING (from page 1)

sustaining a strong market, as well as vibrant rural communities.

This makes rebuilding the cow herd important to our industry's long-term health. However, if we rebuild, it must be with a cow herd that is better in sync with the environment in which they will be asked to perform. In many cases, this will call for moderation in the production potential of the cattle, which in kind will often call for more moderate cow size. However, there is no reason to think packers' desire for large carcasses will change, so if the cow herd in general does need to be moderated in size, it will mean that more cattle will need to be grown through a stocker or backgrounding phase to achieve desired heavy carcasses.

The traditional stocker part of our industry is already running largely at capacity. Typically, stocker operations take advantage of inexpensive feeds like grazing wheat or ryegrass, and often rely on purchasing affordable, often mismanaged cattle that generally have lost identity in terms of source, genetics and previous health protocol. These are the kinds of light feeder cattle that are often sold one at a time through a sale barn. The stocker operation can then straighten these

high-risk cattle out from a health standpoint, grow them on low-cost feeds and ultimately group them into uniform loads for remarketing.

We are seeing an uptick in stocker capacity particularly for value-adding the increasing number of fall-born calves. More producers are breeding cattle that come up open in the fall and moving them into a fall-calving herd. Unfortunately, some of these cattle are open because of the genetic defect that causes early embryonic death loss, so moving these cows to a fall-calving herd is "kicking the can down the road" in terms of dealing with this problem.

However, these fall-born calves can be grazed the following summer by a stocker operation, which will increase their eventual slaughter weight when finished in a feedyard. With more land being converted from irrigated cropland to pasture in places like West Texas, we can look for growth in this segment of the stocker business.

Another way to extend the growth curve of moderate-framed cattle is to background them in a feedyard. Finishing cattle has largely become the business of the larger feedyards whose modern feed mills and infrastructure make them more efficient, and hard for small yards to compete with. However, small, well-run feedyards

make perfect backgrounding operations. Their smaller size gives experienced managers the ability to deal with "bawling calves" and grow them often up to 800 to 900 pounds, when they can be moved to large finishing yards either by marketing the cattle or through retained ownership.

This segment of the industry was thought to be largely mature, but the closing of the border to Mexican cattle has freed up a lot of bunk space. In addition, there are a lot of grain farmers, particularly in the Midwest, who were formerly farmer feeders. Many still have the facilities and

expertise that they could move into backgrounding calves if the economics were right. However, they typically would not be in a position to accept cattle until after harvest. — **Dr. Bob Hough, WLJ correspondent**

(Editor's note: This article

is part two of a three-part series about rebuilding the cow herd. Part one was published in the May 18 WLJ issue and part three will appear in the May 25 WLJ issue. A comprehensive feature article may also be found in the spring edition of The Wire on page 24.)

Understanding and preventing fetal loss in sheep

With lambing season in full swing, the University of Wyoming (UW) Extension published a new online resource for producers seeking to minimize pregnancy loss in their flocks.

Titled "Why Ewes Don't Always Deliver What They Scan: Understanding Fetal Loss in Sheep," the new publication synthesizes recent scientific studies to explain when, how and why pregnancies may go awry, then outlines best practices for optimizing performance.

"A benchmark in profitable and sustainable sheep production systems is maximizing pounds of lamb weaned per ewe, and doing so requires attention to detail during every stage of breeding and pregnancy," said Whit Stewart, UW Extension sheep specialist and associate professor of animal science. "This bulletin brings together timely knowledge and recent

advances that help producers better understand how to support the ewe so she can successfully carry more lambs to full term."

Co-authored by Stewart and Johnson County extension educator Micah Most, the new publication starts by identifying key milestones and pitfalls at each stage of pregnancy.

While a typical pregnancy lasts about 147 days, research suggests that most embryo losses occur before day 29, the authors report. Nutrition, stress and environmental factors influence potential losses throughout the pregnancy, but are especially important during the first trimester.

"Because early losses are difficult to detect, maintaining optimal nutrition and stress-free conditions throughout pregnancy—especially during early development—is key to maximizing

embryonic, fetal, and newborn lamb survival," the publication states.

In sheep, pregnancy losses are often partial: it's not unusual for a ewe to birth just one lamb even after an early scan indicated twins or triplets. Research shows that partial losses can be linked to specific sires and even the ratio of male and female fetuses in a single pregnancy.

Still, while some factors are outside a producer's control, preventing undernutrition can help improve embryonic survival rates. Proper nutrition, disease prevention, ample forage resources and a low-stress environment are all essential to increasing the odds of a healthy pregnancy.

The authors recommend working with a veterinarian to create a veterinary health plan that includes administering relevant vaccinations as well as practicing good hygiene, implementing quar-

antine measures as needed and confirming diagnoses early.

Research-based strategies to support pregnancy health also include minimizing environmental and social stressors. In a state where shearing often occurs mid-gestation and weather conditions can be harsh, this is especially important, the authors note.

"Not every fertilized oocyte becomes a lamb on the ground," they acknowledge. "But understanding why—whether it is early embryonic loss, infection-induced fetal loss, or the effects of nutrition and hormonal signaling—helps Wyoming producers make more informed management decisions."

To read the full publication, visit bit.ly/sheep-fetal-loss. Contact Stewart at whit.stewart@uwyo.edu or Most at mmost@uwyo.edu with questions. — **UW Extension**

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