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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.

INDEX

OpinionP-2
MarketsP-8
Classifieds.....P-10
Sale Calendar.....P-11

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.

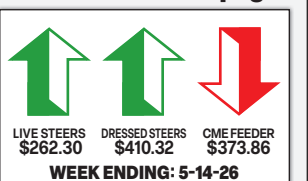
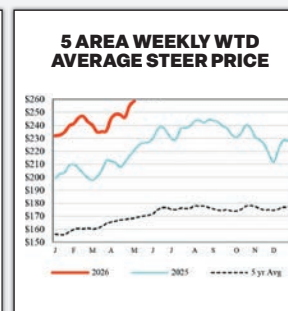
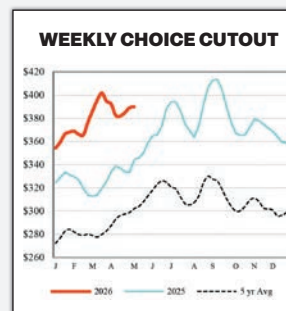
"Northern dressed deals have traded in a range of \$400-410, mostly \$405-410, \$2-7 higher than last week's weighted averages," ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, wrote in her Thursday midday comments. "Southern live deals have

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

COMMENTS

A victory for Montana ranchers



MURNIN

May is always my favorite time of year living in Montana. The grass is turning, calves are getting branded across the territory, and most ranchers up here are working on one of their favorite projects of the year, getting cows out to grass.

This May, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) made a decision that was favorable to ranchers and what they hold dearest, their grass.

On May 8, the BLM announced its final decision to rescind seven grazing permits held by American Prairie (formerly the American Prairie Reserve). This reverses a Biden administration-era decision that allowed bison managed by American Prairie to graze on federal lands. This final decision has been widely covered by media sources across Montana, and if you read the comment sections, they have not been short of controversy on the topic.

The BLM made its decision to rescind the grazing permits under the Taylor Grazing Act. Under the Taylor Grazing Act, the bureau may issue permits only for domestic livestock primarily managed for production purposes. The bureau ruled that the bison herd managed by American Prairie was for conservation and ecological restoration purposes and not for production purposes. They have until Sept. 30 to remove the bison from the federal ground.

American Prairie has disputed these claims. They are now claiming that they run these bison for production, although I looked all over their website and have not found anything about Bison production being the goal. There is a lot on that website about rewilding the prairie, but nothing about raising the bison for sales or meat production. This decision is not an attack on all bison production. It only affects the seven grazing permits held by American Prairie for their conservation herd.

This decision has been seen as a small win for ranchers and livestock producers across north-central Montana. The Montana Stock Growers Association and producers across the area have been fighting for this decision to slow the massive land grab American Prairie has been taking. If this decision makes it through the almost certain appeal coming, this could be a big win for ranchers throughout the West.

Some of the reasons the Taylor Grazing Act was enacted were to prevent environmental damage, regulate and manage grazing, and stabilize the livestock industry. The conservation herd of American Prairie did not fit the law of the land.

I know it has been said before repeatedly, but food security is national security. The Taylor Grazing Act is in place to allow us to continue raising food on our federal lands. If we continue to take our federal and private ground out of production, we will put more weight on our already narrowing agricultural producers to fill that gap. I know, personally, I have this conversation a lot with my friends who are young producers, given this record-low cow herd, grass is still hard to find for those looking to expand their operations. Why is that? We continue to see ground going out of production due to urbanization, and these ranches are being bought by organizations with the goal of taking that ground out of production. Nobody's pastures are getting any bigger.

This decision is also a small win for the local communities of North Central Montana.

I know this will probably only slow the expansion of American Prairie, but it's certainly something. American Prairie has already put together over half a million acres in North Central Montana. With every ranch they gather up in the name of their non-profit, that is one less family that could potentially send their kids to the local school, one less branding for the community to gather at, and fewer people around the community to support the local businesses. With these record cattle prices, I've watched producers across the region reinvest in their operations, and most of those purchases come from local retailers that serve their communities.

A lot of the time, it's easy to think that we as livestock producers are forgotten about by the federal government. For now, it feels good to see one small victory for the American Cowboy. — KEVIN MURNIN



DITTMER'S TAKE

Let's examine what harm would come to both the beef industry and consumers from the Trump Administration pursuing anti-trust cases against the Big Four packers. Antitrust actions usually end up in fines for companies or forced divestitures.

One of the cattle industry's greatest fears has been packing plant cutbacks or closures because they take bidders out of the market, reduce the percentage utilization of packing capacity and threaten the viability of both processors and feedyards in a region.

After all, it is simple economics that the larger scale of bigger packers allows them to spread fixed costs over more head and more pounds of beef. That keeps prices more affordable to consumers and moves big volumes.

Stephen Koontz, livestock economist at Colorado State University, led a team that examined Mandatory Livestock Reporting data and found that, on average, larger packers pay more for cattle within their region.

They need more cattle to operate plants efficiently; have more big-client retailers, steak chains and fast-food contracts to supply; and have more capital or better access to capital.

Bigger packers report data to the government twice daily, including prices paid for cattle, numbers purchased and boxed beef sales. What other industry is so regulated and monitored?

Breaking up larger packers that produce the biggest volume of beef at the lowest average cost would result in:

- Higher average beef costs to consumers.
- Higher average processing costs for the packing industry, fewer dollars for cattlemen.
- Supply disruptions as ownership changes.
- Buyers for fed cattle with needs for fewer cattle and less deep pockets.

Remember the American Beef Packers crisis when cattle feeders ended up with fed cattle shipped and bouncing checks?

President Donald Trump has tried to attract foreign capital to America, proud of countries that have pledged to bring it here. Antitrust actions could not only force foreign capital out but also disallow or discourage new industry investment. Car companies or chip manufacturers to come here is okay, but not meat processors?

Major meat packer Swift was for sale for years. Why did it languish? Investors look for return on investment. Processing yields roughly 2.5 to 3% profit. Packaged processed meats, like bacon, hot dogs or pre-cooked meats, can generate 10% or more.

JBS is involved in cattle harvesting because that's what JBS does. They are meat-processing people. They hold that there is a market for everything a carcass yields—one just has to find whatever country or culture will pay the best price.

JBS brought capital into the U.S. beef industry when no one else did.

We're not familiar with the ownership of National Beef. But they are leveraging foreign capital to buy top-quality cattle from high Plains feeders, supplying the market with top-quality beef and employing hundreds of American citizens and residents.

Beef packers have been losing hundreds of millions for months. Beef prices are determined largely by supply and demand. The tight beef supply is primarily due to drought. The human factor is demand, painstakingly nurtured by multiple links in the beef production chain for decades.

One of the partners in the Beef Checkoff is the processors who

collect the dollar on each head they buy.

That demand development effort is responsible for setting records in cattlemen's pockets today.

It is the big packers that can afford long-term investment and the research, product development and creative merchandising support to retailers and foodservice customers; the monitoring of quality control in beef packaging and labs to test for residues and pathogens. We've visited the new product development centers at Cargill and Tyson.

We do need smaller processors. There are niches and markets and consumer demand for product the big packers cannot justify serving or cannot logistically handle at their scale, speed and volume. It should be up to smaller packers to identify and serve a need, not the government forcing a breakup of the big packers to determine how markets are served.

The beef industry cannot afford anti-trust moves to oust or discourage capital from any source. Packers here in America buy cattle from American cattlemen, employ people here and sell beef to consumers here and worldwide. Top quality beef is the industry's concern, not a national security concern like advanced computer chips, drones or fighter jet parts.

The beef production chain from the semen tank through cow/calf producers, backgrounders, feeders, packers, retailers, restaurateurs, exporters and importers is finally being rewarded after decades.

We don't need the government, with no valid justification, wrecking things just because we have finally tasted success. — Steve Dittmer, WLJ columnist

(Steve Dittmer is the author of the Agribusiness Freedom Foundation newsletter. Views in the column do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of WLJ or its editorial staff.)

HOOVES & HORNS BY A.W. ERWIN



"Run in fer a rabbit an' come back with a headache,....
It's like that every time I go into town!"

OBITUARY



Mark Lawrence Joyce; 1963-2026

It is with sorrow we announce the passing of a loving husband, father and grandfather, Mark L. Joyce, who

left us on April 18 at the age of 62.

Mark was born Oct. 8, 1963, to Thomas and Geraldine Joyce of Juntura, OR. He was the seventh of eight children. He graduated from Vale High School in 1982. Mark attended college in Bend, OR, for three months before returning home to pursue his passion of ranching, becoming a third-generation rancher and continuing his grandparents' legacy alongside his family. His hard work on the ranch would provide the promise of passing the legacy to the next generations. Living and working on the ranch brought Mark the opportunity to share his interest in hunting. Family and friends can cherish the memories made during hunting seasons with him.

Through the shared enjoyment of team roping, Mark met the love

of his life, Wendy Kemble. Mark and Wendy were married on Sept. 17, 1988. They worked side by side for many years moving cattle and herding sheep, haying meadows and farming in Vale; they always supported each other. They celebrated 37 years of marriage before his passing. Their love for each other brought two sons, Martin and Nicholas. Many memories were created among the four of them—from brandings and sheep camp to hunting adventures, and countless moments shared with family, friends and community members. Throughout the years, Mark proudly served on multiple boards, including the Juntura School Board and Juntura Road District.

Despite challenging health issues, Mark never let kidney failure, nor cancer, define him and remained

dedicated to working on the ranch and supporting his family. His family will forever be grateful for his sister, Rosemary, donating her kidney and providing him with years of watching his sons grow. He never complained about his pain and was always thankful to those who helped during difficult times. Most importantly, Mark never lost his faith in God.

Mark was preceded in death by his parents, Thomas and Geraldine. He is survived by his wife, Wendy; his sons, Martin (Brooke) and Nick (Sage); and his grandchildren, Rory Ray and Teo James.

"If I die tomorrow, I'll be with the Lord. If I live tomorrow, the Lord will be with me. Either way, I belong to Him. And I can never thank Him enough for staying by my side through thick and thin. Amen."

WLJ

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

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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

Despite tariff disadvantages for U.S. beef, several factors point to expanding opportunities in Thailand, including a potential trade agreement.

While beef from Australia, New Zealand and Japan benefit from zero duties in Thailand under free trade agreements, U.S. beef is currently tariffed at 50%. But a signed framework for an agreement on reciprocal trade between the U.S. and Thailand in October 2025, aimed at reducing trade barriers, offers hope to importers and U.S. exporters for a leveled trade environment.

In addition to potential tariff relief, supply and demand factors point to expanding opportunities in Thailand for

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).

collin).

- 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/4356awww.

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 uncolored 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**

23rd annual

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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, condensing 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 tradeoffs. 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. Elastrator 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 ▲	255.00	227.68
CME Feeder Index	373.86 ▼	375.19	302.41
Boxed Beef Average	387.45 ▼	389.62	349.90
Average Dressed Steers	410.32 ▲	400.00	357.33
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,471 ▼	1,472	1,437
Weekly Slaughter**	527,000 ▼	534,000	559,000
Weekly Beef Production***	473.8 ▼	480.4	489.3
Hide/Offal Value	14.02 ▼	14.21	11.06
Corn Price	4.56 ▲	4.53	4.50

*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	439	386.31	2,195	367.83
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

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	25873	16853
Aug.	24410	24700	24715	24758	24903	25598	16668
Oct.	23830	24050	24003	23940	24063	25120	17005
Dec.	23753	23953	23900	23843	23978	25093	18068

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle							
	5/8	5/11	5/12	5/13	5/14	High*	Low*
May	36738	37125	37125	36823	36980	38103	21920
Aug.	36423	36745	36750	36225	36455	38280	22268
Sep.	36223	36568	36533	35940	36158	38020	22460
Oct.	35980	36300	36250	35600	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/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 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	PAIRS
								SLAUGHTER BULLS	REPLACEMENTS
NORTHWEST									
No report available Blackfoot, ID									
May 7 Burley, ID	293	602	516-540	478	419	373		141-249	
No report available Emmett, ID									
May 9 Eugene, OR	1,133	310-502*	400-510*	360-421*	340-380*	335-400*	330-355*	175-198	2,100-4,300
May 11 Madras, OR	280	360-492*	350-430*	300-417*	320-366*			210-242	1,700-3,150
May 6 Vale, OR	759	500-550	525-555	485-507.50	415-470	365-425	345-365	160-190	3,250-4,000
May 12 Davenport, WA	394	450-500	455-487.50	347.50-430	370-425	340-370	300-340	180-232	3,000-4,000
May 7 Toppenish, WA	1,079		470-547.50	447-507	380-435			178-194	3,975-4,775
			405-460	357-410				200-234	
		300-530	427.50-472.50	327.50-437.50	290-387.50	282.50-375	225-350	110-282.50	3,000-5,000
		442.50-486	225-433	230-442.50	225-383	175-340	194-325	166-315	1,650-3,400
			465*	470*	350-401*	350*		158-183	4,800
								175-226	3,475-3,575
FARWEST									
May 7 Orland, CA	2,810		400-592	400-550	350-483	300-418	290-372	170-189	2,500-4,900
No report available Escalon, CA			380-550	380-490	330-447	280-378	280-349	170-224	2,500-4,050
May 11 Famoso, CA	665	455-720	440-600	390-540	365-440	315-388	280-350	140-240	
May 13 Galt, CA	3,109	380-600	380-510	335-490	315-405		290-340	135-208	
May 9 Turlock, CA	4,403		440-530	450-535	370-460	330-420	300-370	100-185	3,000-5,100
No report available Salina, UT			440-530	400-570	335-430	350-385	300-341	180-220	
			460-597	450-595	410-524	375-465	361-418	353-361	
			440-530	425-523	399-490	379-450	340-389	285-327	
NORTH CENTRAL									
May 11 Iowa	6,154	680	585-660	522.50-600	465-538	385-474	380.50-423	356-388	147.50-247.50
May 12 Miles City, MT	1,079		500-610	467-545	400-500	320-427	300-374	285-341	175-251
May 6 Bassett, NE	1,547								130-192.50
No report available Ericson, NE			555	572.50-599	491.50-545	452.50-505	385-400	340-396	3,610-4,985
May 8 Imperial, NE	882			480-525	435-479	382.50-432	354-396		3,450
No report available Kearney, NE									
No report available Lexington, NE									
May 7 Ogallala, NE	2,681	640	550-591	521-532.50	508-529	422.50-478	390-418	327.50-387	
May 7 Valentine, NE	5,880	625	553-620	539-570	509-571	445-500	382.50-449	365-416.75	
No report available Herreid, SD			520	539-570	455-517.50	410-481	362-416	358-370	
May 13 Torrington, WY	6,593		555-620	550-575	425-502	397-436.25	299-375.50		
			525-565	465-470	375-433	359-382	306-363		
SOUTH CENTRAL									
May 7 Willcox, AZ	800	1,200	471-560	490-528	401-470	386-415		140-204	3,750-4,250
May 11 Colorado	2,150	1,000	421-490	415-472	383-408	339-378		190-207	2,950-3,250
May 6 La Junta, CO	870		552.50-630	487.50-545	472.50-527.50	387.50-427.50		171-191	2,825-4,225
No report available Loma, CO			507.50-580	470-510	402.50-422.50	380-387.50		201-227	2,700-3,325
May 13 Dodge City, KS	3,688		613-682.50	537.50-624	465-520	433-467.50	364-401	331-369	147.50-195
May 7 Pratt, KS	5,294		555-635	460-534	407.50-457.50	354-415.50	344-368.75	297-336.50	3,050-4,200
May 7 Salina, KS	2,080	560	457.50-532.50	487.50-545	462.50-492.50	389-447.50	350-390	309-362.50	165-297
May 14 Clovis, NM	1,814	570-580	545-580	500-535	440-477.50	370-439	338.25-379.25	319-340	1,950-4,500
May 13 El Reno, OK	11,009	620-670	610-665	500-565	432-525	370-420	320-393	265	2,000-3,900
May 12 McAlester, OK	680	410-595	402-505	420-505	342-425.50	342-400	320-359	311.50-335</	

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 pushback 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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6.....Auctions	24.....Pasture Wanted
7.....Auctioneers	25.....Mineral Rights
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9.....Lost Cattle	27.....Irrigation
10.....Cattle for Sale	28.....Ag/Industrial Supplies
11.....Cattle Wanted	29.....Fencing/Corrals
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14.....Dogs for Sale	32.....Building Materials
15.....Horses/Mules	33.....Trucks/Trailers
16.....Bison/Buffalo	34.....Tractors/Implements
17.....Sheep/Goats/Hogs	35.....Business Opportunity
18.....Livestock Supplies	36.....Loans
19.....Ranch/Livestock Services	37.....Insurance
20.....Real Estate Opportunities	38.....Financial Assistance
20A.....Pacific Real Estate For Sale	39.....Tech/Books/Art/Etc.
20B.....Intermountain Real Estate For Sale	40.....Miscellaneous
20C.....Mountain Real Estate For Sale	41.....Lost/Found
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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-mil-

lion-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**

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

Figure 1. Four-Firm Concentration Ratio, Steer/Heifer Packing

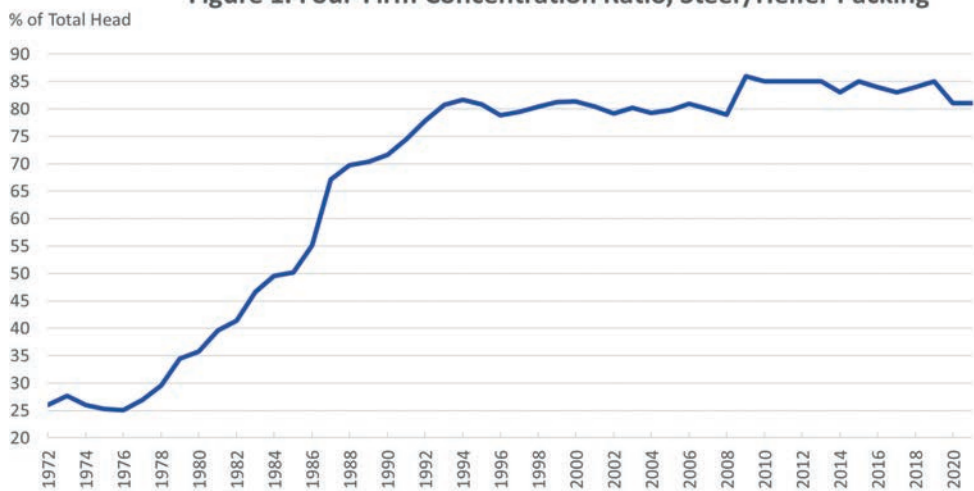
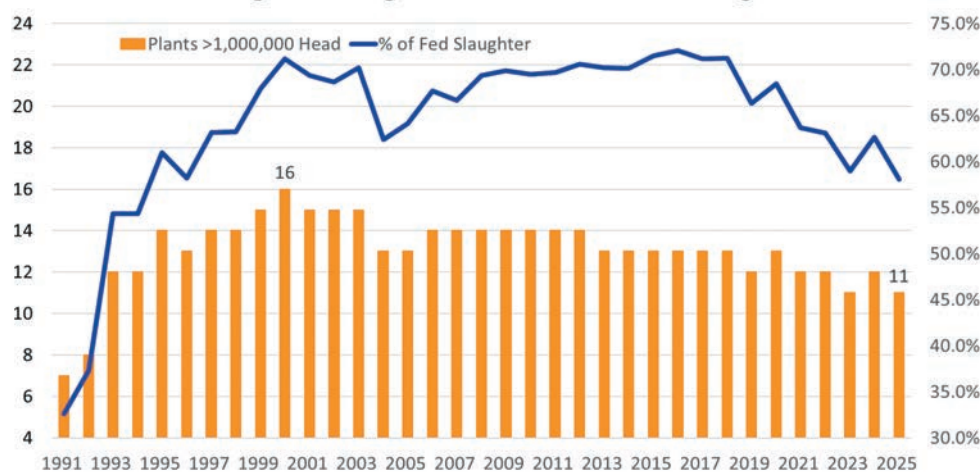


Figure 2. Large Beef Packer % of Fed Slaughter



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Jun. 1 – TK Angus, Bull & Female Sale, Valente, 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

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 maximiz-

ing 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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