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INSIDE WLJ

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN
— Federal shutdown to delay payments to farmers under multiple USDA programs. Page 5

IN COURT — USDA motion to dismiss lawsuit over EID requirement fails in court. Page 9

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

"Crop yields per acre have risen more in the last 20 years than in any other period during the 86 years for which we have records. There have been moderate up-trends in yields for particular crops in particular areas in particular periods. But these have been offset by declining yields in other areas, crops and periods, with the result that the average yield per acre for all crops combined for the United States as a whole showed no marked up-trend for a period of 64 years—up to 1930 at most," wrote Louis H. Bean for USDA in the October 1952 *WLJ* issue.

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Rollins shares plans to support farm economy

— Announces release of aid

USDA recently announced plans to strengthen the farm economy and provide new support for producers.

The agriculture department first teased support in a Sept. 21 news release announcing a new case of

New World screwworm in Mexico. "USDA will soon release a significant plan to help rebuild the American cattle supply, incentivizing our great ranchers, and driving a full-scale revitalization of the American beef industry," the department had said in its press release.

On Sept. 25, at the Agriculture Outlook Forum in Kansas City, MO,

USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins spoke on the current state of the farm economy and the department's plans to help support farmers and ranchers.

"My friends, we know that agriculture in our country today is under threat," Rollins said. "You all know it because you live it more than anyone else in the country, and

you deserve to know what your government plans to do about it."

Rollins outlined a five-point plan intending to support American producers, which includes:

- Dispersing emergency relief.
- Reducing input costs.
- Expanding market access.

See **USDA PLAN** on page 9



Preston Keres/USDA

USDA recently announced plans to help strengthen the farm economy. Pictured here, cattle graze at a ranch in Maryland.

FDA approves doramectin for screwworm treatment

— Mexico implements drug mandate

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has conditionally approved the use of Dectomax-CA1 (a doramectin injection) for the prevention and treatment of New World screwworm (NWS) infestations in cattle. The drug is approved to prevent and treat screwworm larval infestations and prevent reinfection for 21 days.

"We understand the urgency with which America's farmers and ranchers are asking for tools to fight New World screwworm," said FDA Commissioner Marty Makary. "Today's conditional approval—the first in the U.S. for NWS—shows our dedication to rapidly advancing important animal medicines when they are needed most.

"We continue to work tirelessly to complete review of other NWS

products to protect multiple animal species in the U.S.," Makary said. Dectomax-CA1 is conditionally approved for use only in cattle.

The drug is eligible for conditional approval because its use is intended to prevent and treat a serious or life-threatening disease, it addresses an unmet animal health need and demonstrating its effectiveness would require complex or difficult studies.

Dectomax is already fully approved under a New Animal Drug Application for treatment and control of some nematode and arthropod parasites in cattle and swine. Dectomax and Dectomax-CA1 contain the same active ingredient (doramectin injection) at the same dose. Because Dectomax's approval required studies and additional information, FDA did not require new information for the conditional use of Dectomax-CA1.

"Under this conditional approval, the FDA has determined the drug is safe and has a reasonable expectation of effectiveness," said Timothy Schell, acting director of the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine.

The withdrawal period for Dectomax-CA1 is 35 days. The drug should not be used in female dairy cattle 20 months of age or older, or in calves to be processed for veal. The FDA encourages producers and veterinarians to use Dectomax-CA1 only when medically necessary to reduce the risk of antiparasitic resistance.

Dectomax-CA1 is manufactured by Zoetis Inc.

USDA update

Speaking at the Agriculture Outlook Forum in Kansas City, MO, in

See **SCREWWORM** on page 7

Hunters urge SCOTUS to reject corner-crossing appeal

— Ask for appeals court ruling to stand

Lawyers for four hunters are urging the Supreme Court of the U.S. (SCOTUS) to reject an appeal from Iron Bar Holdings, challenging a 10th Circuit Court of Appeals decision allowing "corner crossing" to access public land in Carbon County, WY. In a 39-page filing, the hunters' lawyers argue the case does not warrant review, contending that Iron Bar's failed trespass claims were correctly rejected under federal law.

At issue is a long-standing Western land puzzle: public and private parcels form a checkerboard of alternating square miles. Some public parcels can only be accessed by stepping from one public square to another at the corner, without crossing onto private property.

Iron Bar owns some of these checkerboarded parcels and claims that its property rights allow it to block corner crossing. The hunters'

brief argues otherwise, citing Congress's 1885 Unlawful Inclosures of Public Lands Act (UIA), which forbids any effort to completely prevent access to federal lands "by whatever means."

The 10th Circuit held that Iron Bar's claim would unlawfully "inclose" public land by denying all access, echoing the Supreme Court's 1897 *Camfield v. United States* decision that private rights must yield when they obstruct public access.

Iron Bar contends the ruling conflicts with *Leo Sheep Co. v. United States* (1979), which barred the government from building a road across private land. But the hunters counter that Leo Sheep is concerned with creating new access routes, not extinguishing existing access protected by the UIA. They also dismiss Iron Bar's claims of unconstitutional "takings," noting the company purchased the land in

See **APPEAL** on page 12

Market retreats amid speculation, supply uncertainty

Futures closed lower over the week, presumably pressured by speculation about the conditional approval of a New World screwworm prevention and treatment drug.

Live cattle futures closed lower over the week. The October contract lost about \$1.50 to close at \$230.52, and the December contract lost about a dollar to close at \$233.47.

"The announcement yesterday that Zoetis received a conditional approval for prevention and treatment of New World screwworm in cattle is primarily being blamed for the sell-off in CME cattle futures today, led by a +500 point drop in feeder cattle," wrote Cassie Fish, market analyst, in *The Beef* on Thursday.

The thought process, Fish explained, is that drug approval could lead to the border between Mexico and the U.S. opening soon to the import of feeder cattle.

"However, there is no indication from any officials that this assumption is based in truth," she said.

Cash trade through Thursday totaled about 28,000 head. Live steers sold from \$227-231, and dressed steers sold from \$353-360.

Cash trade for the week ending Sept. 28 totaled 56,622

head. Live steers averaged \$232.78, and dressed steers averaged \$365.09.

Slaughter through Thursday totaled 461,000 head, compared to 466,000 head a week earlier. Total slaughter for the week earlier is estimated at 555,000 head. USDA did not report actual slaughter numbers for the week ending Sept. 20 because data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service was unavailable during the government shutdown.

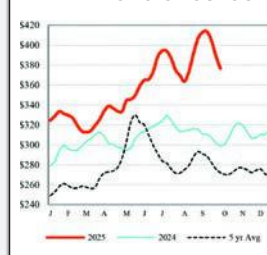
Boxed beef prices continue to trade lower over the weeks. The Choice cutout lost about \$8 to close at \$363.22, and the Select cutout lost about \$10 to close at \$343.40.

"Right now, the concern that the market is near a

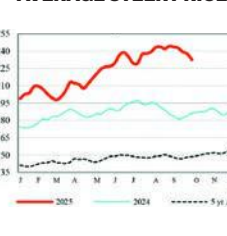
See **MARKETS** on page 11

Time Sensitive
Priority Handling
PERIODICAL:

WEEKLY CHOICE CUTOUT



5 AREA WEEKLY WTD AVERAGE STEER PRICE



↑	↓	↑
LIVE STEERS	DRESSED STEERS	CME FEEDER
\$230.08	\$359.76	\$367.61
WEEK ENDING: 10-2-25		

COMMENTS

Market slowdown

The post-Labor Day market lull should be about over in the next few weeks. The holiday rib market should be picking up as packers start hoarding ribs for the holiday season. It appears that weekly slaughter levels are stuck at 550,000 head a week; packers are seeing red ink again, losing around \$160 a head.



CROW

Fed cattle markets are slower. Most fed cattle traded at \$230 live and \$360 dressed for the last week of September. August live cattle marketings were at a record low. The marketing rate was 14.4%. It was 16% in 2015, and the five-year average marketing rate was 17%. However, we had a record-high Choice cutout value of \$413 in August.

For the first time in a while, the southern Plains feeders are selling fed cattle at par with northern Plains feeders. The lack of feeder cattle from Mexico has drastically reduced placements in the South. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced they approved a new Dectomax product for treating the New World screwworm (NWS), and it appears that Mexico is going to start treating the worm with ivermectin. It will be interesting to see how these products work and if they are able to control the problem. Cattle supplies are in a dire situation. Choice beef averaged \$9.85 last August, and consumers are starting to feel the pain.

The Cattle Report offered more details about the new NWS product, "The cattle markets will be absorbing two new pieces today. FDA conditionally approved Dectomax-CA1 (doramectin injection) injectable solution for the prevention and treatment of New World screwworm larval infestations, and prevention of NWS reinfestation for 21 days. Dectomax-CA1 is conditionally approved for use only in cattle. This news may lead to an opening of the southern border to the import of Mexican cattle. The injection only has a 21-day effectiveness rating, and this will need evaluation by health professionals.

"Meanwhile Mexico is working on building a sterile fly hatchery to control the screwworm situation and the U.S. is planning on building a fly facility in Texas. It could be several years before these facilities are functioning, so be vigilant, this could take a while to solve.

"USDA has no current plans to offer payments to beef producers. Instead, Rollins said, the government will focus on freeing up land, using funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill for animal disease prevention, and hopefully inspiring the next generation of farmers.

"Rarely do we see common sense coming from the government. We applaud Secretary Rollins' recognition of the damage government actions can deliver to the free markets. High prices in a free market are the cure for high prices. Price signals create responses from market participants and U.S. breeders are responding. East of the Rockies, the drought monitor shows the country to be in the best shape for forage in many years and with drop prices low, one can reasonably expect sharp increases in breeder heifers and coming calf crops.

"Some will remember the dairy buyout when the government decided to help milk prices by offering large incentives to dairies to liquidate dairy cows and the result was a crash to the beef markets with all the extra unexpected beef on the market. Too often government interference in free markets have unintended consequences and those consequences overwhelm the intent."

Feeder cattle markets have been a bit erratic on the futures markets. Cash feeder cattle are selling well around \$345 for yearlings. Auction market volume is picking up and should remain strong in the foreseeable future. Closeouts on cattle placed in feedlots are getting pretty thin right now, but current closeouts on fed cattle are quite good. But cattle feeders are choosing to add more weight to cattle they have rather than fill pens with replacement feeders.

Has the feeder cattle market seen its cyclical high? I think not. We are behind on marketings by about a million head and the forecast is for supplies of feeders to be even smaller next year. Placements have been behind for five straight months, and I wouldn't expect to see Mexico to open up to feeder cattle imports any time soon; there is too much disease risk. We might even see some feedlots shut down.

The greatest threat to this cattle market is demand. Beef is at \$9.85/lb., pork is at \$5/lb. and chicken is at \$2.50/lb., so consumers have plenty of protein choices. Government shutdowns do matter. Let's hope this ends quickly and we can get to the point where we can slow down government spending. It must happen. — **PETE CROW**

KAY'S KORNER



U.S. beef processors, especially those that produce fed beef, made billions of dollars in profits during the COVID-19 pandemic years. Tyson Foods, the industry's largest fed beef processor, had an operating income in beef of \$9.493 billion in the five years from 2018 to 2023. But that year saw its first annual loss since 2015, and Tyson then reported its largest ever loss (\$381 million) in 2024. The losses have continued this year, and Tyson now anticipates a beef operating loss between \$375 million and \$475 million for fiscal 2025.

In contrast to packers' pandemic profits, prices for all classes of cattle plunged, especially when packing plants were forced to run at severely reduced production levels due to worker absenteeism because of COVID-19 related illnesses. But now the picture has flipped, with packers losing historic amounts of money and cattle producers—from cattle feeders to cow-calf operators—having probably their most profitable year ever.

This column has regularly discussed the main drivers of this profitability. But they start with the fact that the U.S. cattle herd is the smallest since 1951 and that beef demand, particularly at home, is remarkably strong, even in the face of record-high retail beef prices. USDA's retail Choice beef price in August averaged \$9.85 per pound, while its All-Fresh Beef price averaged \$9.18/lb. Ground beef prices also set new record highs.

Cattlemen are now making a record profit of more than \$700 per animal, up from just \$2 five years ago, according to some industry estimates (as reported by The Wall Street Journal on Sept. 15). Ranchers are putting some of their windfall toward upgrading long-neglected equipment, while others are paying off longstanding debts and upgrading their beef cow herds, said WSJ. As an example, Nebraska rancher Shaun Loughery is pouring his earnings into bull semen. In past years, he has spent around \$120,000 annually on semen and breeding bulls. His focus is to produce cattle that can yield juicier steaks and fetch higher prices. This year, Loughery plans to double his typical investment. And even though his profit is up roughly 35% compared with last year, he isn't taking a vacation. He's doing ultrasounds on his bred heifers.

Ranchers across the Great Plains and elsewhere started selling off their cattle several years ago as drought conditions dried up grazing pastures, WSJ said. Losses that racked up during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with persistent inflation and

high interest rates, compounded their economic woes. Many ranchers have since held back from increasing the size of their herds.

Ranchers' annual income varies depending on their size, but industry officials estimate that a herd the size of Loughery's (1,000 head) could generate roughly \$300,000 this year, WSJ said. Loughery said that kind of money could be enough to spend even more to boost the quality of his livestock and hire another full-time employee.

The industry is split on how long the good times for ranchers will last, WSJ said. Executives of Tyson Foods and JBS SA, two of the world's largest meat companies, have projected that cattle supplies could tick up in 2027 or 2028. That could help ease costs for processors and curb ranchers' big paydays. But Derrell Peel, a professor of agricultural economics at Oklahoma State University, doubts many ranchers have started rebuilding their herds. They have struggled to make a living and are using this moment to pay down their debts. "If we have started it, it's in the very early stages," he told WSJ.

Meanwhile, the industry faces two threats to continued producer profits: a possible erosion in beef demand and the destructive New World screwworm (NWS) parasite being detected in the U.S. It moved dangerously close to the U.S. border with Mexico when Mexico's National Service of Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA) announced on Sept. 21 that a new case of NWS had been detected less than 70 miles from the border in Sabinas Hidalgo, Nuevo León.

USDA issued its own announcement a few hours later. This case is now the northernmost detection of NWS since the current outbreak began, USDA said. It is one most threatening to the American cattle and livestock industry, considering Sabinas Hidalgo is located near a major highway running from Monterrey, Nuevo León, to Laredo, TX, one of the most heavily trafficked commercial thoroughfares in the world, USDA said. Before this detection, the previous northernmost case appeared on July 9 in Veracruz, Mexico, which is approximately 370 miles further south of the border — **Steve Kay, WLJ columnist**

(Steve Kay is editor/publisher of Cattle Buyers Weekly, an industry newsletter published at P.O. Box 2533, Petaluma, CA, 94953; 707-765-1725. Kay's Korner appears exclusively in WLJ.)



GUEST OPINION

TARIFFS AND THE STORM GATHERING OVER FARM COUNTRY

Farmers are facing a tough fall, and, unfortunately, it could get tougher if we don't resolve current trade disputes soon. It's not in my nature to focus on the clouds overhead, but it's not wise to ignore them either. Farmers across the country are facing a growing economic storm. Row crop prices are low, and production expenses are at record highs. As we hear more rumbles of tariffs, the storm is impossible to ignore. America's farmers count on markets around the world, and we cannot afford more disruptions to trade.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) supports the goals of security and ensuring fair trade. That priority is what brought me to the North American European Union Agricultural Conference. This is a long-standing, biannual forum to bring together farm leaders from across the Atlantic to hear from one another and discuss opportunities and challenges facing agriculture.

We are committed to doing right by the land, strengthening our communities, and growing safe, healthy and affordable food for our neighbors near and far. Trade is critical to helping us achieve these goals, but farmers and rural communities often bear the brunt of tariffs and tariff retaliation.

U.S. farmers are seeing the impact of trade disruptions and tariffs already this year. Our agricultural trade deficit has increased, reaching \$28.6 billion in the first half of 2025. As of June, the monthly deficit was up 14% from last year. It's important to note that there was certainly ground to make up when it comes to trade, as we have been in an agricultural trade deficit for several years now without any new deals in nearly a decade.

Farm Bureau has long advocated for trade deals that open new markets and reduce barriers to trade, and we are grateful to see the many frameworks that have been announced by the administration. We are urging the administration to quickly bring those deals across the finish line and resolve remaining disputes with our key trade partners sooner rather than later.

The longer trade disputes continue, unfortunately, the more storm clouds gather over farm country. Farmers can face long-term effects because of the uncertainty and disruptions that tariffs bring. Many countries may decide to simply buy agricultural products elsewhere, and it can be difficult to re-

cover those markets once they're lost.

We are already seeing this shift with China. In 2024, China purchased about half of the soybeans grown in the U.S. This summer, since June, we have not shipped a single soybean to China. That doesn't mean their demand has dropped. In fact, China has imported a record number of soybeans so far this year, but they have turned to Brazil and Argentina to avoid U.S. tariffs. Soybeans are not the only U.S. commodity losing market share in China, either. China is also cutting back on U.S. pork and cotton and has not purchased any U.S. corn, wheat or sorghum. Overall, USDA is projecting that U.S. agricultural exports to China will total only \$17 billion this year. That is down 30% from 2024, and more than 50% from 2022.

What does all this mean for the economic storm over farm country? Many farm families are struggling to hold on and will have tough decisions to make this fall. Farm debt is expected to increase 20% from 2022, totaling almost \$593 billion this year. It's not just farm country facing this storm either. We must keep top of mind how farm exports boost our economy at home. Every \$1 in U.S. agricultural exports generates more than \$2 in economic activity across our nation's economy. Agricultural exports support roughly \$362 billion in total U.S. economic output and about 1.05 million full-time jobs—that includes nearly half a million on farms.

The U.S. has lost a staggering number of farms in recent years. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, we lost 141,000 from 2017 to 2022, and we have lost another 20,000 farms since. This is an alarming trend that we must address.

Farmers and ranchers are no strangers to storms. We know from hard experience how circumstances beyond our control can wipe out weeks, months, even years of hard work. We also know how important it is to be prepared and to take every action to reduce the impact of the coming storm. In nature, we cannot stop a storm or force it to change course. All you can do is prepare and pray. But with an economic storm, we can heed the warnings and act.

Trade disruptions can be resolved. That's why farmers and ranchers across the country are urging the administration to bring relief to farm country by locking in trade agreements and restoring our trade partnerships. Let's head off the storm before it wreaks havoc. — **Zippy Duvall, AFBF president**

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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THE VIEWPOINT

with Andrew Coppin

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

Growing up on one of the most remote stretches of Western Australia shaped Andrew Coppin's life in ways he couldn't have predicted.

"As a kid, I grew up in Western Australia, one of the most remote places on the planet," Andrew told WLJ. "My dad had farming and ranching operations, and I spent most of my spare time on a farm or ranch somewhere."

Those formative years instilled a deep respect for land, livestock and water—long before he would become the co-founder and CEO of Ranchbot Monitoring Solutions, a company transforming how ranchers manage one of their most critical resources: water.

After exploring some early business endeavors and studying for his university degree, Andrew launched a 25-year career in global finance, working in New York, Hong Kong and beyond. Rising from stockbroker to director of a firm managing \$15 billion with 500 employees, he seemed far removed from cattle country. But the pull of the land never disappeared.

"I'd sort of done most things you could do in the world of finance I was in," Andrew said. "Call it a midlife crisis, call it

what you will, but I was becoming disenfranchised. I wanted to do something worthy and thought, 'What's my legacy going to be?'"

That question pulled him back to agriculture. "I loved that time of my life," Andrew explained. "There weren't many people in ag tech really trying to solve these complicated problems—like how we're going to feed more people with the resources we've got, and those thoughts just led me to a greater calling to invest my time and money into those areas."

Brewing a solution

The turning point came at a pitch night where Andrew met Craig Hendricks, a software developer presenting an idea for remote water and infrastructure monitoring. "I told him, you've got the right idea but the wrong execution," Andrew said. They met for coffee, and "the rest is history."

Together, they launched Farmbot in Australia—branded Ranchbot in the U.S.—to tackle a simple yet costly problem: ranchers driving long distances to check tanks and pumps that 95% of the time don't require attention. They built 100 prototypes, each rigorously tested in real-world conditions for a year to eliminate every bug before scaling.

According to Andrew, the company has sold 35,000 sensors worldwide, monitoring water for 10 million cattle and 15 million sheep. Farmbot employs approximately 70 people, and Ranchbot currently has 20



Andrew Coppin

Courtesy photo

employees, with plans to expand. Andrew relocated to Texas about 18 months ago after years of long flights to expand the brand in the U.S.

How Ranchbot works

Ranchbot is more than a sensor—it's a comprehensive monitoring network designed for the harshest environments. By placing sensors in tanks, pipes, wells, pumps and reservoirs, Ranchbot continuously monitors water levels, flow rates and pump performance every minute of every day—not just a few times a day. If water is falling too fast, pressure is too high or a pump fails, the system sends real-time alerts via satellite or cellular networks. Ranchers can select the notifications they prefer, ranging from low-level alarms to high-priority warnings. Andrew emphasizes that "making really hard things look simple is hard," but Ranchbot's combination of robust design and advanced algorithms achieves just that.

The economics are equally

practical. Each unit costs between \$500 and \$1,500 and operates for approximately \$1 per day, providing a return on investment within three to four months. Many ranchers deploy dozens of units. "I have customers with 30 or 40 of these things, and they will utilize over the coming years as they seek greater productivity and cost savings," Andrew said. "It's a no brainer when you think that within a few months, they've paid for themselves."

Beyond water, the Ranchbot platform is expanding. In Australia, ranchers can overlay pasture mapping, integrate weather stations and connect security cameras—features already starting to roll out in the U.S.

"We only build things our customers want," Andrew notes. Each year, the company surveys customers to rank potential innovations and commits to delivering the top three. Last year's list included remote pump control, security cameras and weather stations, all of which are now part of the product line in Australia.

Ranching and technology

Andrew believes technology and tradition can complement each other.

"We can be really respectful of cowboy culture and heritage and still drive the need to innovate," he said, underlining the balance between tradition and innovation. "Our technology allows ranchers a lot more time for roping, hunting, family, and church than if they're just driving around checking stuff that doesn't need checking."

Looking ahead, Andrew sees artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and space-based communication networks driving the next wave of change. That connectivity, Andrew notes, will enable everything from virtual fencing integrated with water management to computer vision systems that monitor pasture health and animal well-being.

"Data is powerful, but data needs AI and machine learning to make it productive," Andrew explained.

Ranchbot is already testing prototypes that analyze digital signatures from pumps to forecast failure days in advance. Cameras may soon track which cows are drinking, identify illness earlier than a human could and even estimate weight or monitor bodyscore across pastures.

"The earliest sign a cow is sick is when she stops drinking," Andrew said. "A camera can tell you that long before a person notices."

However, Andrew emphasized that the goal is not to overwhelm ranchers with numbers. "We don't talk about data; we talk about actionable insights," he stressed. "There's no point giving a rancher raw data if all they can ask is, 'So what?' We tell them the consequence—what it means for their grazing, their herd, their bottom line."

Collaboration is another focus. "No rancher wants seven apps to run the farm," Andrew said. Ranchbot is integrating with grazing apps like CattleMax, weather systems such as Davis, and soil moisture and security camera providers. The goal is a platform that simplifies management while respecting each rancher's unique needs.

Andrew acknowledges that some producers remain cautious. However, he believes the benefits—saved time, lower costs and peace of mind—will win them over.

"I hear from ranchers every day: 'This thing has changed my life for the better. Why didn't I do it 10 years ago?'" he said.

His own journey reflects the balance he hopes to foster across the industry. From a boy in remote Western Australia to a global entrepreneur in Texas, Andrew has come full circle. Ranchbot Monitoring Solutions embodies that arc—uniting deep respect for tradition with cutting-edge tools that help ranchers steward land and water more effectively. — Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor

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SD program offers aspiring farmers a rare path into agriculture

Cody Kafka had dreamed of farming his own land since he began working on a farm in his teens, but that seemed unlikely without land to inherit. So it felt good when he finally walked across his own acres for the first time this year.

"It was one of the most freeing feelings I've ever

really felt," Kafka said. He owed the feeling to a little-known program administered by the state.

Kafka and his wife, Codi, who live in Alexandria, SD, started thinking seriously about getting into farming last year. But finding a lender was difficult until the Kafkas came across South Dakota's Beginning

Farmer Bond Program.

"Without this program, I don't think it would have been possible," Kafka said.

Kafka, an ag products salesman in Mitchell, and his wife, an accountant, were approved this year for the program along with one other applicant.

The program facilitates the sale of bonds to pur-

chasers who receive federally tax-exempt interest, enabling loans to first-generation farmers at low interest rates. The program helps new farmers acquire land, equipment or livestock. Awardees must farm the land, not just own it.

Board members affiliated with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, which administers the program, approved a total of \$4.6 million in bonds for 13 applicants statewide from 2019 to this year, an average of about \$354,000 per award. The office said it has received no reports of awardees not paying off loans on time.

High land and equipment costs mean aspiring farmers face limited access to credit, and modern farming methods have allowed fewer farmers to farm more land.

USDA reports show the number of farms in the state dropped from 34,000 in 1994 to 28,300 in 2024. The sharpest declines occurred among medium-sized farms. Large-scale farms operating on 2,000 acres or more now control over two-thirds of the cropland in the state, ac-

cording to a South Dakota State University report. Thirty years ago, large farms controlled less than half of the state's cropland.

And those aren't the only challenges facing new farmers.

"Commodity prices fluctuating, droughts, excessive rain, etcetera," Kafka said. "It really is a risky business, and so it was very, very nerve-racking to take a big financial step such as this."

The Kafkas received \$510,000 to purchase 160 acres near Gregory. This spring, Cody Kafka planted corn.

For Bill Even, commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, overseeing the program is personally gratifying. When he was a young, "asset-poor farmer," he said, a USDA farmer loan program "allowed me the chance to buy my first piece of farm ground."

Even said that without that program's low-interest rate, plus his own equity and a commercial lender, he wouldn't have been able to get established.

Kafka said he was turned down for a USDA farmer

loan because he did not have the required farm income history. That's when he came across the state-administered program online.

"It's still stringent—you need balance sheets, cash flows, all of that," he said. "But they want people exactly like us, with little experience but stable finances, to get a chance."

Kafka said he is working to improve the soil health of his new land, and experimenting with cover crops, rotational grazing and regenerative practices.

The math is tough this year. Corn prices are down nearly a dollar per bushel from what the Kafkas budgeted.

"We're penciling in a loss," Kafka said.

But they view the land as a long-term investment. With off-farm income to cushion their losses, he hopes to weather the early years.

"Land hasn't depreciated since the 1980s," he said. "That, and it'll be paid for in 20 years. And, hopefully, I'll live another 20 after that." — **Joshua Haiar, South Dakota Searchlight**

Federal shutdown will delay expected payments to farmers

The federal shutdown will delay payments expected to farmers under several commodity, conservation and aid programs, USDA detailed in a document posted Sept. 30.

USDA's "Lapse of Funding Plan" spells out what positions and obligations at various agencies will continue to operate and which agency activities will be halted.

All told, USDA will furlough 42,256 employees out of 85,907 total employees across the department. The lion's share of employees remaining are classified as necessary to protect life and property. Most of the employees remaining will be at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

At the Farm Service Agency (FSA), 6,377 staff in county offices across the country will be furloughed. FSA stops processing payments under the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) and the Supplemental Disaster Assistance Program, as well as payments under ARC/PLC and the Conservation Reserve Program.

USDA had announced the final \$2 billion in ECAP payments would go out to farmers. It's unclear if those deposits were made before the Wednesday shutdown.

All FSA farm-loan activity is halted as well, from processing to closing loans and signing off on guaranteed loans or lines of credit.

At the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 8,849 employees will be furloughed, leaving fewer than 500 NRCS staff working during the shutdown. All technical assis-

tance is halted. Dam safety and rehabilitation duties continue because they affect life and safety.

Agricultural statistics will halt during the furlough. At the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), 456 employees will be furloughed. All NASS data reports, including monthly reports, will be suspended. NASS had four monthly reports set for release on Oct. 1.

The Economic Research Service and Office of the Chief Economist also suspended all their program activities. The next World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report is set for release Oct. 9. Twice in the past 12 years—October 2013 and January 2018—USDA has suspended the release of a WASDE report because of a government shutdown.

At Rural Development, 2,640 staff will be furloughed. The majority of the agency's work is suspended.

Core food nutrition programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children continue operations during a lapse of appropriations, "subject to the availability of funds."

At FSIS, the 7,064 food inspectors will continue to perform their duties at processing plants, inspecting meat, poultry and egg products, as well as lab work and investigations into food outbreaks.

For APHIS, the majority of staff, 5,734 of them, will remain on board. APHIS will continue border inspections. USDA will use emergency funding balances to deal with New



World screwworm, highly pathogenic avian influenza and other animal disease challenges.

At USFS, 12,744 employees out of 32,390 will be furloughed. USFS will shut down activities at 154 national forests and more than 500 ranger districts across 193 million acres of land. Operations for wildfires, law enforcement, emergency and natural disaster response and protecting infrastructure will continue. — **Chris Clayton, DTN ag policy editor**


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The power of breed diversity

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But as Kansas State (K-State) University beef cattle experts reminded producers in a recent episode of the Beef Cattle Institute's "Cattle Chat" podcast, crossbreeding takes more than guesswork. Done right, it can unlock the power of heterosis, also known as hybrid vigor—giving producers cows that stay in the herd longer, breed back easier and better withstand the chal-

lenges of the pasture.

"Heterosis is a good thing," said Phillip Lancaster, a cattle nutritionist. "There are two things to keep in mind: if it gets too complicated and you backcross too much, you can lose the benefits. And it depends on which breeds you're crossing. You get the most advantage when you cross *Bos indicus* with *Bos taurus* (cattle origins), for example."

Lancaster cautioned that heterosis must add measurable value. "If the cross doesn't perform as well as

one of the breeds by itself, then it isn't worth it," he said.

Veterinarian Bob Larson emphasized the importance of breed complementarity. "It comes down to how well you can manage the plan you have for genetics," he said.

Veterinarian Todd Gundersen added that producers should start by identifying the traits that matter most to their operation.

"The question is, what traits are most important to you, and where can you best get those?" he said.

That focus on priorities, the

experts explained, connects directly to how producers approach breed diversity. Lancaster noted that while many breeds today share similar carcass goals, opportunities still exist for producers who look beyond the average.

"Most breed associations have similar end goals now," he said. "That's why it's important to find individual animals that bring something different—something that helps you reach your specific operational goals." — **K-State Research and Extension**

LEGAL LEDGER

EU deforestation rule delayed another year

The European Union (EU) is again proposing to delay its anti-deforestation rule by one year. The rule would ban imports of products alleged to be driving deforestation. It was set to take effect at the end of the year, but the EU Commission said the supporting system is not ready. "We have concluded that we cannot meet the original deadline without causing disruptions to our businesses and supply chains," commission spokesman Olof Gill told a press conference in Brussels, Belgium. The rule was originally set to take effect at the end of 2024 but was delayed a year.

Newsom signs bill to protect Klamath salmon

On Sept. 26, California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) signed a bill into law to protect salmon and salmon habitat in the Klamath River watershed. Assembly Bill (AB) 263 was introduced in January by Assemblymember Chris Rogers (D-Santa Rosa) in partnership with the Karuk and Yurok Tribes. Newsom signed the bill as part of a suite of bills intended to "examine and address historical wrongs and promote access and inclusion for California Native peoples." The bill will maintain river flows for at-risk salmon runs on the Scott and Shasta rivers. "With mainstream dams removed, we must now focus on the critical spawning and rearing habitat in the Scott and Shasta Rivers," said Karuk Tribe Chairman Russell "Buster" Attebery.

Trump administration expands coal industry

The Trump administration recently announced actions to expand the U.S. coal industry. The Department of the Interior on Sept. 29 announced it is opening 13.1 million acres of federal land for coal leasing. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum signed the order to advance President Donald Trump's Reinvigorating America's Beautiful Clean Coal Industry executive order. "By reducing the royalty rate for coal, increasing coal acres available for leasing, and unlocking critical minerals from mine waste, we are strengthening our economy, protecting national security, and ensuring that communities from Montana to Alabama benefit from good-paying jobs," Burgum said. The Department of Energy on Sept. 29 also announced a \$625 million boost to expand the coal industry in accordance with Trump's executive order. "These funds will help keep our nation's coal plants operating and will be vital to keeping electricity prices low and the lights on without interruption," said Secretary of Energy Chris Wright.

Greens seek protections for western spadefoot

The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the California Fish and Game Commission on Sept. 24 to seek protections for the western spadefoot under the state's Endangered Species Act. The species is commonly referred to as a toad but is a type of frog. The group said the species is threatened by habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, in addition to climate change, pollution and invasive species. The western spadefoot was proposed for threatened protections in 2023, but a final decision has yet to be made. The Center's petition seeks state protections for the northern and southern populations, which span the species' entire range in California.

Horned lark could receive stronger protections

Following a lawsuit by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Bird Alliance of Oregon, a federal judge found that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's 2022 decision to list the streaked horned lark as threatened and not endangered was unlawful. The court ordered the agency to reconsider within one year if the species warrants stronger protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The streaked horned lark resides in Puget Sound and Willamette Valley prairies in Oregon. The groups said the species has been reduced to small populations due to urbanization and agricultural conversion of their habitat. "The Service now has no excuse but to uplist the streaked horned lark from threatened to endangered," said Joe Liebezeit of the Bird Alliance of Oregon.

USFWS to remove look-alike protections

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed in a Sept. 26 Federal Register listing to revise regulations for 11 species treated as listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to similarities in appearance. The proposal relates to the conservation of the Pearl River map turtle, bog turtle, Miami blue butterfly, desert tortoise, Florida panther and pallid sturgeon. The agency proposes to amend or remove regulations for 11 species that are similar in appearance. USFWS said the proposal will eliminate unnecessary regulations and ensure that species treated as endangered or threatened meet the required criteria of the ESA. "These protections are still sorely needed to protect the imperiled species from further decline and to keep these look-alike animals from becoming threatened or endangered themselves," said the Center for Biological Diversity.

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SCAN TO VIEW CATALOGS

USDA selects sites to help with NWS research

SCREW WORM (from page 1)

late September, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins shared more details about the latest detection of NWS in Mexico.

"Unfortunately, what we found was Mexico has failed to enforce proper cattle movement controls in infected regions and is not tending to fly traps daily as promised, which hinders our real-time detection capabilities," Rollins said.

She said Mexico must implement the agreed-upon protocols, expand surveillance immediately and lock down cattle movement in infected areas. Until 100% compliance is demonstrated, Rollins said, a border reopening plan will not be considered.

USDA is deploying 200 staff members into Mexico to work with the country's National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) to continue reviewing fly traps, of which there are about 8,000 in Mexico.

"My commitment is as we are getting hourly updates, we will immediately let the public know," Rollins promised.

Mexico measures

The Mexican government implemented regulations on livestock movement in mid-

September, according to a SENASICA document acquired by Reuters. The Mexican agency said the anti-parasite drug ivermectin must be given 72 hours in advance of any cattle movement under the supervision of the International Regional Organization for Animal and Plant Health, Reuters reported.

A Mexican industry official told Reuters the ivermectin requirement would significantly delay livestock movement.

The Mexican meat sector pushed back against new measures. The Mexican meat industry group AMEG (Asociación Mexicana de Engordadores de Ganado Bovino) said recent measures "jeopardise the supply chain of the meat production sector." The group said restricting the movement of livestock from the north to the south "threatens the economic viability of the sector that generated \$192 billion in 2024."

The group contended the only proven way to eradicate the parasite is to release sterile flies to reduce the mating population in the wild, Reuters reported.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said the country was working on new measures that would soon be announced, but that restricting livestock movement was not simple.

On Sept. 30, SENASICA said it was conducting research to strengthen scientific and technological research and called on researchers to join forces to eradicate the pest. The agency plans to test entomopathogenic fungi in traps against NWS as a method of pest control. Entomopathogenic fungi are parasitic fungi that infect and kill insects and other arthropods.

U.S. research

USDA selected three sites

to support the fight against NWS, which include the Arizona Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Texas A&M AgriLife and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

The Arizona Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at University of Arizona conducts diagnostic testing to detect and manage animal diseases. The lab specializes in microbiology, cytology, histopathology and molecular diagnostics.

As part of the effort to eradicate NWS, the lab will

process captured adult flies to determine if they are NWS. If suspected to be NWS, the lab will send the sample to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, IA, for confirmation. USDA will then use the information to track the pest.

Veterinarians and animal owners may submit samples to the lab for processing. More details on submitting samples are available at tinyurl.com/2wm336vz.

Texas A&M AgriLife and NNSA are exploring safer alternatives to high-radioac-

tive technologies against NWS. This includes producing sterile flies via electron beam (eBeam), which could be a potentially safer alternative to high-radioactivity cobalt-60 gamma sterilization.

"Texas A&M researchers are now confident that eBeam can effectively sterilize male screwworms *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, without relying on high-activity radioactive material," Texas A&M AgriLife said. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor**

Bank of North Dakota developing loan program

The Bank of North Dakota is working on a new loan assistance program for farmers in response to tough financial conditions facing the industry.

Don Morgan, president of the state-owned Bank of North Dakota, said the state's agricultural industry has been hit hard by a combination of low commodity prices, a sustained period of high interest rates and inflation.

"We believe we have an extreme stress situation coming up in our agricultural sector for 2026," Morgan told the North Dakota Industrial Commission recently.

The Bank of North Dakota is preparing a new relief program for farmers and ranchers modeled after a 2019 program that worked very well, Morgan said.

"It allowed our banks and credit unions to restructure some agricultural debt at some below-market rates," Morgan said.

The details of the program have yet to be determined. Morgan will return to the Industrial Commission in November or December, he said, with a finished product for the board's approval "so that we could roll out for the 2026 ag renewal season," he said.

Gov. Kelly Armstrong (R), who chairs the Industrial Commission, urged bank officials to keep in mind that

there is discussion in Washington, D.C., about a federal relief program for farmers this year, though he noted the exact timing may change.

"My concern is not knowing what the federal government is going to do," Armstrong said.

The other factor to keep in mind, Armstrong said, is there will likely be a special session of the North Dakota Legislature at the start of 2026. If the Bank of North Dakota is rolling out a loan assistance program at the same time, the governor said it will likely be a topic of discussion for lawmakers.

Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring, Armstrong's colleague on the Industrial Commission, suggested the legislature could consider additional aid for farmers if the state-owned bank's program is insufficient.

Morgan said it's important to get the relief program rolled out with time to spare before banks begin working with farmers to renew agricultural loans this winter, even if the legislature decides to provide additional assistance after the program is implemented.

"The banks do need some time to prepare because most of the ag renewals come in February, March, April, May," Morgan said. — **Jacob Orledge, North Dakota Monitor**



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Delegation wants NM exempt from proposed Roadless Rule rollback

All five members of New Mexico's all-Democratic Congressional delegation signed on to a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins that requests the state be excluded from the Trump administration's proposed repeal of the so-called Roadless Rule.

The 24-year-old Roadless Area Conservation Rule was implemented to restrict road construction and timber harvesting on over 58 million acres of federal Forest Service land across 38 states. This includes about 1.6 million acres of land in New Mexico, which impacts all five of the state's national forests. However, the Gila National Forest has the most protected acreage.

Rollins announced the proposal to rescind the rule in June during the Western Governors' Association meeting held in Santa Fe,

NM, and contends the rule change will give state and local experts the freedom to make decisions about forest management and allow the logging industry to grow.

New Mexico's Congressional delegation sent a letter to Rollins on Sept. 19, after three weeks of public comment ended. The delegation asked the secretary to exclude New Mexico from the rollback, citing negative impacts to the state's vulnerability to wildfires, public safety and the outdoor recreation economy.

"New Mexico is particularly vulnerable to wildfire," the letter reads, "with a risk profile higher than 82% of the United States. Multiple studies, including those conducted by the federal government, have confirmed that wildfires are much less likely to ignite in roadless areas."

According to the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, about 1,000 wildfires have been reported in 2025 as of September, impacting more than 197,000 acres of land. Communities across the state are still recovering from wildfires in recent years, which exacerbate flooding conditions and landslides, disproportionately affecting rural and lower income residents, the letter states.

The delegation also pointed to the disruption of wildlife movement and habitat conservation by road construction, as well as outdoor recreation, which they said generates "\$3.2 billion in New Mexico and supports nearly 30,000 jobs." Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) recently urged New Mexicans to provide public input on the proposed rule change.

"This is being imposed ... by people in the White House, who frankly have never harvested a bull elk or [caught and] released a native trout," he said on the U.S. Senate floor. "The truth is that the roadless rule protects us from wildfires, it ensures clean drinking water for communities, and it sustains wildlife habitat for wildlife and for sportsmen."

The letter noted that road construction in backcountry areas is linked to an increase in dust and runoff and will negatively impact watersheds that provide water to multiple cities in New Mexico and could pose a threat to native aquatic species. The delegation also pointed out that the Roadless Rule already allows for timber harvesting for purposes of "ecological or wildfire mitigation purposes." — **Leah Romero, Source New Mexico**

STORY SHORTS

IRS extends drought tax relief timeline

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued guidance granting tax relief to farmers and ranchers who sold livestock due to drought conditions. According to the notice, producers in 49 states and other drought-stricken regions may defer taxes on capital gains from forced livestock sales, provided the animals were held for draft, dairy or breeding purposes. Typically, livestock must be replaced within two years, but this extension allows up to four years—and in some cases, beyond—depending on when the drought officially ends. Sales of livestock raised for slaughter or sporting purposes, as well as poultry sales, are not eligible. The relief offers producers more time and flexibility to recover while managing the impacts of the ongoing drought. For more information, visit tinyurl.com/yvnbfbws.

USDA shifts health export rules to APHIS

Starting in early fiscal year 2026, animal health restrictions affecting U.S. exports of meat, poultry and egg products will be relocated from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Export Library to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) website. This transition consolidates requirements in one location, making information easier to access and update, according to the government. While FSIS will continue posting certification requirements, APHIS will maintain animal health restrictions through a searchable, downloadable spreadsheet. The change improves efficiency, accuracy and usability for industry and FSIS employees, USDA said. During the transition, information may appear on both sites, with FSIS providing guidance and references.

Second case of anthrax reported in ND

North Dakota's state veterinarian confirmed the state's second anthrax case of 2025 in a beef cattle herd in Stark County, urging producers to stay vigilant. State veterinarian Ethan Andress emphasized that producers in areas with a history of anthrax should review risk factors and vaccination needs with their veterinarians. Effective vaccines are available, but they require over a week to provide immunity, with annual boosters needed for ongoing protection. Producers are advised to monitor herds for unexplained deaths, promptly contact veterinarians and submit samples for testing. Additional information and resources are available on the North Dakota Department of Agriculture website at tinyurl.com/yjhn9cm7.

MT Stockgrowers launches 2025 Cattle Drive

The Montana Stockgrowers Foundation is accepting donations for its 2025 Cattle Drive, the state's largest steer feed-out contest supporting education and leadership in agriculture. Ranchers and supporters can donate a steer, its market value or partner with neighbors to participate. Donated cattle are fed at Yellowstone Cattle Feeders in Shepherd, MT, until optimum market weight. Donors receive carcass and genomic data, branded apparel and opportunities to win prizes, including a \$17,000 equipment package for the champion steer winner. Donations close Dec. 15, with animal pickups beginning in mid-October. For details, contact foundation@mtbeef.org or 406-461-0642.

Hillshire recalls corn dogs for wood fragments

The Hillshire Brands Company is recalling about 58 million pounds of corn dogs and sausage-on-a-stick products sold under the Jimmy Dean and State Fair labels due to possible contamination with wood fragments, according to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Packaged between March 17 and Sept. 26, the recalled items bear establishment numbers "EST-582" or "P-894" and were distributed nationwide to retail, food service and online outlets. The recall surfaced after multiple consumer complaints, including five reports of injury. FSIS warns that affected products may still be in home, school or institutional freezers. Consumers are advised to discard or return the products immediately rather than risk consumption.

Omaha Steaks breaks ground on safety facility

Omaha Steaks held a groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 22 for its new 40,000-square-foot product safety facility, which will utilize cold pasteurization technology to enhance food safety. This non-thermal process, already applied to spices, fruits and vegetables, eliminates harmful microorganisms while preserving quality. Construction began at the end of September, with operations set for June 2027, adjacent to the company's fulfillment center. CEO Nate Rempe said the project reflects Omaha Steaks' commitment to both food safety and the community's future. The facility also supports growth, as Omaha Steaks' ground beef business has increased by 74% over the past four years.

Cargill highlights steak expectations

Cargill released its first-ever "State of Steak—Foodservice Edition" report, offering insights into how consumer expectations for steak are evolving. The research underscores steak's role as both an indulgence and a business driver, with diners expecting consistency in doneness, tenderness and presentation. One in four consumers reported disappointment with their last steakhouse meal, highlighting the risks of missed expectations. Guests gravitate toward ribeye, sirloin, filet and New York strip, preferring menu clarity and recognizable cuts. Cargill urges operators to align menus with consumer emotions, train staff and emphasize quality to ensure steak remains a loyalty-building centerpiece.

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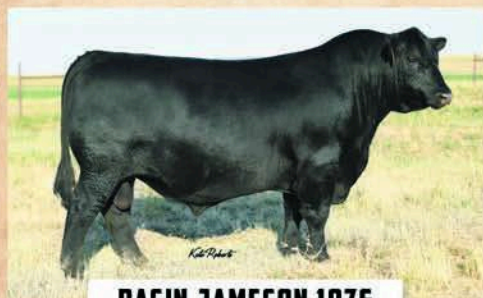
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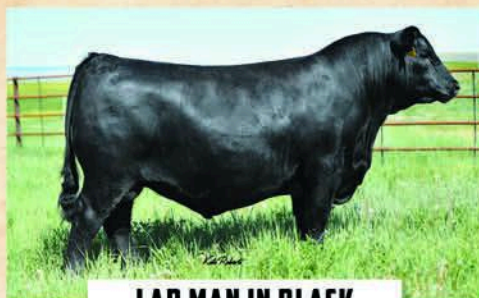
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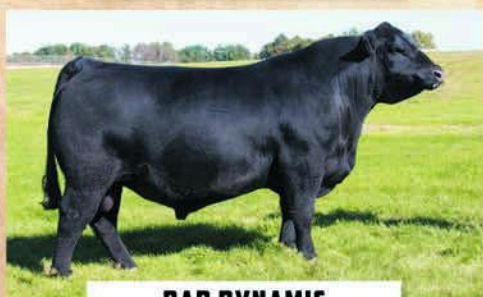
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Court denies USDA motion to dismiss lawsuit over EID

A legal challenge to a USDA mandate requiring electronic identification (EID) tags for certain beef cattle, bison and dairy cows moving across state lines will continue after a federal judge on Sept. 30 denied a USDA motion to dismiss the case brought on behalf of cattle producers.

The rule that took effect on Nov. 5, 2024, requires visibly

readable EID tags for sexually intact cattle and bison 18 months or older, dairy cattle of any age, and cattle and bison of any age used for rodeos, shows or exhibitions.

The New Civil Liberties Alliance filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of South Dakota, on behalf of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stock-

growers of America (R-CALF USA), the South Dakota Stockgrowers Alliance and the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, as well as individual producers.

The federal court also dismissed one of the counts alleged by the plaintiffs—that the mandate was beyond USDA's statutory power. Also allowed to stand are the plain-

tiffs' allegation that the final rule was arbitrary and capricious.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) provide EID tags for free through state veterinarian offices.

The lawsuit is seeking the vacation of the rule in its entirety and to permanently block its enforcement.

Though APHIS has funded EID tags so far, the judge expressed skepticism that such funding would continue. USDA has argued that APHIS would continue to provide funding. USDA has estimated the number of cattle affected by the rule would be about 11 million head per year.

In its ruling, the court was skeptical that such APHIS funding is long-term and at some point, producers could shoulder more of a financial burden to meet the mandate.

"To this end they assert that plaintiffs have not established 'that they stand to incur actual and imminent financial costs in order to comply with the rule,'" the court said in the ruling.

"Plaintiffs, however, throughout their amended complaint allege that certain individuals have paid money for EID tags and that the financial burden on most cattle herds will be anywhere from \$50 to \$2,000. Additionally, the final rule states that APHIS cannot commit to long-term

funding for EID tags because the availability of federal funding in future fiscal years is dependent on annual congressional appropriations and USDA-APHIS budgetary priorities."

As a result of the ruling, the case now moves to the summary judgement stage, according to the ruling.

EID tags are printed with a unique 15-digit number. USDA has said the rule will help producers by making it easier to track animals during an animal disease outbreak.

"Since the rule came into effect almost a year ago, America's ranchers and farmers have been forced to comply with its expensive and unnecessary EID mandate," said Kara Rollins, litigation counsel for the alliance.

"The rule is a classic example of bureaucratic convenience overriding reasoned decision making. We look forward to having this case resolved on the merits." — **Todd Neeley, DTN environmental editor**

USDA prepares to purchase US commodities for international aid

USDA PLAN (from page 1)

- Investing in international food assistance.
- Securing and protecting U.S. farmland.

USDA plans

First, Rollins noted the release of relief through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP), which has resulted in over \$8 billion in payments to more than 560,000 farmers since March. Rollins announced the release of \$2 billion in remaining funding while at the ag forum. However, in its Sept. 30 Lapse of Funding Plan, USDA noted that remaining supplemental disaster assistance program payments would cease during the government shutdown. It is unclear whether the payments were made before the lapse in government operations.

Next, Rollins focused on farmer input costs. "As I was traveling around the country, I heard a lot about fertilizer, seed, labor, interest rates, tractors ... how it had all gone sky-high," she said.

Rollins continued that she was concerned about foreign influence, especially given that much of fertilizer production takes place overseas. To address why input costs are higher, the USDA and Department of Justice (DOJ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Sept. 26 to protect competition in ag inputs.

"This partnership strengthens longstanding coordination between the agencies with a particular focus on ensuring coordination with respect to ensuring farmers and ranchers have competitive access to agricultural inputs," the agencies said in a news release.

Rollins said the antitrust division of DOJ will work with USDA effective immediately to take a hard look at and scrutinize competitive conditions in the ag marketplace, including antitrust enforcement to promote free market competition. More information on their partnership is set to be released later.

Rollins also reiterated the Trump administration's earlier announced plan of kickstarting the planned America First Trade Promotion Program a year earlier than intended. An allocation of \$285 million was repurposed from the Biden administration into the program to help American agriculture expand to overseas markets.

USDA will also invest \$480 million to purchase commodities from American farmers for international food assistance programs, including McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition and Food for Progress.

"Along with our federal partners, we continue to explore all viable pathways to fuel airplanes, ships, and long-haul trucks with American-grown and -produced biofuels while exploring other new uses for American-grown commodities," Rollins said.

Rollins called the initiative a "win-win for the global market, and most importantly, a big win for our farmers and producers here at home."

USDA is providing \$240 million to purchase U.S. commodities for six McGovern-Dole projects, totaling more than 56,000 metric tons of U.S.-grown food, the department said. Partners with Food for Progress will receive \$240 million to sell 361,000 metric tons of U.S. commodities abroad.

Finally, Rollins said the last prong of USDA support would be securing and protecting U.S. farmland for U.S. farmers. "USDA is working across the Trump administration to take aggressive action to address the U.S.-owned farmland by foreign adversaries and foreign ownership head-on," she said.

USDA will no longer incentivize the development of farmland for green energy and will not use taxpayer funds to purchase solar panels, the department had announced earlier this summer.

Rollins also addressed at the ag forum the recent New World screwworm detection.

"Mexico has failed to enforce proper cattle movement controls in infected regions and is not tending to fly traps daily as promised, which hinder our real time detection capabilities," she said. "This is unacceptable. Mexico must fully implement the agreed upon protocols and must expand surveillance immediately and lock down cattle movement in infected zones."

Rollins also said USDA is working on short- and long-term solutions to revitalize and diversify the U.S. beef industry.

"Low inventory and high demand is not sustainable," she said. "If we wish to be a country that can feed ourselves, like so many of the problems that you face, our cattle inventory unfortunately cannot be built rebuilt overnight."

However, Rollins noted that although the administration plans to incentivize producers

to help build back the cattle supply, direct payments would not be part of that plan.

"We see how the government getting involved can completely distort the markets," she said. "And so currently there will be no plan, no plan is even under consideration to insert ourselves through payments into the

beef cattle industry."

USDA plans to share more information about its revitalization plans in mid-October, which will include opening up more working lands, expanding risk mitigation tools and motivating the next generation of ag producers. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor**



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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: 10/2/2025	Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	230.08 ▲	N/A	186.79
CME Feeder Index	367.61 ▲	361.31	248.25
Boxed Beef Average	363.22 ▼	371.97	299.80
Average Dressed Steers	359.76 ▼	364.87	299.67
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,428 ▲	1,422	1,404
Weekly Slaughter**	555,000 ▲	552,000	612,000
Weekly Beef Production***	485.4 ▲	481.7	524.1
Hide/Offal Value	11.38 ▼	11.50	11.30
Corn Price	4.22 ▼	4.28	4.33

*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	
September 26	6,983	382.60	244	437.28	1,405	388.90	2,075	379.92	740	360.61	2,518	337.85
September 19	6,983	393.06	200	449.47	1,293	401.68	2,105	391.87	591	372.65	2,793	346.49
September 12	6,793	404.37	195	456.22	1,235	412.13	2,069	402.71	774	380.60	2,520	354.37
September 5	5,747	409.20	185	459.04	1,082	416.17	1,583	409.54	601	385.31	2,297	362.78

Cutouts						FED BOXED BEEF					
DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT		50% LEAN	90% LEAN					
October 2	363.22	343.40	336.54		136.07	426.00					
October 1	368.47	346.89	332.00		137.94	N/A					
September 30	371.03	347.25	332.63		140.30	422.34					
September 29	370.68	348.89	338.26		134.00	424.33					
September 26	371.43	352.44	338.97		146.06	430.09					

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle							
	9/26	9/29	9/30	10/1	10/2	High*	Low*
Oct.	23180	23133	23200	23273	23128	24678	16853
Dec.	23430	23383	23500	23645	23445	24208	16668
Feb.	23650	23623	23740	23930	23713	24358	17005
Apr.	23730	23700	23840	24048	23808	24428	18068

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle							
	9/26	9/29	9/30	10/1	10/2	High*	Low*
Sep.	36504	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	36648	21920
Oct.	35700	35620	36163	36395	35763	37000	22268
Nov.	35448	35388	35980	36278	35620	36938	22460
Jan.	34783	34735	35355	35713	35058	36765	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	6,497	1,576	230.08
Live FOB Heifer	1,595	1,369	230.47
Dressed Del Steer	6,679	991	359.76
Dressed Del Heifer	1,501	864	360.00

SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Live FOB Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Steer	2,260	987	364.87
Dressed Del Heifer	196	863	365.00

SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	1,228	1,517	186.79
Live FOB Heifer	271	1,397	185.54
Dressed Del Steer	600	945	299.67
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: SEPTEMBER 28, 2025		
	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	31,252	3,662
Formula	245,244	1,794
Negotiated Cash	61,201	131
Negotiated Grid	33,661	1,366
Packer Owned	9,376	N/A
Total	380,734	6,953

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS		FORWARD BEEF SALES	
Delivery Month		Neg. Sales 0-21 days	2,135
Sep. '25	125,386	Neg. Sales 21+ days	1,077
Oct. '25	188,466	Formula sales	3,737
Nov. '25	175,504	Forward contract sales	34
Dec. '25	174,917	Domestic sales	5,882
Jan. '26	98,120	NAFTA Exports	104

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		226.64	-2.26
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		224.23	-0.65

Ontario Auctions			
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs		235.18	+1.23
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		233.22	+1.19
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs		158.13	-2.75

*Price comparison from one week ago.

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, September 30, 2025				
Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario	
501-600 lbs	492.97	517.63	460.50	
601-700 lbs	439.05	452.75	419.20	
701-800 lbs	398.52	405.87	386.39	
801-900 lbs	370.06	367.80	371.88	
Heifers:				
401-500 lbs	509.53	533.51	452.34	
501-600 lbs	454.43	440.62	405.54	
601-700 lbs	398.12	404.79	376.68	
701-800 lbs	361.46	N/A	359.56	

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	0	0	230,638	1,021,845

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE			
October 2, 2025			
Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary			
Receipts EST: N/A	Week Ago EST: N/A	Year Ago Act: 9,750	
THIS REPORT WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED AFTER MAY 12TH. 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										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	NORTHWEST
									SLAUGHTER BULLS	REPLACEMENTS	
September 25	Burley, ID	846	427.50-504.45	482-515.375-463	423-445.357-386	360-391.345	350.50-351		125-175.183-190		
September 27	Eugene, OR	1,074	240-430*.280-370*	260-388*.240-378*	280-387*.260-357*	260-322*.210-290*	240-298*.210-273*	235-300*	145-160.149-170	1,400-3,350.1,300-2,900	
September 29	Madras, OR	339							140-172.155-193		
September 24	Vale, OR	938	505-555.450-462	460-525.420-455	430-495.362-387	380-420	338-369.325-339		165-178.175-208		
September 30	Davenport, WA	370	540.510-520	480.375-462.50	380-465.150-480	200-450.50.250-410	180-407.245-365	343-365.250-343	150-335.155-312.50	110-250.134-312.50	
September 25	Toppenish, WA	1,872	550-570*.440-505*	500-512.50*.405-440*	441-453*.401*	396*.370*			160-172.167.50-199.50	2,450-3,875	
September 25	Orland, CA	2,516	300-555.280-478	300-500.280-483	300-505.280-410	275-426.255-383	250-387.230-347	230-356	145-186.145-197	8,250	
September 24	Galt, CA	1,713	500-575.450-535	450-530.425-500	425-510.370-460	370-440.310-395	350-400.285-362		110-204.165-200		
September 30	Turlock, CA	806	439-542.50.430-500	420-521.400-495	410-484.392-423	353-374.340-370	318-350.310-347	300-318.285-316	140-186.154-183		
September 29	Iowa	5,976	500-612.50.485-570	483-551.410-510	414-490.367.50-430	350-426.339-394	357-389.332.50-364	270-372.50.265-340	132.50-250.100-220		
September 30	Miles City, MT	1,136	660.657.50.512.50	485-550.441-497.50	404-446.50.385-444	390-394.390	350-366	345.25-382.25.315-352	135-178.172-197	2,850-3,050	
October 1	Bassett, NE	1,740					357.50-406	345.25-382.25.300-406			
September 25	Willcox, AZ	1,667	647-695.573-660	543-637.50.486-547.50	485-546.473-515	423-450.396-442.50	369-420.350-415		120-172.160-202	3,850-4,550.3,100-3,250	
September 29	Colorado	4,203	607.50-685.475-585	570-615.435-540	451-522.50.398-480	401-467.357.50-450	370-427.50.325-397.50	360-380.337-355	317.50-370.242.50-335	113-221.122-230	2,075-4,800.1,025-3,850
September 24	La Junta, CO	2,271	440-615.470-540	415-522.405-480	415-522.400-467	372.50-427.50.360-450	355-380.325-355	332.50-370.295-335	156-183.185-201	2,600-3,525	
September 29	Loma, CO	550	520-600.485-530	460-525.410-460	405-465.380-410	380-410.325-375	330-375.320-355	300-355.275-345	160-185.185-220	4,150-4,250	
October 1	Dodge City, KS	4,055	508-547.50.448-457.50	478-523.412.50-452.50	413-474.50.361-444	371.50-401.50.329-370	354-378.75.342-354.50	342-375.50.299-323	122.50-182.163-226	2,350-3,525.1,825-2,250	
September 25	Pratt, KS	2,309	572.50.440-562.50	552.50-630.372.50-497.50	452.50-607.50.361-415	387.50-497.50.349-369	362-420.331-350	350-387.314.25-374.50	150-180.160-205	2,350-2,400	
September 25	Salina, KS	1,624	620.535	460-515.425-565	455-507.50.415-460	416-470.386-413	364-416.348-398	349-388.310-369	336-346.315-328		
October 1	Clovis, NM	1,444	435-655.490-632	455-615.425-565	430-575.365-485	382-452.330-400	334-390.315-348	326-365.235-347	235-347.250-334		
October 1	El Reno, OK	7,435	620-755.540-550	530-610.430-490	430-550.400-460	385-460.345-410	355-420.335-395	345-392.50.339-363	290-372.50.250-338		
September 30	McAlester, OK	1,050	442-630.411-510	375-495.378-440	375-495.367-395	371-425.323-365	348-399.298-325	325-354.183	220-338.183		
September 30	Oklahoma City, OK	4,496	472.50-595.410-507.50	420-485.345-460	371-445.349-401	357.50-409.320-393	351-385.310-349	312-377.271-333.50	149-170.174-200	3,250.1,700-3,300	
September 26	Cuero, TX	1,831	408-615.399-510	412-525.382-490	379-460.350-418	340-394.319-400	338-352.312.50-405	322-342.290-310	142-165.185-197	3,250.2,350-3,000	
September 25	Dalhart, TX	2,588	515-550.442.50-532.50	430-535.410-441	387.50-457.50.350-422	330-391.342.50-349	365-393.326-349	331-367.289-324	120-171.125-160	1,525.1,200	
September 25	San Angelo, TX	689	435-535	400-445.400-415	340-425.327.50-370	321-365.320-327.50	312.50-346.305-317.50	317.50-335	130-186.164-207		

New carbon dioxide pipeline to begin NE operations

A Kansas pipeline company is about to activate its \$1.5 billion pipeline to transport carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in Nebraska and Iowa to a sequestration site in Wyoming and, along with it, launch a first-of-its-kind program to share some proceeds with rural communities along the pipeline route.

Officials with Tallgrass Energy said they would soon be shipping CO₂ from the first of 11 ethanol plants connected to its pipeline—a converted, former natural gas pipeline—for a 392-mile trip across Nebraska, Colorado, Iowa and Wyoming.

In conjunction with the launch, Tallgrass announced it is making an initial donation of \$500,000 to a fund managed by the Nebraska Community Foundation that could financially help more than 230 communities and community organizations on the route.

The company projects that more than \$7 million will be distributed over 10 years through the “Trailblazer Community Investment Fund,” with the money targeted for local early childhood centers, elder care facilities and food pantries. That is on top of lease payments to landowners and spending more than \$450,000 on disaster response training sessions and equipment purchases for the mostly rural, volunteer fire and rescue departments along the pipeline route.

Summit pipeline changes

A much larger CO₂ pipeline proposal, the 2,500-mile Summit, recently announced plans to provide more incentives for landowners who provide rights of way and new aid to local communities along the route, DTN/Progressive Farmer reported.

That pipeline, first proposed three years ago, would connect to 57 ethanol plants across North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. But the Summit project has faced fierce landowner opposition in some areas, along with lawsuits and regulatory barriers. Jane Kleeb of Bold Nebraska, said the offer by Summit is different than what was negotiated with Tallgrass. Summit, she said, just laid out an offer, and did not work out the new incentives with local officials.

The new offers from Summit were described by Summit CEO Joe Griffin as “a promise to operate safely, openly and in a way that brings meaningful benefits to the people and places that make this project possible,” DTN reported.

Tallgrass is still going through the process to gain regulatory approval in Iowa for building the small portion of its pipeline in that state. But a company spokesman said 100% of the rights of way needed in Iowa had been obtained, removing that hurdle toward the project’s approval there.

The investment fund was negotiated with the environmental group, Bold Nebraska, which was a leading opponent of construction of the Keystone XL crude oil pipeline across the state. The agreement has been hailed as a new blueprint for acceptance of large infrastructure projects that impact rural areas.

“It’s important to us to strategically invest back into the communities who have supported the project’s development,” said Kyle Quackenbush, segment president at Tallgrass.

“We hope that these investments serve to provide a safety net to our neighbors throughout their lifetimes—from early childhood to eldercare—so that these com-

munities can continue to grow and thrive,” he said.

A year ago, Tallgrass announced its agreement with Bold Nebraska to share some of the proceeds in exchange for its cooperation.

Such pipelines in other states have generated opposition, as well as lawsuits and protests. In this case, though, extensive new rights of way weren’t necessary, and many landowners along the pipeline route grow corn, a crop expected to benefit from expanding the markets for corn-based ethanol by making the fuel more environmentally friendly.

Kleeb, the founder of Bold Nebraska, said rural communities “deserve to benefit from the projects that impact them—whether that’s sharing in profits, investing in social services or simply having a seat at the project’s decision-making table.”

Kleeb said the agreement serves as a model for rural as well as urban communities impacted by such projects.

The new pipeline, formerly the Trailblazer pipeline, is the first of its kind to begin operation as part of a push by the Biden Administration to reduce carbon emissions and make ethanol production more “green.”

Making the biofuel less carbon-intensive could make it more attractive for states seeking environmental benefits, officials have said, and the pipeline will give Nebraska-produced ethanol an advantage in its use as sustainable aviation fuel, a new market for the biofuel.

“It’s going to put Nebraska ethanol into a league of its own,” said Steven Davidson, a Tallgrass spokesman.

Jeff Yost, president and CEO of Nebraska Community Foundation, said the new community fund will target some of the biggest challenges facing rural communities—quality early

childhood education, senior care and food insecurity—providing small grants to sustain jobs and services.

He said the foundation has already identified more than 230 organizations in the 31 impacted counties as eligible

for a portion of the funds. To share in a portion of the funds, Yost said that qualified organizations will be invited to submit applications and verify that they are doing the work they profess to do.

Yost added that sometimes companies do this kind of fund sharing “for public relations purposes.”

“(But) I see these guys doing it for the right reasons,” he said. — **Paul Hammel, Nebraska Examiner**



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Feeders follow live cattle lower

MARKETS (from page 1)

top seems to be greater than any concern of the fact that the tightest fed cattle supplies of the cycle are yet to come in 2026,” Fish said. “Truth is, there is no way to know today if the concern is warranted or not.”

Feeder cattle

“Following in the live cattle market’s footsteps, the feeder cattle complex is also trading lower as traders continue to struggle to find enough support to justify trading higher,” wrote Shay-Le Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, in her Thursday midday comments.

Feeder cattle futures traded steady to lower over the week. The October contract gained 25 cents to close at \$354.30, and the November contract lost about \$5 to close at \$352.40.

“Adding only more kin-

dling to the feeder cattle market’s reasons to trade lower, the market did close lower Wednesday afternoon after traders decided they didn’t possess enough support to be edging up against the market’s resistance thresholds,” Stewart said.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index closed higher over the week, gaining about \$6 to close at \$367.61.

Corn futures continue to trade sideways. The December contract lost 4 cents to close at \$4.21, and the March contract also lost 4 cents to close at \$4.38.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 8,500 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers sold steady to \$10 lower and feeder heifers sold from \$5 lower to \$5 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 774 lbs. sold from \$364-389, averaging \$375.99.

Nebraska: Tri-State Livestock in McCook sold 3,772

head on Monday. Compared to the previous auction, steers sold \$4-15 lower and heifers traded \$11-15 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 786 lbs. sold for \$370.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 5,000 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers and heifers sold steady to \$3 lower in a very light test. Steer and heifer calves sold \$5-10 lower on lesser quality. Benchmark steers averaging 773 lbs. sold from \$355-369.50, averaging \$364.77.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 3,056 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, there was a much larger offering of feeder steers and heifers. Steers were not well compared, and heifers sold unevenly steady. A group of benchmark steers averaging 764 lbs. sold for \$380. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor**

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Ag groups call to overturn corner-crossing ruling

APPEAL (from page 1)

2005—well after the UIA limited such rights. Calling Iron Bar's warnings of nationwide trespass "hyperbole," the hunters emphasize that corner crossing remains rare and carefully limited, and urge the court to let the 10th Circuit's decision stand.

The hunters' brief also stresses that the 10th Circuit's ruling was firmly grounded in the UIA's text and long-standing precedent. The statute declares that "all inclosures of any public lands" are unlawful and specifically prohibits fencing, intimidation or "any other unlawful means" of preventing free passage. The panel concluded that Iron Bar's civil trespass action amounted to just such an obstruction because it would extinguish the only lawful means of reaching thousands of acres of public land.

Court documents stated that Iron Bar argued that "inclosure" must mean a physical fence, but the record showed

the company had erected chained t-posts with "No Trespassing" signs near Elk Mountain. Both the district court and the 10th Circuit found those barriers violated the UIA. More broadly, the appellate panel explained that Congress wrote the law to prevent not only fences but also lawsuits or threats that effectively withdraw public land from use.

The brief said the decision also drew support from earlier rulings, including *Camfield* and the 8th Circuit's decision in *Mackay v. Uinta Development Co.*, which barred landowners from using trespass suits to prevent shepherds from accessing public ranges. In each case, courts recognized that checkerboard owners cannot convert federal land into private property by closing off all access to it. The 10th Circuit emphasized that Iron Bar's position would create exactly that outcome—granting one landowner control over vast swaths of public land Congress intended to remain open.

Producers file brief

In August, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, Wyoming Wool Growers Association and Montana Stockgrowers Association filed an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to grant Iron Bar's petition and overturn the 10th Circuit's ruling.

The groups argue the case carries "vast national implication and importance," with countless landowners and agricultural operations potentially affected by the court's reading of the UIA. For more than a century, they note, corner crossing has never been recognized as a lawful means of accessing federal lands.

The brief warns that legitimizing corner crossing will impose new administrative and enforcement burdens on state and federal governments, while exposing ranchers and property owners to unprecedented legal risks. The groups also contend that the 10th Circuit's reliance on *Camfield* sidestepped questions raised by *Leo Sheep Co.*

v. United States, creating uncertainty over which precedent should govern. They maintain that only SCOTUS can resolve this ambiguity.

Background

Petitioner Iron Bar Holdings is owned by Fred Eshelman, a pharmaceutical executive from North Carolina. In 2005, Eshelman purchased checkerboarded land around Elk Mountain in Carbon County, WY. Rising at the northern end of the Medicine Bow Mountains, Elk Mountain is a prime elk habitat, and interspersed among Iron Bar's lands are roughly 11,000 acres of public land.

Court documents state since acquiring the property, Iron Bar has aggressively sought to block access. Employees confronted hunters on public parcels, and in 2015, the company installed chained t-posts at a corner near a county road to prevent crossing. In 2020, the hunters attempted to step over those corners using GPS and mark-

ers. The hunters returned in 2021, this time with a ladder to avoid the chained posts, and again stayed entirely on public land. They never touched Iron Bar's land but were accused of trespass. A jury later acquitted them.

Undeterred, Iron Bar pursued a civil suit claiming the hunters had violated its airspace rights. In 2022, a federal district court ruled for the hunters, holding that corner crossing without contact or damage is not trespass and that federal law limits state property rights in checkerboard lands. In 2023, the 10th Circuit unanimously affirmed, stressing that the UIA prohib-

its landowners from extinguishing public access "by whatever means."

The Supreme Court has not yet decided whether it will take up Iron Bar's petition. The justices will begin their fall session on Oct. 6, when they could determine whether to hear the case or let the 10th Circuit's ruling stand. If the Court declines review, the ruling by the appeals court will legalize corner crossing between sections of federal land in the six states under the 10th Circuit's jurisdiction: Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah and Wyoming. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

Benefits of early culling open breeding heifers

Early culling of open breeding heifers has several benefits to your cow-calf operation's bottom line. Pregnancy can be diagnosed by palpation at 60 days and by ultrasound as early as 30 days, so now is the time to take action and cull the open heifers. In addition to reducing grazing pressure on pastures, there are several other long-term benefits.

Typically, we should expect well-developed yearling heifers, at 65% of their mature weight, going into their first breeding season to conceive in a fairly short breeding season (45-60 days). The easiest time in a beef breeding female's life to get bred should be as a well-developed yearling heifer. Because of this, culling open heifers as soon as possible leads to:

- Improving the long-term reproductive performance of your cow herd. Reproductive traits are low in heritability; nevertheless, culling open heifers will improve the genetic potential for reproductive performance in your cow herd by eliminating the sub-fertile heifers. From a business

standpoint, reproductive success (percent calf crop weaned) is of critical economic importance in the cow-calf sector.

- Culling open yearling heifers right now still gives them the potential to be marketed as yearlings. At this age they still have the potential to finish out while in the A maturity group and harvest as fed cattle reaching the most valuable quality grades (Choice and Prime).

It is good management practice to breed heifers to calve a little ahead of our mature cow herd. It permits us to concentrate our management efforts during the heifer's calving season and, as importantly, to give them a little extra time to breed back and calve on schedule the following year.

With this in mind, hold your replacement heifers accountable. Cull opens as soon as practical to save on feed bills, capture their maximum value and improve the fertility of your cow herd. — **Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**

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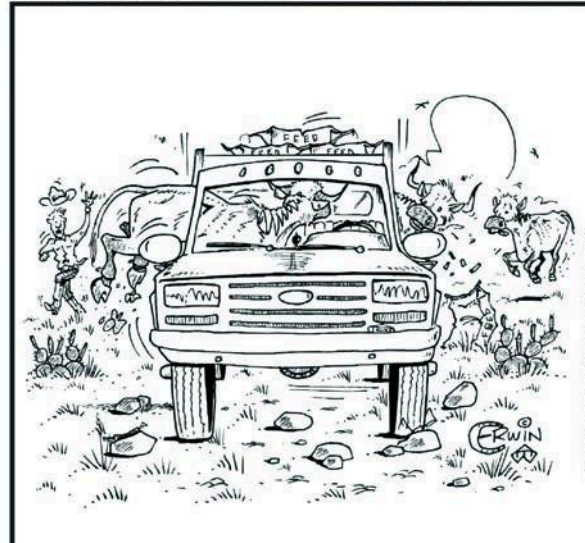
(Send calendar of events information to editorial@wlj.net.)

Nov. 12-14 – The Washington Cattlemen's and Cattlewomen's associations' 100th Annual

Convention and Tradeshow will be held at the Wenatchee Convention Center in Wenatchee, WA. Details: washingtoncattlemen.org/convention.

HOOVES & HORNS

BY A.W. ERWIN



"That's it, Misty! Snatch them keys so he can't run-off with this load of feed!"

Negotiations stall as Colorado River crisis looms again

Time is running out for the seven states in the Colorado River Basin, as well as 30 tribes and Mexico, to reach a long-term deal for managing the overtopped river.

The current guidelines and drought contingency plans for the river expire at the end of next year, and negotiators have until Nov. 11 to reach a new agreement or risk intervention by the federal government.

Meanwhile, after one of the river's driest years on record, reservoir levels at Lake Mead and Lake Powell have again declined, prompting warnings from federal officials and hydrological experts.

"The urgency for the seven Colorado River Basin states to reach a consensus agreement has never been clearer," Scott Cameron, acting assistant secretary for water and science at the U.S. Department of the Interior, said last month in a statement. "We cannot afford to delay."

The Colorado River supplies water and hydropower to 40 million people in the West and irrigates more than 5 million acres of farmland. During the past two decades, unprecedented drought has depleted the river's flow and threatened to sink reservoir levels below the threshold

needed to supply water and electricity to the Lower Basin.

The stakes are especially high for farmers in California's Imperial Valley, who are entitled to the largest share of the river and rely on it as their only source of irrigation for half a million acres of farmland.

Farmers in the desert region produce most of the vegetables grown in the U.S. during winter, and they employ one-sixth of the local workforce.

"Our water is a valuable resource for this community," said Mark McBroom, who farms in the Imperial Valley. "It's our primary industry driver."

Supplies from the Colorado River are allocated based on the seniority of each user's water rights and governed by a compact enacted in 1922.

Under the century-old law, 7.5 million acre-feet of water a year is promised to the Upper Basin, which includes Wyoming, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. The Lower Basin states of Nevada, Arizona and California are entitled to the same amount, while 1.5 million acre-feet goes to Mexico. That totals 16.5 million acre-feet. But in recent years, drought has reduced flows to a fraction over 12 million acre-feet.

"The fundamental problem we're contending with is declining hydrology with no end in sight," said J.B. Hamby, president of the Colorado River Commission of California and the state's lead negotiator. "How do we adapt to live with less?"

The seven basin states have yet to come to a consensus.

Last year, the Lower Basin agreed to long-term cuts of 1.5 million acre-feet a year during most conditions on the river. Under that proposal, which would take effect after 2026 and potentially last decades, California would forfeit about 10% of its allocation, with Nevada giving up 17% and Arizona 27%.

"That's still on the table," Hamby said.

But Lower Basin negotiators are looking for a commitment from the Upper Basin that in the most dire circumstances, those states would join the Lower Basin in enforcing cuts, he said. Thus far, they have only agreed to voluntary conservation.

The Upper Basin, which is less populated, has typically not used its full allocation, diverting around 4.5 million acre-feet a year, while population growth in Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and Las Vegas has stretched supplies in the Lower Basin.

Leaders from the Upper Basin have sought to protect the region's right to continue developing and using more water. At the meeting of the Upper Colorado River Commission on Sept. 17, Wyoming State Engineer Brandon Gebhart characterized the Lower Basin's demands as asking his state to "give up the future we were promised."

Hamby, who also serves as vice chairman of the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) board of directors, said that stance was "going in the opposite direction" of what's needed to protect the river.

Every state has "legal theories and positions," he said, but the reality on the river "requires some level of compromise."

While interstate negotiations continue, meetings have commenced among California water users to discuss where the state's anticipated cuts will come from.

The Imperial Valley's senior water rights will likely spare the region from forced reductions, growers and water managers said. But the valley, which is entitled to 3.1 million acre-feet a year—roughly one-quarter of the river's flow—may still play a role in the state's water balancing strategy.

Since 2003, IID has transferred 16% of its entitlement to cities such as San Diego in exchange for funding to install water-saving irrigation systems. From 2024 through the end of 2026, growers are forfeiting an additional 8% of their allocation through federally funded programs designed to boost reservoir levels on the river.

Under the short-term agreement, farmers are paid to stop irrigating hay crops for 45 to 60 days during summer, sacrificing two or three cuttings without—they hope—killing the perennial crops.

Farmers participating in the deficit irrigation program described mixed results, with some needing to reseed

about half their crop afterward, but they said the grower-proposed strategy could provide an option for future conservation.

"We're learning how to make those adjustments," said McBroom, who dried up most of his hay crops during the past two summers.

In each year, more than a quarter of the farmland in the Imperial Valley was enrolled in the program. Next year, it will be scaled back as IID reaches the 700,000 acre-feet of conservation over three years that the federal government has funded.

"We will have to truncate those programs unless Reclamation decides to increase that cap," IID Water Manager Tina Shields said, referring to

the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, to whom IID has submitted a request for additional short-term water conservation funding. The district has an environmental permit to conserve up to 900,000 acre-feet between 2024 and the end of next year.

In the long term, growers cautioned against siphoning more of the Imperial Valley's water supply to other parts of the state.

"We're going to draw a line in the sand," Imperial County farmer Ronnie Leimgruber said. "We don't want to solve a water crisis and create a food crisis." — **Caleb Hampton, Ag Alert assistant editor, California Farm Bureau**



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.)

Oct. 6 – The National Cattlemen's Beef Association has opened applications for spring 2026 semester internships in the association's Colorado headquarters and Washington, D.C. office. All internships run from January to May 2026 and are paid positions. Details: jobs.keldair.com/ncba.

Oct. 15 – The New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, in partnership with Purina Mills and Depot Farm and Ranch Agency, is thrilled to announce fall scholarship applications are open. Details: www.nmagriculture.org.

Oct. 15 – The New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association will welcome college interns at its 2025 Joint Stockmen's Convention in Albuquerque, NM. Details: 505-247-0584.

Oct. 19 – Students can compete to win up to \$15,000 in scholarship dollars during the Farming for the Future Social Media Scholarship Contest sponsored by South Dakota Farmers Union. Details: tinyurl.com/2jzzvhe9.



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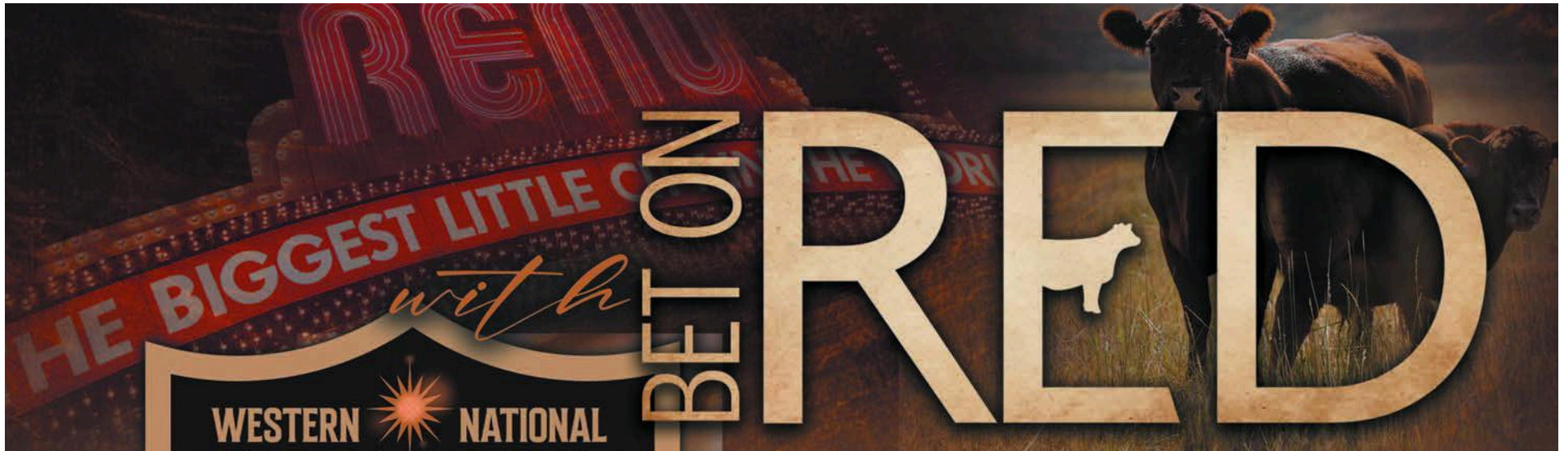
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