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INSIDE WLJ

DAIRY DILEMMA — Sonoma farmers face pivotal vote on Measure J that could reshape the dairy and poultry sectors. Page 4

HABITAT HARM — Greens report extensive damage to garter snake habitat due to livestock grazing. Page 6

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

Looking back to 1953, Nelson Crow's insights remind us how global events often shape even the most rural American industries, a theme that still resonates today. "It seems like a far cry from the explosion of the terrifying H-bomb in Russia to the serene grazing of cows on a Western cattle ranch, but there is a very important relationship between the two. For it means that the U.S. must step up its military preparedness, which in turn means that government spending must be maintained on a high level," wrote Nelson Crow in his October 1953 "Observations by the Publisher."

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Port strike costs agriculture producers billions

— Negotiations ongoing

The ongoing East Coast and Gulf Coast ports strike could cost agriculture producers $1.1 billion per week as 40% of the containerized exports move through these ports, according to a report from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

Agriculture groups have asked President Joe Biden to intervene in the strike between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX), warning that it will affect the agriculture economy.

"If port operations are stopped, the impact on the ag supply chain will quickly reverberate throughout agriculture and not only slow or shutdown operations, but also potentially lower farmgate prices," a letter to Biden read from dozens of agriculture groups.

Erin Borror, vice president for economic analysis at the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), said the strike will significantly impact the U.S. meat and livestock industries.

Borror said 45% of waterborne pork and 30% of waterborne beef exports move through the affected East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, totaling about $100 million in red meat shipments weekly. These ports have handled nearly $3 billion in U.S. red meat exports during the year's first seven months.

"As we learned from the COVID shipping issues, when there is one disruption in the shipping or in the supply chain, there are ripple or domino effects," Borror said. "And so we really need to think about the impacts indirectly on all U.S. red meat exports, which were valued at over $11 billion in the first seven months of the year."

Dan Halstrom, president of

See PORT STRIKE on page 10

Captain Albert E. Theberge/NOAA Corps

Major port strikes on the East Coast and Gulf Coast could lead to billions of dollars in losses for agricultural producers. Pictured here, thousands of shipping containers at the terminal at Port Elizabeth, NJ.

EPA amends its CWA complaint against ID ranch

— Provides imagery, data

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filed an amended complaint in the Clean Water Act (CWA) case against Idaho ranch Ace Black Ranches, following the case's dismissal by a federal court in Idaho.

On Aug. 29, Judge David C. Nye of the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho ruled to dismiss a CWA case alleging the Idaho ranch violated the act by discharging fill materials into the Bruneau River and adjacent wetlands when implementing new irrigation infrastructure. Nye said the agency failed to show the adjacent wetlands on the property had a continuous surface connection to navigable waters, nor did it comply with Sackett v. EPA.

"Until the government has provided more detailed allegations and information, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted and the court must dismiss," the court wrote in its order.

EPA was given 30 days to file an amended complaint, which the agency did on Sept. 27.

Updated complaint

The agency wrote in its amended complaint that Ace Black Ranches discharged pollutants into the Bruneau River and its adjacent wetlands, contending that both waters are waters of the U.S. (WOTUS). EPA continued that the ranch cleared and "leveled nearly all the ranch's wetlands" without required CWA permits.

The amended complaint includes mapped data from observing aerial photographs of the ranch property from 1940 to

See EPA COMPLAINT on page 6

Livestock groups concerned about old-growth forest plan

— Greens also raise alarm

Livestock groups have raised "grave" concerns over the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) draft plan for old-growth forest conservation, warning it could severely undermine public lands management. At the same time, environmental groups and lawmakers criticized the proposal for insufficiently protecting old-growth forests from logging, expressing worries about the future of the ecosystems.

Kaitlynn Glover, Public Lands Council (PLC) executive director, wrote on behalf of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, American Sheep Industry Association and the Association of National Grasslands that they have concerns regarding the agency's preferred alternative. They argue USFS is hindered by bureaucratic delays and self-imposed restrictions on active management, which has led to escalating suppression costs and vast untreated, fire-prone areas.

"Federal forests are facing increasing threats from fire, drought, insects and damage from unmanaged multiple use," the letter read. "PLC is concerned the preferred alternative would require additional staff burden to evaluate and approve even the most basic projects, but would represent another litigation risk for agencies attempting to carry out Congress' mandates."

Glover wrote they prefer the no-action alternative even though it has "yielded poor, high-risk results."

The letter continued that the preferred alternative places unsustainable budgetary and personnel demands on USFS, which is already dealing with severe financial constraints and cutting essential programs. These challenges will worsen as the agency focuses on large-scale forest plan amendments instead of prioritizing critical forest management work, the groups said.

Glover wrote that the environmental impact statement fails to

See PLC REMARKS on page 8

Cattle futures higher after cash trade rally

Cattle futures climbed higher after higher cash trade from the weekly Central Stockyards Fed Cattle Exchange auction saw 519 head sold of the 2,652 head offered, at $186.76 for steers in Texas and $188.50 using the Bid the Grid method.

Live cattle futures closed higher, with the October contract up almost $2 to $186 and the December contract up $1.58 to $186.40.

Cash trade had yet to develop, with about 4,300 head sold. Live steers sold for $187, and dressed steers sold for $295-300.

"In market fundamentals, there has been very light trade volume thus far in the negotiated market, with Iowa trading 900 steers at $187 yesterday and the national total around 3k head," Cassie Fish, market analyst, wrote on Thursday for The Beef. "Nebraska, Texas and Kansas had not traded any cattle as of yesterday and bids are scarce today. Last week's tops were $185 in the south, $187 in Nebraska and $188 in Iowa."

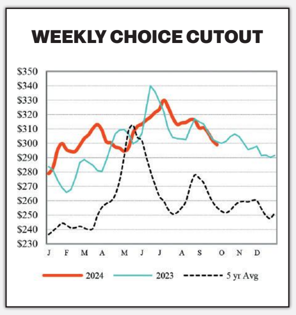
Cash trade through Sept. 29 totaled 81,235 head. Live steers averaged $186.25, and dressed steers averaged $293.76.

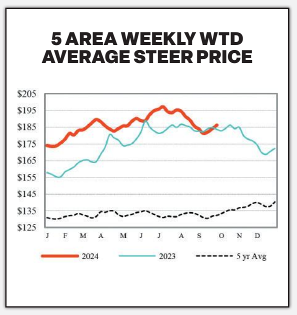
The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for the week of Sept. 23-30 was the following on a live basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $186.38.
- Formula net purchases: $185.31.
- Forward contract net purchases: $189.01.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: $184.75.

On a dressed basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $293.72.
- Formula net purchases: $292.07.
- Forward contract net purchases: $293.03.
- Negotiated grid net





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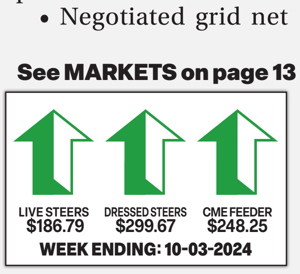

COMMENTS

Markets will improve

CROW

Cattle markets have turned stronger after the post-Labor Day lull. Packers enjoyed a profitable August and September. However, margins turned south as the beef cutout fell below $300. Now that they are experiencing losses, they will more than likely lower production speeds in an effort to advance the cutout value. They are now experiencing higher cattle costs.

Fed cattle markets have been higher the last two weeks. Packers bought 81,000 head on the cash market two weeks earlier, which is always a market maker. The futures market turned higher with the October contract reaching $187.42 on Wednesday; there doesn't seem to be much of a positive cash basis on fed cattle at this point.

Packers will be looking to build their rib and loin inventory for the holiday season, which usually carries the cutout into January. I'm sure the grocery retailers are making those orders now for the holidays; higher fed cattle prices typically follow this seasonal trend. There has been some fed cattle trade at the handful of fed cattle auctions for over $190 last week.

Feeder cattle also moved higher with the October and November contracts higher by $3.50-plus, moving the market to $249.70 and $248.55, respectively. This is despite the advance in corn prices, which are currently around $4.30 a bushel. Cattle feeders have enjoyed a 95-cent cost of gain on current closeouts.

Cattle feeders have already bought all the true yearling feeder cattle and will start buying lighter cattle to fill pens as they did during the as-low cattle inventory in 2015, they just need to get their hands on the inventory. They will find grass to hold those calves and contract with growyards just to hold inventory.

It doesn't appear that cow-calf producers are ready to start herd rebuilding quite yet. With the average age of producers at 63 years old, there may not be enough stamina to do so. There are not many bred heifer sales scheduled in November or December to suggest that trend. Those that will be offered are from outfits that have regular bred heifer sales every year or every other year, and I don't expect to see them bring more than two times the price of a calf.

Now I'm going to write about something I usually refrain from writing about, which is politics. Just in the past week, this country has experienced many setbacks both domestically and internationally.

Hurricane Helene in the Southeast has crippled that region. It is rare to see a hurricane maintain its strength and devastate Asheville, NC, a town where folks run to escape costal hurricanes. It's now five days at the time of this writing since the disaster and FEMA has yet to show up with basic solutions. Not a good response from the federal government.

Then we have a serious longshoreman strike, who are asking for a 77% pay raise. Union labor seems to have found some leverage and is holding the world hostage; nothing will come in or out of East Coast and Gulf ports. The Biden administration can legally intervene and put those folks back to work while they negotiate a fair contract, which would be best for all. It's sad when one group can hold the country hostage.

Then we have an escalating war in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. It's clear that Israel is going to retaliate from the recent Iranian attack, and I can't see how this won't end up in a full-out war, but I guess it already is for Israel. I'm convinced that the appeasement strategy isn't working.

And then there are so many other policy issues that haven't worked: immigration, economy, energy, climate change and the list goes on and on with failed policies. The political divide is becoming a serious issue and our politicians on both sides of the aisle need to tape up and get over partisan politics and start governing the country for the masses.

The election is less than 30 days away and we all know that this current administration can't do the job. I know that I'm preaching to the choir for most of you. For me, it's a classic "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" situation. Elections always come down to the lesser of the two evils, but for me, the choice is clear. — **PETE CROW**

KAY'S KORNER

STRIKE THREATENS MEAT TRADE

The U.S. and most countries around the world rely on trade with each other to support their economies and keep their citizens fed, clothed and otherwise provisioned. This trade depends on two factors: mutual trade agreements and an efficient and dependable means by which to move goods from country to country.

Much of the trade, as it has for many hundreds of years, relies on ships to perform that vital task. So, it is extremely disturbing that the U.S faces the first strike of East Coast and Gulf Coast dockworkers in 47 years. The strike, if prolonged, could wreak havoc on the export and import of beef, pork and chicken, plus a wide variety of animal food exports and imports.

Dockworkers from Maine to Texas went on strike on Oct. 1 after their current labor contract expired. The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), the union that represents about 45,000 people on the two coasts, started setting up picketing stations after work stoppage talks failed at the end of September. The strike involves 14 major ports on the two coasts. The last time the ILA struck in 1977, the port closure lasted six weeks, creating trade chaos.

The strike is preventing imports of beef that restaurants and retailers increasingly rely on to make hamburgers due to limited domestic supplies, traders and meat industry members told Reuters. Along with beef, imports of seafood and U.S. exports of chicken are being disrupted. Even short-term disruptions to shipments could snarl the broader U.S. food supply chain, experts and food importers said. If the strike stretches out, the result will be either shortages of some food products, price inflation or both, they told Reuters.

The beef sector could see ripple effects if the strike disrupts imports for more than a week, beef industry members told Reuters. In anticipation of the strike, suppliers to U.S. grocers and fast-food restaurants ramped up imports of frozen lean beef that is mixed with domestic supplies to make hamburger meat, three industry members told Reuters.

The strike could impose a significant economic impact on the U.S. meat industry, says Erin Borror of the U.S. Meat Export Federation. In the first seven months of 2024, the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports directly accounted for nearly $3 billion worth of U.S. red meat exports, the equivalent of approximately $100 million worth of product weekly. As the industry learned from the COVID shipping issues, when there is one disruption in the shipping or in the supply chain, there are ripple or domino effects, says Borror.

The shutdown occurs at a time of year when exports typically increase, Borror said. U.S. production and exports typically accelerate in the fourth quarter. With the seasonal increase in pork production, the industry really needs to be able to handle and accommodate more pork, including ahead of year-end holidays. The U.S. is exporting a record-large share of its pork production. More than 30% of all pork production goes to export when one includes variety meats. For beef, about 14% of all production, including variety meats, is exported. Both beef and pork exports are necessary for the profitability of the U.S. red meat industry, she said.

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) warned of long-term economic repercussions, potential animal food supply issues and escalating costs for farmers and pet owners. AFIA President and CEO Constance Cullman said the failure of the two sides to reach a labor agreement or of the Biden administration to intervene before the contract deadline means that U.S. animal food manufacturers face a dire trading situation that mirrors or could be worse than the days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With reduced access to imports of essential ingredients, packaging materials, equipment or other goods, production of animal food may be limited at best, said Cullman. In 2023, the overall export value for feed, feed ingredients and pet food stood at $13.4 billion, while imports stood at an estimated $5.4 billion. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, in 2023, grains, animal feed and hay accounted for 2.18 million metric tons (mt) or more than 70% of waterborne exports that ship from East Coast and Gulf Coast ports.

Beef exporters in Australia (and no doubt in New Zealand, Brazil and other countries) fear that a prolonged strike could cause severe disruptions to their efforts to export beef and other meat to the U.S. The U.S. is easily Australia's largest beef and lamb export market this year, accounting for 235,000 mt of chilled and frozen beef by the end of August, plus 57,000 mt of lamb and mutton. The biggest proportion of Australian chilled, higher quality beef exports arrive via West Coast ports, which are likely to be unaffected by the current dispute, says Beef Central. But the majority of frozen trimmings used for hamburgers arrive via the big East Coast ports like Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey. **— 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.)**

OBITUARY

Beatrice 'Betty' Peek; 1929-2024

Beatrice "Betty" Peek, wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend, passed away Sept. 6 at her home in Anderson, CA, surrounded by family and friends. She was born Nov. 17, 1929, at Fourth Crossing, CA, to Andrew and Bessie Gomes. She was the youngest of five children. Her father, Andy, died when she was 16 on their small ranch near San Andreas, CA. Her grandfather, Frank Gomes, came to California in 1850 during the Gold Rush and homesteaded in Calaveras County. That historic ranch is still in the family today and she was proud of that. After her father died, she was raised by her mother and two older brothers, Woodie and Cyril. After graduation from high school, her brother, Cyril, took her to San Francisco where she attended modeling school.

In 1950 she met the love of her life, Ellington Peek, at a dance in Mokelumne Hill in Calaveras County. They married just a few months later. They would have celebrated their 74th wedding anniversary on Nov. 26.

Ellington and Betty had four children: Andy (Rhonda), Callie Wood (Darrell), Laurie Norene (Jerry) and Brad (Gaby). Ellington's cattle buying business kept him on the road, so Betty was often playing both the mother and father role, but she was the best mother, always there for her family.

In 1956, Ellington and Betty started their first business adventure when they leased the Shasta Auction in Anderson, CA. Betty, being the businesswoman she was, was the one to actually take the sale receipts from the first sale to the bank in Angels Camp where they had their operating loan.

As time went on and the livestock auction business expanded, Ellington talked Betty into opening a small retail store in the yard next to the auction ring. She sold tack and jeans on sale day. She took that idea and ran with it. Betty started Shasta Western Shop and never looked back. After building the facilities in Cottonwood, she earned the nickname "Tornado Betty." She ended up expanding the store three times and became one of the leading Western wear stores in Northern California. People came from all over to buy what Betty had to sell as she knew how to buy merchandise that her clientele wanted. Betty retired at the age of 79 in 2009 after losing her oldest son, Andy, to pancreatic cancer. Even to this day, Betty was flattered to have people say how much they missed her store.

While Betty and Ellington both worked hard, they also enjoyed spending time at the ranch that she was raised on near San Andreas. Betty's work ethic and character can be attributed to her formidable years on the ranch as a young girl. They had no electricity growing up, and during grammar school, Betty had to ride a donkey to school. Ironically, she never liked riding horses since. Betty's father was one of 11 children, so there were always get-togethers with the large extended family. The ranch was always the place that Betty returned to.

Besides the Gomes Ranch, Betty loved the mountains around Mineral, CA. Early in their marriage, Betty, Ellington and the kids spent many summers at Feather River Meadows where they had different older cabins. In 1988, they bought a lot near Mineral. Betty, along with Barbara Holliday, spent many months clearing the land for the log cabin she would build. She loved being in the mountains at "the Cabin."

Four years ago, when most 90-year-olds are moving to a rest home, Betty and Ellington finally decided it was time to buy the house of their dreams. They left the house where they had lived for 60 years to fulfill Betty's lifelong dream to move to a new home in Anderson. The new location had the added blessing of being next door to daughter-in-law, Rhonda, and grandson, Mason.

Betty was always one to give advice to her family and loved them all. She leaves behind grandchildren: Mason Peek, Ramsey Wood (Trisha), Dallice Nuttall (Logan), Matthew Norene (Kaci), Courtney Trumm (Daniel); as well as bonus grandchildren Tarin Morrison (Dennis), J.P. Vansickle, Kelsey Alexander (James), Sara Garaventa (Roman), and Michael Uhalde. She was also blessed with many great-grandchildren: Tyler, Royal and Karla Wood; Franky, Clayton and Reese Nuttall; Carter, Brady, Levi and James Norene; Colton, Maverick and Jaxston Trumm; and bonus great-grandchildren Kayli Pfrimmer (Riley), Lexie Regelin and Kynnadee Regelin; Gavin, Tanner and Caleb Alexander; and Lew Garaventa.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that you consider making a donation to the Andy Peek Livestock Scholarship, P.O. Box 887, Cottonwood, CA 96022. A celebration of Betty's life will be held Oct. 26 at 11 a.m. in Shasta Hall at the Shasta District Fairgrounds (1890 Briggs St, Anderson, CA 96007).

WLJ

Letters to the editor: Letters for publication must be no longer than 675 words, must refer to an article that has appeared within the month, and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be shortened for space requirements. Send a letter to the editor by emailing editorial@wlj.net or mailing it to Western Livestock Journal, Attn: Editorial Dept., 6021 S Syracuse Way, Ste #103, Greenwood Village, CO 80111.

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Member IPC

PRESIDENT
LOGAN IPSEN
New Plymouth, ID
916-947-2392
logan@wlj.net

EDITORIAL@WLJ.NET
ANNA MILLER
Managing Editor
720-372-2353 • anna@wlj.net
CHARLES WALLACE
Contributing Editor
805-814-2017 • charles@wlj.net

ADVERTISING@WLJ.NET
KIRBY BRINCEFIELD
Operations Manager
720-716-3363
kirby@wlj.net
MIKE OLDCORN
Advertising Coordinator & Graphic Design
720-370-9095
mike@wlj.net
TRISTAN MARTIN
Advertising Coordinator & Graphic Design
720-372-1763
tristan@wlj.net

FIELD REPS
DEVIN MURNIN
Director of Field Services
Billings, MT • 406-696-1502
devin@wlj.net
JARED PATTERSON
Caldwell, ID
208-312-2386
jared@wlj.net
TY GROSHANS
Akron, CO
970-818-6016
ty@wlj.net

CIRCULATION@WLJ.NET
HANNAH JACKSON
Circulation Manager & Copy Editor
720-370-8275 • hannah@wlj.net

CLASSIFIED@WLJ.NET
TOM WHITE
Classifieds Manager
720-370-7977 • tom@wlj.net

PUBLISHER EMERITUS
PETE CROW
Publisher Emeritus • pete@wlj.net

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Sonoma livestock farms face threat in ballot measure

As voters cast their ballots in the coming weeks, farmers in Sonoma County, CA, say the future of the region's dairy and poultry farms is on the line. Measure J, a ballot initiative in Sonoma County, would cap within three years the number of animals each farm can raise, banning larger farms or forcing them to downsize.

"We would be out of business," said George Mertens, owner of Mertens Dairy in Sonoma.

He isn't speculating. The Coalition to End Factory Farming, a group of environmental and animal rights organizations supporting the measure, published a list of 21 "factory farms"—Mertens Dairy among them—that they said would be prohibited under the proposed law.

The measure specifically targets medium and large concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs, defined primarily by the number of mature animals farms have. In a report on the potential impacts of the measure, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) identified 11 such farms in the county.

Whatever the true number, farmers in the region say Measure J, if passed, could have grave consequences on the region's entire dairy and poultry sectors.

"If some of the larger farms in our community are no longer able to operate, it may lead to a collapse of the entire sector," said Albert Straus, owner of Petaluma-based Straus Family Creamery, which sources milk from seven dairies in Sonoma County.

Sonoma County's 42 organic dairies represent more than 40% of California's organic dairies and produce 13% of the nation's organic milk, according to the USDA. They are supported by a local supply chain of feed stores, farm service companies and creameries such as Straus and Clover Sonoma.

The critical mass of farms generates enough demand for the local feed stores to stay in business and enough milk to supply the creameries. Each link in the chain is essential to the others, farmers say.

But within the past three decades, Sonoma County has lost more than half its dairy farms, and recent years have brought major challenges such as the pandemic, bird flu, rising costs and shrinking margins.

"Everybody is on the edge of losing the critical mass of support services," Straus said. "We're at a tipping point, and this will take us over that point."

At risk is a model of dairy production that has gained international acclaim for its dedication to animal welfare, climate action and environmental stewardship.

To maintain their certification under the USDA National Organic Program, dairy farmers must implement practices that support biodiversity and comply with animal welfare standards, including putting their cows on pasture for at least 120 days each year. Many of the farms are subject to additional animal welfare criteria imposed by their buyers.

Nearly all the Sonoma County dairies targeted by Measure J as large CAFOs are family-owned, pasture-based farms. While groups supporting Measure J have sought to conflate the term with "factory farms," CAFO is a designation by the Environmental Protection Agency used to assess potential water quality risks, with no link to animal welfare or concentration.

"They're looking at it and just saying, 'Big is bad,'" said Doug Beretta, owner of Beretta Family Dairy in Santa Rosa and president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau.

Beretta said his herd of around 300 dairy cows grazes on 400 acres of irrigated pasture during the summers.

"We're not factory farms," he said.

In Sonoma County, dairy farms manage an average of 3.2 acres per mature dairy cow, according to UCCE, and unlike dairies in some regions, their wastewater management is regulated by a regional water quality board.

"Sonoma County is home to some of California's best agricultural stewards whose farms provide numerous climate and environmental benefits such as storing carbon in soil, limiting energy-intensive urban sprawl, and providing wildlife habitat and open space to recharge groundwater," Renata Brillinger, executive director of the California Climate and Agriculture Network, said in a statement.

The proposed law says it is needed to protect the environment, public health, farmworkers, animals and small farms of Sonoma County. The measure cites studies that have linked CAFOs with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, toxic waste, climate change, worker injuries and illnesses, and other negative impacts.

"I don't believe in Band-Aid fixes to a systemic problem," Kristina Garfinkel, lead organizer for the Coalition to End Factory Farming, said at a Measure J debate held last month in Santa Rosa. "Factory farming is hurting all of us, and it's time that we eliminate them from our food system."

The coalition has failed to convince many of the stakeholders it says the measure is intended to benefit. It sought support from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and the Sonoma County Democratic Party, Garfinkel said.

"We wanted this to be a collaborative thing," she said, "but we were ghosted, and we never heard anything."

Both groups have come out against Measure J, as have advocates for environmental conservation, climate action, sustainable agriculture and disadvantaged populations. Measure J is also officially opposed by the Sonoma County Republican Party, more than a dozen county Farm Bureaus, and groups representing realtors, law enforcement, labor unions, land conservation, food safety and other interests.

"If this measure passes, individuals, restaurants and school cafeterias won't stop buying poultry and dairy products. And they shouldn't. These are important parts of many people's diets," Wendy Krupnick, president of the Sonoma County chapter of CAFF, said in a statement.

"They should have this choice as well as the choice to buy local, quality products from family-owned farms rather than imports from corporations outside Sonoma County."

The UCCE report, which analyzed the consequences of all animal agriculture being eliminated in Sonoma County, found that Measure J would likely harm Sonoma County's climate efforts, force it to import products from farther away, raise food costs and cause farmworkers to be displaced from their farm residences and forced out of the county due to a lack of affordable alternatives.

Dairies in the county employ around 300 people and provide free housing and utilities to more than 600 workers and their family members, according to the report.

A report by California State University, Chico, estimated the demise of Sonoma County's dairy and poultry production would directly result in the loss of $259 million in economic output and 700 jobs. Including indirect and induced impacts, Measure J could cost the region $418 million and more than 1,300 jobs, the report said.

"There is no precedent or science to justify the need for Measure J," said Dayna Ghirardelli, executive director of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau.

Farmers in Sonoma County have cautioned that Measure J's supporters, if successful in their county, could expand their efforts to other parts of California, the nation's No. 1 milk-producing state.

"If they win here," Beretta said, "it will go through this state." **—Caleb Hampton, Ag Alert assistant editor, California Farm Bureau Federation**

New auction platform lets consumers bid on meat

Putting the consumer in the driver's seat to purchase high-quality beef directly from the ranchers who produced it just got easier with a new auction platform called Bid on Beef.

"The buyer gets to decide what they want to purchase. You get to pick the cuts, you get to pick the price, and we are just showing you the best of the best. You tell us what it's worth," explained Bid on Beef founder Chris Earl. "It's really a win-win partnership and relationship that we're building with these great families on the land and these families in the urban areas that we want to serve."

Earl has seen firsthand the need for high-end meat. He had a meat company in Chicago for more than 20 years. But he knew it could be done in a way to get the beef distributed in a wider area.

"Commodity pricing was keeping the price of high-quality meat down from what it probably should have been," he said. "You just don't find the quality of meat we have in America anywhere else in the world, and we wanted to offer this product to the public and let the buyer decide what it is worth."

Earl's idea that he had been formulating for the past 10 years was finally brought forward in 2024. He built the CK6 Consulting team to plan and market the Bid on Beef platform, which is just one of the services they provide for customers in the cattle business. Wes Tiemann serves as auctioneer for Bid on Beef sales. Aaron Duvall provides insight from his ownership of an Angus ranch, as well as the Texas Beefhouse restaurant in Whitehouse, TX. Kody Fleeman and Amanda Radke help with marketing, planning and sales.

Linda Salant, one of the first consumer buyers of beef from this platform, found the Bid on Beef option to be a great way to purchase exactly what she wants and have it delivered to her front door.

"I'm an absolute carnivore, so all I eat is meat and animal byproducts, and I'm part of a larger community of carnivores. We want to buy meat and talk about the sustainability and quality of the meat," said the North Carolina native. "A lot of people are not satisfied with just going to the supermarket and buying the meat they know nothing about, but I like to know more."

Finding a rancher close by isn't always feasible for people in urban areas. Bid on Beef gives them an option to purchase just what they want, know how the meat is raised and have it delivered frozen within two days of the auction. The platform allows consumers to purchase lots of specific cuts of steak, ground beef or roasts.

"Knowing the quality will be the best available really provides the consumer customer with the perfect opportunity to purchase what we want, and we can decide what price we want to pay for it," Salant explained. "Plus, it's fun to be able to bring out my competitive nature and bid on what I want on an auction."

Auction process

Bid on Beef is offered in two ways: a live or online auction. During a live auction, individuals bid on the cuts of meat mirroring how cattlemen would purchase a bull or female at an auction on the ranch. Some of the Bid on Beef auctions are held in conjunction with production sales on the farm.

In the online timed auction, buyers must register with a secure credit card on file and then can decide which lot to try to purchase. When a potential buyer is outbid, they receive notification via text or email so they can rebid on the lot, if desired. As the sale comes to an end, a lot will close after it has no more bids in a two-minute period, and then buyers will be notified if they have won the lot.

"We are trying several different ways of selling the beef. We are even having a meal at a production sale to give people the opportunity to eat the beef that they will be bidding on," Radke said. "You can see the cattle, and you can stockpile your freezer all at the same time."

Radke has been working with producers to develop the best way to market their program to buyers and consumers. The Bid on Beef experience does have some parameters to provide a great product.

Bid on Beef handles the collection of payments from customers and offers sellers a reduced shipping rate to send purchases across the country. A small commission is collected on each sale, and sellers are paid as soon as the beef has been shipped after the auction. There is no membership fee to be part of the platform, as they are solely focused on results in the sale.

CK6 Consulting has specialized in the Angus seedstock business for 16 years and, in the last five years, has helped its clients exceed $200 million in sales. It works with a group of purebred Angus producers throughout the year. No matter if the Bid on Beef sellers are CK6 clients or not, they provide advice on genetics, feed, beef cut specifications, shipping and packaging, and any other aspect of the direct-to-consumer beef-selling business.

The group wants to provide a great beef-eating experience for buyers and is committed to selling USDA-inspected Angus and Wagyu beef on the auctions that is American raised, fed, processed, packaged and delivered by the individual cattle-ranching families.

"With our extensive experience and knowledge in the Angus breed, we have identified a niche in the market and the ideal customer we want to serve. Our focus is Angus beef or an F1 cross with Wagyu, primarily so we can hit the premium markets that prime beef can capture," Radke explained.

In one of the first pilot auctions with Texas Beefhouse, 13 lots of 150 pounds of beef were sold in 90 minutes and averaged just under $31 per pound. This is the same amount some of these cattle families would sell in three or four months at farmers markets.

"The motivation for me is to keep good cattle-ranching families doing what they love, which is raising cattle and raising great beef, but also freeing up their time so they can sell the beef in one or two auctions and have more time to spend on the ranch and with their families," Earl said. "It's really exciting to see the culmination of their hard work."

Moving forward, Radke said they don't have a specific number of sellers in mind but have recently interviewed more than 130 potential sellers on the platform and have verified 22.

"Our intention is to vet the best ranchers in the country, who can provide a consistent, high-quality product delivered straight to our customers. Every ranching family we have interviewed is at a different point in their beef business, so we provide consultations, shipping and packaging advice, and marketing strategies to these folks. And, just like cattle sales, we believe competition will rise the best to the top and make the best even better," she explained.

Interest has been growing since starting sales this summer. For the remainder of 2024, there are two to three Bid on Beef auctions per week.

"Our challenge and passion is reaching our target customer in urban areas, and we spend a great deal of time and effort working to connect with these folks who want to source USA premium beef from a trusted ranching family," Radke stressed. — **Jennifer Carrico, DTN senior livestock editor**

CWA case could result in daily fines of $66K

EPA COMPLAINT
(from page 1)

present day, light detection and ranging imagery, maps from the National Wetlands Inventory and maps of soil types, and assessing the wetlands during 2021 and 2023 inspections on the property.

The complaint also included an aerial map of where the agency alleges wetlands are located on the property, with eight connection points highlighted on the river.

"Most of these wetlands are adjacent wetlands meaning they abut the Bruneau River and thus have a continuous surface connection to the Bruneau River," EPA wrote.

The agency said Ace Black Ranches has conducted activities related to sand and gravel mining on the property in and around the Bruneau River and adjacent wetlands since October 2017 through at least 2022. EPA analyzed aerial imagery that showed sand and gravel mining operations during the time period and also included photos of heavy equipment found on the site during a 2021 inspection.

Photographs also showed roads allegedly built by the ranch to cross the Bruneau River. "This (second) road effectively dammed the Bruneau River, causing water to back up and allowing very little water to flow down the river," EPA said.

The agency continued that the ranch's "clearing and grading, roadbuilding, bank stabilization, and sand and gravel mining activities resulted in the unauthorized discharge of 'pollutants'... to waters of the United States."

During all of these activities, the ranch did not have a permit under Section 404 of the CWA, EPA added.

The agency concluded its amended complaint by contending the ranch violated the CWA through illegal discharges of pollutants and illegal discharges of dredged and/or fill materials.

EPA asked the court to declare the ranch in violation of the CWA, permanently enjoin the ranch from discharging to WOTUS, require the ranch to completely restore impacted portions of the river and wetlands at the ranch's expense, and assess penalties for each violation of the CWA.

Each day of discharge would constitute a separate violation of the CWA, and the ranch faces civil penalties of up to $66,712 per day per violation. **— Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor**

Greens claim livestock grazing damaged species' habitat

Environmental groups continue to assert that livestock grazing on public lands in Arizona and New Mexico is damaging critical habitat for the northern Mexican garter snake.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Maricopa Audubon Society released a report in mid-September titled "Grazed to Death: Livestock Production Adversely Modifying Most Critical Habitat for Northern Mexican Garter Snakes on Public Lands in Arizona."

The report comes after the groups' complaint this summer against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for what the groups call a violation of the Endangered Species Act for allowing grazing along the Big Sandy River.

"The riparian forests, the river that they adjoin and protect, and the wildlife that use these habitats (including the flycatcher, the cuckoo and the garter snake), have been damaged, degraded, and destroyed by livestock grazing authorized, managed, and allowed by BLM, despite documentation of that damage provided by the plaintiffs," the groups wrote in the suit.

In their latest report, the environmentalists claim cattle grazing has damaged nearly 60% of the garter snake's critical habitat. In 2021, USFWS designated about 20,000 acres of critical habitat in Arizona and New Mexico for the snake, with more than half of the habitat acres on public lands.

"Field biologists documented cows concentrated in streams and riparian areas, often leaving bare, denuded ground, destroyed vegetation and streambanks, and polluted, feces-laden water," the Center for Biological Diversity said. "Cows were often grazing illegally, in places where grazing is prohibited."

The group continued that damage to the snake's critical habitat included parts of Tonto National Forest and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

The July complaint by the Center and Maricopa Audubon Society said that livestock grazing also damaged nearly 60% of the western yellow-billed cuckoo critical habitat in Arizona and New Mexico.

"Given this pattern of neglect, I question whether these federal agencies want struggling species to survive at all," said Chris Bugbee, Southwest conservation advocate at the Center. "They've systematically chosen to put the interests of ranchers over the plants and animals they're charged with protecting."

In a court document filed Sept. 24 with the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, the government broadly refuted the July complaint's claims. The agencies denied the complaint's allegations and also denied that the groups were entitled to any relief. **— Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor**

What to do when calves experience coccidiosis

Newly weaned calves that have been moved to a different location from their mothers and now have a grain-based diet offered to them can experience stress as a result of these changes. In some cases, that will make them more prone to disease, said Kansas State (K-State) University veterinarians speaking on the Beef Cattle Institute's recent "Cattle Chat" podcast.

One disease found in calves post-weaning is coccidiosis, K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said.

"Coccidiosis is caused by an internal parasite that is a single-cell organism that burrows into the intestinal wall and causes damage," he said. "The coccidia organisms are commonly found in the environment, but they can cause a problem with calves that are experiencing stress."

Larson said the telltale sign of this parasite is when calves are producing bloody diarrhea.

K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said that is quite different from the stool changes that happen when the calves are exposed to a different feed formulation.

"When calves are put on a new diet, their stool may be looser than normal, but it will have a consistency to it," Lancaster said. "Calves with coccidiosis will have watery and dark stools, which come from the blood in the intestine. You won't see that with healthy calves transitioning to a grain-type diet."

For beef producers who think this is happening in their herd, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said, "The first step is to get the disease diagnosed, and that can be made from a fecal sample."

He added: "There are several treatment options available, so just work with your local veterinarian to find the best one for your herd and then look at ways you can adjust your management to reduce the risk of a future outbreak." **— K-State Research and Extension**

LEGAL LEDGER

Farm bill extension deadline expires

The 2018 Farm Bill extension expired on Sept. 30 after lawmakers failed to come to an agreement ahead of the deadline. After passing a short-term funding bill, Congress now has until the end of the year to come up with a new farm bill before benefits run out. If lawmakers fail to pass a new extension or a new farm bill by the end of the year, current legislation dies and the process begins all over again with a new Congress in January. "You could have a new party that's in control, and they may choose to completely scrap the previous bill and start over, which could add significant lengths to the process," said Dr. Bart Fischer, co-director for Texas A&M's Agricultural and Food Policy Center.

USCA adopts anti-mRNA vaccine policy

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) adopted interim policy in August regarding the use of mRNA vaccines. The group opposes the use of ribonucleic acid (RNA) gene therapy platform technology inoculations in meat- or milk-producing animals until there is scientifically sound raw data for open review on the health, safety and fertility effects, USCA said. "Ensuring this technology remains transparent to those in the industry as well as those in the marketplace will be key to protecting both the domestic and international markets for U.S. beef," the organization said.

Opposition against Denver slaughter ban

A ballot measure that would ban slaughter in the city and county of Denver continues to garner more opposition, with some surprising opponents. Ordinance 309 is opposed by agriculture groups as the measure targets Denver's one remaining processing facility, Superior Farms, the largest lamb packing facility in the U.S. Recently, former Denver City Councilwoman Kendra Black filed a campaign finance complaint against the measure's proponents, Pro-Animal Future and Pro-Animal Denver, alleging the groups concealed the identities of the supporting donors along with other required information about expenditures. In addition, the Central Committee of the Denver Democrat party endorsed a "no" position against the measure on a 207-12 vote. The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, Service Employees International Union 105, Denver Area Labor Federation, Denver Pipefitters Local #208, the Teamsters Union and the Working Families Party also oppose the measure, according to a Complete Colorado report.

Beef price-fixing lawsuit amended

A federal court granted plaintiffs in a beef price-fixing case the ability to amend their lawsuit to narrow their claims and strengthen their allegations. The plaintiffs' suit is on behalf of feeder cattle producers who sold cattle to beef packers, alleging the packers conspired to fix fed cattle prices. "Plaintiffs allege that defendants conspired to suppress the price of fed cattle they bought in the United States beginning no later than January 2015, and that defendants' coordinated conduct caused a collapse in fed cattle prices and a consequent collapse in feeder cattle prices, which harmed plaintiffs," the complaint read. The initial complaint represented cow-calf ranchers, but the amended complaint will include indirect sellers who sold feeder cattle directly to a feedlot or finishing operation that then sold to one of the Big Four defendants. The amended complaint also includes new details on animals sold, and alleges packers tracked the price of feeder cattle and hedged futures to manage their risk.

CO ranchers urge CPW to halt wolf releases

A total of 26 organizations representing Colorado's agricultural and livestock producers submitted a petition with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Commission to delay wolf introductions until livestock depredations are addressed. CPW announced several weeks earlier that it planned to introduce more wolves this coming winter after sourcing wolves from Canada. Petitioners said 24 confirmed livestock deaths have occurred since wolves were introduced in the state and that CPW has insufficiently addressed the conflicts. The petition requests a clear definition of "chronic depredation," proactive development of non-lethal measures, vulnerability site assessments, the development of a rapid response team and increased local collaboration efforts. CPW also recently announced it planned to capture and relocate an uncollared gray wolf believed to be the fifth member of the Copper Creek Pack, which was relocated in September following chronic depredations.

Greens protest Western Solar Plan

A group of environmental groups filed a formal protest against the Bureau of Land Management's Western Solar Plan, alleging the plan does not protect the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. The groups said the plan fails to offer protections for the cultural trail that spans 2,700 miles across Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. "BLM's current proposal disregards the protection of a nationally significant historic trail that is supposed to be safeguarded by federal law," said Chandra Rosenthal, PEER public lands director.

Plan now to purchase your hay supplies

Feed inputs often make up the largest portion of a producer's costs. With that in mind, we do need to be aware of a few principles in purchasing hay.

- Determine whether you are paying on a per ton or per bale basis.
- Know the hay quality you are purchasing to spend your feeding dollars more effectively.
- Buy bales that are tightly rolled, dense and have square shoulders that don't sag.
- Net wrap helps bales shed water.
- Bales should be free of mold, weed seeds and dangerous levels of nitrates (depending on the forage species).

The class of animals (heifers versus cows, dry versus lactating, thin versus fat condition, etc.) that will consume the hay will determine the quality of hay needed. If possible, buy hay that will best match those requirements. However, quality of hay can be supplemented with additional protein and energy sources to meet those requirements if higher quality hay is hard to source.

Use a lab analysis to determine hay quality. Core sample 15-20 bales from each lot and send the samples to a lab for testing. Tests can cost around $18 for Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) to $28.50 for wet chemistry. These tests calculate moisture content, crude protein, relative feed value, relative forage quality, and additional information including mineral content and nitrate levels.

Storing and feeding hay

Livestock producers should locate hay bale yards in a well-drained area out in the open with easy access in the winter for feeding. Rows should line up north to south, at least 3 feet apart, so sunlight will reach a greater portion of the bale. This will help evaporate moisture from the bales and the ground around them quickly.

If possible, weigh bales with a scale to get accurate weights when planning your winter feeding. If you are feeding hay that may contain noxious/invasive weeds or non-native forage species, feed this hay in a limited area, so if a problem does develop, it can be kept isolated and, hopefully, controlled.

While Nebraska's hay production has rebounded from the lows of 2022, the recent dry conditions remind us that checking hay inventories, prices, and forage quality now can mitigate potential feeding challenges during the colder months. — **Randy Saner and T.L. Meyer, Nebraska Extension educators**

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. 7 – The 2025 spring internship application process for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the Public Lands Council is now open. Details: tinyurl.com/2xce6cjp.

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

Oct. 27 – Certified Angus Beef is seeking applications for its 2025 summer internship program. Four internships are available to join the communications and marketing teams. Details: CABcattle.com/internship.

Old-growth forest plan to be finalized on Jan. 1

PLC REMARKS
(from page 1)

adequately assess social, economic and socioeconomic impacts, including grazing opportunities on USFS lands. The groups said the plan overlooks thousands of forest allotments that rely on effective forest management to maintain grazing conditions and mitigate the growing risk of catastrophic wildfires.

"While PLC appreciates the need for forest management and land use plans can remain responsive to current needs, we believe the proposed actions will make it more difficult for the agency to properly balance multiple use while mitigating the ever-present threat of fire risk," the letter concluded. "We remain concerned that 'protecting old growth' is simply being used as a proxy to reduce the agency's tools to manage forested ecosystems."

While the groups are concerned about managing old-growth forests, lawmakers and environmental groups urged stronger protections.

A letter from 33 Congress members to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urged USFS "to take concrete steps to conserve mature forests with the intention of nurturing future old-growth forests."

The lawmakers emphasized that language protecting existing old-growth forests from degradation is critical to the amendment's success. While they support the USFS' effort to conserve future old-growth forests, they urged the agency to strengthen protections for both mature and old-growth forests in the final environmental impact statement.

Environmental groups expressed similar sentiments, stating the proposal does not protect old-growth forests that confront the climate change crisis.

"The National Old Growth Amendment should be a transformative policy that positions the United States as an international leader in harnessing nature to confront the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis," the coalition of groups said in a statement. "We hope to see the nationwide old-growth amendment strengthened so it can become a centerpiece of our nation's climate and conservation legacies."

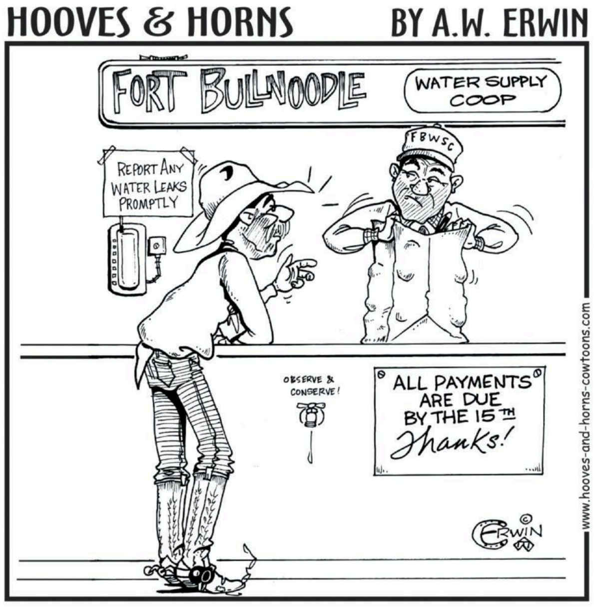
USFS considered four alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement, including the no-action alternative and a preferred alternative proposing strategic amendments to existing land management plans (LMPs). The preferred alternative would add goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and monitoring requirements to each plan based on a detailed review of forested conditions.

According to an appendix of the impact statement, LMPs were grouped into four categories. The first category is primarily unforested grasslands, and limited action would occur in forested areas. Categories 2, 3 and 4 LMPs would be amended with the complete set of proposed plan components, with exceptions only if unique circumstances justify not implementing the full suite of proposed components.

Category 2 units with existing old-growth components would see minor adjustments, Category 3 units lacking restrictive standards would experience noticeable management changes, and Category 4 units with old-growth potential but no components would undergo significant shifts in old-growth management.

According to USFS, a decision and implementation is estimated on Jan. 1, 2025. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

HOOVES & HORNS **BY A.W. ERWIN**



"Miss Abernathy paid me in zucchini squash fer gatherin'an' haulin'her steers,... *So **yes,..** yer gittin' paid in squash too."*

Biological time lag of heifer retention

It is evident the pace of expansion of the U.S. cow inventory will be slower than past cycles. Several factors will continue to contribute to the slow rebuild. Our beef cow inventory continues to tighten and pushes market prices to record levels. With regard to heifer retention, the questions most of us are asking:

- Will increased heifer retention (at some point in the future) result in even higher prices?
- How long will these prices last?

Good questions. Past cattle cycles indicate the answer to the first is most likely yes. When producers begin to retain more heifers to develop as herd replacements, it results in fewer calves going to market.

The answer to the second question is this week's topic. The biological time lag of beef production. The reality of beef production is that what competing animal proteins can accomplish in weeks (broiler production) or months (pork production), will take those of us in the cow-calf sector years to accomplish. The biology of the beef animal is why.

If we selected a high percentage of our spring-born heifer calves to develop as replacements this fall, next spring those properly developed replacement heifers would be ready to breed by 14-15 months of age. The following spring (2026), those heifers would calve at 2 years of age. Those calves would be ready to market at weaning in the fall of 2026. Those calves would become yearlings in 2027 and eventually become marketed as finished "A Maturity" finished cattle or beef carcasses six to seven months after entering the feedyard.

As of now, there is little evidence of large-scale heifer retention across the country. If and when we begin to retain heifers (on a large scale), we are a couple of years away from increasing the cow inventory, and at least 30 months away from increasing the supply of weaned calves, and so on, regarding yearlings and fed cattle. As is always the case in the beef cattle industry, other factors can and will have an impact on the market.

That being said, the basic fundamentals of supply and demand favor strong prices for all categories of cattle until cow inventory begins to increase, and that will take some time. — **Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**

Story Shorts

DOI announces Colorado River agreements

The Department of the Interior (DOI) announced significant progress in ensuring the long-term health of the Colorado River System. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton, alongside leaders from key water districts in California and Arizona, signed five water conservation agreements supported by President Joe Biden's Investing in America agenda. These agreements will conserve over 717,000 acre-feet (an acre-foot is 325,851 gallons) of water by 2026, and through long-term deals with the Gila River Indian Community, will save an additional 73,000 acre-feet over the next decade to advance water conservation in the West.

Lawmakers address Boar's Head outbreak

Several members of Congress sent separate letters to Boar's Head and USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regarding "egregious sanitation problems," and asked how lack of oversight resulted in the deaths of 10 people. In a letter to Boar's Head, lawmakers demanded answers regarding the company's handling of food safety concerns to prevent future deadly outbreaks. They questioned whether the facility tested nonfood-contact surfaces for Listeria monocytogenes, how often these tests were conducted, why managerial staff failed to act sooner and how they would be held accountable for repeated noncompliance. The lawmakers also asked how the company plans to assure the public that other Boar's Head facilities are not facing similar issues. In a second letter to FSIS, lawmakers expressed outrage that no enforcement actions had been taken against Boar's Head despite 69 records of noncompliances at the facility in the year leading up to the outbreak. They demanded details about the scope of the contract with Virginia for inspecting the Boar's Head facility, questioning whether state inspectors performed all duties and how corrective actions were managed. Additionally, they requested records of USDA inspector visits to the facility, including the frequency, length and findings of those inspections.

USDA launches aid for distressed farmers

The USDA has launched the Distressed Borrowers Assistance Network to support financially struggling farmers and ranchers. This initiative connects borrowers with personalized assistance through partnerships with organizations like Farm Aid and land-grant universities. The network will train community-based organizations on farm loan policies to better assist producers in navigating USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) financing options. The network aims to stabilize distressed borrowers by providing one-on-one support, helping them overcome financial challenges and continue contributing to the agricultural economy. The network comes after FSA announced changes to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program, with online loan payments and applications combined with assistance tools. For more information, visit a local FSA office or fsa.usda.gov.

JBS partners with GreenGas

JBS USA and GreenGasUSA partnered to produce renewable natural gas (RNG) at several JBS beef and poultry processing facilities across the U.S. This collaboration will enhance JBS' methane capture capabilities, converting biogas from wastewater into pipeline-quality RNG. Initial installations will occur at JBS facilities in Nebraska, Utah and South Carolina, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "At JBS and Pilgrim's, we're committed to reducing the impact of food production by partnering with stakeholders to reduce our carbon footprint," said Wesley Batista Filho, CEO of JBS Foods USA. According to JBS, the partnership, expected to be completed by the end of 2025, will help displace emissions equivalent to 60 million car miles or 26 million pounds of coal burned annually.

Man sentenced for breeding hybrid sheep

Arthur "Jack" Schubarth of Vaughn, MT, was sentenced to six months in prison for two felony wildlife crimes, including violating the Lacey Act, as part of a nearly decade-long scheme to create giant sheep hybrids for captive hunting. Schubarth, owner of Sun River Enterprises LLC, conspired with others between 2013 and 2021 to breed larger hybrid sheep using illegal genetic material from Marco Polo argali sheep and wild-hunted bighorn sheep. His goal was to sell the hybrids to game ranches despite Montana laws prohibiting the sale and use of game animal parts.

CPW investigating mountain lion killing

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is investigating the death of a mountain lion that was killed by a man with a shovel near Cañon City, CO, after it approached the man and his dog at a campground. The man alleged that the 95-pound female lion came within 10 feet of his husky, prompting him to strike the lion in the head. A CPW officer's preliminary findings suggest the man acted in self-defense. The lion had injuries on its paw and back, and its body was sent for necropsy. Although CPW continues to investigate the incident, the agency said the incident does not qualify as a mountain lion attack because the man suffered no injuries and was never touched by the animal.

Feeding weaned calves to tackle respiratory challenges

Respiratory challenges come with a hefty price tag, but there's an innovative solution to help tackle those calf health challenges head on when weaning calves. Calf health challenges are costly and widespread. And despite improving vaccinations, management practices and genetics, USDA feedlot data shows respiratory challenges aren't decreasing.

One in five head is affected by respiratory challenges costing the beef industry about $1 billion annually. It's a staggering economic loss, but overcoming it starts at the producer level. What can you do to join in the fight against respiratory challenges? Start by monitoring calf health and the impact of respiratory challenges on your operation.

Studies show a respiratory challenge could cut a calf's rate of gain in half for 30 days or more. Assuming healthy calves gain around 3 pounds per day, that's 45 potential lbs. lost per calf. And guess what? Health-challenged calves don't catch up. If the days spent feeding weaned calves is equal, you've lost 45 lbs. of outweight compared to a healthy calf.

Based on a $1.20/cwt market price, that's $54 of lost profit per calf. Add an extra $30 for time and money to doctor the calf and each respiratory-challenged calf can cost approximately $90. However, there's more to the story. Respiratory challenges at weaning can lead to longer-term consequences that often go unnoticed.

Overlooked consequences

Following the same math, if a respiratory challenged heifer gets bred the first time, she'll calve 45 lbs. lighter than her contemporaries. And she's still growing, so it takes more for her to catch up body condition post-calving.

A first-calf heifer that is playing catch-up on body condition will have a hard time getting bred back. If she does breed back, it will probably be later in the breeding season. And, the later she gets bred, the further she will fall behind in subsequent breeding seasons.

Additionally, producers who retain ownership could miss out on profit for every respiratory-challenged calf they send to the feedlot.

Cattle never diagnosed with respiratory challenges have heavier carcasses and more muscle on the rail, meaning a more valuable carcass. But even if you don't retain ownership, calf health status affects your reputation. Healthy cattle build a positive reputation with cattle buyers. A good reputation can result in better prices and less time spent marketing.

Proactive strategies when weaning calves and innovative feed technology can make having more healthy calves a reality. Keeping calves healthy begins well before weaning. It starts with proper sanitation, vaccination, weaning calves using low-stress methods and feeding weaned calves proper nutrition.

When weaning calves, they face many barriers to health while their immune system is at its most vulnerable. Even the best calf health management can be infiltrated by respiratory challenges.

Keeping calves healthy means less time and money invested in reacting to respiratory challenges, putting more potential dollars back in producers' pockets. — **Purina Animal Nutrition**

When is an hour of operator labor not just that?

Some cow-calf operations hire a significant amount of labor, but for a lot of these operations the majority of labor is unpaid operator labor.

The classic economist approach to valuing unpaid labor is to value it at its opportunity cost. If the farmer could be making $20 per hour doing something else, their labor on the farm should be valued at $20 per hour and be treated as an expense. On the surface, it's hard to argue with this logic, but it is also not the way that most farmers think about the value of their time.

For this reason, I tend not to treat labor as an expense, but instead make the point that any return must be sufficient to adequately compensate the operator for the time they spend. This allows each individual in the room to evaluate whether that return is sufficient and place whatever value they feel is appropriate on their time.

One danger of this approach involves not fully considering other expenses that often accompany operator labor. To illustrate this, consider two very different operator labor hours—an hour spent manually clearing fence rows and an hour spent on a tractor baling hay. A producer clearing fence rows may be using a set of loppers to cut small saplings, they may have a smaller set of clippers for briars and weeds, and they may even have a chainsaw they use on occasion when needed.

An overly eager economist could talk about depreciation on that chainsaw and the other equipment, as well as the fuel being used when the chainsaw is operating, but clearly these costs are pretty minimal. The point here being that the vast majority of the cost associated with an hour clearing fence rows is time.

On the contrary, time is a much smaller portion of the total cost of an hour spent baling hay. Beyond the hour of labor, the producer baling hay is running both a tractor and hay baler. Fuel costs are much more significant, as is depreciation on both pieces of equipment. The same can be said of maintenance and repairs associated with the additional use of the equipment. Choosing not to place a value on an hour spent clearing fences is one thing, but not placing a value on time spent baling hay is very different.

Obviously, these are two extremes here, but hopefully it helps to illustrate the point. Sometimes an hour of operator labor is not just an hour of operator labor, especially if there are a lot of other expenses being incurred during that hour.

Most farmers prefer time spent running machinery over time spent doing more manual labor. In fact, many producers are willing to trade manual labor hours for more machinery hours pretty readily. Cleaning out fence rows on a hot day is tough work, but the expense beyond the value of the time spent is pretty minimal. Conversely, that same hour spent baling hay comes with a lot of additional expenses beyond the value of that time.

The point being that choosing not to value operator labor is the choice of the farmer, but that farmer still needs to make sure they are valuing other costs incurred during those operator labor hours. Failing to do so has the potential to greatly underestimate total costs for the operation. — **Dr. Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky Extension**

Strike threatens $32M in weekly dairy exports

PORT STRIKE
(from page 1)

USMEF, told Meat+Poultry that while the largest ports for U.S. beef and pork exports are on the West Coast, the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports remain significant. He emphasized that although 30% of exports might sound low, a substantial portion of high-value chilled beef is shipped from the East Coast.

"Redirecting to the West Coast is a potential, very short-term solution, but it's by no means a long-term solution at all because it's not just U.S. beef and pork," Halstrom said.

In addition to the impacts on pork and beef, Daniel Munch, economist for AFBF, said poultry producers will lose market access. According to Munch, nearly 80% of waterborne poultry exports would be at risk, leading to lower prices for producers as they lose critical market access. The Port of Savannah handles nearly 50% of East Coast containerized poultry exports, making it a significant player in the supply chain. The disruption would also affect feed suppliers, particularly those providing corn and soymeal, key ingredients for broiler operations.

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) warned of long-term economic consequences, potential disruptions in animal food supplies and rising costs for farmers and pet owners. Prolonged strikes could delay the delivery of critical ingredients like vitamins, minerals, amino acids and micronutrients, threatening animal health and increasing expenses.

"Our industry does not have a choice to provide vital nutrition to farm animals and pets—we have a responsibility," AFIA President and CEO Constance Cullman said in a statement. "Yet, with reduced access to imports of essential ingredients, packaging materials, equipment or other goods, production of animal food may be limited at best. The animal food industry relies heavily on the interdependence of smooth shipping routes and has spent years building relationships with foreign buyers and sellers, yet overnight, could lose the ability to access or do business with international markets."

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the U.S. Dairy Export Council asked the Biden administration to intervene in the strike, saying in a statement it would have a devastating effect on dairy farmers. In 2023, over 530,000 20-foot equivalent units of dairy products worth $1.7 billion were shipped through East and Gulf ports, representing 21% of U.S. dairy exports by volume. The ongoing strike threatens $32 million in weekly dairy exports, with further indirect effects as exporters are forced to reroute shipments and contend with increased transportation costs.

"The administration must act now to bring both sides back to the table. The stakes are too high," said Gregg Doud, president and CEO of NMPF. "This strike puts the livelihoods of American dairy farmers and the strength of our supply chain at risk. The administration needs to step in and end the strike before further damage is done."

Negotiations ongoing

As of *WLJ* press time, negotiations between USMX and ILA were ongoing but at an impasse. According to ILA President Harold Daggett, the union is asking for a $5-an-hour raise for each of the six years of the contract, "absolute airtight language" there will not be automation or semi-automation and for container royalties to go to the union.

USMX offered a nearly 50% wage increase on Oct. 1, saying it "exceeds every other recent union settlement while addressing inflation and recognizing the ILA's hard work to keep the global economy running."

ILA countered that the wage increase was insufficient because it doesn't adequately meet the needs of its members, many of whom operate multi-million-dollar equipment for just $20 an hour, barely above minimum wage in some states. Additionally, two-thirds of members are constantly on call with no guaranteed employment, and they only qualify for benefits based on the hours worked in the previous year, leaving them vulnerable during downturns.

Biden emphasized that collective bargaining is the best way for workers to secure fair pay and benefits. He urged USMX, representing foreign-owned carriers, to make a fair offer to the ILA, ensuring workers are compensated appropriately for their contributions. With ocean carriers seeing record profits, some increasing by over 800% since the pandemic, Biden said it's only fair that workers, who risked their health to keep ports running, receive a significant wage increase.

"It is time for USMX to negotiate a fair contract with the longshoremen that reflects the substantial contribution they've been making to our economic comeback," Biden said. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

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HABITAT HARM — Greens report extensive damage to garter snake habitat due to livestock grazing. Page 6

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

Looking back to 1953, Nelson Crow's insights remind us how global events often shape even the most rural American industries, a theme that still resonates today. "It seems like a far cry from the explosion of the terrifying H-bomb in Russia to the serene grazing of cows on a Western cattle ranch, but there is a very important relationship between the two. For it means that the U.S. must step up its military preparedness, which in turn means that government spending must be maintained on a high level," wrote Nelson Crow in his October 1953 "Observations by the Publisher."

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Port strike costs agriculture producers billions

— Negotiations ongoing

The ongoing East Coast and Gulf Coast ports strike could cost agriculture producers $1.1 billion per week as 40% of the containerized exports move through these ports, according to a report from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

Agriculture groups have asked President Joe Biden to intervene in the strike between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX), warning that it will affect the agriculture economy.

"If port operations are stopped, the impact on the ag supply chain will quickly reverberate throughout agriculture and not only slow or shutdown operations, but also potentially lower farmgate prices," a letter to Biden read from dozens of agriculture groups.

Erin Borror, vice president for economic analysis at the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), said the strike will significantly impact the U.S. meat and livestock industries.

Borror said 45% of waterborne pork and 30% of waterborne beef exports move through the affected East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, totaling about $100 million in red meat shipments weekly. These ports have handled nearly $3 billion in U.S. red meat exports during the year's first seven months.

"As we learned from the COVID shipping issues, when there is one disruption in the shipping or in the supply chain, there are ripple or domino effects," Borror said. "And so we really need to think about the impacts indirectly on all U.S. red meat exports, which were valued at over $11 billion in the first seven months of the year."

Dan Halstrom, president of

See PORT STRIKE on page 10

Captain Albert E. Theberge/NOAA Corps

Major port strikes on the East Coast and Gulf Coast could lead to billions of dollars in losses for agricultural producers. Pictured here, thousands of shipping containers at the terminal at Port Elizabeth, NJ.

EPA amends its CWA complaint against ID ranch

— Provides imagery, data

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filed an amended complaint in the Clean Water Act (CWA) case against Idaho ranch Ace Black Ranches, following the case's dismissal by a federal court in Idaho.

On Aug. 29, Judge David C. Nye of the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho ruled to dismiss a CWA case alleging the Idaho ranch violated the act by discharging fill materials into the Bruneau River and adjacent wetlands when implementing new irrigation infrastructure. Nye said the agency failed to show the adjacent wetlands on the property had a continuous surface connection to navigable waters, nor did it comply with Sackett v. EPA.

"Until the government has provided more detailed allegations and information, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted and the court must dismiss," the court wrote in its order.

EPA was given 30 days to file an amended complaint, which the agency did on Sept. 27.

Updated complaint

The agency wrote in its amended complaint that Ace Black Ranches discharged pollutants into the Bruneau River and its adjacent wetlands, contending that both waters are waters of the U.S. (WOTUS). EPA continued that the ranch cleared and "leveled nearly all the ranch's wetlands" without required CWA permits.

The amended complaint includes mapped data from observing aerial photographs of the ranch property from 1940 to

See EPA COMPLAINT on page 6

Livestock groups concerned about old-growth forest plan

— Greens also raise alarm

Livestock groups have raised "grave" concerns over the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) draft plan for old-growth forest conservation, warning it could severely undermine public lands management. At the same time, environmental groups and lawmakers criticized the proposal for insufficiently protecting old-growth forests from logging, expressing worries about the future of the ecosystems.

Kaitlynn Glover, Public Lands Council (PLC) executive director, wrote on behalf of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, American Sheep Industry Association and the Association of National Grasslands that they have concerns regarding the agency's preferred alternative. They argue USFS is hindered by bureaucratic delays and self-imposed restrictions on active management, which has led to escalating suppression costs and vast untreated, fire-prone areas.

"Federal forests are facing increasing threats from fire, drought, insects and damage from unmanaged multiple use," the letter read. "PLC is concerned the preferred alternative would require additional staff burden to evaluate and approve even the most basic projects, but would represent another litigation risk for agencies attempting to carry out Congress' mandates."

Glover wrote they prefer the no-action alternative even though it has "yielded poor, high-risk results."

The letter continued that the preferred alternative places unsustainable budgetary and personnel demands on USFS, which is already dealing with severe financial constraints and cutting essential programs. These challenges will worsen as the agency focuses on large-scale forest plan amendments instead of prioritizing critical forest management work, the groups said.

Glover wrote that the environmental impact statement fails to

See PLC REMARKS on page 8

Cattle futures higher after cash trade rally

Cattle futures climbed higher after higher cash trade from the weekly Central Stockyards Fed Cattle Exchange auction saw 519 head sold of the 2,652 head offered, at $186.76 for steers in Texas and $188.50 using the Bid the Grid method.

Live cattle futures closed higher, with the October contract up almost $2 to $186 and the December contract up $1.58 to $186.40.

Cash trade had yet to develop, with about 4,300 head sold. Live steers sold for $187, and dressed steers sold for $295-300.

"In market fundamentals, there has been very light trade volume thus far in the negotiated market, with Iowa trading 900 steers at $187 yesterday and the national total around 3k head," Cassie Fish, market analyst, wrote on Thursday for The Beef. "Nebraska, Texas and Kansas had not traded any cattle as of yesterday and bids are scarce today. Last week's tops were $185 in the south, $187 in Nebraska and $188 in Iowa."

Cash trade through Sept. 29 totaled 81,235 head. Live steers averaged $186.25, and dressed steers averaged $293.76.

The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for the week of Sept. 23-30 was the following on a live basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $186.38.
- Formula net purchases: $185.31.
- Forward contract net purchases: $189.01.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: $184.75.

On a dressed basis:

- Negotiated purchases: $293.72.
- Formula net purchases: $292.07.
- Forward contract net purchases: $293.03.
- Negotiated grid net

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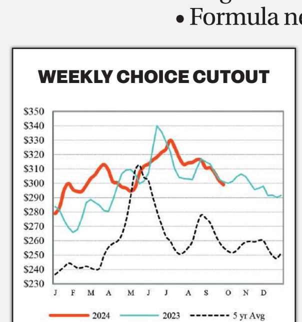

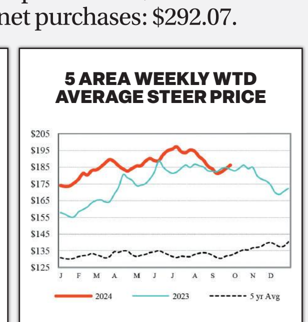

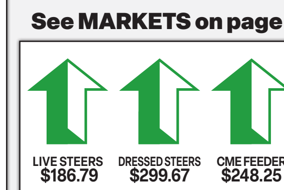

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COMMENTS

Markets will improve

CROW

Cattle markets have turned stronger after the post-Labor Day lull. Packers enjoyed a profitable August and September. However, margins turned south as the beef cutout fell below $300. Now that they are experiencing losses, they will more than likely lower production speeds in an effort to advance the cutout value. They are now experiencing higher cattle costs.

Fed cattle markets have been higher the last two weeks. Packers bought 81,000 head on the cash market two weeks earlier, which is always a market maker. The futures market turned higher with the October contract reaching $187.42 on Wednesday; there doesn't seem to be much of a positive cash basis on fed cattle at this point.

Packers will be looking to build their rib and loin inventory for the holiday season, which usually carries the cutout into January. I'm sure the grocery retailers are making those orders now for the holidays; higher fed cattle prices typically follow this seasonal trend. There has been some fed cattle trade at the handful of fed cattle auctions for over $190 last week.

Feeder cattle also moved higher with the October and November contracts higher by $3.50-plus, moving the market to $249.70 and $248.55, respectively. This is despite the advance in corn prices, which are currently around $4.30 a bushel. Cattle feeders have enjoyed a 95-cent cost of gain on current closeouts.

Cattle feeders have already bought all the true yearling feeder cattle and will start buying lighter cattle to fill pens as they did during the as-low cattle inventory in 2015, they just need to get their hands on the inventory. They will find grass to hold those calves and contract with growyards just to hold inventory.

It doesn't appear that cow-calf producers are ready to start herd rebuilding quite yet. With the average age of producers at 63 years old, there may not be enough stamina to do so. There are not many bred heifer sales scheduled in November or December to suggest that trend. Those that will be offered are from outfits that have regular bred heifer sales every year or every other year, and I don't expect to see them bring more than two times the price of a calf.

Now I'm going to write about something I usually refrain from writing about, which is politics. Just in the past week, this country has experienced many setbacks both domestically and internationally.

Hurricane Helene in the Southeast has crippled that region. It is rare to see a hurricane maintain its strength and devastate Asheville, NC, a town where folks run to escape costal hurricanes. It's now five days at the time of this writing since the disaster and FEMA has yet to show up with basic solutions. Not a good response from the federal government.

Then we have a serious longshoreman strike, who are asking for a 77% pay raise. Union labor seems to have found some leverage and is holding the world hostage; nothing will come in or out of East Coast and Gulf ports. The Biden administration can legally intervene and put those folks back to work while they negotiate a fair contract, which would be best for all. It's sad when one group can hold the country hostage.

Then we have an escalating war in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. It's clear that Israel is going to retaliate from the recent Iranian attack, and I can't see how this won't end up in a full-out war, but I guess it already is for Israel. I'm convinced that the appeasement strategy isn't working.

And then there are so many other policy issues that haven't worked: immigration, economy, energy, climate change and the list goes on and on with failed policies. The political divide is becoming a serious issue and our politicians on both sides of the aisle need to tape up and get over partisan politics and start governing the country for the masses.

The election is less than 30 days away and we all know that this current administration can't do the job. I know that I'm preaching to the choir for most of you. For me, it's a classic "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" situation. Elections always come down to the lesser of the two evils, but for me, the choice is clear. — **PETE CROW**

KAY'S KORNER

STRIKE THREATENS MEAT TRADE

The U.S. and most countries around the world rely on trade with each other to support their economies and keep their citizens fed, clothed and otherwise provisioned. This trade depends on two factors: mutual trade agreements and an efficient and dependable means by which to move goods from country to country.

Much of the trade, as it has for many hundreds of years, relies on ships to perform that vital task. So, it is extremely disturbing that the U.S faces the first strike of East Coast and Gulf Coast dockworkers in 47 years. The strike, if prolonged, could wreak havoc on the export and import of beef, pork and chicken, plus a wide variety of animal food exports and imports.

Dockworkers from Maine to Texas went on strike on Oct. 1 after their current labor contract expired. The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), the union that represents about 45,000 people on the two coasts, started setting up picketing stations after work stoppage talks failed at the end of September. The strike involves 14 major ports on the two coasts. The last time the ILA struck in 1977, the port closure lasted six weeks, creating trade chaos.

The strike is preventing imports of beef that restaurants and retailers increasingly rely on to make hamburgers due to limited domestic supplies, traders and meat industry members told Reuters. Along with beef, imports of seafood and U.S. exports of chicken are being disrupted. Even short-term disruptions to shipments could snarl the broader U.S. food supply chain, experts and food importers said. If the strike stretches out, the result will be either shortages of some food products, price inflation or both, they told Reuters.

The beef sector could see ripple effects if the strike disrupts imports for more than a week, beef industry members told Reuters. In anticipation of the strike, suppliers to U.S. grocers and fast-food restaurants ramped up imports of frozen lean beef that is mixed with domestic supplies to make hamburger meat, three industry members told Reuters.

The strike could impose a significant economic impact on the U.S. meat industry, says Erin Borror of the U.S. Meat Export Federation. In the first seven months of 2024, the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports directly accounted for nearly $3 billion worth of U.S. red meat exports, the equivalent of approximately $100 million worth of product weekly. As the industry learned from the COVID shipping issues, when there is one disruption in the shipping or in the supply chain, there are ripple or domino effects, says Borror.

The shutdown occurs at a time of year when exports typically increase, Borror said. U.S. production and exports typically accelerate in the fourth quarter. With the seasonal increase in pork production, the industry really needs to be able to handle and accommodate more pork, including ahead of year-end holidays. The U.S. is exporting a record-large share of its pork production. More than 30% of all pork production goes to export when one includes variety meats. For beef, about 14% of all production, including variety meats, is exported. Both beef and pork exports are necessary for the profitability of the U.S. red meat industry, she said.

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) warned of long-term economic repercussions, potential animal food supply issues and escalating costs for farmers and pet owners. AFIA President and CEO Constance Cullman said the failure of the two sides to reach a labor agreement or of the Biden administration to intervene before the contract deadline means that U.S. animal food manufacturers face a dire trading situation that mirrors or could be worse than the days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With reduced access to imports of essential ingredients, packaging materials, equipment or other goods, production of animal food may be limited at best, said Cullman. In 2023, the overall export value for feed, feed ingredients and pet food stood at $13.4 billion, while imports stood at an estimated $5.4 billion. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, in 2023, grains, animal feed and hay accounted for 2.18 million metric tons (mt) or more than 70% of waterborne exports that ship from East Coast and Gulf Coast ports.

Beef exporters in Australia (and no doubt in New Zealand, Brazil and other countries) fear that a prolonged strike could cause severe disruptions to their efforts to export beef and other meat to the U.S. The U.S. is easily Australia's largest beef and lamb export market this year, accounting for 235,000 mt of chilled and frozen beef by the end of August, plus 57,000 mt of lamb and mutton. The biggest proportion of Australian chilled, higher quality beef exports arrive via West Coast ports, which are likely to be unaffected by the current dispute, says Beef Central. But the majority of frozen trimmings used for hamburgers arrive via the big East Coast ports like Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey. **— 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.)**

OBITUARY

Beatrice 'Betty' Peek; 1929-2024

Beatrice "Betty" Peek, wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend, passed away Sept. 6 at her home in Anderson, CA, surrounded by family and friends. She was born Nov. 17, 1929, at Fourth Crossing, CA, to Andrew and Bessie Gomes. She was the youngest of five children. Her father, Andy, died when she was 16 on their small ranch near San Andreas, CA. Her grandfather, Frank Gomes, came to California in 1850 during the Gold Rush and homesteaded in Calaveras County. That historic ranch is still in the family today and she was proud of that. After her father died, she was raised by her mother and two older brothers, Woodie and Cyril. After graduation from high school, her brother, Cyril, took her to San Francisco where she attended modeling school.

In 1950 she met the love of her life, Ellington Peek, at a dance in Mokelumne Hill in Calaveras County. They married just a few months later. They would have celebrated their 74th wedding anniversary on Nov. 26.

Ellington and Betty had four children: Andy (Rhonda), Callie Wood (Darrell), Laurie Norene (Jerry) and Brad (Gaby). Ellington's cattle buying business kept him on the road, so Betty was often playing both the mother and father role, but she was the best mother, always there for her family.

In 1956, Ellington and Betty started their first business adventure when they leased the Shasta Auction in Anderson, CA. Betty, being the businesswoman she was, was the one to actually take the sale receipts from the first sale to the bank in Angels Camp where they had their operating loan.

As time went on and the livestock auction business expanded, Ellington talked Betty into opening a small retail store in the yard next to the auction ring. She sold tack and jeans on sale day. She took that idea and ran with it. Betty started Shasta Western Shop and never looked back. After building the facilities in Cottonwood, she earned the nickname "Tornado Betty." She ended up expanding the store three times and became one of the leading Western wear stores in Northern California. People came from all over to buy what Betty had to sell as she knew how to buy merchandise that her clientele wanted. Betty retired at the age of 79 in 2009 after losing her oldest son, Andy, to pancreatic cancer. Even to this day, Betty was flattered to have people say how much they missed her store.

While Betty and Ellington both worked hard, they also enjoyed spending time at the ranch that she was raised on near San Andreas. Betty's work ethic and character can be attributed to her formidable years on the ranch as a young girl. They had no electricity growing up, and during grammar school, Betty had to ride a donkey to school. Ironically, she never liked riding horses since. Betty's father was one of 11 children, so there were always get-togethers with the large extended family. The ranch was always the place that Betty returned to.

Besides the Gomes Ranch, Betty loved the mountains around Mineral, CA. Early in their marriage, Betty, Ellington and the kids spent many summers at Feather River Meadows where they had different older cabins. In 1988, they bought a lot near Mineral. Betty, along with Barbara Holliday, spent many months clearing the land for the log cabin she would build. She loved being in the mountains at "the Cabin."

Four years ago, when most 90-year-olds are moving to a rest home, Betty and Ellington finally decided it was time to buy the house of their dreams. They left the house where they had lived for 60 years to fulfill Betty's lifelong dream to move to a new home in Anderson. The new location had the added blessing of being next door to daughter-in-law, Rhonda, and grandson, Mason.

Betty was always one to give advice to her family and loved them all. She leaves behind grandchildren: Mason Peek, Ramsey Wood (Trisha), Dallice Nuttall (Logan), Matthew Norene (Kaci), Courtney Trumm (Daniel); as well as bonus grandchildren Tarin Morrison (Dennis), J.P. Vansickle, Kelsey Alexander (James), Sara Garaventa (Roman), and Michael Uhalde. She was also blessed with many great-grandchildren: Tyler, Royal and Karla Wood; Franky, Clayton and Reese Nuttall; Carter, Brady, Levi and James Norene; Colton, Maverick and Jaxston Trumm; and bonus great-grandchildren Kayli Pfrimmer (Riley), Lexie Regelin and Kynnadee Regelin; Gavin, Tanner and Caleb Alexander; and Lew Garaventa.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that you consider making a donation to the Andy Peek Livestock Scholarship, P.O. Box 887, Cottonwood, CA 96022. A celebration of Betty's life will be held Oct. 26 at 11 a.m. in Shasta Hall at the Shasta District Fairgrounds (1890 Briggs St, Anderson, CA 96007).

WLJ

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Member PC

PRESIDENT

LOGAN IPSEN
New Plymouth, ID
916-947-2392
logan@wlj.net

EDITORIAL@WLJ.NET

ANNA MILLER
Managing Editor
720-372-2353 • anna@wlj.net

CHARLES WALLACE
Contributing Editor
805-814-2017 • charles@wlj.net

ADVERTISING@WLJ.NET

KIRBY BRINCEFIELD
Operations Manager
720-716-3363
kirby@wlj.net

MIKE OLDCORN
Advertising Coordinator & Graphic Design
720-370-9095
mike@wlj.net

TRISTAN MARTIN
Advertising Coordinator & Graphic Design
720-372-1763
tristan@wlj.net

FIELD REPS

DEVIN MURNIN
Director of Field Services
Billings, MT • 406-696-1502
devin@wlj.net

JARED PATTERSON
Caldwell, ID
208-312-2386
jared@wlj.net

TY GROSHANS
Akron, CO
970-818-6016
ty@wlj.net

CIRCULATION@WLJ.NET

HANNAH JACKSON
Circulation Manager & Copy Editor
720-370-8275 • hannah@wlj.net

CLASSIFIED@WLJ.NET

TOM WHITE
Classifieds Manager
720-370-7977 • tom@wlj.net

PUBLISHER EMERITUS

PETE CROW
Publisher Emeritus • pete@wlj.net

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Sonoma livestock farms face threat in ballot measure

As voters cast their ballots in the coming weeks, farmers in Sonoma County, CA, say the future of the region's dairy and poultry farms is on the line. Measure J, a ballot initiative in Sonoma County, would cap within three years the number of animals each farm can raise, banning larger farms or forcing them to downsize.

"We would be out of business," said George Mertens, owner of Mertens Dairy in Sonoma.

He isn't speculating. The Coalition to End Factory Farming, a group of environmental and animal rights organizations supporting the measure, published a list of 21 "factory farms"—Mertens Dairy among them—that they said would be prohibited under the proposed law.

The measure specifically targets medium and large concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs, defined primarily by the number of mature animals farms have. In a report on the potential impacts of the measure, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) identified 11 such farms in the county.

Whatever the true number, farmers in the region say Measure J, if passed, could have grave consequences on the region's entire dairy and poultry sectors.

"If some of the larger farms in our community are no longer able to operate, it may lead to a collapse of the entire sector," said Albert Straus, owner of Petaluma-based Straus Family Creamery, which sources milk from seven dairies in Sonoma County.

Sonoma County's 42 organic dairies represent more than 40% of California's organic dairies and produce 13% of the nation's organic milk, according to the USDA. They are supported by a local supply chain of feed stores, farm service companies and creameries such as Straus and Clover Sonoma.

The critical mass of farms generates enough demand for the local feed stores to stay in business and enough milk to supply the creameries. Each link in the chain is essential to the others, farmers say.

But within the past three decades, Sonoma County has lost more than half its dairy farms, and recent years have brought major challenges such as the pandemic, bird flu, rising costs and shrinking margins.

"Everybody is on the edge of losing the critical mass of support services," Straus said. "We're at a tipping point, and this will take us over that point."

At risk is a model of dairy production that has gained international acclaim for its dedication to animal welfare, climate action and environmental stewardship.

To maintain their certification under the USDA National Organic Program, dairy farmers must implement practices that support biodiversity and comply with animal welfare standards, including putting their cows on pasture for at least 120 days each year. Many of the farms are subject to additional animal welfare criteria imposed by their buyers.

Nearly all the Sonoma County dairies targeted by Measure J as large CAFOs are family-owned, pasture-based farms. While groups supporting Measure J have sought to conflate the term with "factory farms," CAFO is a designation by the Environmental Protection Agency used to assess potential water quality risks, with no link to animal welfare or concentration.

"They're looking at it and just saying, 'Big is bad,'" said Doug Beretta, owner of Beretta Family Dairy in Santa Rosa and president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau.

Beretta said his herd of around 300 dairy cows grazes on 400 acres of irrigated pasture during the summers.

"We're not factory farms," he said.

In Sonoma County, dairy farms manage an average of 3.2 acres per mature dairy cow, according to UCCE, and unlike dairies in some regions, their wastewater management is regulated by a regional water quality board.

"Sonoma County is home to some of California's best agricultural stewards whose farms provide numerous climate and environmental benefits such as storing carbon in soil, limiting energy-intensive urban sprawl, and providing wildlife habitat and open space to recharge groundwater," Renata Brillinger, executive director of the California Climate and Agriculture Network, said in a statement.

The proposed law says it is needed to protect the environment, public health, farmworkers, animals and small farms of Sonoma County. The measure cites studies that have linked CAFOs with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, toxic waste, climate change, worker injuries and illnesses, and other negative impacts.

"I don't believe in Band-Aid fixes to a systemic problem," Kristina Garfinkel, lead organizer for the Coalition to End Factory Farming, said at a Measure J debate held last month in Santa Rosa. "Factory farming is hurting all of us, and it's time that we eliminate them from our food system."

The coalition has failed to convince many of the stakeholders it says the measure is intended to benefit. It sought support from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and the Sonoma County Democratic Party, Garfinkel said.

"We wanted this to be a collaborative thing," she said, "but we were ghosted, and we never heard anything."

Both groups have come out against Measure J, as have advocates for environmental conservation, climate action, sustainable agriculture and disadvantaged populations. Measure J is also officially opposed by the Sonoma County Republican Party, more than a dozen county Farm Bureaus, and groups representing realtors, law enforcement, labor unions, land conservation, food safety and other interests.

"If this measure passes, individuals, restaurants and school cafeterias won't stop buying poultry and dairy products. And they shouldn't. These are important parts of many people's diets," Wendy Krupnick, president of the Sonoma County chapter of CAFF, said in a statement.

"They should have this choice as well as the choice to buy local, quality products from family-owned farms rather than imports from corporations outside Sonoma County."

The UCCE report, which analyzed the consequences of all animal agriculture being eliminated in Sonoma County, found that Measure J would likely harm Sonoma County's climate efforts, force it to import products from farther away, raise food costs and cause farmworkers to be displaced from their farm residences and forced out of the county due to a lack of affordable alternatives.

Dairies in the county employ around 300 people and provide free housing and utilities to more than 600 workers and their family members, according to the report.

A report by California State University, Chico, estimated the demise of Sonoma County's dairy and poultry production would directly result in the loss of $259 million in economic output and 700 jobs. Including indirect and induced impacts, Measure J could cost the region $418 million and more than 1,300 jobs, the report said.

"There is no precedent or science to justify the need for Measure J," said Dayna Ghirardelli, executive director of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau.

Farmers in Sonoma County have cautioned that Measure J's supporters, if successful in their county, could expand their efforts to other parts of California, the nation's No. 1 milk-producing state.

"If they win here," Beretta said, "it will go through this state." —**Caleb Hampton, Ag Alert assistant editor, California Farm Bureau Federation**

New auction platform lets consumers bid on meat

Putting the consumer in the driver's seat to purchase high-quality beef directly from the ranchers who produced it just got easier with a new auction platform called Bid on Beef.

"The buyer gets to decide what they want to purchase. You get to pick the cuts, you get to pick the price, and we are just showing you the best of the best. You tell us what it's worth," explained Bid on Beef founder Chris Earl. "It's really a win-win partnership and relationship that we're building with these great families on the land and these families in the urban areas that we want to serve."

Earl has seen firsthand the need for high-end meat. He had a meat company in Chicago for more than 20 years. But he knew it could be done in a way to get the beef distributed in a wider area.

"Commodity pricing was keeping the price of high-quality meat down from what it probably should have been," he said. "You just don't find the quality of meat we have in America anywhere else in the world, and we wanted to offer this product to the public and let the buyer decide what it is worth."

Earl's idea that he had been formulating for the past 10 years was finally brought forward in 2024. He built the CK6 Consulting team to plan and market the Bid on Beef platform, which is just one of the services they provide for customers in the cattle business. Wes Tiemann serves as auctioneer for Bid on Beef sales. Aaron Duvall provides insight from his ownership of an Angus ranch, as well as the Texas Beefhouse restaurant in Whitehouse, TX. Kody Fleeman and Amanda Radke help with marketing, planning and sales.

Linda Salant, one of the first consumer buyers of beef from this platform, found the Bid on Beef option to be a great way to purchase exactly what she wants and have it delivered to her front door.

"I'm an absolute carnivore, so all I eat is meat and animal byproducts, and I'm part of a larger community of carnivores. We want to buy meat and talk about the sustainability and quality of the meat," said the North Carolina native. "A lot of people are not satisfied with just going to the supermarket and buying the meat they know nothing about, but I like to know more."

Finding a rancher close by isn't always feasible for people in urban areas. Bid on Beef gives them an option to purchase just what they want, know how the meat is raised and have it delivered frozen within two days of the auction. The platform allows consumers to purchase lots of specific cuts of steak, ground beef or roasts.

"Knowing the quality will be the best available really provides the consumer customer with the perfect opportunity to purchase what we want, and we can decide what price we want to pay for it," Salant explained. "Plus, it's fun to be able to bring out my competitive nature and bid on what I want on an auction."

Auction process

Bid on Beef is offered in two ways: a live or online auction. During a live auction, individuals bid on the cuts of meat mirroring how cattlemen would purchase a bull or female at an auction on the ranch. Some of the Bid on Beef auctions are held in conjunction with production sales on the farm.

In the online timed auction, buyers must register with a secure credit card on file and then can decide which lot to try to purchase. When a potential buyer is outbid, they receive notification via text or email so they can rebid on the lot, if desired. As the sale comes to an end, a lot will close after it has no more bids in a two-minute period, and then buyers will be notified if they have won the lot.

"We are trying several different ways of selling the beef. We are even having a meal at a production sale to give people the opportunity to eat the beef that they will be bidding on," Radke said. "You can see the cattle, and you can stockpile your freezer all at the same time."

Radke has been working with producers to develop the best way to market their program to buyers and consumers. The Bid on Beef experience does have some parameters to provide a great product.

Bid on Beef handles the collection of payments from customers and offers sellers a reduced shipping rate to send purchases across the country. A small commission is collected on each sale, and sellers are paid as soon as the beef has been shipped after the auction. There is no membership fee to be part of the platform, as they are solely focused on results in the sale.

CK6 Consulting has specialized in the Angus seedstock business for 16 years and, in the last five years, has helped its clients exceed $200 million in sales. It works with a group of purebred Angus producers throughout the year. No matter if the Bid on Beef sellers are CK6 clients or not, they provide advice on genetics, feed, beef cut specifications, shipping and packaging, and any other aspect of the direct-to-consumer beef-selling business.

The group wants to provide a great beef-eating experience for buyers and is committed to selling USDA-inspected Angus and Wagyu beef on the auctions that is American raised, fed, processed, packaged and delivered by the individual cattle-ranching families.

"With our extensive experience and knowledge in the Angus breed, we have identified a niche in the market and the ideal customer we want to serve. Our focus is Angus beef or an F1 cross with Wagyu, primarily so we can hit the premium markets that prime beef can capture," Radke explained.

In one of the first pilot auctions with Texas Beefhouse, 13 lots of 150 pounds of beef were sold in 90 minutes and averaged just under $31 per pound. This is the same amount some of these cattle families would sell in three or four months at farmers markets.

"The motivation for me is to keep good cattle-ranching families doing what they love, which is raising cattle and raising great beef, but also freeing up their time so they can sell the beef in one or two auctions and have more time to spend on the ranch and with their families," Earl said. "It's really exciting to see the culmination of their hard work."

Moving forward, Radke said they don't have a specific number of sellers in mind but have recently interviewed more than 130 potential sellers on the platform and have verified 22.

"Our intention is to vet the best ranchers in the country, who can provide a consistent, high-quality product delivered straight to our customers. Every ranching family we have interviewed is at a different point in their beef business, so we provide consultations, shipping and packaging advice, and marketing strategies to these folks. And, just like cattle sales, we believe competition will rise the best to the top and make the best even better," she explained.

Interest has been growing since starting sales this summer. For the remainder of 2024, there are two to three Bid on Beef auctions per week.

"Our challenge and passion is reaching our target customer in urban areas, and we spend a great deal of time and effort working to connect with these folks who want to source USA premium beef from a trusted ranching family," Radke stressed. — **Jennifer Carrico, DTN senior livestock editor**

CWA case could result in daily fines of $66K

EPA COMPLAINT
(from page 1)

present day, light detection and ranging imagery, maps from the National Wetlands Inventory and maps of soil types, and assessing the wetlands during 2021 and 2023 inspections on the property.

The complaint also included an aerial map of where the agency alleges wetlands are located on the property, with eight connection points highlighted on the river.

"Most of these wetlands are adjacent wetlands meaning they abut the Bruneau River and thus have a continuous surface connection to the Bruneau River," EPA wrote.

The agency said Ace Black Ranches has conducted activities related to sand and gravel mining on the property in and around the Bruneau River and adjacent wetlands since October 2017 through at least 2022. EPA analyzed aerial imagery that showed sand and gravel mining operations during the time period and also included photos of heavy equipment found on the site during a 2021 inspection.

Photographs also showed roads allegedly built by the ranch to cross the Bruneau River. "This (second) road effectively dammed the Bruneau River, causing water to back up and allowing very little water to flow down the river," EPA said.

The agency continued that the ranch's "clearing and grading, roadbuilding, bank stabilization, and sand and gravel mining activities resulted in the unauthorized discharge of 'pollutants'... to waters of the United States."

During all of these activities, the ranch did not have a permit under Section 404 of the CWA, EPA added.

The agency concluded its amended complaint by contending the ranch violated the CWA through illegal discharges of pollutants and illegal discharges of dredged and/or fill materials.

EPA asked the court to declare the ranch in violation of the CWA, permanently enjoin the ranch from discharging to WOTUS, require the ranch to completely restore impacted portions of the river and wetlands at the ranch's expense, and assess penalties for each violation of the CWA.

Each day of discharge would constitute a separate violation of the CWA, and the ranch faces civil penalties of up to $66,712 per day per violation. **— Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor**

Greens claim livestock grazing damaged species' habitat

Environmental groups continue to assert that livestock grazing on public lands in Arizona and New Mexico is damaging critical habitat for the northern Mexican garter snake.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Maricopa Audubon Society released a report in mid-September titled "Grazed to Death: Livestock Production Adversely Modifying Most Critical Habitat for Northern Mexican Garter Snakes on Public Lands in Arizona."

The report comes after the groups' complaint this summer against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for what the groups call a violation of the Endangered Species Act for allowing grazing along the Big Sandy River.

"The riparian forests, the river that they adjoin and protect, and the wildlife that use these habitats (including the flycatcher, the cuckoo and the garter snake), have been damaged, degraded, and destroyed by livestock grazing authorized, managed, and allowed by BLM, despite documentation of that damage provided by the plaintiffs," the groups wrote in the suit.

In their latest report, the environmentalists claim cattle grazing has damaged nearly 60% of the garter snake's critical habitat. In 2021, USFWS designated about 20,000 acres of critical habitat in Arizona and New Mexico for the snake, with more than half of the habitat acres on public lands.

"Field biologists documented cows concentrated in streams and riparian areas, often leaving bare, denuded ground, destroyed vegetation and streambanks, and polluted, feces-laden water," the Center for Biological Diversity said. "Cows were often grazing illegally, in places where grazing is prohibited."

The group continued that damage to the snake's critical habitat included parts of Tonto National Forest and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

The July complaint by the Center and Maricopa Audubon Society said that livestock grazing also damaged nearly 60% of the western yellow-billed cuckoo critical habitat in Arizona and New Mexico.

"Given this pattern of neglect, I question whether these federal agencies want struggling species to survive at all," said Chris Bugbee, Southwest conservation advocate at the Center. "They've systematically chosen to put the interests of ranchers over the plants and animals they're charged with protecting."

In a court document filed Sept. 24 with the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, the government broadly refuted the July complaint's claims. The agencies denied the complaint's allegations and also denied that the groups were entitled to any relief. **— Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor**

What to do when calves experience coccidiosis

Newly weaned calves that have been moved to a different location from their mothers and now have a grain-based diet offered to them can experience stress as a result of these changes. In some cases, that will make them more prone to disease, said Kansas State (K-State) University veterinarians speaking on the Beef Cattle Institute's recent "Cattle Chat" podcast.

One disease found in calves post-weaning is coccidiosis, K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said.

"Coccidiosis is caused by an internal parasite that is a single-cell organism that burrows into the intestinal wall and causes damage," he said. "The coccidia organisms are commonly found in the environment, but they can cause a problem with calves that are experiencing stress."

Larson said the telltale sign of this parasite is when calves are producing bloody diarrhea.

K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said that is quite different from the stool changes that happen when the calves are exposed to a different feed formulation.

"When calves are put on a new diet, their stool may be looser than normal, but it will have a consistency to it," Lancaster said. "Calves with coccidiosis will have watery and dark stools, which come from the blood in the intestine. You won't see that with healthy calves transitioning to a grain-type diet."

For beef producers who think this is happening in their herd, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said, "The first step is to get the disease diagnosed, and that can be made from a fecal sample."

He added: "There are several treatment options available, so just work with your local veterinarian to find the best one for your herd and then look at ways you can adjust your management to reduce the risk of a future outbreak." **— K-State Research and Extension**

LEGAL LEDGER

Farm bill extension deadline expires

The 2018 Farm Bill extension expired on Sept. 30 after lawmakers failed to come to an agreement ahead of the deadline. After passing a short-term funding bill, Congress now has until the end of the year to come up with a new farm bill before benefits run out. If lawmakers fail to pass a new extension or a new farm bill by the end of the year, current legislation dies and the process begins all over again with a new Congress in January. "You could have a new party that's in control, and they may choose to completely scrap the previous bill and start over, which could add significant lengths to the process," said Dr. Bart Fischer, co-director for Texas A&M's Agricultural and Food Policy Center.

USCA adopts anti-mRNA vaccine policy

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) adopted interim policy in August regarding the use of mRNA vaccines. The group opposes the use of ribonucleic acid (RNA) gene therapy platform technology inoculations in meat- or milk-producing animals until there is scientifically sound raw data for open review on the health, safety and fertility effects, USCA said. "Ensuring this technology remains transparent to those in the industry as well as those in the marketplace will be key to protecting both the domestic and international markets for U.S. beef," the organization said.

Opposition against Denver slaughter ban

A ballot measure that would ban slaughter in the city and county of Denver continues to garner more opposition, with some surprising opponents. Ordinance 309 is opposed by agriculture groups as the measure targets Denver's one remaining processing facility, Superior Farms, the largest lamb packing facility in the U.S. Recently, former Denver City Councilwoman Kendra Black filed a campaign finance complaint against the measure's proponents, Pro-Animal Future and Pro-Animal Denver, alleging the groups concealed the identities of the supporting donors along with other required information about expenditures. In addition, the Central Committee of the Denver Democrat party endorsed a "no" position against the measure on a 207-12 vote. The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, Service Employees International Union 105, Denver Area Labor Federation, Denver Pipefitters Local #208, the Teamsters Union and the Working Families Party also oppose the measure, according to a Complete Colorado report.

Beef price-fixing lawsuit amended

A federal court granted plaintiffs in a beef price-fixing case the ability to amend their lawsuit to narrow their claims and strengthen their allegations. The plaintiffs' suit is on behalf of feeder cattle producers who sold cattle to beef packers, alleging the packers conspired to fix fed cattle prices. "Plaintiffs allege that defendants conspired to suppress the price of fed cattle they bought in the United States beginning no later than January 2015, and that defendants' coordinated conduct caused a collapse in fed cattle prices and a consequent collapse in feeder cattle prices, which harmed plaintiffs," the complaint read. The initial complaint represented cow-calf ranchers, but the amended complaint will include indirect sellers who sold feeder cattle directly to a feedlot or finishing operation that then sold to one of the Big Four defendants. The amended complaint also includes new details on animals sold, and alleges packers tracked the price of feeder cattle and hedged futures to manage their risk.

CO ranchers urge CPW to halt wolf releases

A total of 26 organizations representing Colorado's agricultural and livestock producers submitted a petition with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Commission to delay wolf introductions until livestock depredations are addressed. CPW announced several weeks earlier that it planned to introduce more wolves this coming winter after sourcing wolves from Canada. Petitioners said 24 confirmed livestock deaths have occurred since wolves were introduced in the state and that CPW has insufficiently addressed the conflicts. The petition requests a clear definition of "chronic depredation," proactive development of non-lethal measures, vulnerability site assessments, the development of a rapid response team and increased local collaboration efforts. CPW also recently announced it planned to capture and relocate an uncollared gray wolf believed to be the fifth member of the Copper Creek Pack, which was relocated in September following chronic depredations.

Greens protest Western Solar Plan

A group of environmental groups filed a formal protest against the Bureau of Land Management's Western Solar Plan, alleging the plan does not protect the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. The groups said the plan fails to offer protections for the cultural trail that spans 2,700 miles across Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. "BLM's current proposal disregards the protection of a nationally significant historic trail that is supposed to be safeguarded by federal law," said Chandra Rosenthal, PEER public lands director.

Plan now to purchase your hay supplies

Feed inputs often make up the largest portion of a producer's costs. With that in mind, we do need to be aware of a few principles in purchasing hay.

- Determine whether you are paying on a per ton or per bale basis.
- Know the hay quality you are purchasing to spend your feeding dollars more effectively.
- Buy bales that are tightly rolled, dense and have square shoulders that don't sag.
- Net wrap helps bales shed water.
- Bales should be free of mold, weed seeds and dangerous levels of nitrates (depending on the forage species).

The class of animals (heifers versus cows, dry versus lactating, thin versus fat condition, etc.) that will consume the hay will determine the quality of hay needed. If possible, buy hay that will best match those requirements. However, quality of hay can be supplemented with additional protein and energy sources to meet those requirements if higher quality hay is hard to source.

Use a lab analysis to determine hay quality. Core sample 15-20 bales from each lot and send the samples to a lab for testing. Tests can cost around $18 for Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) to $28.50 for wet chemistry. These tests calculate moisture content, crude protein, relative feed value, relative forage quality, and additional information including mineral content and nitrate levels.

Storing and feeding hay

Livestock producers should locate hay bale yards in a well-drained area out in the open with easy access in the winter for feeding. Rows should line up north to south, at least 3 feet apart, so sunlight will reach a greater portion of the bale. This will help evaporate moisture from the bales and the ground around them quickly.

If possible, weigh bales with a scale to get accurate weights when planning your winter feeding. If you are feeding hay that may contain noxious/invasive weeds or non-native forage species, feed this hay in a limited area, so if a problem does develop, it can be kept isolated and, hopefully, controlled.

While Nebraska's hay production has rebounded from the lows of 2022, the recent dry conditions remind us that checking hay inventories, prices, and forage quality now can mitigate potential feeding challenges during the colder months. — **Randy Saner and T.L. Meyer, Nebraska Extension educators**

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. 7 – The 2025 spring internship application process for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the Public Lands Council is now open. Details: tinyurl.com/2xce6cjp.

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

Oct. 27 – Certified Angus Beef is seeking applications for its 2025 summer internship program. Four internships are available to join the communications and marketing teams. Details: CABcattle.com/internship.

Old-growth forest plan to be finalized on Jan. 1

PLC REMARKS
(from page 1)

adequately assess social, economic and socioeconomic impacts, including grazing opportunities on USFS lands. The groups said the plan overlooks thousands of forest allotments that rely on effective forest management to maintain grazing conditions and mitigate the growing risk of catastrophic wildfires.

"While PLC appreciates the need for forest management and land use plans can remain responsive to current needs, we believe the proposed actions will make it more difficult for the agency to properly balance multiple use while mitigating the ever-present threat of fire risk," the letter concluded. "We remain concerned that 'protecting old growth' is simply being used as a proxy to reduce the agency's tools to manage forested ecosystems."

While the groups are concerned about managing old-growth forests, lawmakers and environmental groups urged stronger protections.

A letter from 33 Congress members to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urged USFS "to take concrete steps to conserve mature forests with the intention of nurturing future old-growth forests."

The lawmakers emphasized that language protecting existing old-growth forests from degradation is critical to the amendment's success. While they support the USFS' effort to conserve future old-growth forests, they urged the agency to strengthen protections for both mature and old-growth forests in the final environmental impact statement.

Environmental groups expressed similar sentiments, stating the proposal does not protect old-growth forests that confront the climate change crisis.

"The National Old Growth Amendment should be a transformative policy that positions the United States as an international leader in harnessing nature to confront the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis," the coalition of groups said in a statement. "We hope to see the nationwide old-growth amendment strengthened so it can become a centerpiece of our nation's climate and conservation legacies."

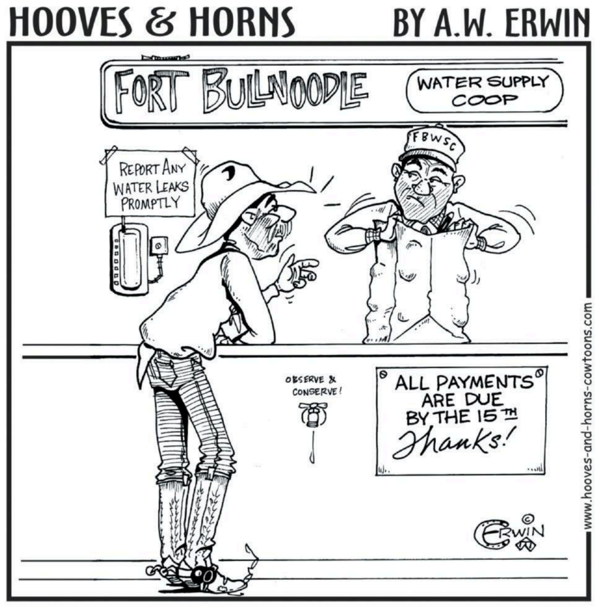
USFS considered four alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement, including the no-action alternative and a preferred alternative proposing strategic amendments to existing land management plans (LMPs). The preferred alternative would add goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and monitoring requirements to each plan based on a detailed review of forested conditions.

According to an appendix of the impact statement, LMPs were grouped into four categories. The first category is primarily unforested grasslands, and limited action would occur in forested areas. Categories 2, 3 and 4 LMPs would be amended with the complete set of proposed plan components, with exceptions only if unique circumstances justify not implementing the full suite of proposed components.

Category 2 units with existing old-growth components would see minor adjustments, Category 3 units lacking restrictive standards would experience noticeable management changes, and Category 4 units with old-growth potential but no components would undergo significant shifts in old-growth management.

According to USFS, a decision and implementation is estimated on Jan. 1, 2025. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

HOOVES & HORNS **BY A.W. ERWIN**



"Miss Abernathy paid me in zucchini squash fer gatherin'an' haulin'her steers,... *So* ***yes,..*** *yer gittin' paid in squash too."*

Biological time lag of heifer retention

It is evident the pace of expansion of the U.S. cow inventory will be slower than past cycles. Several factors will continue to contribute to the slow rebuild. Our beef cow inventory continues to tighten and pushes market prices to record levels. With regard to heifer retention, the questions most of us are asking:

- Will increased heifer retention (at some point in the future) result in even higher prices?
- How long will these prices last?

Good questions. Past cattle cycles indicate the answer to the first is most likely yes. When producers begin to retain more heifers to develop as herd replacements, it results in fewer calves going to market.

The answer to the second question is this week's topic. The biological time lag of beef production. The reality of beef production is that what competing animal proteins can accomplish in weeks (broiler production) or months (pork production), will take those of us in the cow-calf sector years to accomplish. The biology of the beef animal is why.

If we selected a high percentage of our spring-born heifer calves to develop as replacements this fall, next spring those properly developed replacement heifers would be ready to breed by 14-15 months of age. The following spring (2026), those heifers would calve at 2 years of age. Those calves would be ready to market at weaning in the fall of 2026. Those calves would become yearlings in 2027 and eventually become marketed as finished "A Maturity" finished cattle or beef carcasses six to seven months after entering the feedyard.

As of now, there is little evidence of large-scale heifer retention across the country. If and when we begin to retain heifers (on a large scale), we are a couple of years away from increasing the cow inventory, and at least 30 months away from increasing the supply of weaned calves, and so on, regarding yearlings and fed cattle. As is always the case in the beef cattle industry, other factors can and will have an impact on the market.

That being said, the basic fundamentals of supply and demand favor strong prices for all categories of cattle until cow inventory begins to increase, and that will take some time. — **Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**

Story Shorts

DOI announces Colorado River agreements

The Department of the Interior (DOI) announced significant progress in ensuring the long-term health of the Colorado River System. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton, alongside leaders from key water districts in California and Arizona, signed five water conservation agreements supported by President Joe Biden's Investing in America agenda. These agreements will conserve over 717,000 acre-feet (an acre-foot is 325,851 gallons) of water by 2026, and through long-term deals with the Gila River Indian Community, will save an additional 73,000 acre-feet over the next decade to advance water conservation in the West.

Lawmakers address Boar's Head outbreak

Several members of Congress sent separate letters to Boar's Head and USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regarding "egregious sanitation problems," and asked how lack of oversight resulted in the deaths of 10 people. In a letter to Boar's Head, lawmakers demanded answers regarding the company's handling of food safety concerns to prevent future deadly outbreaks. They questioned whether the facility tested nonfood-contact surfaces for Listeria monocytogenes, how often these tests were conducted, why managerial staff failed to act sooner and how they would be held accountable for repeated noncompliance. The lawmakers also asked how the company plans to assure the public that other Boar's Head facilities are not facing similar issues. In a second letter to FSIS, lawmakers expressed outrage that no enforcement actions had been taken against Boar's Head despite 69 records of noncompliances at the facility in the year leading up to the outbreak. They demanded details about the scope of the contract with Virginia for inspecting the Boar's Head facility, questioning whether state inspectors performed all duties and how corrective actions were managed. Additionally, they requested records of USDA inspector visits to the facility, including the frequency, length and findings of those inspections.

USDA launches aid for distressed farmers

The USDA has launched the Distressed Borrowers Assistance Network to support financially struggling farmers and ranchers. This initiative connects borrowers with personalized assistance through partnerships with organizations like Farm Aid and land-grant universities. The network will train community-based organizations on farm loan policies to better assist producers in navigating USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) financing options. The network aims to stabilize distressed borrowers by providing one-on-one support, helping them overcome financial challenges and continue contributing to the agricultural economy. The network comes after FSA announced changes to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program, with online loan payments and applications combined with assistance tools. For more information, visit a local FSA office or fsa.usda.gov.

JBS partners with GreenGas

JBS USA and GreenGasUSA partnered to produce renewable natural gas (RNG) at several JBS beef and poultry processing facilities across the U.S. This collaboration will enhance JBS' methane capture capabilities, converting biogas from wastewater into pipeline-quality RNG. Initial installations will occur at JBS facilities in Nebraska, Utah and South Carolina, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "At JBS and Pilgrim's, we're committed to reducing the impact of food production by partnering with stakeholders to reduce our carbon footprint," said Wesley Batista Filho, CEO of JBS Foods USA. According to JBS, the partnership, expected to be completed by the end of 2025, will help displace emissions equivalent to 60 million car miles or 26 million pounds of coal burned annually.

Man sentenced for breeding hybrid sheep

Arthur "Jack" Schubarth of Vaughn, MT, was sentenced to six months in prison for two felony wildlife crimes, including violating the Lacey Act, as part of a nearly decade-long scheme to create giant sheep hybrids for captive hunting. Schubarth, owner of Sun River Enterprises LLC, conspired with others between 2013 and 2021 to breed larger hybrid sheep using illegal genetic material from Marco Polo argali sheep and wild-hunted bighorn sheep. His goal was to sell the hybrids to game ranches despite Montana laws prohibiting the sale and use of game animal parts.

CPW investigating mountain lion killing

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is investigating the death of a mountain lion that was killed by a man with a shovel near Cañon City, CO, after it approached the man and his dog at a campground. The man alleged that the 95-pound female lion came within 10 feet of his husky, prompting him to strike the lion in the head. A CPW officer's preliminary findings suggest the man acted in self-defense. The lion had injuries on its paw and back, and its body was sent for necropsy. Although CPW continues to investigate the incident, the agency said the incident does not qualify as a mountain lion attack because the man suffered no injuries and was never touched by the animal.

Feeding weaned calves to tackle respiratory challenges

Respiratory challenges come with a hefty price tag, but there's an innovative solution to help tackle those calf health challenges head on when weaning calves. Calf health challenges are costly and widespread. And despite improving vaccinations, management practices and genetics, USDA feedlot data shows respiratory challenges aren't decreasing.

One in five head is affected by respiratory challenges costing the beef industry about $1 billion annually. It's a staggering economic loss, but overcoming it starts at the producer level. What can you do to join in the fight against respiratory challenges? Start by monitoring calf health and the impact of respiratory challenges on your operation.

Studies show a respiratory challenge could cut a calf's rate of gain in half for 30 days or more. Assuming healthy calves gain around 3 pounds per day, that's 45 potential lbs. lost per calf. And guess what? Health-challenged calves don't catch up. If the days spent feeding weaned calves is equal, you've lost 45 lbs. of outweight compared to a healthy calf.

Based on a $1.20/cwt market price, that's $54 of lost profit per calf. Add an extra $30 for time and money to doctor the calf and each respiratory-challenged calf can cost approximately $90. However, there's more to the story. Respiratory challenges at weaning can lead to longer-term consequences that often go unnoticed.

Overlooked consequences

Following the same math, if a respiratory challenged heifer gets bred the first time, she'll calve 45 lbs. lighter than her contemporaries. And she's still growing, so it takes more for her to catch up body condition post-calving.

A first-calf heifer that is playing catch-up on body condition will have a hard time getting bred back. If she does breed back, it will probably be later in the breeding season. And, the later she gets bred, the further she will fall behind in subsequent breeding seasons.

Additionally, producers who retain ownership could miss out on profit for every respiratory-challenged calf they send to the feedlot.

Cattle never diagnosed with respiratory challenges have heavier carcasses and more muscle on the rail, meaning a more valuable carcass. But even if you don't retain ownership, calf health status affects your reputation. Healthy cattle build a positive reputation with cattle buyers. A good reputation can result in better prices and less time spent marketing.

Proactive strategies when weaning calves and innovative feed technology can make having more healthy calves a reality. Keeping calves healthy begins well before weaning. It starts with proper sanitation, vaccination, weaning calves using low-stress methods and feeding weaned calves proper nutrition.

When weaning calves, they face many barriers to health while their immune system is at its most vulnerable. Even the best calf health management can be infiltrated by respiratory challenges.

Keeping calves healthy means less time and money invested in reacting to respiratory challenges, putting more potential dollars back in producers' pockets. — **Purina Animal Nutrition**

When is an hour of operator labor not just that?

Some cow-calf operations hire a significant amount of labor, but for a lot of these operations the majority of labor is unpaid operator labor.

The classic economist approach to valuing unpaid labor is to value it at its opportunity cost. If the farmer could be making $20 per hour doing something else, their labor on the farm should be valued at $20 per hour and be treated as an expense. On the surface, it's hard to argue with this logic, but it is also not the way that most farmers think about the value of their time.

For this reason, I tend not to treat labor as an expense, but instead make the point that any return must be sufficient to adequately compensate the operator for the time they spend. This allows each individual in the room to evaluate whether that return is sufficient and place whatever value they feel is appropriate on their time.

One danger of this approach involves not fully considering other expenses that often accompany operator labor. To illustrate this, consider two very different operator labor hours—an hour spent manually clearing fence rows and an hour spent on a tractor baling hay. A producer clearing fence rows may be using a set of loppers to cut small saplings, they may have a smaller set of clippers for briars and weeds, and they may even have a chainsaw they use on occasion when needed.

An overly eager economist could talk about depreciation on that chainsaw and the other equipment, as well as the fuel being used when the chainsaw is operating, but clearly these costs are pretty minimal. The point here being that the vast majority of the cost associated with an hour clearing fence rows is time.

On the contrary, time is a much smaller portion of the total cost of an hour spent baling hay. Beyond the hour of labor, the producer baling hay is running both a tractor and hay baler. Fuel costs are much more significant, as is depreciation on both pieces of equipment. The same can be said of maintenance and repairs associated with the additional use of the equipment. Choosing not to place a value on an hour spent clearing fences is one thing, but not placing a value on time spent baling hay is very different.

Obviously, these are two extremes here, but hopefully it helps to illustrate the point. Sometimes an hour of operator labor is not just an hour of operator labor, especially if there are a lot of other expenses being incurred during that hour.

Most farmers prefer time spent running machinery over time spent doing more manual labor. In fact, many producers are willing to trade manual labor hours for more machinery hours pretty readily. Cleaning out fence rows on a hot day is tough work, but the expense beyond the value of the time spent is pretty minimal. Conversely, that same hour spent baling hay comes with a lot of additional expenses beyond the value of that time.

The point being that choosing not to value operator labor is the choice of the farmer, but that farmer still needs to make sure they are valuing other costs incurred during those operator labor hours. Failing to do so has the potential to greatly underestimate total costs for the operation. — **Dr. Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky Extension**

Strike threatens $32M in weekly dairy exports

PORT STRIKE
(from page 1)

USMEF, told Meat+Poultry that while the largest ports for U.S. beef and pork exports are on the West Coast, the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports remain significant. He emphasized that although 30% of exports might sound low, a substantial portion of high-value chilled beef is shipped from the East Coast.

"Redirecting to the West Coast is a potential, very short-term solution, but it's by no means a long-term solution at all because it's not just U.S. beef and pork," Halstrom said.

In addition to the impacts on pork and beef, Daniel Munch, economist for AFBF, said poultry producers will lose market access. According to Munch, nearly 80% of waterborne poultry exports would be at risk, leading to lower prices for producers as they lose critical market access. The Port of Savannah handles nearly 50% of East Coast containerized poultry exports, making it a significant player in the supply chain. The disruption would also affect feed suppliers, particularly those providing corn and soymeal, key ingredients for broiler operations.

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) warned of long-term economic consequences, potential disruptions in animal food supplies and rising costs for farmers and pet owners. Prolonged strikes could delay the delivery of critical ingredients like vitamins, minerals, amino acids and micronutrients, threatening animal health and increasing expenses.

"Our industry does not have a choice to provide vital nutrition to farm animals and pets—we have a responsibility," AFIA President and CEO Constance Cullman said in a statement. "Yet, with reduced access to imports of essential ingredients, packaging materials, equipment or other goods, production of animal food may be limited at best. The animal food industry relies heavily on the interdependence of smooth shipping routes and has spent years building relationships with foreign buyers and sellers, yet overnight, could lose the ability to access or do business with international markets."

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the U.S. Dairy Export Council asked the Biden administration to intervene in the strike, saying in a statement it would have a devastating effect on dairy farmers. In 2023, over 530,000 20-foot equivalent units of dairy products worth $1.7 billion were shipped through East and Gulf ports, representing 21% of U.S. dairy exports by volume. The ongoing strike threatens $32 million in weekly dairy exports, with further indirect effects as exporters are forced to reroute shipments and contend with increased transportation costs.

"The administration must act now to bring both sides back to the table. The stakes are too high," said Gregg Doud, president and CEO of NMPF. "This strike puts the livelihoods of American dairy farmers and the strength of our supply chain at risk. The administration needs to step in and end the strike before further damage is done."

Negotiations ongoing

As of *WLJ* press time, negotiations between USMX and ILA were ongoing but at an impasse. According to ILA President Harold Daggett, the union is asking for a $5-an-hour raise for each of the six years of the contract, "absolute airtight language" there will not be automation or semi-automation and for container royalties to go to the union.

USMX offered a nearly 50% wage increase on Oct. 1, saying it "exceeds every other recent union settlement while addressing inflation and recognizing the ILA's hard work to keep the global economy running."

ILA countered that the wage increase was insufficient because it doesn't adequately meet the needs of its members, many of whom operate multi-million-dollar equipment for just $20 an hour, barely above minimum wage in some states. Additionally, two-thirds of members are constantly on call with no guaranteed employment, and they only qualify for benefits based on the hours worked in the previous year, leaving them vulnerable during downturns.

Biden emphasized that collective bargaining is the best way for workers to secure fair pay and benefits. He urged USMX, representing foreign-owned carriers, to make a fair offer to the ILA, ensuring workers are compensated appropriately for their contributions. With ocean carriers seeing record profits, some increasing by over 800% since the pandemic, Biden said it's only fair that workers, who risked their health to keep ports running, receive a significant wage increase.

"It is time for USMX to negotiate a fair contract with the longshoremen that reflects the substantial contribution they've been making to our economic comeback," Biden said. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

Successfully managing cheatgrass when timed properly

Targeted livestock grazing is a successful and cost-efficient method to manage cheatgrass in the western Great Plains when timed to coincide with cheatgrass growth rather than based solely on the time of year, according to a recent study published by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL).

Findings show the targeted grazing window lasts approximately 38 days in the spring, with some variation depending on the year and location.

Cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum) is an annual grass native to Eurasia that has become one of the most problematic invasive species in the western U.S. This invasive species outcompetes native vegetation in the spring, and after completing its growth, it dries into fine fuels during the summer, leading to more frequent, widespread wildfires.

One low-cost method is known to help manage this problem. Early spring targeted grazing, where cattle are allowed to graze cheatgrass early in the season at the right time, can help limit seed production and reduce the competitiveness of cheatgrass. However, what is the right timing for this grazing method to be successful?

ARS research ecologist Dana Blumenthal, one of the co-authors of the recently published paper, explains a key finding of the study, "Cattle are very predictable in when they like to eat cheatgrass. Producers can effectively graze it from when it's 4 inches tall until it's done flowering, and the seeds are hardening up. That is a window of about a month to a month and a half. The window moves around from year to year, so it's important to use cheatgrass growth as a guide for when to graze rather than calendar dates."

Researchers at the ARS' Rangeland Resources & Systems Research facility (with locations in Colorado and Wyoming) and UNL's Panhandle Research and Extension Center collected data from mixed-grass prairie sites in the western Great Plains, including Nebraska and Wyoming, over a period of four years.

The scientists identified pastures with areas of cheatgrass intermixed with native plant communities and grazed them with yearling cattle from April through June. Samples of fecal material from the grazing cattle were collected twice a week and analyzed to determine the proportion of different grass species in their diets.

Researchers measured vegetation phenology (height and flowering stage), forage quality and biomass of cheatgrass and coexisting native plant species. These measurements helped them compare the differences in cattle selection for plant species and forage quality over the four years.

"We were surprised by how late in the season the cattle kept using cheatgrass. That's really helpful because it gives producers more time to get cattle out into cheatgrass areas and have an impact," said Blumenthal.

Results of this four-year study showed that grazing can be timed effectively by keeping track of two easily observable cheatgrass characteristics—height at the beginning of the grazing window and seed maturity later on. The resulting grazing windows, on average across the years of this study, were seven days longer in the western Nebraska site compared to the southeastern Wyoming site.

In terms of impact, results showed that targeted grazing in the early spring can reduce seed production of cheatgrass by as much as 77% when compared to summer grazing. Furthermore, spring targeted grazing can lead to favorable cattle weight gains due to higher crude protein and energy in cattle diets during this period.

"Moving forward, we'd like to learn in which years grazing has the largest effect on cheatgrass seed production. Is it when cattle eat more cheatgrass because the plants are larger, or when cheatgrass is already struggling to grow, for example, in a drought?" said Julie Kray, an ARS technician with the Rangeland Resources & Systems Research facility. "We know that multiple years of targeted grazing will be needed to control cheatgrass, but there may be certain years in which it is more important to prioritize grazing it." — **USDA ARS**

The critical role of longevity and maternal performance

"The question that was posed to us was why is longevity and maternal performance important? And I think that question is very obvious to this audience, and it's because both of those have a huge contribution to the profitability of the cow-calf enterprise," explained Rick Machen of Texas A&M University, Kingsville. Machen was a featured speaker alongside Bob Weaber, Kansas State University, during the 2024 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Symposium June 11 in Knoxville, TN.

Machen highlighted that longevity and maternal performance are central to economic success in cow-calf operations. He emphasized that longevity, which he defines as the ability of cows to remain in production over many years, contributes significantly to an operation's profitability.

"The longer these cows stay in the herd and are productive at or above the average for the herd, the more profitable those cows can be," Machen said. By retaining cows that continue to produce calves efficiently, operations can benefit from a lower unit cost of production.

Both Machen and Weaber addressed the importance of sustainability in the cow-calf industry. "It's already been mentioned this morning about the whole issue of sustainability and the three pillars of sustainability being economic, social and environmental," Machen said.

He stressed that while we often focus on environmental and social concerns, economic sustainability is crucial. Without a strong economic foundation, social and environmental goals cannot be achieved.

Like Machen, Weaber emphasized the importance of integrating genetics and the environment into the decision making for a breeding program. "From a commercial cow-calf perspective, of course, most people in the room will recognize that it's the phenotype of that cow and her performance in a production environment that builds herd profitability," Weaber said.

He highlighted the combined role of genetics and environmental management in creating a productive cow. Throughout his part of the presentation, Weaber emphasized how management practices, such as supplemental feed and breeding programs, impact a cow's performance.

"We can't overlook the impact of our management," he said, acknowledging that changes to the cow's environment can impact productivity.

Improving calf crop percentages is one strategy they discussed for increasing revenue. "Even a modest increase of say 7% for a herd of 100 cows, that's seven additional calves. Even if they're not very big calves, by weight and current prices, can generate an additional $10,000 in revenue," Weaber said. This statement emphasized the substantial financial impact of increasing calf survival rates and overall productivity.

Machen also discussed the importance of early calving, emphasizing that heifers born early in the calving season are likely to be more productive. "The idea is that these females that are born early in the calf drop are likely from genetics that are adapted and work in our production system," he explained. By selecting for early calving, producers can ensure a longer productive life for their cows.

Lastly, Machen addressed the often-overlooked cost of depreciation. "Depreciation is a non-cash cost. We don't write a check for depreciation, but it's a very real cost in these enterprises," he said. Understanding this cost is essential for operations to accurately plan their financials and maintain profitability.

Throughout the talk, Machen and Weaber provided many different viewpoints of how longevity, maternal performance and effective management practices can contribute to the success of cow-calf operations.

To watch the full presentation, visit youtu.be/Z-5-qbfQWQc. For more information about this year's Symposium and BIF, including additional presentations and award winners, visit BIFSymposium.com. — **Lauren Gatz, BIF communications intern**

MARKET NEWS

MARKET SITUATION REPORT

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

MARKET AT A GLANCE

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 10/3/2024		Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	186.79	▲	185.59	182.51
CME Feeder Index	248.25	▲	244.20	251.54
Boxed Beef Average	299.80	▲	296.37	297.76
Average Dressed Steers	299.67	▲	N/A	289.12
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,404	▲	1,399	1,371
Weekly Slaughter**	612,000	▲	610,000	612,000
Weekly Beef Production***	524.1	▲	520.3	505.1
Hide/Offal Value	11.30	▼	11.32	13.57
Corn Price	4.33	▲	4.15	4.98

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

BEEF REPORT: Weekly Composite Boxed Beef

WEEK ENDING	COMPREHENSIVE Loads	COMPREHENSIVE Price	PRIME Loads	PRIME Price	BRANDED Loads	BRANDED Price	CHOICE Loads	CHOICE Price	SELECT Loads	SELECT Price	UNGRADED Loads	UNGRADED Price
September 27	7,123	301.18	209	344.67	1,317	306.65	2,162	299.69	764	287.49	2,672	273.14
September 20	6,767	303.96	186	345.97	1,286	308.84	2,178	301.64	663	290.46	2,454	271.56
September 13	7,017	308.10	242	348.08	1,249	314.02	2,210	306.10	915	296.33	2,401	278.11
September 6	6,302	312.12	200	349.59	1,208	316.07	1,816	309.57	783	298.96	2,294	278.79

Cutouts — FED BOXED BEEF

DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT	50% LEAN	90% LEAN
October 3	299.80	283.29	274.43	73.00	346.33
October 2	299.81	283.93	275.12	70.63	349.02
October 1	300.17	285.30	280.75	70.90	350.49
September 30	298.08	284.53	276.07	74.76	351.71
September 27	296.69	282.08	278.30	N/A	N/A

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle

	9/27	9/30	10/1	10/2	10/3	High*	Low*
Oct.	18375	18378	18448	18750	18783	19633	15310
Dec.	18448	18480	18518	18775	18790	19975	16853
Feb.	18550	18585	18618	18843	18850	18878	16668
Apr.	18640	18655	18688	18875	18888	19000	17005

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle

	9/27	9/30	10/1	10/2	10/3	High*	Low*
Sep.	24553	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	26390	21608
Oct.	24708	24620	24615	24980	25018	26460	21920
Nov.	24570	24490	24468	24870	24923	27095	22268
Jan.	23960	23878	23845	24213	24308	26625	22460

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

FED CATTLE TRADE

FED CATTLE TRADE	Head Count	Avg. Weight	Avg. Price
WEEKLY WEIGHTED AVERAGES			
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
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	234	1,462	185.59
Live FOB Heifer	375	1,385	184.34
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	26,345	1,444	182.51
Live FOB Heifer	12,519	1,315	182.41
Dressed Del Steer	6,136	958	289.12
Dressed Del Heifer	1,274	846	288.82

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	26,534	3,315
Formula	268,066	5,551
Negotiated Cash	76,479	169
Negotiated Grid	46,734	1,087
Packer Owned	11,153	N/A
Total	**428,966**	**10,122**

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS / FORWARD BEEF SALES

Delivery Month			
Sep. '24	106,057	Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,990
Oct. '24	113,012	Neg. Sales 21+ days	1,338
Nov. '24	162,915	Formula sales	3,700
Dec. '24	119,872	Forward contract sales	96
Jan. '25	80,240	Domestic sales	6,233
		NAFTA Exports	65

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	179.54	+0.92
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	178.66	+0.49
Ontario Auctions		
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs	178.80	-0.02
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	N/A	N/A
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs	122.97	-0.37

*Price comparison from one week ago.

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	296.23	272.55	305.56
601-700 lbs	278.57	N/A	278.92
701-800 lbs	261.76	N/A	263.05
801-900 lbs	245.80	N/A	246.01
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	285.95	N/A	294.47
501-600 lbs	255.80	263.35	273.35
601-700 lbs	246.66	248.36	255.19
701-800 lbs	235.25	233.48	231.88

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
	9/23/2024	9/16/2024		
Feeders	23,082	20,106	1,024,475	848,125

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE

October 2, 2024

Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary

Receipts EST: 9,750 **Week Ago EST: 14,950** **Year Ago Act: 13,800**

Santa Teresa, NM -

Compared to Monday, steer calves and yearlings sold steady to 2.00 higher. Heifers traded 1.00 higher. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers and spayed heifers weighing 300-700 lbs.

Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2	
300-400 lbs	278-288
400-500 lbs	258-268
500-600 lbs	237-248

Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2	
300-400 lbs	330-340
400-500 lbs	300-310
500-600 lbs	270-280

Douglas, AZ -

Compared to last week, steer calves and yearlings sold 4.00-8.00 higher. Heifers not well tested. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers weighing 300-700 lbs.

Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2	
300-400 lbs	N/A
400-500 lbs	N/A
500-600 lbs	N/A

Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2	
300-400 lbs	324-334
400-500 lbs	294-304
500-600 lbs	264-274

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

Selected Auctions Week Ending October 3, 2024

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

DATE MARKET		200-300 lb.	300-400 lb.	400-500 lb.	500-600 lb.	600-700 lb.	700-800 lb.	800 lb. -up	SLAUGHTER COWS SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
NORTHWEST										
September 27 Blackfoot, ID	N/A		265-293	265-327 250-278	235-285 225-267	225-260	215-258	200-249 195-235	112-132 125-137.50	
September 26 Burley, ID	816		305-321 287.50	315 259-283	261 238-258	275 215-229.50	222		94-145.50 135-140	
No report available Emmett, ID										
September 28 Eugene, OR	859		190-255*	235-299* 219-268*	212-272* 213-258*	175-239* 160-190*	165-197*		95-106 139-150	1,475-2,400 750-1,490
September 30 Madras, OR	767			320-350 275-310	285-310.50 250-278	258-284 235-255	230-250 215-229	200-215	115-144 130-160	
No report available Vale, OR										
September 30 Davenport, WA	370	275 400	260-297.50 125-270	175-278 125-245	162.50-260 97.50-249	117.50-246 120-230	187.50-226 184-200	142-207.50 115-192	60-176 125-153.50	2,200
September 26 Toppenish, WA	1,055			324-335* 282.50*		242.50-257.50* 230*			128-134 144-152.50	
FARWEST										
September 26 Orland, CA	1,859			250-350 230-341	230-324 210-306	220-292 200-264	200-257 180-214	190-239 170-225	130-154 125-162	
September 27 Escalon, CA	N/A								75-123 90-153	
September 30 Famoso, CA	302		250-300 230-260	250-300 230-260	250-260 220-250	230-255 200-220	200-230	180-220 190-205	100-150 100-135	
No report available Galt, CA										
September 27 Turlock, CA									110-128	
October 1 Salina, UT	1,302	305-430 295-350	245-420 235-375	215-350 195-295	182.50-296 167.50-261	195-273 185-241	227.50-239 187.50-225	172.50-226.50	107-141.50 132-187.50	
NORTH CENTRAL										
September 30 Iowa	6,021		370-395 290-318	300-335 222.50-302.50	269-311.50 255-285	242.50-289.50 222-268	240-265.25 230.50-248	223.50-257 200-234	115-172.50 97.50-168.50	
October 1 Miles City, MT	914			343 325	320.50		238-247	235.50-238 215-240.50	105-127 129-148	
October 2 Bassett, NE	7,010		345 315	322.50-345 291-297	294-344.25 276.50-278	283-320 255-279	253-274 244.25-259	236.50-264 211.50-246		
No report available Ericson, NE										
No report available Imperial, NE										
No report available Kearney, NE										
September 27 Lexington, NE	2,184		323	335 295.50-303	301-317 266-295	282.50-299.75 288	265-266.25	237-259.25 194-229		
September 26 Ogallala, NE	3,051					264-268.50 256.50	249.50-273 239-255.50	205.50-266 200-239		
No report available Valentine, NE										
September 27 Herreid, SD	3,566						235.50-254	232-263.75 230-236.50		
October 2 Torrington, WY	3,088	387.50	359-370 318-337	325-335 290-330	287-330 260	263 256-262	252-261 242-253	232-252.50 222-244		
SOUTH CENTRAL										
September 26 Willcox, AZ	1,159	330 272.50	294.50-330 277-295	293.50-329 255.50-296	248-271.50 224.50-252.50	232.50-247.50 206.50-222			110-139 130-166	2,000-2,225
September 30 Colorado	5,528	276-399.50 301	300-381 287-322	289-364 249-311	264-312.50 231-286	236-268 221-252	220-250 213-241.50	206-246.50 189-230.50	70-142.50 87.50-182	1,675-2,425 675-2,475
No report available La Junta, CO										
September 30 Loma, CO	715		315-340 300-330	300-320 260-300	260-280 240-260	240-260 235-260	225-255 210-245	175-220 180-210	120-140 140-155	
October 2 Dodge City, KS	1,635	332.50	286-341 268-282.50	305-351 270-281	280-304 251-264	254-264 236-242.50	236-267.25 227-239.50	227.75-253 213-225	111-135.50 139.50-158	
September 26 Pratt, KS	2,865		302.50-402.50 320-352.50	305-363 272.50-300	283-321 248-286	241-273 230-250	237-249 213.50-249.50	245-259.75 205-237	100-125.50 118-158	1,850-2,650
September 26 Salina, KS	2,659		345-367.50 307.50-318	321-335 275-302	288-315 250-290	247-285 240-256	233-272.50 232.50-238	224.50-251.75 210-230		
September 26 Clovis, NM	1,547		315-352 282-301	286-340.50 242-289	262.50-291 226-273	235-251 205-226	222-242.50 203	160-216 195-211	113.50-121 135-157	1,500-2,350 1,100-1,925
October 1 El Reno, OK	2,500		340 345	290-345 269-330	250-300 236-275	235-272.50 218.50-254	236-252			
October 1 McAlester, OK	1,460		333-369 268-293	284-337 258-277	255-290 229-246	238-259 225-243	220-246 195-211	178-217 170-186	102-126 135-158	1,300-2,350
October 1 Oklahoma City, OK	5,878		343-353 315-321	278-346 250-288	259-313 235-268	243-272 232-251	231-261 224-238	199-246 181-225.50		
September 27 Cuero, TX	1,897	300-420 275-455	271-355 239-305	249-320 233-215	228-276 219-350	219-234 206-258	211-234 197-262.50		85-120 120-155	1,200-1,500
September 26 Dalhart, TX	1,741		352.50-372.50 316-330	292-350 239-279	249-299 238-255.50	244-272 213-247	246-257.50 205	240 202	95-125 135	910
September 26 San Angelo, TX	966		345	270	276 230.50-241.50	253	204-208		102-118 128-160	2,450
September 26 Tulia, TX	773		335 293	300 273-290	258-290 236-264.50	228 200-208	225 208		100-118 130-135	1,500
EAST										
September 27 Alabama	10,553	350-460 295-330	295-340 250-305	264-310 224-275	240-270 213-245	231-257.50 192-232	220-241 192-227.50	183-230	97-139 123-165	1,100-2,800 800-2,500
September 30 Lexington, KY	1,010	303* 287.50*	299-332.50* 255-295*	274-310.50* 233-285.50*	260-286* 230-261*	234-266* 215-233*	255.50* 191-214*	235.25*	111-140 128-158	1,825-2,600 1,350-2,375
September 30 Joplin, MO	6,406		360 282-315	275-317.50 269-294	270-317 250-270	258-277 240-273	244.50-268 229-247	222-249 220		
September 30 Tennessee	7,339	260-375 222-365	250-330 235-285	245-300 212-270	217.50-283 170-255	207-262.50 192-240	197-246 180-225	177-232.50 160-215.50	100-140 122-170	1,325-2,400 875-2,400
September 30 Virginia	2,900	247.50	185-312.50 227.50-254	225-290 151-254	225-275 150-237	220-254 150-237.25	229.50-250 170-218	193-230 120-212.50		
CANADA										
October 2 Lethbridge, Alberta	10,778						335-362.50 314-332	296-360.50 285-318.50	160-189 196-208	

An update on rebuilding the cattle herd

The biggest question in the cattle industry continues to be that of herd rebuilding. Specifically, there are questions regarding the status of the beef cow herd in 2024 and, more importantly, how the industry is setting up for 2025 and beyond.

Beef herd expansion involves two components: reduced cow culling and increased heifer retention. Direct measures of the cow herd inventory and replacement heifer inventories are only available in the Jan. 1 USDA Cattle report, with the next release set for late January 2025. In the meantime, it is challenging to determine what is happening in 2024.

There is data on beef cow slaughter through the year that does indicate the beef cow herd culling rate. The final rate is usually expressed annually as total annual beef cow slaughter as a percent of the Jan. 1 beef cow inventory. The annual beef cow slaughter total will not be available until after the end of the year.

In the first 37 weeks of 2024, beef cow slaughter is down 16.3% year over year. Monthly beef cow slaughter can be expressed as a percentage of total cattle slaughter. On an annual basis, beef cow slaughter as a percentage of total cattle slaughter is 97.5% correlated with the annual herd culling rate.

A 12-month moving average of this percentage provides an indication during the year of beef cow herd culling. The blue line in Figure 1 shows this moving average since 1987. The two major cyclical beef herd expansion in the 1990-96 and 2014-19 periods shows how beef cow herd slaughter behaves during herd expansion.

In the two previous herd rebuilds, beef cow slaughter bottomed in 1992 and in 2016. The moving average reflects the previous 12 months, suggesting that beef cow slaughter was at a low in the first year of herd expansion in each of these cycles. Figure 1 indicates that beef cow slaughter is declining currently but has not bottomed, and is not yet low enough to indicate herd expansion.

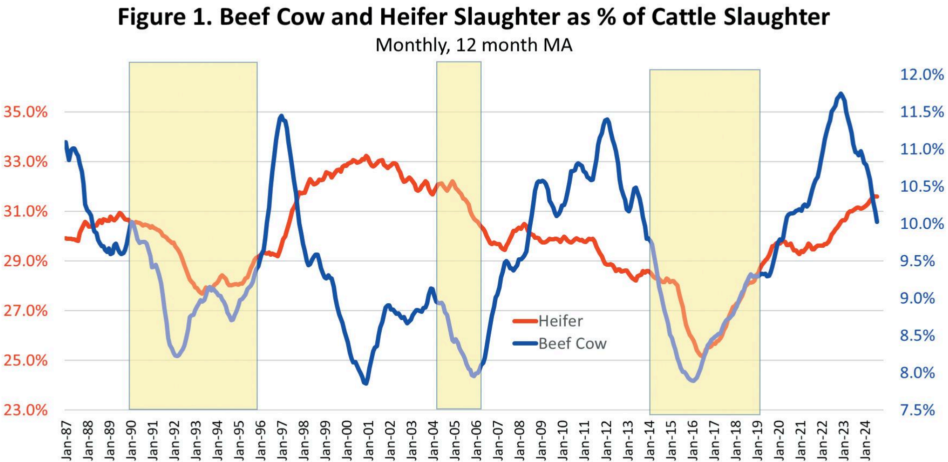
Moreover, the rate of beef cow slaughter in 2024, although sharply lower year over year, is not down enough to offset the small bred beef heifer inventory at the beginning of the year. The beef cow herd is likely down year over year in 2024.

Figure 1 also contains a similar 12-month moving average of heifer slaughter as a percentage of total cattle slaughter. Heifer slaughter goes down when heifer retention increases and there is a 72.5% correlation (negative) between this slaughter percentage and beef replacement heifer percentage (beef replacement heifers as a percent of the beef cow herd inventory). The correlation is strong but less than for cows because heifer slaughter includes more than just beef heifers.

Figure 1 shows that the moving average of heifer slaughter also bottoms during herd expansion, typically about a year later than the cow slaughter moving average. The 12-month moving average of the heifer slaughter percentage of total cattle slaughter has not decreased at all thus far.

Both of the measures in Figure 1 suggest that there is only minimal indication of industry movement towards herd rebuilding. The beef cow herd will likely be smaller on Jan. 1, 2025, and has very limited potential to do anything other than stabilize and hold steady in 2025. — **Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist**

Figure 1. Beef Cow and Heifer Slaughter as % of Cattle Slaughter



Dec. 4-6 – The National Grazing Lands Coalition will hold the ninth National Grazing Lands Conference in Tucson, AZ. Registration is open at www.grazinglands.org.

Boxed beef prices higher

MARKETS
(from page 1)

purchases: $292.90.

Total slaughter through Thursday is estimated to be 491,000 head, 4,000 head above the prior week. The total projected slaughter for a week earlier was 612,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending Sept. 21 was 614,409 head. The average steer dressed weight was 948 lbs., 3 lbs. higher than the prior week.

"The last year which saw a record setting, year-over-year acceleration of carcass weights of such a dramatic amount was 2015," Fish wrote on Thursday. "2015 steer carcass weights averaged 19 pounds more than 2014, a year-over-year feat never achieved prior. This year isn't complete, but at this pace, exceeding a 19-pound annual gain ought to be easy."

Boxed beef prices rose, with the Choice cutout up $3.43 to $299.80 and the Select cutout up 92 cents to $283.29.

"This week thus far, boxed beef prices have stabilized and improved a bit, thanks to the beginning of holiday rib demand," Fish wrote on Tuesday. "Sloppy lean beef prices and improving choice rib values have combined to push the Choice/Select spread back out over $15/cwt. The degree of the Q4 cutout rally will depend primarily on the rib."

Feeder cattle

Despite a few days of trading lower, feeder cattle futures were higher. The October contract was up a little over $2 to $248.97, and the November contract climbed $4.72 to $248.12.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index was up $4.05 to $248.25.

Corn futures were higher, with the December and March contracts up 15 cents to $4.28 and $4.46, respectively.

Colorado: Winter Livestock in La Junta sold 2,761 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 500 lbs. sold mostly $5-7 higher and over 500 lbs. sold mostly $5-11 lower, with instances of sharply lower. Feeder heifers under 450 lbs. sold mostly $28-31 higher. Heifers between 450-800 lbs. sold $3-4 lower, and over 800 lbs. sold $31 higher. Benchmark steers 766 lbs. sold for $223-225, averaging $224.26.

Kansas: Winter Livestock in Dodge City sold 1,415 head on Wednesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers 700-950 lbs. sold $3-5 higher. Feeder heifers 600-875 lbs. sold $3-6 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 707 lbs. sold for $260.50-267.25, averaging $264.74.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 5,500 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 800 lbs. sold steady to $8 higher and over 800 lbs. sold steady to $3 lower. Feeder heifers sold steady to $8 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 772 lbs. sold for $244.50-258, averaging $255.15.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 6,200 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers and steer calves sold $3-8 higher. Feeder heifers over 800 lbs. sold $5 higher and under 800 lbs. were unevenly steady. Heifer calves sold $3-8 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 713 lbs. sold for $248-261, averaging $254.70. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

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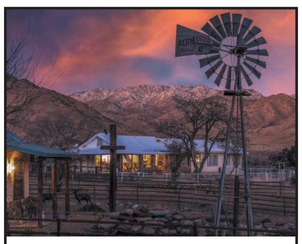

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SALE REPORTS

EAGLE PASS RANCH BULL SALE
Sept. 25, Dos Palos, CA
29 SimAngus bulls $6,371
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

BEEF SOLUTIONS BULL SALE
Sept. 26, Ione, CA
63 Angus bulls... $11,837
80 SimAngus bulls 8,778
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

TOPS: Bruin Branded 3755, by Sitz Logo 8148; to Genex, Shawano, WI, $31,000. Bruin 636H Milestone 3706, by Sitz Milestone; to Kenny Wilson, Tomales, CA, $19,500. Bruin 8148 Logo 3783, by Sitz Logo 8148; to Bell Cattle, Petaluma, CA, $16,750. Circle Compass L156, by Circle Compass J258; to Greg Ramelli, Portola, CA, $15,500. **—JARED PATTERSON**

MCPHEE RED ANGUS PRODUCTION SALE
Sept. 28, Lodi, CA
38 Red Angus bulls $7,342
4 Red Angus bred heifers 3,325
22 Red Angus open heifers 2,454
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

TOPS—Bulls: McPhee Masterpiece 232, by McPhee Done Good 4960; to Elam Red Angus, MT, $25,000. McPhee Envy 562, by Flatiron Precision 643; to Bruce Jensen, Orland, CA, $18,000. McPhee Gentleman Jack 235, by Flatiron Precision 643; to Bruce Jensen, Orland, CA, $15,000. **Open heifer:** Rita's Darling 551, by McPhee Done Good 4960; to White Cattle, CA, $6,500. **—JARED PATTERSON**

TRAYNHAM COX LLC PRODUCTION SALE
Sept. 29, Fort Klamath, OR
18 Angus bulls $6,319
15 SimAngus bulls 5,600
12 Angus open heifers 9,896
6 Angus bred heifers 3,833
4 Angus spring pairs 6,624
5 SimAngus open heifers 8,050
2 Hereford open heifers 3,625
Auctioneer: Eric Duarte

TOPS—Bull: TR Generation 2983, by Traynhams Generation 913; $10,000. **Open heifers:** TR Envious Blackbird M4176, by SCC SCH 24 Karat 838; to Payton Wood, Montague, CA, $31,000. TR Envious Blackbird M4155, by SCC SCH 24 Karat 838; to Hannah & Hadley Harrison, Montague, CA, $21,000. Traynhams Beauty Queen M4215, by Traynham Bankroll 1418; to Harrison Livestock, Montague, CA, and Megan Elwood, Redding, CA, $20,000. **—JARED PATTERSON**

RODEO STANDINGS

October PRCA world standings

The top five contestants and earnings are listed as provided on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) website, www.prorodeo.com, as of Oct. 2.

All Around
1. Shad Mayfield, $224,412.77, Clovis, NM. 2. Junior Nunes Nogueira, $190,401.08, Presidente Prudente, SP. 3. Coleman Proctor, $185,703.12, Pryor, OK. 4. Wacey Schalla, $167,952.90, Arapaho, OK. 5. Tuf Cooper, $133,016.32, Decatur, TX.

Bareback Riding
1. Rocker Steiner, $233,318.94, Weatherford, TX. 2. Keenan Hayes, $219,083.09, Hayden, CO. 3. Leighton Berry, $172,955.15, Weatherford, TX. 4. Dean Thompson, $172,196.52, Altamont, UT. 5. R.C. Landingham, $171,419.82, Hat Creek, CA.

Saddle Bronc Riding
1. Damian Brennan, $280,019.41, Injune, QL. 2. Ryder Wright, $251,257.32, Beaver, UT. 3. Kade Bruno, $227,122.81, Challis, ID. 4. Wyatt Casper, $219,783.57, Miami, TX. 5. Brody Cress, $213,987.95, Hillsdale, WY.

Bull Riding
1. T.J. Gray, $244,815.39, Dairy, OR. 2. Hayes Weight, $236,010.08, Goshen, UT. 3. Jace Trosclair, $212,965.17, Chauvin, LA. 4. Josh Frost, $211,063.61, Randlett, UT. 5. Clayton Sellars, $207,366.06, Wildwood, FL.

Steer Wrestling
1. Dalton Massey, $199,262.94, Hermiston, OR. 2. Dakota Eldridge, $169,401.29, Elko, NV. 3. Stetson Jorgensen, $153,752.08, Blackfoot, ID. 4. Will Lummus, $148,837.27, Byhalia, MS. 5. J.D. Struxness, $147,265.81, Milan, MN.

Team Roping (Headers)
1. Dustin Egusquiza, $201,007.70, Marianna, FL. 2. Tyler Wade, $191,737.56, Terrell, TX. 3. Kaleb Driggers, $177,360.55, Hoboken, GA. 4. Coleman Proctor, $155,790.29, Pryor, OK. 5. Clint Summers, $143,145.98, Lake City, FL.

Team Roping (Heelers)
1. Levi Lord, $201,007.70, Sturgis, SD. 2. Wesley Thorp, $191,737.56, Throckmorton, TX. 3. Junior Nunes Nogueira, $188,486.30, Presidente Prudente, SP. 4. Jake Long, $146,583.75, Coffeyville, KS. 5. Logan Medlin, $142,557.08, Tatum, NM.

Tie-Down Roping
1. Shad Mayfield, $286,346.67, Clovis, NM. 2. Haven Meged, $221,308.91, Miles City, MT. 3. Ty Harris, $219,172.35, San Angelo, TX. 4. Riley Webb, $216,906.92, Denton, TX. 5. Shane Hanchey, $157,844.67, Sulphur, LA.

Steer Roping
1. Cole Patterson, $96,403.22, Pawnee, OK. 2. Slade Wood, $77,887.35, New Ulm, TX. 3. Vin Fisher, $70,335.47, Andrews, TX. 4. Trent Johnson, $70,027.60, Blue Mound, KS. 5. Cody Lee, $69,666.92, Gatesville, TX.

Barrel Racing
1. Hailey Kinsel, $204,102.54, Cotulla, TX. 2. Leslie Smalygo, $195,906.99, Skiatook, OK. 3. Ashley Castleberry, $170,234.90, Montgomery, TX. 4. Kassie Mowry, $162,282.84, Dublin, TX. 5. Emily Beisel, $154,004.96, Weatherford, OK.

Breakaway Roping
1. Shelby Boisjoli-Meged, $146,664.56, Miles City, MT. 2. Josie Conner, $139,098.18, Iowa, LA. 3. Jackie Crawford, $135,498.02, Stephenville, TX. 4. Kelsie Domer, $133,036.93, Dublin, TX. 5. Taylor Munsell, $132,997.53, Alva, OK.

SALE CALENDAR

Sale Calendar is a service to our advertisers. There is a minimum advertising requirement to be eligible to be listed in the Sale Calendar. Contact your fieldman for more information or to have your date added to the Sale Calendar. We will only run auction sale dates or private treaty start dates.

ALL BREEDS

Oct. 19 – FAMOSO All Breeds Bull Sale, Famoso, CA
Nov. 2 – World of Bulls Bull Sale, Galt, CA

ANGUS

Oct. 8 – 9 Peaks Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Ft. Rock, OR
Oct. 8 – Coleman Angus, Female Sale, Charlo, MT
Oct. 9 – Montana Ranch, Female Sale, Bigfork, MT
Oct. 12 – Vintage Angus Ranch, Female Sale, Modesto, CA
Oct. 13-14 – EZ Angus Ranch, Dispersal Sale, Farmington, CA
Oct. 17 – Thomas Angus Ranch, Production Sale, Baker City, OR
Oct. 18 – NILE Angus Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Basin Angus, Female Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Fink Beef Genetics, Bull Sale, Randolph, KS
Oct. 25 – Birch Creek Angus, Bull Sale, Ruby Valley, NV
Oct. 26 – Bear Mountain Angus, Female Sale, Palisade, NE
Oct. 28 – Dal Porto Livestock, Female Sale, Brewster, NE
Oct. 30 – Spring Lake Angus, Dispersal Sale, Lynch, NE
Oct. 31 – Marcy Livestock, Cow Dispersal Sale, Gordon, NE
Nov. 7 – Stokrose Land & Livestock, Bull Sale, Moses Lake, WA
Nov. 8 – Montana Ranch, Bull Sale, Bigfork, MT
Nov. 11 – Green Mountain Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 13 – Riverbend Ranch, Bull Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Nov. 14 – Hoffman Ranch, Bull Sale, Thedford, NE
Nov. 15 – Jorgensen Land & Cattle, Bull Sale, Arcadia, FL

CHAROLAIS

Oct. 19 – Fink Beef Genetics, Bull Sale, Randolph, KS

HEREFORD

Oct. 19 – Lambert Ranch, Bull Sale, Oroville, CA

RED ANGUS

Oct. 18 – NILE Red Angus Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Rocking R Red Angus, Bull Sale, Bayard, NE
Nov. 2 – Bet on Red Sale, Reno, NV
Nov. 4 – Sand Dune Cattle Co., Dispersal Sale, Burwell, NE
Nov. 11 – Ludvigson Stock Farms, Bull Sale, Park City, MT

SIMANGUS

Oct. 16 – Yardley Cattle Co., Female Sale, Beaver, UT

STABILIZER

Oct. 12 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Ozark, AR
Oct. 26 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Dinuba, CA
Nov. 9 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Fort Collins, CO

COMMERCIAL

Nov. 15 – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bred Heifer Sale, Pilot Rock, OR

HORSE

Oct. 10 – Jamison Ranch, Horse Sale, Quinter, KS

Successfully managing cheatgrass when timed properly

Targeted livestock grazing is a successful and cost-efficient method to manage cheatgrass in the western Great Plains when timed to coincide with cheatgrass growth rather than based solely on the time of year, according to a recent study published by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL).

Findings show the targeted grazing window lasts approximately 38 days in the spring, with some variation depending on the year and location.

Cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum) is an annual grass native to Eurasia that has become one of the most problematic invasive species in the western U.S. This invasive species outcompetes native vegetation in the spring, and after completing its growth, it dries into fine fuels during the summer, leading to more frequent, widespread wildfires.

One low-cost method is known to help manage this problem. Early spring targeted grazing, where cattle are allowed to graze cheatgrass early in the season at the right time, can help limit seed production and reduce the competitiveness of cheatgrass. However, what is the right timing for this grazing method to be successful?

ARS research ecologist Dana Blumenthal, one of the co-authors of the recently published paper, explains a key finding of the study, "Cattle are very predictable in when they like to eat cheatgrass. Producers can effectively graze it from when it's 4 inches tall until it's done flowering, and the seeds are hardening up. That is a window of about a month to a month and a half. The window moves around from year to year, so it's important to use cheatgrass growth as a guide for when to graze rather than calendar dates."

Researchers at the ARS' Rangeland Resources & Systems Research facility (with locations in Colorado and Wyoming) and UNL's Panhandle Research and Extension Center collected data from mixed-grass prairie sites in the western Great Plains, including Nebraska and Wyoming, over a period of four years.

The scientists identified pastures with areas of cheatgrass intermixed with native plant communities and grazed them with yearling cattle from April through June. Samples of fecal material from the grazing cattle were collected twice a week and analyzed to determine the proportion of different grass species in their diets.

Researchers measured vegetation phenology (height and flowering stage), forage quality and biomass of cheatgrass and coexisting native plant species. These measurements helped them compare the differences in cattle selection for plant species and forage quality over the four years.

"We were surprised by how late in the season the cattle kept using cheatgrass. That's really helpful because it gives producers more time to get cattle out into cheatgrass areas and have an impact," said Blumenthal.

Results of this four-year study showed that grazing can be timed effectively by keeping track of two easily observable cheatgrass characteristics—height at the beginning of the grazing window and seed maturity later on. The resulting grazing windows, on average across the years of this study, were seven days longer in the western Nebraska site compared to the southeastern Wyoming site.

In terms of impact, results showed that targeted grazing in the early spring can reduce seed production of cheatgrass by as much as 77% when compared to summer grazing. Furthermore, spring targeted grazing can lead to favorable cattle weight gains due to higher crude protein and energy in cattle diets during this period.

"Moving forward, we'd like to learn in which years grazing has the largest effect on cheatgrass seed production. Is it when cattle eat more cheatgrass because the plants are larger, or when cheatgrass is already struggling to grow, for example, in a drought?" said Julie Kray, an ARS technician with the Rangeland Resources & Systems Research facility. "We know that multiple years of targeted grazing will be needed to control cheatgrass, but there may be certain years in which it is more important to prioritize grazing it." — **USDA ARS**

The critical role of longevity and maternal performance

"The question that was posed to us was why is longevity and maternal performance important? And I think that question is very obvious to this audience, and it's because both of those have a huge contribution to the profitability of the cow-calf enterprise," explained Rick Machen of Texas A&M University, Kingsville. Machen was a featured speaker alongside Bob Weaber, Kansas State University, during the 2024 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Symposium June 11 in Knoxville, TN.

Machen highlighted that longevity and maternal performance are central to economic success in cow-calf operations. He emphasized that longevity, which he defines as the ability of cows to remain in production over many years, contributes significantly to an operation's profitability.

"The longer these cows stay in the herd and are productive at or above the average for the herd, the more profitable those cows can be," Machen said. By retaining cows that continue to produce calves efficiently, operations can benefit from a lower unit cost of production.

Both Machen and Weaber addressed the importance of sustainability in the cow-calf industry. "It's already been mentioned this morning about the whole issue of sustainability and the three pillars of sustainability being economic, social and environmental," Machen said.

He stressed that while we often focus on environmental and social concerns, economic sustainability is crucial. Without a strong economic foundation, social and environmental goals cannot be achieved.

Like Machen, Weaber emphasized the importance of integrating genetics and the environment into the decision making for a breeding program. "From a commercial cow-calf perspective, of course, most people in the room will recognize that it's the phenotype of that cow and her performance in a production environment that builds herd profitability," Weaber said.

He highlighted the combined role of genetics and environmental management in creating a productive cow. Throughout his part of the presentation, Weaber emphasized how management practices, such as supplemental feed and breeding programs, impact a cow's performance.

"We can't overlook the impact of our management," he said, acknowledging that changes to the cow's environment can impact productivity.

Improving calf crop percentages is one strategy they discussed for increasing revenue. "Even a modest increase of say 7% for a herd of 100 cows, that's seven additional calves. Even if they're not very big calves, by weight and current prices, can generate an additional $10,000 in revenue," Weaber said. This statement emphasized the substantial financial impact of increasing calf survival rates and overall productivity.

Machen also discussed the importance of early calving, emphasizing that heifers born early in the calving season are likely to be more productive. "The idea is that these females that are born early in the calf drop are likely from genetics that are adapted and work in our production system," he explained. By selecting for early calving, producers can ensure a longer productive life for their cows.

Lastly, Machen addressed the often-overlooked cost of depreciation. "Depreciation is a non-cash cost. We don't write a check for depreciation, but it's a very real cost in these enterprises," he said. Understanding this cost is essential for operations to accurately plan their financials and maintain profitability.

Throughout the talk, Machen and Weaber provided many different viewpoints of how longevity, maternal performance and effective management practices can contribute to the success of cow-calf operations.

To watch the full presentation, visit youtu.be/Z-5-qbfQWQc. For more information about this year's Symposium and BIF, including additional presentations and award winners, visit BIFSymposium.com. — **Lauren Gatz, BIF communications intern**

MARKET NEWS

MARKET SITUATION REPORT

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

MARKET AT A GLANCE

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 10/3/2024		Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	186.79	▲	185.59	182.51
CME Feeder Index	248.25	▲	244.20	251.54
Boxed Beef Average	299.80	▲	296.37	297.76
Average Dressed Steers	299.67	▲	N/A	289.12
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,404	▲	1,399	1,371
Weekly Slaughter**	612,000	▲	610,000	612,000
Weekly Beef Production***	524.1	▲	520.3	505.1
Hide/Offal Value	11.30	▼	11.32	13.57
Corn Price	4.33	▲	4.15	4.98

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

BEEF REPORT: Weekly Composite Boxed Beef

WEEK ENDING	COMPREHENSIVE Loads	COMPREHENSIVE Price	PRIME Loads	PRIME Price	BRANDED Loads	BRANDED Price	CHOICE Loads	CHOICE Price	SELECT Loads	SELECT Price	UNGRADED Loads	UNGRADED Price
September 27	7,123	301.18	209	344.67	1,317	306.65	2,162	299.69	764	287.49	2,672	273.14
September 20	6,767	303.96	186	345.97	1,286	308.84	2,178	301.64	663	290.46	2,454	271.56
September 13	7,017	308.10	242	348.08	1,249	314.02	2,210	306.10	915	296.33	2,401	278.11
September 6	6,302	312.12	200	349.59	1,208	316.07	1,816	309.57	783	298.96	2,294	278.79

Cutouts — FED BOXED BEEF

DATE	CHOICE	SELECT	COW BEEF CUTOUT	50% LEAN	90% LEAN
October 3	299.80	283.29	274.43	73.00	346.33
October 2	299.81	283.93	275.12	70.63	349.02
October 1	300.17	285.30	280.75	70.90	350.49
September 30	298.08	284.53	276.07	74.76	351.71
September 27	296.69	282.08	278.30	N/A	N/A

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle

	9/27	9/30	10/1	10/2	10/3	High*	Low*
Oct.	18375	18378	18448	18750	18783	19633	15310
Dec.	18448	18480	18518	18775	18790	19975	16853
Feb.	18550	18585	18618	18843	18850	18878	16668
Apr.	18640	18655	18688	18875	18888	19000	17005

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle

	9/27	9/30	10/1	10/2	10/3	High*	Low*
Sep.	24553	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	26390	21608
Oct.	24708	24620	24615	24980	25018	26460	21920
Nov.	24570	24490	24468	24870	24923	27095	22268
Jan.	23960	23878	23845	24213	24308	26625	22460

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

FED CATTLE TRADE

FED CATTLE TRADE	Head Count	Avg. Weight	Avg. Price
WEEKLY WEIGHTED AVERAGES			
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
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	234	1,462	185.59
Live FOB Heifer	375	1,385	184.34
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	26,345	1,444	182.51
Live FOB Heifer	12,519	1,315	182.41
Dressed Del Steer	6,136	958	289.12
Dressed Del Heifer	1,274	846	288.82

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	26,534	3,315
Formula	268,066	5,551
Negotiated Cash	76,479	169
Negotiated Grid	46,734	1,087
Packer Owned	11,153	N/A
Total	**428,966**	**10,122**

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS / FORWARD BEEF SALES

Delivery Month			
Sep. '24	106,057	Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,990
Oct. '24	113,012	Neg. Sales 21+ days	1,338
Nov. '24	162,915	Formula sales	3,700
Dec. '24	119,872	Forward contract sales	96
Jan. '25	80,240	Domestic sales	6,233
		NAFTA Exports	65

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	179.54	+0.92
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	178.66	+0.49
Ontario Auctions		
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs	178.80	-0.02
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs	N/A	N/A
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs	122.97	-0.37

*Price comparison from one week ago.

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	296.23	272.55	305.56
601-700 lbs	278.57	N/A	278.92
701-800 lbs	261.76	N/A	263.05
801-900 lbs	245.80	N/A	246.01
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	285.95	N/A	294.47
501-600 lbs	255.80	263.35	273.35
601-700 lbs	246.66	248.36	255.19
701-800 lbs	235.25	233.48	231.88

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
	9/23/2024	9/16/2024		
Feeders	23,082	20,106	1,024,475	848,125

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE

October 2, 2024

Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary

Receipts EST: 9,750 Week Ago EST: 14,950 Year Ago Act: 13,800

Santa Teresa, NM -

Compared to Monday, steer calves and yearlings sold steady to 2.00 higher. Heifers traded 1.00 higher. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers and spayed heifers weighing 300-700 lbs.

Douglas, AZ -

Compared to last week, steer calves and yearlings sold 4.00-8.00 higher. Heifers not well tested. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers weighing 300-700 lbs.

Santa Teresa, NM		Douglas, AZ	
Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2		**Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2**	
300-400 lbs	278-288	300-400 lbs	N/A
400-500 lbs	258-268	400-500 lbs	N/A
500-600 lbs	237-248	500-600 lbs	N/A
Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2		**Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2**	
300-400 lbs	330-340	300-400 lbs	324-334
400-500 lbs	300-310	400-500 lbs	294-304
500-600 lbs	270-280	500-600 lbs	264-274

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

Selected Auctions Week Ending October 3, 2024

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

DATE MARKET		200-300 lb.	300-400 lb.	400-500 lb.	500-600 lb.	600-700 lb.	700-800 lb.	800 lb. -up	SLAUGHTER COWS SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
NORTHWEST										
September 27 Blackfoot, ID	N/A		265-293	265-327 250-278	235-285 225-267	225-260	215-258	200-249 195-235	112-132 125-137.50	
September 26 Burley, ID	816		305-321 287.50	315 259-283	261 238-258	275 215-229.50	222		94-145.50 135-140	
No report available Emmett, ID										
September 28 Eugene, OR	859		190-255*	235-299* 219-268*	212-272* 213-258*	175-239* 160-190*	165-197*		95-106 139-150	1,475-2,400 750-1,490
September 30 Madras, OR	767			320-350 275-310	285-310.50 250-278	258-284 235-255	230-250 215-229	200-215	115-144 130-160	
No report available Vale, OR										
September 30 Davenport, WA	370	275 400	260-297.50 125-270	175-278 125-245	162.50-260 97.50-249	117.50-246 120-230	187.50-226 184-200	142-207.50 115-192	60-176 125-153.50	2,200
September 26 Toppenish, WA	1,055			324-335* 282.50*		242.50-257.50* 230*			128-134 144-152.50	
FAR WEST										
September 26 Orland, CA	1,859			250-350 230-341	230-324 210-306	220-292 200-264	200-257 180-214	190-239 170-225	130-154 125-162	
September 27 Escalon, CA	N/A								75-123 90-153	
September 30 Famoso, CA	302		250-300 230-260	250-300 230-260	250-260 220-250	230-255 200-220	200-230	180-220 190-205	100-150 100-135	
No report available Galt, CA										
September 27 Turlock, CA									110-128	
October 1 Salina, UT	1,302	305-430 295-350	245-420 235-375	215-350 195-295	182.50-296 167.50-261	195-273 185-241	227.50-239 187.50-225	172.50-226.50	107-141.50 132-187.50	
NORTH CENTRAL										
September 30 Iowa	6,021		370-395 290-318	300-335 222.50-302.50	269-311.50 255-285	242.50-289.50 222-268	240-265.25 230.50-248	223.50-257 200-234	115-172.50 97.50-168.50	
October 1 Miles City, MT	914			343 325	320.50		238-247	235.50-238 215-240.50	105-127 129-148	
October 2 Bassett, NE	7,010		345 315	322.50-345 291-297	294-344.25 276.50-278	283-320 255-279	253-274 244.25-259	236.50-264 211.50-246		
No report available Ericson, NE										
No report available Imperial, NE										
No report available Kearney, NE										
September 27 Lexington, NE	2,184		323	335 295.50-303	301-317 266-295	282.50-299.75 288	265-266.25	237-259.25 194-229		
September 26 Ogallala, NE	3,051					264-268.50 256.50	249.50-273 239-255.50	205.50-266 200-239		
No report available Valentine, NE										
September 27 Herreid, SD	3,566						235.50-254	232-263.75 230-236.50		
October 2 Torrington, WY	3,088	387.50	359-370 318-337	325-335 290-330	287-330 260	263 256-262	252-261 242-253	232-252.50 222-244		
SOUTH CENTRAL										
September 26 Willcox, AZ	1,159	330 272.50	294.50-330 277-295	293.50-329 255.50-296	248-271.50 224.50-252.50	232.50-247.50 206.50-222			110-139 130-166	2,000-2,225
September 30 Colorado	5,528	276-399.50 301	300-381 287-322	289-364 249-311	264-312.50 231-286	236-268 221-252	220-250 213-241.50	206-246.50 189-230.50	70-142.50 87.50-182	1,675-2,425 675-2,475
No report available La Junta, CO										
September 30 Loma, CO	715		315-340 300-330	300-320 260-300	260-280 240-260	240-260 235-260	225-255 210-245	175-220 180-210	120-140 140-155	
October 2 Dodge City, KS	1,635	332.50	286-341 268-282.50	305-351 270-281	280-304 251-264	254-264 236-242.50	236-267.25 227-239.50	227.75-253 213-225	111-135.50 139.50-158	
September 26 Pratt, KS	2,865		302.50-402.50 320-352.50	305-363 272.50-300	283-321 248-286	241-273 230-250	237-249 213.50-249.50	245-259.75 205-237	100-125.50 118-158	1,850-2,650
September 26 Salina, KS	2,659		345-367.50 307.50-318	321-335 275-302	288-315 250-290	247-285 240-256	233-272.50 232.50-238	224.50-251.75 210-230		
September 26 Clovis, NM	1,547		315-352 282-301	286-340.50 242-289	262.50-291 226-273	235-251 205-226	222-242.50 203	160-216 195-211	113.50-121 135-157	1,500-2,350 1,100-1,925
October 1 El Reno, OK	2,500		340 345	290-345 269-330	250-300 236-275	235-272.50 218.50-254	236-252			
October 1 McAlester, OK	1,460		333-369 268-293	284-337 258-277	255-290 229-246	238-259 225-243	220-246 195-211	178-217 170-186	102-126 135-158	1,300-2,350
October 1 Oklahoma City, OK	5,878		343-353 315-321	278-346 250-288	259-313 235-268	243-272 232-251	231-261 224-238	199-246 181-225.50		
September 27 Cuero, TX	1,897	300-420 275-455	271-355 239-305	249-320 233-215	228-276 219-350	219-234 206-258	211-234 197-262.50		85-120 120-155	1,200-1,500
September 26 Dalhart, TX	1,741		352.50-372.50 316-330	292-350 239-279	249-299 238-255.50	244-272 213-247	246-257.50 205	240 202	95-125 135	910
September 26 San Angelo, TX	966		345	270	276 230.50-241.50	253	204-208		102-118 128-160	2,450
September 26 Tulia, TX	773		335 293	300 273-290	258-290 236-264.50	228 200-208	225 208		100-118 130-135	1,500
EAST										
September 27 Alabama	10,553	350-460 295-330	295-340 250-305	264-310 224-275	240-270 213-245	231-257.50 192-232	220-241 192-227.50	183-230	97-139 123-165	1,100-2,800 800-2,500
September 30 Lexington, KY	1,010	303* 287.50*	299-332.50* 255-295*	274-310.50* 233-285.50*	260-286* 230-261*	234-266* 215-233*	255.50* 191-214*	235.25*	111-140 128-158	1,825-2,600 1,350-2,375
September 30 Joplin, MO	6,406		360 282-315	275-317.50 269-294	270-317 250-270	258-277 240-273	244.50-268 229-247	222-249 220		
September 30 Tennessee	7,339	260-375 222-365	250-330 235-285	245-300 212-270	217.50-283 170-255	207-262.50 192-240	197-246 180-225	177-232.50 160-215.50	100-140 122-170	1,325-2,400 875-2,400
September 30 Virginia	2,900	247.50	185-312.50 227.50-254	225-290 151-254	225-275 150-237	220-254 150-237.25	229.50-250 170-218	193-230 120-212.50		
CANADA										
October 2 Lethbridge, Alberta	10,778						335-362.50 314-332	296-360.50 285-318.50	160-189 196-208	

An update on rebuilding the cattle herd

The biggest question in the cattle industry continues to be that of herd rebuilding. Specifically, there are questions regarding the status of the beef cow herd in 2024 and, more importantly, how the industry is setting up for 2025 and beyond.

Beef herd expansion involves two components: reduced cow culling and increased heifer retention. Direct measures of the cow herd inventory and replacement heifer inventories are only available in the Jan. 1 USDA Cattle report, with the next release set for late January 2025. In the meantime, it is challenging to determine what is happening in 2024.

There is data on beef cow slaughter through the year that does indicate the beef cow herd culling rate. The final rate is usually expressed annually as total annual beef cow slaughter as a percent of the Jan. 1 beef cow inventory. The annual beef cow slaughter total will not be available until after the end of the year.

In the first 37 weeks of 2024, beef cow slaughter is down 16.3% year over year. Monthly beef cow slaughter can be expressed as a percentage of total cattle slaughter. On an annual basis, beef cow slaughter as a percentage of total cattle slaughter is 97.5% correlated with the annual herd culling rate.

A 12-month moving average of this percentage provides an indication during the year of beef cow herd culling. The blue line in Figure 1 shows this moving average since 1987. The two major cyclical beef herd expansion in the 1990-96 and 2014-19 periods shows how beef cow herd slaughter behaves during herd expansion.

In the two previous herd rebuilds, beef cow slaughter bottomed in 1992 and in 2016. The moving average reflects the previous 12 months, suggesting that beef cow slaughter was at a low in the first year of herd expansion in each of these cycles. Figure 1 indicates that beef cow slaughter is declining currently but has not bottomed, and is not yet low enough to indicate herd expansion.

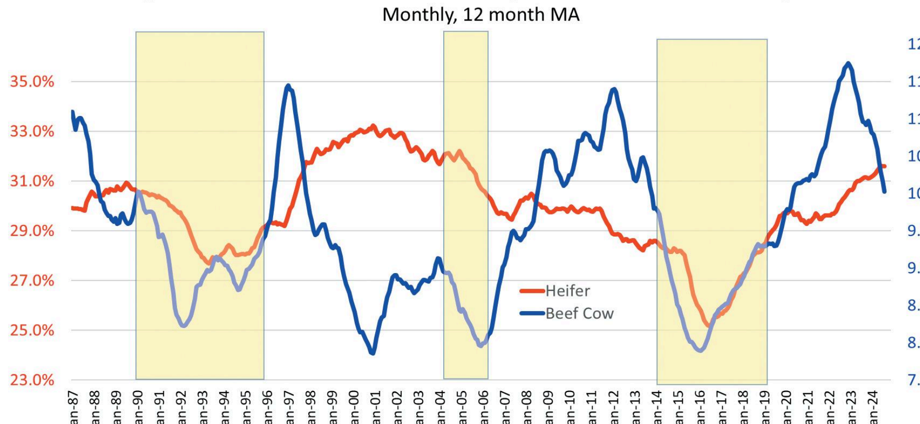
Moreover, the rate of beef cow slaughter in 2024, although sharply lower year over year, is not down enough to offset the small bred beef heifer inventory at the beginning of the year. The beef cow herd is likely down year over year in 2024.

Figure 1 also contains a similar 12-month moving average of heifer slaughter as a percentage of total cattle slaughter. Heifer slaughter goes down when heifer retention increases and there is a 72.5% correlation (negative) between this slaughter percentage and beef replacement heifer percentage (beef replacement heifers as a percent of the beef cow herd inventory). The correlation is strong but less than for cows because heifer slaughter includes more than just beef heifers.

Figure 1 shows that the moving average of heifer slaughter also bottoms during herd expansion, typically about a year later than the cow slaughter moving average. The 12-month moving average of the heifer slaughter percentage of total cattle slaughter has not decreased at all thus far.

Both of the measures in Figure 1 suggest that there is only minimal indication of industry movement towards herd rebuilding. The beef cow herd will likely be smaller on Jan. 1, 2025, and has very limited potential to do anything other than stabilize and hold steady in 2025. — **Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist**

Figure 1. Beef Cow and Heifer Slaughter as % of Cattle Slaughter
Monthly, 12 month MA



CALENDAR COMING EVENTS

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

Dec. 4-6 – The National Grazing Lands Coalition will hold the ninth National Grazing Lands Conference in Tucson, AZ. Registration is open at www.grazinglands.org.

Boxed beef prices higher

MARKETS
(from page 1)

purchases: $292.90.

Total slaughter through Thursday is estimated to be 491,000 head, 4,000 head above the prior week. The total projected slaughter for a week earlier was 612,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending Sept. 21 was 614,409 head. The average steer dressed weight was 948 lbs., 3 lbs. higher than the prior week.

"The last year which saw a record setting, year-over-year acceleration of carcass weights of such a dramatic amount was 2015," Fish wrote on Thursday. "2015 steer carcass weights averaged 19 pounds more than 2014, a year-over-year feat never achieved prior. This year isn't complete, but at this pace, exceeding a 19-pound annual gain ought to be easy."

Boxed beef prices rose, with the Choice cutout up $3.43 to $299.80 and the Select cutout up 92 cents to $283.29.

"This week thus far, boxed beef prices have stabilized and improved a bit, thanks to the beginning of holiday rib demand," Fish wrote on Tuesday. "Sloppy lean beef prices and improving choice rib values have combined to push the Choice/Select spread back out over $15/cwt. The degree of the Q4 cutout rally will depend primarily on the rib."

Feeder cattle

Despite a few days of trading lower, feeder cattle futures were higher. The October contract was up a little over $2 to $248.97, and the November contract climbed $4.72 to $248.12.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index was up $4.05 to $248.25.

Corn futures were higher, with the December and March contracts up 15 cents to $4.28 and $4.46, respectively.

Colorado: Winter Livestock in La Junta sold 2,761 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 500 lbs. sold mostly $5-7 higher and over 500 lbs. sold mostly $5-11 lower, with instances of sharply lower. Feeder heifers under 450 lbs. sold mostly $28-31 higher. Heifers between 450-800 lbs. sold $3-4 lower, and over 800 lbs. sold $31 higher. Benchmark steers 766 lbs. sold for $223-225, averaging $224.26.

Kansas: Winter Livestock in Dodge City sold 1,415 head on Wednesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers 700-950 lbs. sold $3-5 higher. Feeder heifers 600-875 lbs. sold $3-6 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 707 lbs. sold for $260.50-267.25, averaging $264.74.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 5,500 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 800 lbs. sold steady to $8 higher and over 800 lbs. sold steady to $3 lower. Feeder heifers sold steady to $8 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 772 lbs. sold for $244.50-258, averaging $255.15.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 6,200 head on Monday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers and steer calves sold $3-8 higher. Feeder heifers over 800 lbs. sold $5 higher and under 800 lbs. were unevenly steady. Heifer calves sold $3-8 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 713 lbs. sold for $248-261, averaging $254.70. — **Charles Wallace, *WLJ* contributing editor**

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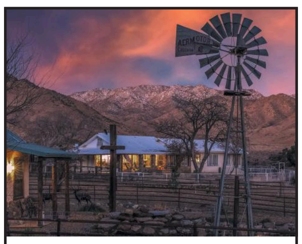

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SALE REPORTS

EAGLE PASS RANCH BULL SALE
Sept. 25, Dos Palos, CA
29 SimAngus bulls $6,371
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

BEEF SOLUTIONS BULL SALE
Sept. 26, Ione, CA
63 Angus bulls . . . $11,837
80 SimAngus bulls 8,778
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

TOPS: Bruin Branded 3755, by Sitz Logo 8148; to Genex, Shawano, WI, $31,000. Bruin 636H Milestone 3706, by Sitz Milestone; to Kenny Wilson, Tomales, CA, $19,500. Bruin 8148 Logo 3783, by Sitz Logo 8148; to Bell Cattle, Petaluma, CA, $16,750. Circle Compass L156, by Circle Compass J258; to Greg Ramelli, Portola, CA, $15,500. **—JARED PATTERSON**

MCPHEE RED ANGUS PRODUCTION SALE
Sept. 28, Lodi, CA
38 Red Angus bulls $7,342
4 Red Angus bred heifers 3,325
22 Red Angus open heifers 2,454
Auctioneer: Rick Machado

TOPS—Bulls: McPhee Masterpiece 232, by McPhee Done Good 4960; to Elam Red Angus, MT, $25,000. McPhee Envy 562, by Flatiron Precision 643; to Bruce Jensen, Orland, CA, $18,000. McPhee Gentleman Jack 235, by Flatiron Precision 643; to Bruce Jensen, Orland, CA, $15,000. **Open heifer:** Rita's Darling 551, by McPhee Done Good 4960; to White Cattle, CA, $6,500. **— JARED PATTERSON**

TRAYNHAM COX LLC PRODUCTION SALE
Sept. 29, Fort Klamath, OR
18 Angus bulls $6,319
15 SimAngus bulls 5,600
12 Angus open heifers 9,896
6 Angus bred heifers 3,833
4 Angus spring pairs 6,624
5 SimAngus open heifers 8,050
2 Hereford open heifers 3,625
Auctioneer: Eric Duarte

TOPS—Bull: TR Generation 2983, by Traynhams Generation 913; $10,000. **Open heifers:** TR Envious Blackbird M4176, by SCC SCH 24 Karat 838; to Payton Wood, Montague, CA, $31,000. TR Envious Blackbird M4155, by SCC SCH 24 Karat 838; to Hannah & Hadley Harrison, Montague, CA, $21,000. Traynhams Beauty Queen M4215, by Traynham Bankroll 1418; to Harrison Livestock, Montague, CA, and Megan Elwood, Redding, CA, $20,000. **—JARED PATTERSON**

RODEO STANDINGS

October PRCA world standings

The top five contestants and earnings are listed as provided on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) website, www.prorodeo.com, as of Oct. 2.

All Around
1. Shad Mayfield, $224,412.77, Clovis, NM. 2. Junior Nunes Nogueira, $190,401.08, Presidente Prudente, SP. 3. Coleman Proctor, $185,703.12, Pryor, OK. 4. Wacey Schalla, $167,952.90, Arapaho, OK. 5. Tuf Cooper, $133,016.32, Decatur, TX.

Bareback Riding
1. Rocker Steiner, $233,318.94, Weatherford, TX. 2. Keenan Hayes, $219,083.09, Hayden, CO. 3. Leighton Berry, $172,955.15, Weatherford, TX. 4. Dean Thompson, $172,196.52, Altamont, UT. 5. R.C. Landingham, $171,419.82, Hat Creek, CA.

Saddle Bronc Riding
1. Damian Brennan, $280,019.41, Injune, QL. 2. Ryder Wright, $251,257.32, Beaver, UT. 3. Kade Bruno, $227,122.81, Challis, ID. 4. Wyatt Casper, $219,783.57, Miami, TX. 5. Brody Cress, $213,987.95, Hillsdale, WY.

Bull Riding
1. T.J. Gray, $244,815.39, Dairy, OR. 2. Hayes Weight, $236,010.08, Goshen, UT. 3. Jace Trosclair, $212,965.17, Chauvin, LA. 4. Josh Frost, $211,063.61, Randlett, UT. 5. Clayton Sellars, $207,366.06, Wildwood, FL.

Steer Wrestling
1. Dalton Massey, $199,262.94, Hermiston, OR. 2. Dakota Eldridge, $169,401.29, Elko, NV. 3. Stetson Jorgensen, $153,752.08, Blackfoot, ID. 4. Will Lummus, $148,837.27, Byhalia, MS. 5. J.D. Struxness, $147,265.81, Milan, MN.

Team Roping (Headers)
1. Dustin Egusquiza, $201,007.70, Marianna, FL. 2. Tyler Wade, $191,737.56, Terrell, TX. 3. Kaleb Driggers, $177,360.55, Hoboken, GA. 4. Coleman Proctor, $155,790.29, Pryor, OK. 5. Clint Summers, $143,145.98, Lake City, FL.

Team Roping (Heelers)
1. Levi Lord, $201,007.70, Sturgis, SD. 2. Wesley Thorp, $191,737.56, Throckmorton, TX. 3. Junior Nunes Nogueira, $188,486.30, Presidente Prudente, SP. 4. Jake Long, $146,583.75, Coffeyville, KS. 5. Logan Medlin, $142,557.08, Tatum, NM.

Tie-Down Roping
1. Shad Mayfield, $286,346.67, Clovis, NM. 2. Haven Meged, $221,308.91, Miles City, MT. 3. Ty Harris, $219,172.35, San Angelo, TX. 4. Riley Webb, $216,906.92, Denton, TX. 5. Shane Hanchey, $157,844.67, Sulphur, LA.

Steer Roping
1. Cole Patterson, $96,403.22, Pawnee, OK. 2. Slade Wood, $77,887.35, New Ulm, TX. 3. Vin Fisher, $70,335.47, Andrews, TX. 4. Trent Johnson, $70,027.60, Blue Mound, KS. 5. Cody Lee, $69,666.92, Gatesville, TX.

Barrel Racing
1. Hailey Kinsel, $204,102.54, Cotulla, TX. 2. Leslie Smalygo, $195,906.99, Skiatook, OK. 3. Ashley Castleberry, $170,234.90, Montgomery, TX. 4. Kassie Mowry, $162,282.84, Dublin, TX. 5. Emily Beisel, $154,004.96, Weatherford, OK.

Breakaway Roping
1. Shelby Boisjoli-Meged, $146,664.56, Miles City, MT. 2. Josie Conner, $139,098.18, Iowa, LA. 3. Jackie Crawford, $135,498.02, Stephenville, TX. 4. Kelsie Domer, $133,036.93, Dublin, TX. 5. Taylor Munsell, $132,997.53, Alva, OK.

SALE CALENDAR

Sale Calendar is a service to our advertisers. There is a minimum advertising requirement to be eligible to be listed in the Sale Calendar. Contact your fieldman for more information or to have your date added to the Sale Calendar. We will only run auction sale dates or private treaty start dates.

ALL BREEDS
Oct. 19 – FAMOSO All Breeds Bull Sale, Famoso, CA
Nov. 2 – World of Bulls Bull Sale, Galt, CA

ANGUS
Oct. 8 – 9 Peaks Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Ft. Rock, OR
Oct. 8 – Coleman Angus, Female Sale, Charlo, MT
Oct. 9 – Montana Ranch, Female Sale, Bigfork, MT
Oct. 12 – Vintage Angus Ranch, Female Sale, Modesto, CA
Oct. 13-14 – EZ Angus Ranch, Dispersal Sale, Farmington, CA
Oct. 17 – Thomas Angus Ranch, Production Sale, Baker City, OR
Oct. 18 – NILE Angus Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Basin Angus, Female Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Fink Beef Genetics, Bull Sale, Randolph, KS
Oct. 25 – Birch Creek Angus, Bull Sale, Ruby Valley, NV
Oct. 26 – Bear Mountain Angus, Female Sale, Palisade, NE
Oct. 28 – Dal Porto Livestock, Female Sale, Brewster, NE
Oct. 30 – Spring Lake Angus, Dispersal Sale, Lynch, NE
Oct. 31 – Marcy Livestock, Cow Dispersal Sale, Gordon, NE
Nov. 7 – Stokrose Land & Livestock, Bull Sale, Moses Lake, WA
Nov. 8 – Montana Ranch, Bull Sale, Bigfork, MT
Nov. 11 – Green Mountain Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 13 – Riverbend Ranch, Bull Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Nov. 14 – Hoffman Ranch, Bull Sale, Thedford, NE
Nov. 15 – Jorgensen Land & Cattle, Bull Sale, Arcadia, FL

CHAROLAIS
Oct. 19 – Fink Beef Genetics, Bull Sale, Randolph, KS

HEREFORD
Oct. 19 – Lambert Ranch, Bull Sale, Oroville, CA

RED ANGUS
Oct. 18 – NILE Red Angus Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 19 – Rocking R Red Angus, Bull Sale, Bayard, NE
Nov. 2 – Bet on Red Sale, Reno, NV
Nov. 4 – Sand Dune Cattle Co., Dispersal Sale, Burwell, NE
Nov. 11 – Ludvigson Stock Farms, Bull Sale, Park City, MT

SIMANGUS
Oct. 16 – Yardley Cattle Co., Female Sale, Beaver, UT

STABILIZER
Oct. 12 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Ozark, AR
Oct. 26 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Dinuba, CA
Nov. 9 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Fort Collins, CO

COMMERCIAL
Nov. 15 – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bred Heifer Sale, Pilot Rock, OR

HORSE
Oct. 10 – Jamison Ranch, Horse Sale, Quinter, KS