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**FUNDING FALLOUT**—Amid poultry debacle, Vilsack justifies USDA's financial strategies. Page 11

**A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY**

In a time when our nation faces its own share of challenges, a call for unity and resilience rings as true today as it did in 1944: "The days ahead, following our certain victory over Germany and Japan, are certain to be fraught with complex problems; but America is strong and virile and common sense tells us that we can overcome our domestic problems just as we are overcoming the threat of aggressor nations against us. Let's forget politics and get down to work," wrote Nelson Crow in his November 1944 "Observations by the Editor."

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## New HPAI findings raise transmission concerns

### —More human cases reported

A recent study found a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus identified in an infected dairy worker proved to be lethal in lab mice and ferrets, as human HPAI cases continue to spread.

USDA and Oregon state officials are investigating an H5N1 outbreak in an Oregon backyard farm with mixed poultry and livestock, while the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) plans to expand testing and monitoring efforts.

### Study

A recent study published in Nature explored a HPAI H5N1 virus, known as huTX37-H5N1, that infected a farm worker exposed to dairy cows. This virus, isolated from the worker's eye after they experienced mild conjunctivitis, was lethal in lab mice and ferrets. Notably, it could also spread through the air between separated ferrets and replicate in human respiratory tract cells, raising concerns about its ability to potentially spread between humans.

In lab experiments, the huTX37-H5N1 virus was able to reproduce in human eye and lung cells. Researchers found that a very small amount of this virus—less than one plaque-forming unit (PFU)—was lethal in mice, whereas it took 31.6

PFU of a similar virus from cow milk to be fatal. Additionally, huTX37-H5N1 spread to all 15 types of mouse tissues tested, with the highest concentration found in the lungs and other respiratory tissues.

The huTX37-H5N1 virus has a

mutation, PB2-E627K, often seen in avian influenza viruses that helps them adapt to mammals. This mutation allows the virus to reproduce more efficiently, making it critical

**See HPAI on page 13**



Adobe Stock

New research on the transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza between mammals is leading to expanded testing and monitoring efforts.

## 9th Circuit denies Easterday appeal against Tyson

### —No evidence of contract found

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, in a unanimous decision, has denied an appeal by Cody Easterday asserting Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. violated a breach of contract by splitting profits for the beef label Cody's Beef.

"Easterday argues that he alleged sufficient facts to show an enforceable oral contract between him and Tyson," the opinion said. "We disagree."

The opinion said Easterday's claim that he expected a 50-50 profit split with Tyson fails legally because his belief was never expressed to Tyson, making it irrelevant in court. Since Easterday doesn't allege that Tyson agreed to any specific profit division, he hasn't shown an enforceable contract, the court said.

Additionally, court documents said Easterday hadn't provided

facts to show an implied contract, which would require proof that Tyson requested work, Easterday expected payment and Tyson knew of this expectation.

The judges upheld a district court's assertion that the unclean hands doctrine barred Easterday from pursuing unjust enrichment and promissory estoppel claims. The district court noted that Easterday "admitted to submitting false and fraudulent invoices for non-existent cattle," directly affecting his current claims and "unclean hands cannot recover in equity."

The 9th Circuit also found the district court did not abuse its discretion, dismissing the amended complaint as amendments would be futile. Since the statute of limitations bars Easterday's claims, the court found no grounds for further changes.

**See EASTERDAY on page 10**

## North America agrees to strengthen bison conservation

### —Signs trilateral letter of intent

Leaders from the U.S., Canada and Mexico have signed an agreement to strengthen coordination on conservation efforts for the American bison across its range in North America.

The countries plan to work together to promote the ecocultural conservation of bison through regional activities, joint work plans and shared activity reports.

"Through a letter of intent, the countries will work to pursue bison conservation, restore ecological processes, and support traditional human use of natural resources with a particular focus on the

unique historical connection between bison and Indigenous peoples," the Department of the Interior said.

The efforts will build on the Grasslands Keystone Initiative, which was launched in 2023 by the Interior Department and included a \$25 million investment to restore bison across the country. A secretary's order established a Bison Working Group comprising representatives from five bureaus with bison equities, which is working to develop a Bison Shared Stewardship Plan.

Canada is currently studying the genetic diversity and population viability of Canadian bison herds, similar to a 2020 effort undertaken

by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Mexico inherited 23 bison from the U.S. in 2019, establishing the country's second herd, and is working to implement the Mexican Recovery Plan for the Bison.

### Letter of intent

The letter of intent was established following the 2024 Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management Annual Meeting held in May. The committee was established in 1996 in an effort to bring together the three countries to align efforts on conserving North America's

**See BISON PLAN on page 16**

## Futures steady to higher; cash trade remains limited

Futures were mixed over the week, while cash trade remained subdued as packers hesitated to procure more cattle amid steady supplies and declining boxed beef prices.

Live cattle futures were mixed over the week. The December contract lost a little less than 50 cents to close at \$185.82, and the February contract gained 65 cents to close at \$187.42.

"Things are just as quiet in the country as the negotiated fed cattle trade has yet to occur even though it's Thursday at noon," wrote Cassie Fish, market analyst, in The Beef on Thursday. "Packers own a lot of cattle thanks to four consecutive weeks of sizeable buys. And given that and the sloppy cutout, packers are not eager to worsen margins by paying steady, let alone higher for this week's fed cattle buy."

Cash trade through Thursday totaled less than 5,000 head. Live steers sold from \$186-188, and dressed steers sold for \$294.

Cash trade for the week ending Nov. 3 totaled 87,606 head. Live steers averaged \$189.79, and dressed steers averaged \$297.28.

The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for

the week of Oct. 28 to Nov. 4 was the following on a live basis:

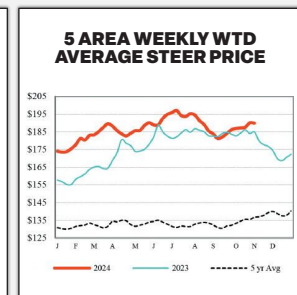
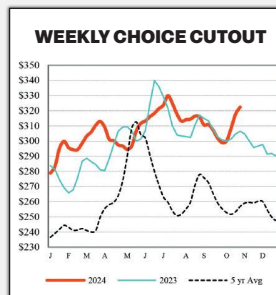
- Negotiated purchases: \$189.83.
- Formula net purchases: \$194.26.
- Forward contract net purchases: \$188.39.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: \$194.53.

On a dressed basis:

- Negotiated purchases: \$297.48.
- Formula net purchases: \$302.38.

- Forward contract net purchases: \$298.04.
- Negotiated grid net purchases: \$300.

**See MARKETS on page 19**



| Category       | Price    |
|----------------|----------|
| LIVE STEERS    | \$187.71 |
| DRESSED STEERS | N/A      |
| CME FEEDER     | \$249.92 |

**WEEK ENDING: 11-07-24**

Time Sensitive  
Priority Handling  
**PERIODICAL:**

## COMMENTS

### Animal ag for the win

The right to vote and express our confidential opinion on who should govern and what measures should define legislation is one of the greatest rights that legal citizens in this country get to express. Politics and media outlets have become a major source of division, and the effects are felt worldwide. Being a global powerhouse, our policies and procedures impact populations and our responsibility to uphold a powerful standard has been more and more compromised with each election. Our government has a duty to govern, but that duty extends beyond our borders. How our representatives do that should start here within our borders by listening to what the constituents across the 50 states tell our leaders to do. The democracy we feel today seems backwards—the people should be directing government, not the government directing the people.



IPSEN

The voting booth is a place to send a message as to what matters most to the population in this particular time. One of the best quotes I heard in this election season was to “vote with your wallet, not your emotions.” This resonated with me deeply. This campaign season was so divisive and made many people feel “if you’re not with us, you’re against us.” This shouldn’t be the case. Voting one way does not make you wrong or right. It simply means you aligned with one candidate for whatever reason. As the dust is still settling as of the writing of this column, there were several places across this country that rural America and agriculture held a major place in the voting booth this past week and gained many key wins.

In the far West, a major piece of legislation was on the docket in Sonoma County, CA, where anti-agriculture groups from the Bay Area were targeting the definition of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO). While nearly 21 operations would have fallen subject to this ruling’s changing definition, this piece would have set a major precedence for other groups to run with across the country. This measure was a blatant target on farming operations in California. Local efforts—including a major push from Sonoma County Farm Bureau Executive Director Dayna Ghirardelli—to educate the voting population proved majorly successful as nearly 85% of voters disagreed with the measure.

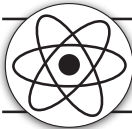
Measures like this are going to continue to pop up in each election cycle. Take for example, the defeated Proposition 3 in Oregon this past summer that wanted to essentially ban all animal agriculture, fishing, trapping and hunting. The group behind Measure J, dubbed as the Coalition to End Factory Farming, was already planning protests for immediately after the election process. The donor pool they target will continue to foster ideas that target animal agriculture and will be seen on another ballot; it’s just a matter of time.

In Colorado, Ordinance 309 targeted Superior Farms, Inc., a slaughterhouse facility in which nearly 20% of the nation’s lamb processing takes place. The ordinance was defeated as nearly 65% of voters disagreed with the in-city ban. Animal agriculture was targeted with an additional measure: Ordinance 308, which was slightly softer in its wording, targeted the use of animal products to be manufactured, distributed, displayed or sold. This included leather, furs used in products like cowboy hats, gloves, rugs, fly fishing gear and so on. Clearly this was an ordinance that would have quickly expanded its meanings and gone after a much wider array of products and continued to target animal agriculture.

Ordinance 309 was a much bolder move by a group named Pro-Animal Future. This ordinance set out to completely disarm, dismantle and go after animal processing facilities, starting in the city of Denver. The blatant attack used fear tactics and emotionally driven messages to sway votes throughout the campaign, but fortunately, this proved to not be enough as the ordinance was beaten handily. Agriculture needs to be on the lookout for future ordinances that reach the ballot because this clearly won’t be the last of its kind in Colorado where the trend is to continue to lean further left.

Production agriculture has been the attacked party for far too long. Issues like these are going to continue to creep into the ballots. Continued efforts to educate the masses is an absolute must moving forward. Continuing to work together across trade associations to share success stories, bounce ideas and work together is going to continue to be a need agriculture figures out. From the time seeds are planted to crops being fed to animals to their harvest, these industries need to have a steady stream of information sharing in order to combat activists and harmful legislation.

Regardless of what side of the aisle you chose to be sitting in the Oval Office, agriculture needs to remain at the forefront of our minds. Like-minded priorities that promote agriculture need to be a strong commitment from the new legislation. At *WLJ*, we are anxious to see who the new administration will place in important seats that will impact our readership over the next four years. One thing is for sure, there’s a definite shift happening out there. — **LOGAN IPSEN**



## RESOURCE SCIENCE

*Consilience: the linking together of principles from different disciplines especially when forming a comprehensive theory.*

Politicians need to make policies considering a wide range of issues, such as the economy, immigration and the environment. Consilience, defined above and explained by the biologist E. O. Wilson, is required to do this properly. Politicians also use broad terms which can be vague. For example, there are new policies to identify and protect “old growth forests” without clear definition of what they are. All forests grow, so “old trees in forests” might be a more accurate term. The U.S. Forest Service recognized that forests in different areas have different growth rates, weather, soil, water conditions and tree species and defined old growth for different regions (see the References at [wlj.net](http://wlj.net)). The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is another example of vague terminology because subspecies and populations are considered “species” under the ESA.

Maintaining the economy while protecting the environment is an example of consilience and combining policies. Immigration must also be combined with these policies because immigration increases the U.S. population, population growth is the ultimate cause of environmental impacts, and population growth is considered necessary for economic growth (see the References).

Consider that immigration increases the U.S. population. Todd Bensman of the Center for Immigration Studies reports that 7.6 million illegal immigrants were encountered by the Border Patrol since January 2021, more than 5 million were allowed to stay in the U.S. and 10 million are expected to remain in the U.S. by January 2025. Increasing populations increases demand for resources and land, with increased environmental impacts including climate change.

Immigration is advocated for economic growth. While discussing immigration reform, former president Bill Clinton recently said, “We’ve got the lowest birth rate we have had in well over a hundred years... We are not at replacement level, which means we have got to have somebody come here if we want to grow the economy.” The Penn Wharton Budget Model at the University of Pennsylvania reported U.S. population projections: “U.S. population growth is projected to decline, and the population will become much older over time. Preventing these outcomes will require faster immigration by several multiples of its current rate.”

This focus on economic growth ignores the environmental impacts of population growth. It appears we need consilience of economic, environmental and immigration policies. But first we need facts and clear terminology. Note the terms used in these quotes. Clinton refers to a lower birth rate and Penn Wharton

## THE US POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION

refers to population growth declining. They don’t refer to population numbers. You might consider birth rate and growth of your livestock herd, but ultimately you aim for a number of animals that fit your range.

We need to know the number of people in the U.S. population and if it’s growing or declining for informed policy. I got the current U.S. population data from the Census Bureau. The U.S. population was 337,269,340 as of Oct. 15 at 8 a.m. MDT. There is one death every 11 seconds, which is 5.5 deaths every minute or 2,866,909 deaths per year, and one birth every 9 seconds, which is 6.7 births every minute or 3,504,000 births per year. Births minus deaths (3,504,000 minus 2,866,909) is an increase of 637,091 people per year. There are more births than deaths. There is one immigrant every 28 seconds, which is 2.1 immigrants every minute, or 1,126,285 per year. The Census Bureau doesn’t say if this includes illegal immigrants. Combining the excess births and immigrants is 637,091 plus 1,126,285, which is 1,763,376 new people per year. The U.S. population is growing with or without immigrants.

The Census Bureau also reports the U.S. population gains one person every 18 seconds, which is 3.3 new people every minute or 1,752,000 people per year. This is a little less than my calculation of net birth plus immigration of 1,763,376 per year (a difference of 11,376).

The U.S. population is increasing by about 1.76 million people per year with births and immigration. Fertility data indicate there are currently 1.62 children per woman, and this is projected to decline. But do we need more immigration as Clinton and Penn Wharton suggest, perhaps because immigration is currently an important political issue? I don’t think we need more immigration, especially illegal immigration, because it’s illegal. The U.S. population has increased at about the same rate since 1900. In my opinion, increased environmental impacts, crowding and traffic, loss of open spaces, and impacts on agricultural land is a result of increased population. The U.S. population can’t continue to increase at a high rate for only economic reasons without impacting our quality of life, environment and agricultural lands. Impacts of immigration on the U.S. population, the economy and the environment need to be assessed together. — **Dr. Matt Cronin**

*(Matt Cronin is a biologist with Northwest Biology and Forestry Company LLC in Bozeman, MT, [croninm@aol.com](mailto:croninm@aol.com). He was a research professor at the University of Alaska. A full list of references can be found at [wlj.net](http://wlj.net).)*



## GUEST OPINION

Beef producers are faced with a number of challenges and we don’t all agree on how to overcome them. These issues are complicated, and often lead to tense conversations. Simply telling one another to get along isn’t enough, so I would like to share some of the overarching issues facing everyone in the industry and what we can do to overcome them. Finding common ground is imperative for our future. At the end of the day, I believe that, deep down, all Americans want to get along with one another; this is also the case for beef producers.

Something we discuss in agricultural policy is the Jeffersonian Effect. Thomas Jefferson was an avid advocate for American agriculture and believed that when we are considering a policy or law for our country that benefits the American farmer, we should pass it because agriculture is essential to our nation. Farming and ranching promotes family values, develops land, feeds people and promotes caring for others and animals. Our food supply is a critical part of national security, and ultimately our freedom.

Over the last two decades, we have moved away from this line of thought as the American people have become increasingly removed from agriculture. We often place blame on politicians when policy doesn’t go our way, but we must recognize that lawmakers are being presented with a variety of opinions, even from within our industry. In general, we are up against more opposition than ever in passing policies that will improve production agriculture. We are facing more litigation and are constantly battling misinformation about how American farmers and ranchers produce food.

We are all very aware of generational turnover, and the fact that fewer people are coming into production agriculture today. Recently when we sat in front of the Senate Ag Committee staff, I pointed to this trend, and the concern that we could wake up one day and realize that we can’t feed our country anymore. To prevent this, we need policy that improves the landscape for American farmers and ranchers. Achieving this will require unity.

Within our industry, we aren’t always helping one another. It is easy to get lost in the weeds on industry-specific issues, like

country-of-origin labeling, or international trade. We can argue with one another about these issues to no end, and while it is important that we find solutions, we must keep in mind their effect on the larger picture, keeping farms and ranches in production.

The American food supply system, and importantly for industry members, the American West, could look very different if these trends continue. Small communities in Montana have struggled as farms and ranches have consolidated or have been sold to special interest groups that take the land out of production. Fewer small farms and ranches means there is less population, which has a negative effect on everything from local economies to schools. Younger generations sometimes leave the community to seek opportunity. It’s imperative that we find ways to create opportunities in our rural communities to help them remain in the area. This is important to carrying our traditions and keeping the farm and ranch lands in production.

It’s a unique life, and those of us who choose it have a passion for it. Even if someone is raised in rural areas, it isn’t easy to ask young people to commit to this life. The reality of living and working on a ranch often includes driving hundreds of miles every week to get kids to school, having extended power outages in a storm, less access to technology, among many other challenges. We need to think outside the box as we try to support the next generation of producers or maybe someone who wants to get in the business. This may be access to capital and land, or a program that helps increase profit margins for young or new producers.

How do we regain focus on these larger issues? Reach across the aisle and talk to the neighbor that you don’t always agree with. The only thing we can control is ourselves, and if someone doesn’t want to discuss an issue or says something you don’t agree with, simply move on. If you are presented with an idea you don’t agree with, be open to hearing the other person’s side. We can all find common ground, and sometimes all it takes is opening that door. Keeping farms and ranches in business and rural communities vibrant are goals we can all agree on. — **Lesley Robinson, Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) first vice president**

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Lot 1

**SITZ Architect 9453**

Reg# 20692507

S: S Architect 9501 MGS: SITZ Vigilante 11830

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC    | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|-------|----------|
| 11   | -1.4 | 77   | 139 | 1.42  | 22.3     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP   | Act. PAP |
| 25   | 0.47 | 0.61 | 91  | -3.33 | 41       |



Lot 3

**SITZ Architect 9473**

Reg# 20692420

S: S Architect 9501 MGS: SITZ Logo 12964

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC    | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|-------|----------|
| 5    | 2.0  | 104  | 164 | 2.12  | 22.0     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP   | Act. PAP |
| 20   | 0.67 | 0.61 | 110 | -0.35 | 38       |



Lot 5

**SITZ RLS Continuity 11553**

Reg# 20646761

S: SITZ Continuity MGS: Musgrave 316 Exclusive

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC   | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|------|----------|
| 5    | 1.1  | 91   | 163 | 1.33 | 14.9     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP  | Act. PAP |
| 23   | 0.75 | 0.74 | 73  | 1.82 | 39       |



Lot 6

**SITZ Rangeland 8243**

Reg# 20692601

S: Ellingson Rangeland MGS: SITZ Logo 12964

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC    | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|-------|----------|
| 5    | 2.4  | 91   | 150 | 0.79  | 18.8     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP   | Act. PAP |
| 29   | 0.89 | 0.90 | 93  | -2.44 | 37       |



Lot 59

**SITZ Prodigy 10323**

Reg# 20652224

S: SITZ Prodigy 12000 MGS: SITZ Profile 1160

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC   | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|------|----------|
| 3    | 3.1  | 91   | 158 | 1.54 | 17.5     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP  | Act. PAP |
| 31   | 0.90 | 1.02 | 79  | 0.01 | 39       |



Lot 91

**SITZ Accomplishment 13003**

Reg# 20771954

S: SITZ Accomplishment 720F MGS: Koupals B&B Titan 3013

| CED  | BW   | WW   | YW  | SC    | HP       |
|------|------|------|-----|-------|----------|
| 9    | 1.5  | 73   | 127 | 1.41  | 17.5     |
| Milk | MARB | REA  | \$M | PAP   | Act. PAP |
| 23   | 0.51 | 0.78 | 81  | -3.36 | 40       |

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# CA water board seeks comments on Bay-Delta plan

California water officials are taking another step forward as part of a broader process to improve conditions for struggling fish populations in the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its tributaries.

The California State Water Resources Control Board recently announced draft updates for the Sacramento River and Delta phase of the state's

water quality control plan, known as the Bay-Delta plan.

Thad Bettner, executive director of the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, a group that holds contracts with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to divert water from the Sacramento River, said the draft updates mark the beginning of the implementation process, which he said "could have significant impacts on agriculture

and the environment."

State law requires the state water board to adopt and periodically review water quality control plans for all surface waters. The draft updates released are the second phase of the Bay-Delta plan and follow the 2018 board adoption of new flow objectives for the protection of fish in the lower San Joaquin River tributaries—the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and

Merced rivers.

Draft updates under consideration for the Sacramento River tributaries include a regulatory pathway alternative by staff that proposes 45% to 65% of unimpaired flows and other measures to support fish. The pathway sets year-round inflow and outflow requirements, proposes new measures to preserve cold-water habitat for salmon and steelhead, drought protection requirements and monitoring and reporting provisions.

As an alternative, the board is considering incorporating voluntary agreements, which propose flow and nonflow measures to protect fish populations. Known as Healthy Rivers and Landscapes, the proposal submitted by water agencies and supported by Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) aims to double salmon populations by 2050.

"The Healthy Rivers alternative is the best path forward for California," said David Guy, president of the Northern California Water Association, which represents water suppliers and local governments in the Sacramento Valley. "It is more implementable and will be so much more effective for fish and wildlife and will not be devastating to the whole entire state."

Guy added that the voluntary agreements align with Newsom's water priorities, including building Sites Reservoir and the Delta Conveyance Project.

"The state water board (regulatory pathway) proposal would undermine every one of

the administration's (water) priorities that the governor has talked about over the last two to three years," he said. "We just need to make sure that the Healthy Rivers program meets the requirements for a water quality control plan update and that we have a strong program going forward with some regulatory relief to it if this doesn't happen."

The voluntary agreements propose an initial eight-year term. If approved by the board and shown to be effective, the term could be extended or modified. If the proposed voluntary agreements are not found to be effective, a regulatory pathway could apply. For parties and tributaries without voluntary agreements, the regulatory pathway would apply under the proposal.

The draft updates to the Bay-Delta plan include options based on alternatives described in a staff report to the board last fall.

The board has not yet decided on how to move forward with draft updates for the Sacramento River and Delta and seeks public input during a series of workshops.

"With the release of these possible updates to the Sacramento (River and) Delta portions of the plan, the board would like to hear significant public input, which will be carefully considered as we work toward a comprehensive update that provides for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses of water in the watershed," said Eric Oppenheimer, executive director of the state water board.

The Sacramento River Settlement Contractors are still digesting draft updates to the plan, Bettner said. He added that farmers, conservation groups and other stakeholders must actively engage in the regulatory process, as updates could lead to considerable adjustments in water availability for agricultural use.

"The difficulty is, given that there are still a lot of options in terms of what the board may ultimately decide, it is hard to analyze what those effects would be," Bettner said.

The Bay-Delta watershed, which includes the Sacramento and San Joaquin River systems, is the hub of the state's water supply network. The river systems, including their tributaries, drain water from about 40% of the state's land area, supporting a variety of beneficial uses. The rivers and the delta provide a portion of the water supply for two-thirds of Californians and millions of acres of farmland.

Public comments on the draft updates for the Sacramento River and Delta portion of the Bay-Delta plan are due Dec. 19. The mid-December comment deadline, Bettner said, doesn't provide stakeholders a lot of time to analyze the draft updates and prepare comments.

"They've kind of painted us into a corner," he said. "We're pretty much seeing the updates for the first time and having to review it and digest it and understand what it means."

— **Christine Souza, Ag Alert assistant editor, California Farm Bureau Federation**



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## THE VIEWPOINT

with Julie Ellingson

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

In early October, wildfires driven by high winds and extreme drought conditions swept across northwestern North Dakota, burning more than 110,000 acres. In perhaps one of the worst seasons for fire in the state's history, two people lost their lives, countless livestock were killed or affected by fire, and thousands of acres of grazinglands and infrastructure were destroyed.

Julie Ellingson is the executive vice president for the North Dakota Stockmen's Association (NDSA), which is working to help provide disaster relief to livestock producers affected by fire.

"This is obviously the drier time of year, and, of course, there can be some fire associated with harvest from time to time," Julie told WLJ. "But this season really stands out as maybe one of the worst in state history—not only because of its size, but the extensive losses."

Fires broke out in the northwest portion of the state on Saturday, Oct. 5. A complex of two fires, the Ray and Tioga fires, burned across Williams County, burning nearly 89,000 acres.



Julie Ellingson

Courtesy photo

An additional three wildfires broke out in McKenzie County: the Elkhorn Fire, the Bear Den Fire and another fire that was controlled before it was worsened by wind. Investigations regarding the fires' starts are still ongoing.

Estimates for livestock losses are preliminary, Julie said. The National Weather Service predicts a significant loss in livestock, and the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension is in the process of assessing loss and tallying numbers. A preliminary report as of Oct. 29

shared one county had lost at least 254 head of cattle in the fires.

"There were many others that survived but have other issues—burns or respiratory issues that unfortunately will manifest over time," Julie added. "Clinic care and rehabilitating those animals will be an ongoing project."

A better idea of the total livestock losses will likely come after Livestock Indemnity Program applications are submitted and NDSU Extension completes its assessments. In addition to livestock impacts, many

acres of rangeland burnt and at least four occupied farmsteads were destroyed.

"We do know that some families were very hard hit by the fire moving up to 80 miles an hour," Julie said. "It's hard to imagine what that would be like."

Julie applauded the coordinated response to the fires between state agencies and partner organizations.

"Responding to something of that magnitude—a fire with that large of footprint and that persists over a couple of weeks—is quite a feat," she said. "So, I was really proud of the coordinated effort and the information sharing that was had through the process."

Of the 10,884 acres burned during the Elkhorn Fire, a little less than half was privately owned, Steve Best, public affairs officer for U.S. Forest Service Dakota Prairie Grasslands, told WLJ in an email. The McKenzie County Grazing Association holds the permit for grazing within the area of the Elkhorn Fire, and parts of four allotments were affected by the fire. Best said that local range staff is working with the grazing association to manage the duration, frequency and intensity of livestock use on allotments affected by wildfire.

"Flexible management will be applied to the allotments when possible," Best said. "Some of those flexibilities may include adjusting allotment entry and off dates, livestock number adjustments and season of use."

### Relief efforts

Several relief efforts are underway for livestock producers impacted by fire.

"There has been an incredible outpouring of support from people across the state, and across the nation for that matter," Julie said.

NDSA and the North Dakota Stockmen's Foundation are coordinating the "Out of the Ashes Wildfire Disaster Relief Program" to aid livestock producers. Monetary funds will be distributed to eligible ranchers through an application and nomination process.

"Applications will be confidentially screened and 100% of the pool of funds that we have available will be used for impacted producers," Julie said. "We will steward those dollars like they were ours and distribute them in their entirety to those who were impacted."

As of early November, more than 130 unique donors had already contributed to the fund, which was valued at approximately \$350,000 on top of the initial \$50,000 allocated to the fund.

"We are really, really grate-

ful," she said. "Disaster like this really brings out the best in others, and the generosity, care and support that people provide in a time of need really is inspiring."

Monetary contributions to the Out of the Ashes Wildfire Disaster Relief Program can be made two ways. Checks can be made to the NDSF with "Out of the Ashes" written in the memo and sent to 4520 Ottawa St., Bismarck, ND 58503. Credit card donations may be made at [tinyurl.com/mvvedsf2](http://tinyurl.com/mvvedsf2).

Heading into the winter, affected ranchers will now be faced with the loss of their grazingland and feed supplies.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture is coordinating donated hay resources through the Hay Hotline, as well as listing hay available for sale. Producers needing hay or wanting to list their hay can call 701-328-5110.

Farm Rescue is offering support through its "Operation Hay Lift" to haul livestock feed and supplies to ranchers affected by fires. Those interested in donating hay can email [info@farmrescue.org](mailto:info@farmrescue.org) or call 701-252-2017. — Anna Miller, WLJ managing editor



## COMING EVENTS

(Send calendar of events information to [editorial@wlj.net](mailto:editorial@wlj.net).)

**Dec. 5-7** – The United States Cattlemen's Association will host their 2024 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX, at the InterContinental Hotel.

Details: [uscattlemen.org/annual-meeting-2024](http://uscattlemen.org/annual-meeting-2024).

**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](http://www.grazinglands.org).

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# Cattle groups, SD ranches file suit to block federal EID rule

A group of ranchers and cattle industry associations is suing the USDA in federal court in South Dakota to block a rule requiring electronic ear tags for cattle that cross state lines.

The lawsuit aims to undo a rule published in May that some in the ranching community see as expensive, unnecessarily burdensome and implemented in conflict with federal rulemaking norms.

The rule comes from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and versions of it have seen

significant pushback from ranchers since 2019. Previous proposals were scrapped after public comment periods. The latest version of the rule was published in May and would phase out traditional ear tags in favor of electronic identification (EID) for cattle and bison older than 18 months that are shipped across state lines, all dairy cattle, and cattle or bison used for rodeo or recreation.

Electronic tags, the agency says, reduce the possibility of human error, because they wouldn't require a person to

manually log information on ear tags. The electronic tags are also meant to make it easier for veterinarians to access information about a herd when attending to a sick animal.

The rule took effect Nov. 5. While many ranchers and ranch groups oppose the mandate, the opposition is not universal. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association supports the EID rule and has been releasing guidance for livestock growers on how to comply throughout the year. The National Milk Producers Federation has

also pushed for ID rules.

## New lawsuit

The plaintiffs in the South Dakota lawsuit are the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Kenny and Roxie Fox, Rick and Theresa Fox, and Tracy and Donna Hunt of the MW Cattle Company of Wyoming and South Dakota.

Some of the same plain-

tiffs challenged a similar mandate in 2019. The USDA dropped its pursuit of the mandate in the face of resistance from numerous corners of the livestock industry shortly thereafter. The rule came back in a new form in 2023 in the run-up to the May 2024 final rule.

The groups argue in their new lawsuit that by bringing the rule back in a form substantially similar to previously ditched efforts, the USDA violated federal laws on administrative rulemaking.

The tags are expensive and impractical, the plaintiffs argue, and are not necessary to achieve the goals of the law for which the USDA wrote the rule. The USDA has argued that the tags can help trace animal diseases across state lines more effectively than the brands and ear tags commonly used by smaller producers.

In comments to the USDA last year, the plaintiffs wrote that the rule "was unnecessary because current animal disease traceability methods are adequate" and "does not actually address a fundamental problem" with the current system.

"All of Plaintiffs' comments and concerns were rejected or ignored," the lawsuit states.

The plaintiffs are asking a judge to invalidate the USDA rule and permanently prevent the agency from imposing it on them.

## Case leans on SCOTUS ruling

The case is among the first filed in South Dakota that leans on this year's U.S. Supreme Court June 28 decision in Loper Bright vs. Raimondo, which undid a four-decade precedent called the "Chevron doctrine." The doctrine expected federal court deference to the judgment of federal agents who write rules to carry out the mandates in laws passed by Congress.

Under Chevron, plaintiffs who sought to challenge agency regulations had to clear a high bar to prove that an agency overstepped its authority. Without Chevron, judges are no longer expected to give preferential weight to the expertise of agencies when rules are challenged in court.

Loper Bright has sparked a flurry of court challenges to federal rules since June. Google Scholar lists more than 200 federal cases nationwide citing Loper Bright so far this year.

The case in South Dakota, which cites Loper Bright, spins out of longstanding resistance in some quarters to the electronic tagging requirements.

Last month, a group of ranchers held a rally in Rapid City, SD, at which some speakers with the industry suggested the mandate would end the cattle industry.

The rally was held in tandem with the annual convention of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association.

According to coverage

from The Dakota Scout, ranchers are concerned about the cost of the tags, but also fear that electronic tracking will be used to clamp down on ranchers in the name of climate change. Rep. Harriet Hageman (R-WY-At large) spoke at the event and warned that ID tags in Denmark have helped that nation's government levy taxes on livestock producers over emissions from their animals.

## Rounds aims to block rule with bill

Sen. Mike Rounds (R-SD) has railed against the rule for years. In May, shortly after the most recent version of the rule was published in the Federal Register, Rounds introduced a bill that would bar the USDA from instituting EID mandates. Hageman has introduced a similar bill in the House of Representatives.

South Dakota state lawmakers have also weighed in on the issue. In 2022, Gov. Kristi Noem (R) signed a bill into law that says livestock owners can choose any of the identification options available under federal rules from 2013, or options endorsed by the state Animal Industry Board.

Earlier last month, Rounds brought up Loper Bright during a question-and-answer session with the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce. For too long, he said, agencies had too much authority in rule-making, citing the electronic tagging rules as a particularly egregious example.

Ranchers aren't opposed to ear tags necessarily, but Rounds said the USDA shouldn't impose rules for specific types of tags from afar.

"Why in the hell is the federal government telling our farmers or ranchers what kind of a damn ear tag they've got to put in the ear of their livestock?" the senator said during the Oct. 9 event in Sioux Falls, SD.

The rule "may be a good idea," Rounds said, but he doesn't think regulators should be making laws without listening to the industry and taking its concerns seriously.

Overtaking the Chevron doctrine, he said, has given ranchers a better chance to succeed in court.

"On that type of a deal, can they come back in under Chevron and challenge it?" he said. "Yeah, I think they probably can."

A representative from the USDA told South Dakota Searchlight by email that the agency cannot comment on pending litigation. The attorney representing the ranchers in the federal lawsuit did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

An R-CALF news release says the rule "imposes punishing new financial and practical burdens, particularly on smaller and independent cattle producers." — **John Hult, South Dakota Searchlight**



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# Dormant-season grazing is a win for all

In 2015, the Soda Fire burned 280,000 acres in southwest Idaho and southeast Oregon, including large swathes of Malheur County.

One of the biggest contributors to the fire—and others like it—are invasive grasses, otherwise known as “fine fuels.” Not only do fine fuels worsen wildfires, they can also out-compete native plants that make up the unique biodiversity of the Northern Great Basin, where Malheur County is located.

Sergio Arispe, who's been with the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service since 2014, knows all about the problem of invasive grasses and their effect on the local cattle industry. That's because Arispe's No. 1 priority as an associate professor with Extension and research appointments is to evaluate what is important to the community he serves.

Arispe often thinks about wildfires, invasive grasses and public lands—three vital concerns for a county whose ranchers rely on healthy rangeland for grazing. Almost three-quarters of Malheur County is designated as public land.

When community members and the Vale District Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management reached out to Arispe asking for help to manage fine fuels on public

lands, he was more than happy to oblige.

The subsequent eight years of research has been incredibly successful with contracted grazing beyond what was traditionally permitted that reduces combustible plant materials.

Arispe has been awarded \$515,132 from the Fuels Management and Community Fire Assistance Program—within the Oregon/Washington Bureau of Land Management—to continue working on the project and incorporate drone sensing technology.

## Intricate ecosystem

“Within the northern Great Basin where we are in Malheur County, you go out see birds of prey, apex predators like pumas and bobcats,” Arispe said. “You also see herbivores, elk, pronghorn antelope, smaller bird species, water fowl and pheasants. You find insects, all the way to bacteria and moss.”

The ecosystem is a special ecological and recreational resource, he said. “It's just a very active, intricate ecosystem that allows people like you and people like me to go out there, take a deep breath, and really appreciate the beauty.”

Seventy-seven percent of Malheur County is range-

land. The cattle and dairy industries make up 59% of the agricultural products sold, by value. Malheur has the second largest cattle industry in the state.

Rangeland forage and feed costs are big concerns of Malheur cattle producers.

Arispe hoped that he could solve two issues at once: reducing winter feed cost and wildfire risk. He enlisted partner cattlemen to try answering the question: Would cattle eat invasive, fire-fueling grasses during the fall and

winter seasons?

The cattle grazed during the fall, the dormant season for the native plants. This means the native plants were not experiencing new growth and were therefore more resilient.

The experiment to extend the grazing season paid off. Over the past eight years, Arispe's research has led to the removal by grazing of over 6,000 tons of fine fuels from the ecosystem and saved his partner ranchers a total of \$50,000 in feed costs

during the contracted fall-winter grazing period.

Perennial bunch grasses are native, create better habitat and cause less risk of wildfire. “They are ideal grasses that we want.”

Notably, the grazing didn't harm the native plants. “We're not seeing any negative effects on the perennial bunch grass community,” Arispe said.

Arispe published these successes in Rangeland Ecology & Management with partners from Boise State

University, University of Idaho, Brigham Young University, USDA's Agricultural Research Services, and the University of Nevada, Reno.

The next step, funded by Arispe's new grant, will allow him to learn more about the relationship between cattle grazing behavior and the growth of different plant types on public lands.

“We are going to use drone sensors to look at different stages of growth to improve degraded sage brush,” said Arispe. — OSU Extension

## Female Connection Sale

Saturday, November 23, 2024

At Spring Cove Ranch, Bliss, Idaho • 3:00 PM MDT

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Sitz Resilient 10208 x Spring Cove Carol 811  
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**Spring Cove Carol 418 AAA 17933017**  
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## Calculating weight per day of age and ADG

In response to a recent question from a producer, the topic this week addresses the difference between a couple of growth performance measures commonly used in beef production. It also includes some anecdotal evidence observed on a handful of Angus calves being fed at the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Purebred Beef Cattle Center.

The Beef Improvement Federation defines weight per day of age (WDA) and average daily gain (ADG) as follows:

- WDA: Weight of an individual divided by its age in days.

- ADG: Measurement of the average daily body weight change over a specified period of time of an animal on a feed test.

Both are measures of growth that are easy to calculate but are distinctly different. For example, if a calf was born weighing 80 pounds and later weaned at 200 days of age weighing 500 lbs., the WDA (500 divided by 200) is 2.5 lbs./day. The ADG of the same calf from birth to weaning would be 2.1 lbs./day (500 minus 80, divided by 200).

The measure of WDA is useful to evaluate on young growing cattle from approximately weaning to yearling time. The measure of ADG has been used in performance testing for decades and is commonly used to measure the growth performance of pens of finishing cattle. Both these measures would be based on the genetic potential of calves to

grow as well as the environmental effects of factors like weather and the plane of nutrition. ADG could also be heavily influenced by plane of nutrition prior to the testing period which could impact the amount of compensatory gain during the test period.

The OSU Purebred Beef Center is currently developing a group of four Angus heifers and a group of four Angus bulls to potentially exhibit in Angus Pen of Three Show at the Cattlemen's Congress Show in Oklahoma City, OK, in January.

The calves were born from Jan. 17 to Feb. 25. The calves were on a 14% crude protein creep ration, fed ad-lib, for several months prior to weaning in mid-August. Six of the eight calves have Weaning and Yearling EPDs in the best 5% of non-parent Angus cattle. The other two rank in the best 20% of the breed for Weaning and Yearling Weight EPDs.

Based on weights taken at the beginning of October when the calves were 219-258 days of age, the range of actual weights, ADGs and WDAs of the calves are summarized as follows.

- Bulls — Weight range: 970-1,110 lbs. ADG range: 3.83-4.1 lbs. WDA range: 4.14-4.41 lbs.

- Heifers — Weight range: 780-815 lbs. ADG range: 2.9-3.2 lbs. WDA range: 3.2-3.55 lbs. — **Mark Z. Johnson, OSU Extension beef cattle breeding specialist**

# Organic targets may require new markets

When Jeff and Annie Main of Good Humus Farm began farming in Yolo County, CA, nearly half a century ago, one of the first challenges they encountered was finding a market for their organic produce.

"In order to sell something, you have to have somebody to sell it to," Jeff Main said recently during a farm tour organized by the California Climate & Agriculture Network, or CalCAN.

Back then, with organic farming in its early days, there were few established chan-

nels for selling organic produce. So, in 1976, the Mains created their own, helping found the Davis Farmers Market and the Davis Food Co-op.

Today, Good Humus Farm grows 200 varieties of organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers on 30 acres, selling most of it to food co-ops, farmers markets and Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, that prioritize local, organic produce.

The evolution of consumer demand for organic products has enabled organic farming

to develop into a major industry. But according to researchers and policy experts, new markets may need to be created for California to meet its goal of converting more farmland to organic agriculture.

In April, Gov. Gavin Newsom's (D) administration released a set of "nature-based solutions" for meeting the state's climate targets. Among the solutions is a goal of converting 10% of California's annual and perennial cropland to organic agriculture by 2030. By 2045, the state aims to have 20% of its cropland in

organic production.

Those targets could be a heavy lift in light of recent trends in California's organic acreage. In 2022, the most recent year with data reported, about 4% of the state's cropland was organic, and after years of expansion, the share of acreage that was organic had declined for two straight years.

"It could be that we have reached a plateau in terms of overall market forces," said Ryan Galt, director of the University of California (UC), Davis, Agricultural Sustainability

Institute and professor of human ecology.

With organic acreage sliding, some stakeholders are pushing for the state government—as a major food buyer for schools, prisons and other publicly funded institutions—to leverage its purchasing power to create the market needed for California to achieve its goals. There are also market opportunities provided by federally funded programs.

Cathryn Couch, CEO of the Ceres Community Project, which contracts with publicly funded health care organizations to provide meals, said during a panel at the CalCAN Climate & Agriculture Summit that the state should align its food spending with its climate objectives.

"If we have a climate goal," Couch said, "don't we want to bring these two things together?"

California does not track demand for organic products from public programs. Rough estimates suggest the purchasing power of the state and federal government, if leveraged, could be significant.

In 2022, organic producers in California grossed about \$4.5 billion in sales, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

That was the same year the federal government began reimbursing food-as-medicine programs in California and other states. Just 18 months into the program, Couch said the Ceres Community Project, which exclusively buys organic produce, and other partners were spending \$200 million on food-as-medicine.

"We're starting to scale really fast," Couch said, adding that studies showing the food-as-medicine model results in significant cost savings for health care providers has generated further momentum. In the coming years, she said public spending on food in the health care sector could scale up to nearly \$1 billion per year. "What if half of that is going to organic?" Couch said.

Another market opportunity is California's \$600 million yearly budget for the state's Universal School Meals Program, which provides two meals per child per day. Additional spending on food for schools is generated by grant-funded programs such as CDFA's Farm to School program.

Nicholas Anicich, who manages the Farm to School program, said he is pushing for California to prioritize buying certified organic produce for schools. "We're not mandating organic in the program, but we do highly encourage it," Anicich said.

A new federally funded program does focus on buying organic products for schools. The USDA recently launched its Organic Dairy Product Promotion program, which allocates \$15 million for public educational institutions and youth programs to purchase organic dairy products.

California State University, Fresno, is partnering with

USDA to implement the program at schools in California.

Organic farming groups such as California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) are looking to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) Sustainable Pest Management framework as a means through which to secure procurement commitments from the state. Under the framework, DPR has directed state agencies to develop purchasing criteria, recommending they consider organic certification among other factors.

"We want all of our farmers, including those for whom organic makes the most sense, to have diverse market opportunities available to them," said Chris Reardon, director of government affairs for the California Farm Bureau.

CCOF Policy Manager Letitia Benador said contracts with public institutions are valuable for farmers because they ensure reliable sales. "Procurement means a stable market," Benador said.

A significant shift in the state's procurement priorities would inevitably bring challenges.

Built into the business model of organic farms is a higher price point to make up for lower crop yields. That can be an obstacle for institutions working with tight budgets. For school districts, Anicich said, "their job is to not lose money."

There are also challenges associated with establishing the infrastructure and supply chains needed to get organic products from farms to school cafeterias.

Yael Cypers Kotick, procurement manager for the Alice Waters Institute for Edible Education and Regenerative Agriculture, has worked during the past year to implement CDFA's Farm to School program in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest school district in the nation.

Last year, more than 600 schools in LAUSD participated in the Farm to School program, which purchased about 20% of its produce for the district from organic farms. The schools were able to find pricing that worked for them, Cypers Kotick said, but they encountered obstacles as basic as figuring out where a carrot—sourced from a small farm and shipped to schools with limited kitchen infrastructure or staffing—was going to get washed.

"There's this huge gap in the middle," she said. "Physically, things are not set up to accommodate this kind of sourcing."

Still, Cypers Kotick and others said working to establish those market channels can benefit schools and organic farms while advancing the state's climate goals.

"Public procurement seems to make a lot of sense," said Galt, the UC Davis researcher. "Farmers are going to need to be economically viable to continue to survive in the organic world." — **Ca- leb Hampton, Ag Alert assistant editor, California Farm Bureau Federation**

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## September red meat exports above last year

September exports of U.S. pork and beef were higher year over year, according to data released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), with pork exports well-positioned to set annual volume and value records in 2024.

September pork exports totaled 238,047 metric tons (mt), up 8% from a year ago, while value increased 6% to \$685.1 million. Through the first three-quarters of the year, pork exports were 5% above last year's pace at 2.23 million mt, with value up 7% to \$6.36 billion.

"U.S. pork's September performance was especially encouraging because growth was mainly driven by small and medium-sized markets in Central America, Southeast Asia and Oceania, and pork exports to Colombia continue to reach new heights," said USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom. "It was certainly another robust month for pork exports to Mexico and shipments to Japan were above last year. But the broad-based growth reflects the U.S. industry's strong commitment to market diversification."

Through September, pork exports to leading market Mexico are on a record pace, as are shipments to Central America, Colombia and several Caribbean markets. Shipments are also up substantially to South Korea, Oceania and the ASEAN region.

### September beef export growth

Exports of U.S. beef totaled 103,980 mt in September, up 5% year over year, while export

value climbed 6% to \$843.8 million. January-September exports increased 5% in value to \$7.82 billion, despite volume falling 2% to 960,814 mt.

With the exception of China/Hong Kong, September beef exports trended higher than a year ago in all major Asian markets, while demand remained strong in Mexico and shipments to Central America were the largest in 18 months.

"The tourism rebound in Asia has certainly provided momentum for U.S. beef, especially in Japan, Taiwan and Korea," Halstrom said. "We also saw impressive growth in the Philippines and Indonesia, which are markets where we see a lot of untapped growth potential."

Exports of U.S. lamb reached just 167 mt in September, down 32% from a year ago and the lowest this year. Export value was \$853,000, down 27%. Despite this slowdown, January-September lamb exports were 13% above a year ago at 2,113 mt, while value increased 17% to \$11.1 million. Shipments trended higher than a year ago to the Caribbean, Mexico, the Philippines, Guatemala and Taiwan. Lamb exports to Mexico are on pace to be the largest since 2019, while shipments to the Bahamas are the strongest since 2011.

A detailed summary of the January-September export results for U.S. beef, pork and lamb, including market-specific highlights, is available from the USMEF website, usmef.org. — USMEF

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# UNL commits \$5M to better measure environmental impact of cattle

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) aims to better gauge the environmental impact of the ranching industry with a new \$5 million grant.

"We're asking beef producers to make changes without the science to know it is beneficial, and not being able to accurately measure whether their change worked," said Galen Erickson, professor of ruminant nutrition and leader

of the Beef Innovation hub at Nebraska.

Erickson's team recently received a five-year, \$5 million Grand Challenges grant from the university to address that issue. The project will establish scientific processes and develop technology to accurately measure greenhouse gas emissions from grazing cattle.

Researchers will study cattle in grazing systems at three of

the university's research facilities—the Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center near Mead; Barta Brothers Ranch, southeast of Ainsworth; and Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory, near Whitman.

The Grand Challenges initiative is funded by the Office of the Chancellor and the Office of Research and Innovation. The grants are open only

to Husker faculty and must address one of seven thematic areas. This grant, called Advancing Development of Assessments, Practices and Tools (ADAPT) to Produce Climate Smart Beef in Grazing Systems, addresses three of those priorities—climate resilience, sustainable food and water security, and science and technology literacy for society.

"The goal of the project is to develop tools that can be easily and economically employed to help predict the benefits and any situations where we can improve relative to greenhouse gas in grazing systems," Erickson said. "We want to provide tools that allow producers to say this is or isn't a practice that will have a positive effect on the environment"

The ADAPT team includes researchers in grazing systems; human dimensions; remote sensing, including drone technology; data modeling and management; greenhouse gas flux; ecosystem resilience; communications; plant ecophysiology; soil science; and agronomy.

"This project brings together a diverse team with a wide variety of expertise," Erickson said. "There are people working in beef systems on this project who never thought they'd be working in beef systems."

Derek McLean, dean of the Agricultural Research Division, said the university recognizes how important the beef industry is to the state economically and ecologically.

"For more than a century, UNL has provided research-based recommendations to the beef industry so they can more responsibly and profitably do business," he said. "We will continue that support as the beef industry works to understand their environmental footprint. UNL is committed to furthering efforts that are scientifically accurate and data-backed, so we look forward to seeing the ADAPT project add information to the beef sustainability conversation."

Homer Buell, a beef producer from Rose, NE, and former co-chair of the Beef Innovation hub, was involved in the grant proposal.

"It's really important that we know what impact we are having on greenhouse gases," he

said. "There are so many things we can do within our industry, but we really need to know how we're affecting the environment so we can tell our story."

The ADAPT project focuses on how much the greenhouse gas levels around grazing cattle change, rather than just how much the cattle produce. The growing vegetation and soil in a grazing system take up greenhouse gases, which affects how much greenhouse gas is in the atmosphere.

The cow-calf sector has been largely ignored in the studies surrounding greenhouse gas emissions, partly because of the variety and complexity of the grazing systems that produce beef.

In closed-confinement systems like feedlots, only recently has the technology been developed to accurately measure greenhouse gas production by individual animals. Even in buildings that are climate-controlled, animal size, genetics, diet, stress and other factors can cause variation in greenhouse gas production.

A grazing system includes all those variables, plus temperature, wind, soil moisture, forage quantity and quality, and daily travel distance.

The ADAPT project will use satellite, airborne and on-the-ground remote sensing to measure how greenhouse gas levels vary when cattle are in an area.

"We have the expertise, the track record, and we've already done many of these methods, just not in a collaborative way," Erickson said. "The science is accepted, but we're applying unique science in ways it hasn't been used before. It's advanced science, but it's well accepted in the research community."

The technology leverages established research from the nationwide Long-Term Agroecosystem Research Network and tools that have been used for years to measure variation in the gases associated with crop production.

The "carbon" in many environmental conversations refers to carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas plants convert into oxygen. The system of carbon credits is offered as an income opportunity for some cattle producers with grazing

systems.

However, carbon contracts are based on assumptions about how much carbon dioxide is being absorbed by the soil versus how much is being produced. The ADAPT project is designed to provide some certainty for establishing practices that positively affect greenhouse gas levels so if producers do enter those contracts, the expectations are realistic and science based.

Cross-discipline collaboration and the process of gathering producer and beef industry input are easier since the development of the Beef Innovation hub, which brings together researchers, industry associates and beef producers to discuss issues and set priorities for the university's research.

"That partnership has given us access to voices and perspectives we might not otherwise have heard," Erickson said. "It has resulted in collaborative research that moves our understanding ahead more quickly and efficiently, with a focus on practical outcomes."

The diverse team is bringing unique perspectives to the research.

"We need to not only be able to do the research and find the answers; we need to understand what the beef industry and consumers need from this project and deliver the results in a way that they understand and can use," Erickson said. "One of the biggest priorities in this project is to make sure the technology we develop is accurate, economical and will have a legitimate use in the industry."

A producer panel will gather feedback to meet that goal so the research can be adjusted accordingly. The producers who have been involved so far are looking forward to having data and guidelines to make decisions about practices that may affect their environmental impact and their bottom line.

"Part of the problem has been research that was not done or not done right, so things came out that maybe weren't real," Buell said. "We have to find out what's real and affect that as positively as we can." — **Maria Tibbetts, UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources**

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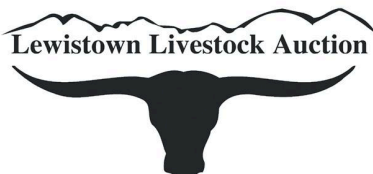
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## Easterday scheduled to be released in August 2029

**EASTERDAY**  
(from page 1)

### Background

In 2022, Easterday filed suit against Tyson Fresh Meats, alleging Tyson breached an agreement to share profits from their Cody's Beef sales in Japan. According to the suit, Tyson approached Easterday in 2013 to collaborate on branding and selling beef to Nippon Ham Foods in Japan, with Easterday's name and likeness featured on the product under the Cody's Beef label. The arrangement was set up as a joint venture, with an agreement to equally share the risks and profits from supplying cattle.

The suit continued that between 2015 and 2020, Easterday Ranches Inc. sold 65,000 head of cattle to Tyson, though not at premium prices. Despite acknowledging their written agreement as late as May 2020, Tyson allegedly failed to compensate Easterday according to the terms, prompting him to seek legal recourse.

In 2023, U.S. District Judge Stanley Bastian in the Eastern District of Washington ruled lawyers for Easterday failed to demonstrate an oral contract and the contract terms were not plausible. Bastian also ruled that unclear hands could not recover equity, and Easterday's claims for relief were derived from cattle feed-

ing agreements that were subject to fraud.

Easterday pled guilty in 2022 to one count of wire fraud in a ghost cattle scheme of providing false invoices to Tyson for non-existent cattle, defrauding the company and another \$244 million. Bastian initially sentenced Easterday to 11 years in federal prison, but the sentence was reduced to 8 years and 9 months due to a change in sentencing guidelines.

According to federal prison records, Easterday is scheduled to be released in August 2029, and he is currently serving his term at a medium-security facility in Victorville, CA. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

# Vilsack defends USDA loan oversight

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is defending USDA's oversight of its loan guarantees and grants to small- and mid-sized processors after Republican lawmakers demanded accountability for \$45.6 million provided to an Iowa broiler processor that shut down and forced the state of Iowa to cull 1.3 million healthy chickens on 13 farms.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) last month was faced with feeding the 1.3 million broiler chickens and eventually depopulating the flocks after Pure Prairie Poultry shut down its operations at a northern Iowa processing facility at the end of September.

Pure Prairie Poultry's shut-

down affected growers in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin, though the largest number of chicken farms were in Iowa. Growers were left scrambling to try to feed and care for roughly 2 million chickens in total. Farmers in some cases resorted to offering free chickens to people who would come and take them.

IDALS ended up culling chickens after finding a potential processor willing to take the birds only to have that plan quashed by creditors in court.

Republican members of Congress from the three states, along with GOP leaders on the House and Senate agriculture committees, wrote a letter to Vilsack demanding answers about USDA's oversight of its

loan guarantee and grant programs. Pure Prairie Poultry was among the first companies to receive a loan guarantee (\$38.7 million) and grant (\$6.9 million) in 2022 when the Biden administration made an aggressive push to expand processing capacity nationally.

In a press conference on Oct. 31, Vilsack defended USDA's overall loan portfolio following Pure Prairie Poultry's collapse. All told, more than 400 projects were funded in some way or another, the secretary noted, through the multiple loan guarantee and grant programs. That led to a total of \$1.4 billion invested not just by USDA but investors and lenders. The collapse of the broiler processor was "an unusual circumstance," the secretary said.

In USDA's overall \$250 billion or so loan portfolio, Vilsack said the loan success rate is close to 97%.

"You can compare and contrast our portfolio and its performance to any commercial bank in the country—any com-

mercial bank—the default rate is very, very low," he said.

Discussing the loan guarantee program, Vilsack said USDA works with the lender, but banks do the underwriting. "The bank basically does the determination that they are willing to lend the money, and if they have the USDA guarantee, they're more willing to lend the money. Often times, the interest rate is impacted and affected."

He continued, "So, we work collaboratively with the bank, and it's just a similar circumstance to any other business where the business goes in, borrows money from the bank and makes the payments or doesn't make the payments. And the bank basically has a decision to make, and if they decide to foreclose, then at some point our guarantee is triggered."

For the producers who lost income growing chickens for Pure Prairie Poultry, Vilsack said they should have access to state indemnity programs. Al-

so, USDA is seeking to file claims for producers in bankruptcy court under the Packers and Stockyards Act. Under the "dealer trust" provisions, producers potentially could be given preference when the court decides how to divvy up proceeds from any assets sold to pay off claims.

"We've been encouraging folks to fully utilize their right under the Packers and Stockyards to file a notice of claim," he said. "That gets them on the list and provides them with a priority."

The secretary said USDA won't know how much it will have to pay on the loan guarantee to the bank until the bankruptcy is resolved. Once the assets are liquidated and money is distributed, the bank will receive its funds. If the bankruptcy pays 80% of the loan value, then USDA comes in and pays a percentage of the deficit.

"It depends on how much the assets bring," he said.

The secretary declined to say if the creditors were wrong for

stepping in and blocking IDALS from securing a processor for the 1.3 million broilers that were culled instead of processed for food.

"I don't know the decision-making that they went through," he said, adding, "I just know that there were options, and ultimately, the options were to euthanize, which is unfortunate and tragic, but that's why you have an indemnity program. That's precisely why you have it, and it's a good program."

Ideally, another company will reopen the processing plant in Charles City, IA, which is still considered a modern facility with its equipment.

"I'm hopeful that we find somebody who's willing to take it over and reopen it because obviously there's a need," Vilsack said. He added, "So there's a long way to go here, but for producers the goal hopefully is to get the thing reopened and everybody frankly should be working toward that." — **Chris Clayton, DTN ag policy editor**

## Turkey prices low ahead of Thanksgiving holiday

Consumers should find good whole turkey prices, but that could change as the holiday season progresses due to lower production and supplies than last year, said Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist and professor in the Texas A&M Department of Agricultural Economics, said prices on whole birds typical for table centerpieces during the holidays have been below the five-year average. The wholesale price for 8-16-pound hens was 99/lb. the week of Oct. 19 compared to \$1.12/lb. last year and the five-year average of \$1.22/lb.

"Prices are good for consumers, but they're bad for producers," he said. "Last year started off strong for producers, but prices bottomed out after Thanksgiving and they haven't recovered."

### Production's impact on turkey prices

Anderson said dismal prices for producers who continue to deal with higher input and labor costs contributed to a drop in production. A USDA report showed turkey production dipped more than 6% compared to this time last year.

Beyond the price-related production declines, Greg Archer, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension poultry specialist and associate professor in the Texas A&M Department of Poultry Science, said avian influenza and an emerging issue with avian metapneumovirus continues to impact turkey and other poultry.

"We're down in the total number of birds and hatchlings, so that will impact the supply side," he said. "Producers have been dealing with avian influenza for three-plus years and now this metapneumonia is becoming an issue. They're losing fewer birds from these diseases, but losses are still impacting production."

As of August, avian influenza outbreaks have resulted in the loss of almost 15 million turkeys in the U.S., according to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Most of those turkeys were lost in 2022. Avian influenza hits turkey production especially hard because flocks have more potential to be exposed to the pathogens that are

carried by wild birds like migratory ducks.

The time it takes to grow a turkey—smaller birds take 15-18 weeks from hatching to harvest, whereas bigger birds can take 20-plus weeks to reach maturity—and the more open-style housing facilities contribute to their risk of exposure, Archer said. Commercial broiler chickens on the other hand are raised in up to six weeks and in houses that are easier to apply biosecurity regimens to prevent pathogen exposure.

Another factor for turkeys is that many commercial producers are in areas like Minnesota with higher migratory duck populations.

"The disease is more prevalent, and it just creates these potential hotspots for outbreaks," Archer said. "Incidents are low, and the hope is that it doesn't become a broader issue like it was a couple years ago."

### Consumer demand trends


Along with reduced production, the number of whole turkeys in cold storage is 1.6% lower than last year, which ties into the trend of fewer birds available this holiday season, Anderson said.

Anderson said he doesn't see any trends suggesting the lower supplies or the threat of disease outbreaks will spur prices upward dramatically. But he said consumers could see slightly higher prices in the days leading up to Thanksgiving.

There's also a chance consumers could see discounts and specials on whole birds as grocers try to draw customers who are likely to buy more items associated with holiday cooking, he said.

One trend Anderson has seen emerge on the demand side over recent holiday seasons that could influence overall turkey prices is the move toward non-traditional meats for holiday meals after Thanksgiving.

"Consumers want that traditional centerpiece turkey for Thanksgiving, but they're also going with other meats like hams and briskets or prime rib for Christmas," he said. "People are forgoing that second turkey for their holiday get-togethers, and that is impacting the overall historical demand." — **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension**



Ramsay, MT

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# Farmer sentiment in October rebounded

October provided a surprising pre-election bounce in farmer sentiment as the Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer index climbed to 115, 27 points higher than in September. The biggest driver of the sentiment improvement was an increase in producers' confidence in the future, as the Future Expectations Index jumped 30 points to 124.

The Current Conditions Index also rose in October but by a smaller amount. With a reading of 95, the Current Conditions Index confirmed that farmers think economic conditions this year are worse than last year and weaker than during the barometer's base period of 2015-16, which was in the early days of a multi-year downturn in the U.S. farm economy. Producers expressed some optimism that economic conditions will improve and not precipitate an extended downturn in the farm economy. The October barometer survey took place from Oct. 14-18.

The overall improvement in farmer sentiment is better

understood by examining responses to the individual questions used to generate the barometer. Much of the sentiment improvement was attributable to producers possessing a less pessimistic view of the U.S. agricultural economy. For example, the percentage of producers who expect bad times for the U.S. agricultural economy in the upcoming year declined from 73% of respondents in September to 53% in October. Similarly, the percentage of producers who expect bad times for U.S. agriculture in the next 5 years fell from 48% to 33%. Looking at a related question, fewer producers said they expect their farm's financial condition to worsen over the next 12 months, with just 23% looking for conditions to worsen compared to 38% who felt that way in September.

However, despite the improvement in the main barometer indices, it's clear producers' financial situation deteriorated in 2024. For example, over half (56%) of the October respondents said

their farm's financial condition was worse than a year earlier. That was lower than reported in September but matches the response to this question in August.

When asked explicitly about their biggest concerns for the upcoming year, producers still point to higher input costs and lower output prices as their biggest concerns. The trend of fewer producers citing interest rates as a top concern continued. Just 15% of producers, down from as much as 26% of producers in late 2023, chose interest rates as one of their biggest concerns in October.

One of the biggest surprises arising from the survey was the increase in the Farm Financial Performance Index. The index is based upon a question that says, "As of today, do you expect your farm's financial performance in the next 12 months to be better than, worse than, or about the same as in the past 12 months?" The October reading of 90 jumped 22 points above September's and was just 2 points lower than a year

earlier. High fall crop yields and a stress-free fall harvest season in the Corn Belt and Plains states likely contributed to the index's rise. However, those two factors alone don't account for the index's sharp rise. The index's improvement provides another indication that farmers' optimism about the future shifted in October, leading to an expectation of better financial performance in 2025 than in 2024.

The Short-Term Farmland Value Expectations Index tends to be correlated with financial performance expectations, and that was the case this month, with the index climbing up to 120, 25 points above the September reading. The long-term index also rose, improving to 159 versus 147 a month earlier. Once again, the rise in both farmland value expectation indices suggests that producers retain some optimism about the agricultural economy's future strength, which, in turn, could support farmland values. — **Purdue University, CME Group**

## LEGAL LEDGER

### Denver voters defeat anti-ag measures

Denver, CO, voters voted against two ballot initiatives that would have had far-reaching implications for agriculture. Ordinance 308, a measure to ban most uses of fur, and Ordinance 309, a measure to ban slaughterhouses from operating in city limits, failed to pass. As of Wednesday afternoon, 58% of voters and 64.6% of voters voted "no" on Ordinance 308 and Ordinance 309, respectively. In addition, 55.5% of Colorado voters voted against Proposition 127, which would have restricted management practices related to mountain lions and bobcats. "We have achieved a significant victory for Colorado's rural communities and our agricultural heritage," the Colorado Cattlemen's Association said in a statement. "Thank you for standing with us and making your voices heard."

### Sonoma County CAFO ban measure fails

Sonoma County, CA, voters chose to overwhelmingly vote against animal activists' ballot measure to ban concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the county. Measure J received only 15% of votes in support. "While we're disappointed by the results, one thing is clear: the measure put the factory farming industry on the defensive," said measure proponent Coalition to End Factory Farming. "The opposition was forced to spend millions of dollars and resort to fearmongering and outright lies to scare voters into voting no." The campaign said it plans to debrief, gather information and discuss new ways to come together and "end factory farming" in Sonoma County.

### Canada ports shut down over labor dispute

Port workers in Canada's largest ports in Vancouver, British Columbia, began strike actions on Nov. 4 at 8 a.m. PST and the B.C. Maritime Employers Association locked workers out at 4:30 p.m. As of Wednesday afternoon, port operations in the Port of Vancouver and the Port of Prince Rupert were at a standstill as negotiations continued between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 514 and the B.C. Maritime Employers Association. Union workers have raised concerns over wages and working conditions. Dockworkers in the Port of Montreal have also been on a partial strike, blocking 40% of container traffic. Potash, coal, pulse crops, beef, pork and forestry products are some of the commodities affected. "Alberta's government is disappointed and dismayed that yet another work stoppage is occurring in Canada's transportation sector that has the potential to create widespread damage to Canadians, our country's economy and our reputation as a reliable trading partner," said Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Transportation Minister Devin Dreeshen in a statement.

### Australia to resume beef exports to China

Two beef plants in Australia are planning to resume exports to China by the end of the year. Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell met with China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao at the China International Import Expo in Shanghai, China, where Wang said China would lift remaining trade restrictions on Australian exports, according to a Reuters report. Two beef plants have remained restricted since 2020 and 2021, after China cited labeling irregularities and technical issues. Five other plants have had their bans lifted since earlier this summer. China is Australia's biggest trading partner, with trade reaching \$327 billion last year.

### Concerns with BLM board representation

The Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) submitted comments to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Nov. 5, expressing concerns with "unbalanced representation" on the agency's national advisory committee for the Public Lands Rule. "We are very disappointed to see the BLM's choice to not provide those with livestock grazing permits their own seat on the committee," said Raylee Honeycutt, MSGA executive vice president. "Only one seat for federal grazing permittees and other permittees to share is disproportionate when you look at the other seats available to non multiple-use users." BLM announced the committee's implementation in October and its plan to choose 15 members from various sectors to serve on the committee.

### 4-H goat case settled for \$300,000

The legal dispute regarding a California 4-H member and her goat project at the Shasta County Fair has come to a settlement after more than two years of ongoing litigation. In June 2022, a 9-year-old member of the Cow Creek 4-H Club exhibited her market goat project at the fair but decided shortly ahead of the junior livestock auction to withdraw the goat from sale. However, because the Shasta County Junior Livestock Auction is a terminal sale, the goat's withdrawal was not allowed. Following the auction, the 4-H member's mother removed the goat from the fairgrounds and the Shasta County Sheriff's Department recovered the animal, with the goat eventually heading to slaughter. The mother sued on behalf of her daughter against the fair staff and the sheriff's department, which led to countersuits. On Sept. 24, the plaintiffs filed a motion to propose a settlement, which was approved on Nov. 1. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California granted a settlement of \$300,000, with \$65,000 allocated to the junior member in a trust fund, \$35,000 for attorneys' fees and the remaining \$200,000 to the mother, which will also cover any additional attorneys' fees.



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# Most ag output growth is productivity improvement

From 1948 to 2021, U.S. agricultural output grew at an average annual rate of 1.46%. The largest contributor to this growth came from improvement in total factor productivity, which measures changes in the efficiency with which inputs are transformed into outputs.

The major drivers of such productivity growth include innovations in animal and crop genetics, improvements in operation management and changing farm sector structure.

Over seven decades, total factor productivity added an annual average of 1.49 percentage points to the output growth rate.

Intermediate inputs, such as agricultural chemicals, energy, purchased services, feed and seed, added 0.46 percentage point. The positive contributions of intermediate inputs and total factor productivity were partially offset by reductions in capital (made up mostly of land) and labor inputs.

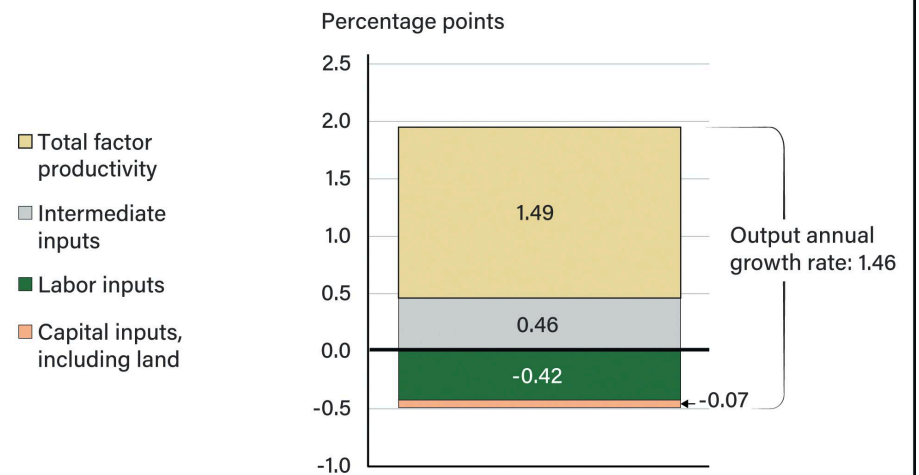
The contribution to the out-

put growth rate of labor use decline was -0.42 percentage point, and that of capital inputs (including land) reduction was -0.07 percentage point, accounting for a combined decrease of 0.49 percentage point.

That decrease slightly exceeded the positive contribution from intermediate inputs, meaning fewer inputs were used during the period. As a result, farmers and ranchers are producing more with fewer inputs. — **USDA Economic Research Service**

## Agricultural output growth composition, 1948–2021

USDA Economic Research Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Note: **Total factor productivity** is a broad measure of the efficiency with which farmers transform resources into commodities. **Intermediate inputs** are the goods and services (including energy, fertilizer and lime, feed, seed, pesticides, and services that are bought from all sources or produced on the farm) that are used to create other goods and services rather than for final consumption. **Capital inputs** include fixed assets such as land and machinery.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Productivity in the U.S. data product, January 2024.

CHARTS of NOTE

## First H5N1 case in swine detected

### HPAI (from page 1)

for scientists to monitor similar viruses.

Researchers recently studied how the huTX37-H5N1 virus affects ferrets, which are similar to humans in how they react to the flu. After infecting ferrets with a high dose of the virus, all of them died within five days, with high virus levels found in their respiratory systems. This virus also spread through the air to nearby ferrets, though only 17-33% of these exposed ferrets were infected, showing that airborne spread is possible, but limited.

Researchers tested antiviral drugs on huTX37-H5N1, finding that it was susceptible to the drugs favipiravir and baloxavir marboxil (Xofluza), and zanamivir (Relenza), but less sensitive to oseltamivir (Tamiflu).

Researchers think past exposure to human flu viruses might give people slight protection against H5N1, though more research is needed.

### Cases

As of Nov. 4, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in collaboration with state health departments, confirmed 44 human cases of H5N1 avian influenza in the U.S. Nineteen cases were linked to infected poultry, and 24 were tied to exposure to sick or infected dairy cows. Among these 44 cases, 20 are dairy farm workers in California, and nine are poultry farm workers in Washington.

Four probable cases were also reported but did not meet CDC's confirmatory testing. People infected have shown only mild symptoms like eye irritation or mild respiratory issues, and none required hospitalization. According to the CDC, the risk to the public remains low, though exposure to infected animals increases infection risk.

Since March 2024, USDA reports show 440 dairy herds across 15 states have been infected with H5N1 avian influenza, with most new cases in California. Infected poultry have also been confirmed in 45 commercial and 30 backyard flocks, impacting over 22 million birds. The USDA continues monitoring the spread closely as cases rise among dairy herds and poultry flocks.

### USDA monitoring

USDA's APHIS announced plans to enhance testing and monitoring of H5N1 avian influenza in dairy herds. Partner-

ing with state veterinarians, USDA will implement a tiered milk sampling strategy to track where H5N1 is present. This will help improve biosecurity measures and guide states in protecting farm workers exposed to infected animals.

USDA said this proactive testing approach follows the agency's steps to control the virus' spread following its detection in dairy cattle in March. USDA's strategy includes bulk milk testing, modeled on programs like the one used to eradicate brucellosis, and will expand this testing in states where the virus persists. USDA has also instituted a federal order requiring cattle testing before interstate movement, which has helped reduce the number of affected states from 14 to two.

APHIS said field trials are transpiring to approve a H5N1 vaccine. The two vaccine trials involve non-viable, non-replicating vaccines that don't lead to virus shedding or transmission to humans, animals or the environment. USDA expects more submissions and approvals for field trials as vaccine development progresses.

### Pig infections

The Oregon Department of Agriculture reported on Oct. 25 the first detection of H5N1 in poultry in Crook County, OR. On Oct. 29, USDA confirmed that a pig tested positive on an Oregon backyard farm with mixed poultry and livestock, marking the first U.S. H5N1 case in swine.

APHIS and Oregon state veterinary officials began investigating on Oct. 30. Although the pig showed no symptoms, it was euthanized for further analysis, with test results negative for two other pigs and pending for the remaining two.

Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, noted that it remains unclear whether the pig was genuinely infected or if its nasal passages were contaminated by environmental exposure. Osterholm explained that a necropsy would determine whether the pig was infected by checking for the virus deep in its lungs. He also noted that previous research indicates the virus does not typically infect pigs easily.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said at a recent press conference that the avian influenza found in the pig was a different strain than the H5N1 detected in cattle and

is distinct from what's typically seen in poultry. Vilsack emphasized that the food supply remains safe and no new precautions are necessary for large-scale hog operations. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

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# Virtual fencing: A new tool for managing rangelands

New technology called virtual fencing is catching on in Idaho and the West. Virtual fencing works like an invisible fence for pets but at

a much larger scale for livestock management.

"I think it's been really beneficial and almost fun to get to do this and learn about

it. It's been a helpful tool, all in all," said Chyenne Smith, who with her husband, Jay, runs J Lazy S Ranch in Carmen Creek, ID, near Salmon.

"My wife's happy, my cows are doing good, the range is managed well, the forest and the BLM are happy, and our calf weights are up, and the market is good, how do you do any better than that?" added Jay Smith.

Jay and Chyenne Smith worked with a research team at the University of Idaho, the Salmon-Challis National Forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to set up a virtual fencing project on spring, summer and fall range.

The project really shined in allowing the Smiths to graze cattle in the Diamond-Moose Allotment in the Salmon-Challis National Forest just one year after the massive Moose Fire.

"After the Moose Fire, the standard Forest Service answer is to stay home for 2-3 years," said Jay Smith. "We went up there and did a self-

survey, in the fall of '22, we could see with our own eyes that approximately 40,000 of the very best acres were unburned or lightly burned. With that much good forage, staying home for 2-3 years did not feel like the right answer to me.

"So I reached out to the University of Idaho, and I said, hey, maybe this is the right time to negotiate a deal to not leave all that grass on the table."

The Smiths also wanted to capitalize on the lucrative cattle prices in 2023 and 2024, meaning they needed to find places to graze their cattle herds on public lands, despite the Moose Fire. "If we would have had to sell those cows, we would have missed the peak market," Smith said.

Turns out, the University of Idaho was eager to support the virtual fencing project. Joel Yelich, a Ph.D. senior livestock researcher at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center in Salm-

on, jumped in with both feet.

"Not only did they have professional staff and knowledge-base to help us get going and manage the virtual fences, they had the connections, time and resources to help us apply for grants and get funding. We would not have been able to do this without the University of Idaho," Smith said.

The Forest Service and BLM also were helpful by investing in virtual fencing base stations to assist in the project. Base stations cost about \$10,000 each.

"I'd say things are going quite well," said Kyle Nelson, rangeland management specialist for the Salmon-Challis National Forest. "Our first season, we went into it with a lot of unknowns, pretty steep learning curve, and we've been able to take what we learned last year and use that with our implementation this year."

Linda Price, manager of the BLM Salmon Field Office, agreed.

"I think it's going great," she said. "When I'm talking to permittees who are part of this, I'm hearing a lot of positive things."

That said, virtual fencing technology has limitations, currently. For example, it won't work in remote areas outside of cellular range. That rules out a lot of remote rangelands in Idaho.

Ranchers who already have fenced pastures on state or federal grazing allotments won't need it. But virtual fencing may be valuable for controlling livestock in rugged areas where building fence is cost-prohibitive.

Jasper Holdsworth, a New Zealand rancher who wanted to create rest-rotation systems without fencing, partnered with Vence co-founder Frank Wooten to make the technology more commercially feasible.

Vence provides the herd-management software and base station interface technology for the virtual fencing system in Salmon.

Virtual fencing systems have three basic components:

- A base station, typically solar powered, in a place where it can receive a strong cellular signal from an existing network.

- Vence GPS collars are placed on livestock.

- Grazing boundaries are set with Vence herd-management software.

To get started, it takes 4-5 days to train the cattle in a small pasture so they learn to respect the virtual fence boundaries.

"We initially set up a barrier that's 5-10 meters away from the physical fence," Yelich says. "When the cows hit that virtual zone, they get a shock. The first day is strictly shock."

"Second day, we go through a larger zone of shock 15-20 meters, and then the third day we go to a combination of the shock and sound. They hit the sound and then the shock, and the sound is reinforcing that they'll be going into a shock zone next."

Yelich works with Vence

technicians to set up multiple base stations on Forest Service and BLM lands to provide broad coverage in steep, mountainous terrain. Vence technicians check on the coverage with a radio frequency scan.

If a rancher sees that a cow is moving out of the virtual fence pasture, they can create a second virtual fence to encourage the mother cow to move back into the pasture. If she doesn't respond correctly, the rancher knows exactly where the cow is located, shortening the trip to herd them back into the right pasture.

Chyenne Smith notes that the GPS cattle data is shared only with producers, not the agencies.

"There's been some concern about the scientific data that the cows collect and who gets that," she said. "Vence only gives that data to the ranchers. The government doesn't get it."

The virtual fencing software also gave the Smiths a head's up when predators or other factors spooked livestock. She shows an example of the cattle running downhill, trying to escape something.

"You can see in real time that the cows are scattering for whatever reason, one reason was they were doing helicopter training, and our cows scattered," she said.

Herding is still needed at times like that, but the GPS data show where to find the cattle. "Knowing where they were gave us so much peace of mind," she said.

Virtual fencing does not eliminate the need for perimeter boundary fences. "It's not a perimeter fence. So where it really works is all of those interior fences, when you're trying to go from pasture to pasture," Yelich said.

Smith recommends that other ranchers may want to try virtual fencing if it could fit their operations and range management objectives.

"We were absolutely astounded by how helpful it was, how beneficial it was for the range, for our cattle, for our workload, it seems like it would be something that's super useful for just about anybody, however they wanted to use it," she says.

In terms of costs, the Smiths say it's worth the money to invest in the GPS collars at \$50 each, but it definitely helps to find grants for the cost of the base stations (approximately \$10,000 each). Individual ranchers could not afford to shoulder the costs of base stations alone, especially if several are needed.

"We're very fortunate to be part of the pilot project, got some grants, and made this more affordable," Jay Smith said. "And then hopefully our data and our usage makes it more popular, makes the cost go down, makes the product better. Definitely our goal, in being pioneers in this, is to help it benefit more people in the future." — **Steve Stuebner for the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission**

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 North Platte Stockyards | North Platte, NE

### ▶ January 23

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 Tehama District Fairgrounds | Red Bluff, CA

### ▶ February 28

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# Prairie chicken advocates: Market incentives key to habitat expansion

Entrepreneur and conservationist Wayne Walker says the business of saving the lesser prairie chicken in Kansas required wider commitment to paying market rates to landowners dedicated to improving grassland habitat for the vulnerable birds.

He said companies involved in energy production within regions favored by the prairie chicken often had good intentions in terms of addressing the need for biological diversity and addressing climate change concerns. But, he said, too many balked at paying the true cost of a landowner setting aside large tracts for benefit of the prairie chicken.

Walker, owner of Common Ground Capital and CEO of LPC Conservation, said on Kansas Reflector's podcast that programs designed to aid the lesser prairie chicken tended to fall short because they didn't pay farmers or ranchers enough to justify multigenerational shifts in land use.

"You can't keep asking the ranchers to be good conservationists for free. That's essentially what we've done to date and ... is why we have lost so much prairie and this bird's in trouble," Walker said.

"Our financial system is designed to make a profit and conservation historically has been kept out of that model," he said. "Until a rancher can make a profit conserving prairie because of the prairie chicken or some other ecosystem service—just like he can

make money selling his wind rights or his solar rights or his mineral rights or his development rights—it's not going to turn around."

In 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service controversially listed two distinct population segments of the lesser prairie chicken under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to habitat loss and fragmentation of grassland areas.

In the northern region, including western Kansas, southeastern Colorado, western Oklahoma and the northeast Texas panhandle, the lesser prairie chicken was listed as threatened. The southern range of the lesser prairie-chicken in eastern New Mexico and the southwest Texas Panhandle was listed as endangered due to the threat of extinction.

The decision of federal regulators enraged members of the Kansas congressional delegation who denounced the listing as an overreach damaging to the state's agriculture and energy sectors.

U.S. Rep. Tracey Mann, a Republican serving the 1st District that includes much of the bird's habitat in Kansas, said the listing amounted to a "proxy war on American agriculture and energy sectors that are vital to our economy."

He said the federal government should get out of the way of farmers, ranchers and landowners, who he described as the "original conservationists."

## More than a cudgel

Years of brawling among energy companies, environmentalists, elected officials and federal regulators led to the listing and fueled the inevitable flurry of lawsuits.

Mike Smith, who works with LPC Conservation projects in five states, said the population of lesser prairie chicken had dropped to perhaps 25,000. In certain years, due to good rainfall, there might be a temporary surge in the population. Drought has the opposite impact on the birds.

The long-term spiral, despite a hodgepodge of voluntary programs and initiatives, justified intervention with the federal ESA, Smith said.

He said mandates from the federal government could prompt greater environmental awareness to deterioration of bird habitat and raise the profile of ap-

proaches anchored to business principles.

"The Endangered Species Act provides a cudgel, and, you know, keeps everybody honest, but the outsourcing of conservation work to the states and then having state rangers or state wildlife managers in the land business has not worked," Smith said. "They don't know how to cobble together the last of the best properties in order to make ... these easements, which is what Wayne (Walker) has done in his conservation banking business."

Walker said collaboration could work if there was sufficient financial incentive for property owners to redirect land resources in a way that also benefitted the bird.

"The old conservation models have done some good things, but overall, we're losing, right?" Walker said. "It just became clear to me ... we had to bring some business acumen to it."

## It's a business

Common Ground Capital works to identify landowners with property that possessed ecological and biological features that could be restored and preserved through a system of conservation banking. Property owners enter into long term protective land easements that serve interests of prairie chickens in exchange for a prescribed revenue stream. It would be ideal to build strongholds for the lesser prairie chicken with 25,000 to 50,000 acres each, Walker said.

When the varied interests come together, companies with a large imprint on the environment—energy companies, for example—purchase conservation credits to position themselves as more clean and green. Wind and solar industries have taken to conservation banking more than oil and gas interests.

"We approach it like a

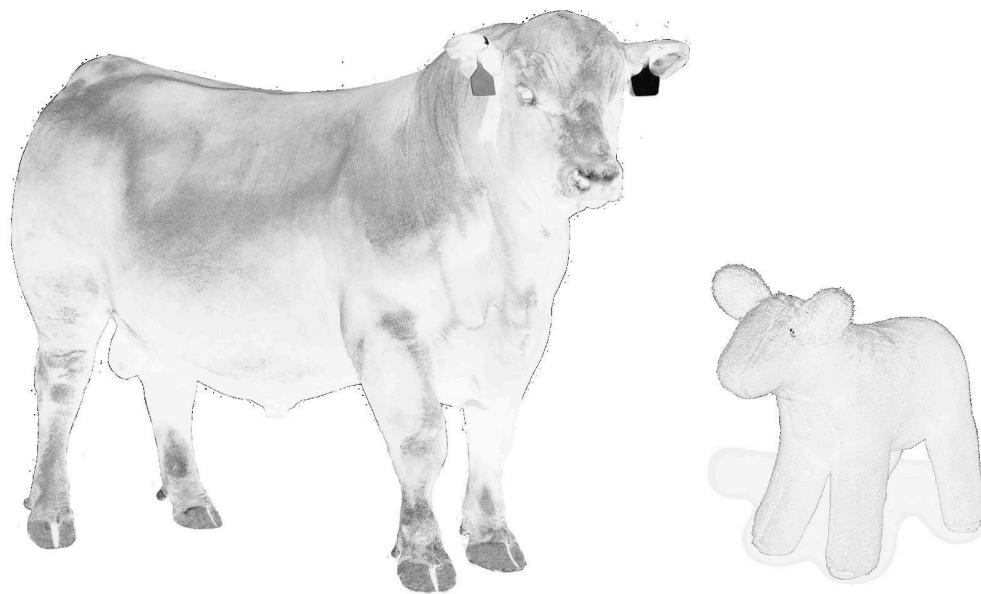
developer would approach building a housing development. You know, location, location. Where are the birds? Where are there ranchers there that are willing to talk to us about this arrangement. And then, of course, with the Fish and Wildlife Service, there are standards we have to meet," Walker said.

Listing the bird as threatened and endangered ought to build momentum for conservation banking. Common Ground Capital, and companies like it, would profit by bringing the diverse interests together.

"I really don't want to be apologizing for that. I mean, people have accused me of trying to get rich off the prairie chicken," Walker said. "Look, if it's a get-rich-quick scheme, it is the worst one in history because we do this for 12 years, and we still aren't quite in the black yet." — **Tim Carpenter, Kansas Reflector**

## Don't buy an imposter.

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## Evaluating overheads is a necessary step for ranchers

Cattle prices in 2023 and 2024 have ranged from good to great depending on if your glass is half empty or half full. Adding to this, feed grains have been getting progressively cheaper since the start of 2023. And finally, Oklahoma has put together two productive hay seasons back-to-back.

Cheaper feed and hay, along with strong calf and cull prices, all pave the way for some profitable years (keeping our fingers crossed that the drought conditions are short lived). Yet, it hasn't felt as rosy as one would have thought in 2018, for example. A phrase heard repeatedly is that it just costs more to do business than it ever has. That is something we can all agree on; it seems to cost more to do everything these days. If we subtract these earlier mentioned issues from the profit math, that leaves overhead expenses as a likely culprit for the less-than-rosy outlook.

Overheads have been explained in many ways. They can be described as all the things that we need to take care of the cattle, that don't go into the cattle. For example, a bale of hay is not overhead. But all the things it took to get the bale in front of the cow likely is.

The tractor, baler, rake, truck, hay bed, repairs, labor, etc. all are a part of our overhead expense.

Costs that fall into the overhead category tend to not follow a normal "commodity trend." More specifically, when we enter drought and hay supplies are already tight, we can expect hay prices to climb. We expect hay prices to stay high until we have a good hay growing season and adequate supply returns. Most overhead items don't behave like this. They tend to have a slow but steady increase in cost over time that is corrosive to our profit margins.

There is a degree of overhead that is required to care for the cow herd. That will vary among ranches based on goals, labor and resource availability. Minimizing overhead costs is difficult. Just be aware that the decisions made to repair, replace or upgrade these assets will impact profitability for many years. As the cost of these items that we need to do business with continues to increase, be especially diligent of how we can stretch each dollar a little further. — **Scott Clawson, Oklahoma State University Extension economist**

# Countries plan to return bison to Tribal lands

## BISON PLAN (from page 1)

wildlife and ecosystems.

"While the overall recovery of bison over the last 130 years is a conservation success story, significant work remains to ensure that bison will remain a viable species," said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. "Our collaborative efforts with Canada and Mexico are an important step forward as we work to restore this majestic species and facilitate the return of bison to Tribally owned and ancestral lands."

The letter of intent cited that about 31,000 bison in North America are stewarded for conservation goals but noted that most herds are "constrained by fences or human tolerance, isolated from each other, and have fewer than 1,000 individuals, raising valid concerns about their genetic integrity, wildness,

and long-term viability." Continuing that while the species may be secure because of these conservation efforts, the letter of intent highlighted that bison are absent from nearly 99% of their historic range. The letter calls for the celebration of conservation success and encourages the movement toward "ecocultural conservation," a concept to protect both ecosystems and cultural traditions.

Ron Hallman, Parks Canada president and CEO, said: "This transborder relationship provides an opportunity, guided by a diversity of science-based and Indigenous knowledge, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and others, that will continue to improve the health and resiliency of bison across their varied environments."

By signing the letter, the three countries agreed to enhance their coordina-

tion, collaboration and gathering and sharing of information to advance ecocultural conservation of bison in North America. Efforts include collaborating on regional activities to promote policies, practices and effective methods; and promoting joint work plans within the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management.

Though the letter says it was signed May 30, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Matthew Strickland digitally signed the letter on Sept. 10, and the letter was released on Nov. 1.

## The Nature Conservancy

On Oct. 31, The Nature Conservancy reported that through its work with Indigenous partnerships, a total of 1,800 bison have returned "back to their an-

cestral grazing lands" since 2020.

The Nature Conservancy partnered with the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council, the non-profit Tanka Fund and other Indigenous communities to restore bison to the Tribes. The Nature Conservancy is the second largest private owner of bison in the U.S., managing about 6,600 head on 11 preserves.

"On (The Nature Conservancy) preserves, a bison's primary job, so to speak, is to help maintain the health of grasslands," the group said. "For the Indigenous Peoples (The Nature Conservancy) partners with bison are much more. We send them to the Tribes as bison and they are welcomed home as buffalo—a cultural keystone—as much as an ecological one, and core to tribal identity." — Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor

# STORY SHORTS

## Plant-based meat sales decline

While U.S. retail sales of refrigerated plant-based meat alternatives have sharply declined, frozen alternatives show signs of stability, according to new data from market information company Circana. In the year leading up to Sept. 29, combined sales of refrigerated and frozen plant-based meat dropped by 9% to \$1.1 billion, with volumes down 9.9%. Notably, refrigerated alternatives (29% of the category) saw a year-over-year decline of 22.8% to \$22.6 million, while frozen options (71% of the category) declined only 1.3%, totaling \$54.3 million. By contrast, traditional refrigerated and frozen meat sales rose 5.5% and 8.3%, respectively.

## Reward offered for missing WY cattle

A \$5,000 reward is being offered for information leading to the recovery or location of nine missing steers taken from Millikin Ranch in Platte County, WY. The 850-pound Red Angus steers carry a sideways V and backward E brand on the left hip, along with blue numbered ear tags on the left ear (#1-53) and blue-gray fly tags on the right ear. The Wyoming Livestock Board Law Enforcement and Platte County Sheriff's Office are investigating. You can contact Tim at 307-331-2398 or Lisa at 307-331-1714 with any information. Additionally, a livestock theft informational meeting will be held at Glendo Town Hall on Nov. 20 at 6 p.m., with law enforcement present to provide updates and answer questions.

## Environmental group buys CA ranch

The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), an environmental group based in Palo Alto, CA, purchased 1,340 acres on the southwestern edge of Sargent Ranch, known as Pescadero Ranch, for \$15.6 million, according to local news outlet Monterey Herald. The newly acquired land, larger than San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, features oak-covered hills, pastures and streams. POST plans to maintain cattle grazing on the ranch while preserving its natural landscape, with future transfer plans including restrictions against development. According to the Monterey Herald, Sargent Ranch's owners are pursuing a quarry project and completed an environmental impact report in 2022. The current owners purchased the ranch from a bankrupt developer in 2013 who was pursuing plans to build golf courses and a casino.

## Lumpy skin outbreak in South Sudan

A lumpy skin disease outbreak in South Sudan's Lakes Region has resulted in the death of at least 273 cattle, while 5,024 animals have been infected, according to a Radio Tamazuj report. Of those animals affected, 3,588 have recovered, but 1,480 remain sick. The disease has spread across eight counties, impacting cattle and goats in villages and camps. Lakes State Minister of Animal Resources and Fisheries Samuel Gai has called on the national government and partners for urgent support as the lumpy skin disease outbreak continues. Local farmers report that calves are particularly vulnerable and stress the need for medical aid to contain the spread.

## Bluetongue virus affecting Sardinia sheep

Sardinia, Italy, where cultural tradition and economy are closely tied to sheep farming, is facing a severe bluetongue virus outbreak affecting nearly one-quarter of its 13,000 sheep farms. The viral infection, transmitted by biting midges thriving in the region's hotter climate, has killed 40,000 sheep and lambs this year, compared to 5,000 in 2023. According to Reuters, Sardinia's government has allocated €13.5 million (\$14.7 million) to aid farmers. Industry group Coldiretti estimates losses up to €25 million (\$27 million). National officials are now devising an emergency response, while farmers already impacted by summer droughts urge for swift support.

## Funding to fight chronic wasting disease

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has allocated \$12 million to support state and Tribal partners in managing and responding to chronic wasting disease (CWD) in deer, elk and related animals. The funding focuses on improving CWD management for farmed herds and wild cervid populations, enhancing containment efforts in affected areas and advancing research on testing methods and genetic management strategies. APHIS also aims to strengthen CWD education and outreach. Priority is given to states and Tribes with established CWD cases or those bordering affected areas with active or planned monitoring programs.

## USDA invests \$1.5 billion in RCPP projects

USDA has committed \$1.5 billion to 92 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects, with partners contributing an additional \$968 million to maximize impact. These projects support farmers, ranchers and landowners in implementing locally led conservation strategies that address natural resource challenges and climate resilience. A dedicated \$100 million is reserved for Tribal-led projects, with seven awards granted to five Tribes. The USDA's commitment to RCPP has led to over 800 projects, leveraging \$8 billion to enhance agricultural and environmental sustainability nationwide, the department said.

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| YW   | +164  |
| HP   | +13.6 |
| Marb | +1.17 |
| RE   | +0.81 |
| \$C  | +324  |

### Diamond Hobson 0L19



|      |     |      |       |       |       |      |
|------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| BW   | WW  | YW   | HP    | Marb  | RE    | \$C  |
| +1.5 | +89 | +150 | +19.2 | +1.13 | +0.67 | +345 |

### Diamond Redemption 5L42



|      |     |      |       |      |       |      |
|------|-----|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| BW   | WW  | YW   | HP    | Marb | RE    | \$C  |
| +1.5 | +77 | +134 | +14.7 | +4.6 | +0.53 | +230 |

### Diamond Logo L225



|      |     |      |       |      |      |      |
|------|-----|------|-------|------|------|------|
| BW   | WW  | YW   | HP    | Marb | RE   | \$C  |
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# Fall Production Sale Dec. 2, 2024

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# Identifying a potential target to regulate gene expression

Texas A&M AgriLife researchers uncovered a promising target for controlling gene expression and other cellular processes, which could lead to advancements in crop resilience and our understanding of certain human diseases.

This target centers on RNA regulation, which, when disrupted in humans, is often linked to neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, as well as many types of cancer. On the other hand, improvements in certain RNA production processes can lead to new therapeutics and improved crop resilience in plants.

With this in mind, a group of researchers led by Xiuren Zhang, Ph.D., Christine Richardson Endowed Professor in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics and jointly appointed professor in the Texas A&M College of Arts and Sciences Department of Biology, aimed to explore how RNA processes are coordinated within cells.

Their study, published in *Nature Cell Biology*, showed that a protein called Serrate connects RNA modification and microRNA production, two essential cellular functions, in a way previously unknown.

"We found that, instead of working in isolation, certain RNA processes influence each other," Zhang said. "These new insights could allow us to regulate gene expression more precisely for applications in crop science and human health."

The study was led by Zhang and performed by postdoctoral researcher Songxiao Zhong, along with support from other scientists within Texas A&M AgriLife Research, the Texas A&M College of Medicine, the University of Nebraska and the Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Biotechnology for Plant Development.

The project was funded by the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and the Welch Foundation.

## RNA's role in plant and human health

RNA plays critical roles in the cell, ranging from acting as messengers to translating genetic code into proteins, catalyzing reactions and even regulating other RNA molecules to adjust gene expression. All of these are necessary to keep cells—and entire organisms—functioning properly.

With RNA's diverse roles, Zhang said its production requires steps to ensure each molecule is precisely produced and properly decorated to perform its specific task. That's where RNA modifications come in.

"You can think of RNA modifications like punctuation in a sentence," Zhang said. "These modifications can act like an exclamation mark to emphasize certain instructions, like a comma to pause others, or even like a period to stop some RNA from being used altogether."

Zhang and Zhong investigated the processes behind

these modifications in their recent research study.

In particular, they looked at the most abundant kind of modification, which involves adding a small chemical group onto the RNA molecule—called N6-adenosine methylation, or m6A modification.

In agriculture, the yield of rice and corn has been shown to be influenced by m6A levels on messenger RNA, or mRNA, which are eventually translated into proteins. Levels of m6A also impact plant resilience to viral infections.

Zhang's team examined the molecular machine responsible for making this type of modification to the mRNA. They found that the protein Serrate interacts with this molecular machine to keep a disordered part of the machine from becoming too tangled to function.

They found that Serrate can also streamline the m6A modification process, making it more efficient, and prevent other enzymes from breaking it down.

While Serrate's roles in other biological processes were already well documented, its role in maintaining the m6A-adding machine is new. The discovery of Serrate's role in RNA modification reveals a connection between this process and the production of a different type of RNA: microRNA.

## mRNA, microRNA connection

Zhang's lab has been investigating Serrate protein for years, but not for its role in mRNA modification—instead, they'd been studying it for its more well-known role in producing microRNAs.

In the cell, microRNAs act as quantity control agents in protein production. These molecules can regulate gene expression by eliminating unnecessary RNAs or preventing certain RNAs from being translated into proteins.

Zhang and Zhong's findings that Serrate is involved in both microRNA production and mRNA modifications show its unique position as a regulator of the fate of cells' RNAs.

"Both of these processes have been studied separately, but their cross-regulation has remained largely unnoticed until now," Zhong said. "We found that Serrate acts as a bridge between these two crucial mechanisms. This is an important step in our fundamental research. Understanding the coordination is essential for developing new treatments."

## Impacts on health and agriculture

Zhang said this discovery opens the door to treatments that could target this RNA modification process to correct problems in gene regulation, in addition to telling scientists more about these fundamental processes.

"We now have a clearer understanding of how m6A is regulated in the cell, which opens up new possibilities for drug discovery," Zhang said.

"By targeting the pathways we've identified, we could develop treatments for diseases that occur when these processes go wrong."

Zhang said these findings are just as important for agriculture. RNA modifications help plants respond to environmental challenges like drought, unfavorable salinity conditions, and pressures from pathogens. The team believes that by manipulating these RNA processes, they could improve crop resilience and productivity.

Looking ahead, the research team plans to expand their work to study how these RNA processes operate in other crops and in human cells.

"This study gives us a new way to understand RNA regulation in a variety of species," Zhang said. "We're excited to explore how we can use this knowledge to improve the future of human health and agriculture." —Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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# MARKET NEWS

## MARKET SITUATION REPORT

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

| MARKET AT A GLANCE        | This Week: 11/7/2024 | Week Ago | Year Ago |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Choice Fed Steers         | 187.71 ▼             | 189.79   | 180.81   |
| CME Feeder Index          | 249.92 ▼             | 251.20   | 237.01   |
| Boxed Beef Average        | 309.46 ▼             | 317.60   | 299.42   |
| Average Dressed Steers    | N/A ▲                | 296.65   | 286.65   |
| Live Slaughter Weight*    | 1,382 ▼              | 1,416    | 1,381    |
| Weekly Slaughter**        | 615,000 ▼            | 623,000  | 632,000  |
| Weekly Beef Production*** | 532.1 ▼              | 537.20   | 525.0    |
| Hide/Offal Value          | 11.05 ▼              | 11.08    | 12.65    |
| Corn Price                | 4.27 ▲               | 4.11     | 4.68     |

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

| BEEF REPORT: Weekly Composite Boxed Beef |                           |        |                   |        |                     |        |                    |        |                    |        |                      |        |
|--|---------------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| WEEK ENDING                              | COMPREHENSIVE Loads/Price |        | PRIME Loads/Price |        | BRANDED Loads/Price |        | CHOICE Loads/Price |        | SELECT Loads/Price |        | UNGRADED Loads/Price |        |
| November 1                               | 6,884                     | 316.14 | 223               | 362.28 | 1,206               | 323.89 | 2,088              | 314.98 | 785                | 291.31 | 2,582                | 272.57 |
| October 25                               | 7,310                     | 315.41 | 216               | 359.26 | 1,248               | 323.73 | 2,068              | 315.81 | 807                | 292.43 | 2,970                | 275.73 |
| October 18                               | 7,570                     | 310.98 | 270               | 354.94 | 1,383               | 316.87 | 2,339              | 312.38 | 783                | 290.02 | 2,795                | 275.53 |
| October 11                               | 6,410                     | 304.11 | 215               | 347.12 | 1,170               | 309.49 | 1,879              | 302.07 | 711                | 286.86 | 2,435                | 271.97 |

| Cutouts |        |        |                 |  |          | FED BOXED BEEF |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------|--------|--------|-----------------|--|----------|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| DATE    | CHOICE | SELECT | COW BEEF CUTOUT |  | 50% LEAN | 90% LEAN       |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nov 7   | 309.46 | 279.72 | 270.12          |  | 73.38    | 345.00         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nov 6   | 315.59 | 283.20 | 269.09          |  | 74.72    | 336.66         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nov 5   | 317.21 | 285.24 | 273.15          |  | N/A      | 343.84         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nov 4   | 316.91 | 287.16 | 273.92          |  | 75.09    | 347.81         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nov 1   | 316.34 | 285.03 | 273.16          |  | 70.87    | 343.48         |  |  |  |  |  |

| CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                 | 11/1  | 11/4  | 11/5  | 11/6  | 11/7  | High* | Low*  |
| Dec.                            | 18593 | 18508 | 18478 | 18540 | 18583 | 19975 | 16853 |
| Feb.                            | 18690 | 18593 | 18595 | 18673 | 18743 | 19000 | 16668 |
| Apr.                            | 18770 | 18688 | 18700 | 18780 | 18825 | 19043 | 17005 |
| Jun.                            | 18130 | 18068 | 18088 | 18178 | 18258 | 18258 | 18068 |

| CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                   | 11/1  | 11/4  | 11/5  | 11/6  | 11/7  | High* | Low*  |
| Nov.                              | 24688 | 24635 | 24615 | 24770 | 24765 | 26460 | 21920 |
| Jan.                              | 24320 | 24243 | 24235 | 24403 | 24433 | 27095 | 22268 |
| Mar.                              | 24115 | 24025 | 24050 | 24175 | 24225 | 26625 | 22460 |
| Apr.                              | 24200 | 24118 | 24123 | 24240 | 24315 | 24315 | 24118 |

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

| FED CATTLE TRADE         | Head Count | Avg. Weight | Avg. Price |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| WEEKLY WEIGHTED AVERAGES |            |             |            |
| Live FOB Steer           | 346        | 1,448       | 187.71     |
| Live FOB Heifer          | 340        | 1,264       | 187.90     |
| Dressed Del Steer        | N/A        | N/A         | N/A        |
| Dressed Del Heifer       | N/A        | N/A         | N/A        |

| SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK |        |       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Live FOB Steer        | 31,974 | 1,545 | 189.79 |
| Live FOB Heifer       | 10,573 | 1,339 | 189.94 |
| Dressed Del Steer     | 5,726  | 1,002 | 296.95 |
| Dressed Del Heifer    | 1,589  | 872   | 296.94 |

| SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR |       |       |        |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Live FOB Steer        | 1,785 | 1,490 | 180.81 |
| Live FOB Heifer       | 1,509 | 1,337 | 181.45 |
| Dressed Del Steer     | 1,517 | 949   | 286.65 |
| Dressed Del Heifer    | 942   | 848   | 287.58 |

| NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: NOVEMBER 4, 2024 |                |               |
|---|----------------|---------------|
|   | Domestic       | Imported      |
| Forward Contract  | 24,913         | 3,885         |
| Formula   | 269,834        | 4,514         |
| Negotiated Cash   | 84,304         | 135           |
| Negotiated Grid   | 39,725         | 1,757         |
| Packer Owned  | 10,602         | N/A           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>429,378</b> | <b>10,291</b> |

| SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS |         |                      |       | FORWARD BEEF SALES     |                     |       |  |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------|-------|------------------------|---------------------|-------|--|
| Delivery Month              |         | Neg. Sales 0-21 days | 2,004 |                        | Neg. Sales 21+ days | 773   |  |
| Nov. '24                    | 176,146 |                      |       | Formula sales          |                     | 4,035 |  |
| Dec. '24                    | 145,068 |                      |       | Forward contract sales |                     | 71    |  |
| Jan. '25                    | 106,558 |                      |       | Domestic sales         |                     | 6,221 |  |
| Feb. '25                    | 87,726  |                      |       | NAFTA Exports          |                     | 129   |  |
| Mar. '25                    | 92,562  |                      |       |                        |                     |       |  |

| 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     | 174.11 | -0.83         |  |
| Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs    | 173.49 | -0.42         |  |

| Ontario Auctions   |        |               |  |
|--|--------|---------------|--|
|  | Price  | Weekly Change |  |
| Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs  | N/A    | N/A           |  |
| Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs | 175.64 | +1.04         |  |
| Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs        | 118.51 | -0.58         |  |

\*Price comparison from one week ago.

| Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, November 5, 2024 |         |              |         |  |
|--|---------|--------------|---------|--|
| Steers:  | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario |  |
| 501-600 lbs  | 307.86  | 319.06       | 299.52  |  |
| 601-700 lbs  | 288.68  | 287.53       | 275.57  |  |
| 701-800 lbs  | 267.89  | 270.36       | 250.78  |  |
| 801-900 lbs  | 244.46  | 247.89       | 239.73  |  |

| Heifers:    |         |              |         |
|-------------|---------|--------------|---------|
|             | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario |
| 401-500 lbs | 312.69  | 311.69       | 287.91  |
| 501-600 lbs | 285.16  | 274.70       | 270.53  |
| 601-700 lbs | 259.20  | 257.61       | 245.21  |
| 701-800 lbs | 237.25  | 243.55       | 227.14  |

| USDA MEXICO TO U.S. WEEKLY LIVESTOCK IMPORTS |              |               |                      |                       |
|--|--------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Species                                      | Current Week | Previous Week | Current Year-to-date | Previous Year-to-date |
| Feeders                                      | 31,083       | 28,976        | 1,145,981            | 996,596               |

| USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE |               |               |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Month                              | Receipts EST. | Week Ago EST. | Year Ago Act. |
| November 6, 2024                   | 6,800         | 8,850         | 9,750         |

| Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary   |  |
|--|--|
| Receipts EST: 6,800  | Week Ago EST: 8,850  |
| <b>Santa Teresa, NM -</b><br>Compared to Tuesday, steer calves and yearlings sold 1.00 higher. Heifers traded 1.00-2.00 higher. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers and spayed heifers weighing 300-700 lbs. | <b>Douglas, AZ -</b><br>Compared to Tuesday, steer calves and yearlings sold steady. Heifers traded steady. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers and spayed heifers weighing 300-700 lbs. |

| Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2 |         | Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2 |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 300-400 lbs                          | 286-298 | 300-400 lbs                         | 280-290 |
| 400-500 lbs                          | 266-276 | 400-500 lbs                         | 260-270 |
| 500-600 lbs                          | 246-256 | 500-600 lbs                         | 240-250 |

| Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2 |         | Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2 |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 300-400 lbs                          | 336-346 | 300-400 lbs                         | 330-340 |
| 400-500 lbs                          | 306-316 | 400-500 lbs                         | 300-310 |
| 500-600 lbs                          | 276-286 | 500-600 lbs                         | 270-280 |

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

| Selected Auctions            |               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |                |             |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Week Ending November 7, 2024 |               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |                |             |
| DATE                         | MARKET        | 200-300 lb. | 300-400 lb. | 400-500 lb. | 500-600 lb. | 600-700 lb. | 700-800 lb. | 800 lb. -up | SLAUGHTER COWS | PAIRS       |
| November 1                   | Blackfoot, ID | N/A         | 290-344     | 280-337     | 265-320     | 235-282     | 230-270     | 215-242     | 87-117         |             |
| October 31                   | Burley, ID    | 869         | 321-405     | 325-361     | 271-320     | 268         | 245         | 148         | 86-120         |             |
|                              |               |             | 300-325     | 280-307     | 255-279     |             |             | 226         | 120-140        |             |
|                              |               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |                |             |
| November 2                   | Eugene, OR    | 788         | 230-265     | 230-270     | 235-289     | 190-230     | 185-200     |             | 102-114.50     | 700-1600    |
|                              |               |             | 210-273     | 211-281     | 285-239     | 180-228     | 170-201     |             | 124-140        |             |
| November 4                   | Madras, OR    | 944         |             | 338-365     | 275-320     | 240-265     | 230-256     | 220-230     | 95-125         | 1,500-2,525 |
|                              |               |             |             | 250-300     | 230-260     | 220-250     | 192-233     | 176-206     | 125-140        |             |
| November 6                   | Vale, OR      | 913         | 330-390     | 285-347     | 265-297.50  | 250-277     | 220-235     | 216-231     | 100-125        |             |
|                              |               |             | 300-362     | 262-332     | 240-271     | 220-241     |             |             | 119-131        |             |
|                              |               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |                |             |
| October 31                   | Toppenish, WA | 1,450       |             | 242         | 230-240     | 225-231     |             |             | 110-160        | 1,450       |
|                              |               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             | 128-135        |             |

| NORTHWEST  |             |       |            |         |         |            |         |            |               |             |
|------------|-------------|-------|------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| October 31 | Orland, CA  | 1,430 |            | 230-300 | 220-300 | 200-263    | 190-235 |            | 110-132       | 2,000-3,375 |
|            |             |       |            | 210-288 | 200-270 | 180-240    | 170-217 |            | 100-146       | 2,500       |
|            |             |       |            |         |         |            |         |            |               |             |
| November 4 | Famoso, CA  | 302   | 250-300    | 250-300 | 250-275 | 220-253    | 200-220 | 160-190    | 105-160       |             |
|            |             |       | 230-275    | 230-275 | 200-250 | 200-230    | 190-205 |            | 115-138       |             |
|            |             |       |            |         |         |            |         |            |               |             |
| November 5 | Turlock, CA | 1,449 | 270-320    | 275-339 | 272-335 | 260-291    | 228-244 | 205-228.25 | 97-117        |             |
|            |             |       | 270-312.50 | 268-299 | 360-288 | 230-250    | 210-223 | 200-210    | 120-147.50    |             |
| November 5 | Salina, UT  | 2,464 | 310-405    | 280-400 | 245-360 | 225-311    | 195-274 | 212.50-245 | 97.70-135.80  |             |
|            |             |       | 265-375    | 250-360 | 220-345 | 192.50-289 | 280-250 | 105-235    | 112.35-181.25 |             |

| NORTH CENTRAL |                |       |            |               |            |               |               |               |         |             |
|---------------|----------------|-------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------|-------------|
| November 4    | Iowa           | 9,756 | 300-420    | 275-367.50    | 240-330    | 231-319.75    | 230-278.25    | 218-265       | 100-175 |             |
|               |                |       | 300-355    | 263-335       | 225-307    | 223-270       | 222-252.35    | 214-244       | 110-174 |             |
| November 5    | Miles City, MT | 3,135 | 465-491    | 372.50-415    | 317-365    | 282-326       | 262.50-295    | 240.50        | 90-129  | 1,350-1,575 |
|               |                |       | 395        | 327.50-365    | 283-315    | 255-286       | 235-260       | 248.75        | 121-161 |             |
| November 6    | Bassett, NE    | 1,285 | 375-406.50 | 325-367.50    | 297-324    | 269-292       | 267           | 262.75-267    |         |             |
|               |                |       | 356-385    | 292-330       | 267-286    | 253-262       | 241           | 228-236       |         |             |
| November 2    | Ericson, NE    | 3,320 | 360-467.50 | 310-375       | 294-333    | 265-319.50    |               |               |         |             |
|               |                |       | 315-395    | 282-337.50    | 268-290    | 268.50        |               | 219           |         |             |
|               |                |       |            |               |            |               |               |               |         |             |
| November 1    | Lexington, NE  | 4,952 | 440        | 359-416       | 315-377.50 | 294-336.50    | 274.50-313.50 |               |         | 1,500-2,600 |
|               |                |       |            | 300-350       | 283-325    | 265-295.50    | 258.50-275.50 | 240           |         |             |
| October 31    | Ogallala, NE   | 5,313 | 360-419    | 331-390       | 285-329    | 272.50-286.50 | 255.50        |               |         |             |
|               |                |       | 296-382.50 | 288-330       | 270-308.50 | 245           | 251           | 244-251       |         |             |
| October 31    | Valentine, NE  | 4,010 | 380-430    | 343-400       | 303-344    | 269.50-294.50 |               |               |         |             |
|               |                |       | 325-410    | 304-339       | 276-309    | 259.50-295    | 235-240       | 196-228       |         |             |
| November 1    | Herreid, SD    | 5,722 | 370-415    | 337.50-392.50 | 294-326    | 268-305.50    | 260-269.25    | 253.50-262.25 |         |             |
|               |                |       | 325-380    | 294-331       | 254-287.75 | 247-250       | 246-260.50    | 214.25-250.75 |         |             |
| November 6    | Torrington, WY | 4,236 | 397-432.50 | 335-393       | 289-347    |               |               |               |         |             |

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# Feeder cattle see gains on the board

## MARKETS (from page 1)

Slaughter through Thursday totaled about 494,000 head, a few thousand head more than a week earlier. Total slaughter for a week earlier is projected at 615,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending Oct. 26 was 625,186 head. The average steer dressed weight was 957 lbs., down 3 lbs. from the prior week.

Boxed beef prices fell over the week. The Choice cutout lost more than \$8 to close at \$309.46, and the Select cutout

lost \$5.65 to close at \$279.72.

"The ends of the carcass have been under seasonal pressure and the Select quality grade has been especially weak and the Select cutout appears vulnerable for further downside," Fish said.

September beef exports were reported down 3% year to date from a year earlier, while imports are up 21% year to date from a year ago. Imports increased from Australia, Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina. Fish noted the U.S. has not been this much of a net importer of beef since 2008.

## Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures saw gains over the week. The November contract gained \$2.28 to close at \$247.65, and the January contract gained \$3 to close at \$244.32.

"Between the support of the live cattle complex's higher trend and the continued support of strong buyer demand in the countryside, the market has all the support it needs to continue to press onward into the afternoon," ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, wrote in her Thursday midday comments. The CME Feeder Cattle In-

dex lost \$1.28 to close at \$249.92.

Corn futures were higher over the week. The December contract gained 17 cents to close at \$4.27, and the March contract gained 14 cents to close at \$4.40.

**Missouri:** Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 5,403 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers under 625 lbs. sold from \$10 lower to \$2 higher. Heavier weights sold from \$3 lower to \$6 higher. Feeder heifers sold steady to \$8 lower. Benchmark steers averaging 766 lbs. sold from \$253.50-271, averaging \$260.62.

**Oklahoma:** Oklahoma National Stockyards in Okla-

homa City sold 1,990 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder cattle and calves were not well tested. Demand was moderate to good. Benchmark steers averaging 719 lbs. sold from \$248-254, averaging \$251.

**South Dakota:** Sioux Falls Regional Cattle Auction in Worthing sold 2,817 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, there was a limited number of light steers. Steers 550 lbs. sold \$9 higher; 800 lbs. sold \$3 higher; 850 lbs. sold \$12 higher with instances of sharply higher and 950 lbs. sold \$11 higher. Heifers 700 lbs. sold \$8-9 lower; 750 lbs. sold \$3 lower; 800 lbs. sold \$1 higher; 850 lbs. sold \$3-4

higher and 900 lbs. sold \$7-8 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 763 lbs. sold from \$243-265.50, averaging \$261.48.

**Wyoming:** Winter Livestock in Riverton sold 2,902 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 500 lbs. sold with instances of \$8-11 lower, over 500 lbs. sold with instances of \$3-5 higher and 600 lbs. were \$9 lower. Heifer calves under 400 lbs. sold \$7-12 lower, over 400 lbs. sold with instances of \$3-10 higher; 450 lbs. calves were \$4-6 lower and over 600 lbs. sold \$9-12 lower. A group of steers averaging 679 lbs. sold for \$255. — Anna Miller, *WLJ* managing editor

## Veterans most often choose cattle as commodity choice

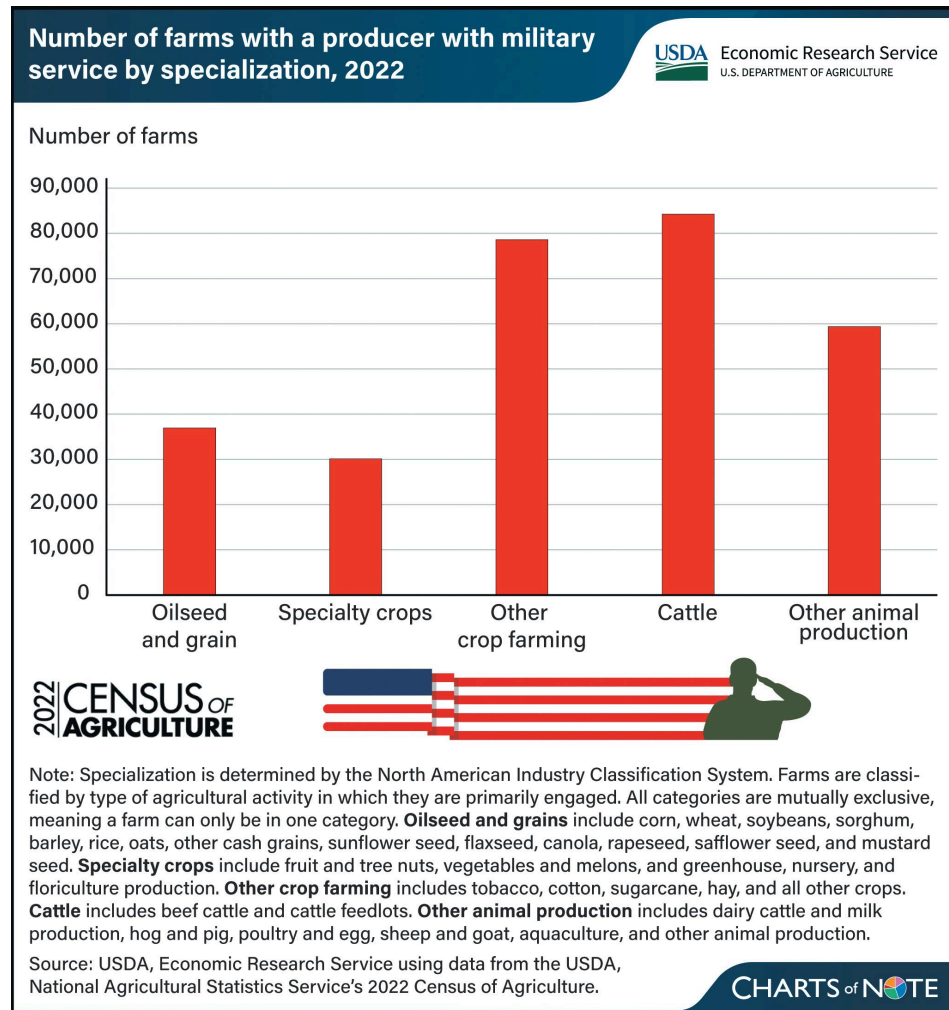
The 2022 Census of Agriculture shows that around 84,000 farms operated by a producer with military service engage in cattle farming (29%), making it the most common commodity specialization among those with military service.

It is followed closely by "other crop farming" with 79,000

operations (27%). "Other animal production" ranks third with approximately 59,000 farms, while operations specializing in "oilseed and grain" and "specialty crops" are less common, with around 37,000 and 30,000 farms, respectively.

In 2022, there were 289,372 farms operated by at least one

producer with current or prior military service, which represents about 15% of all farm operations. These farms were mostly small, with an average farm size of 373 acres, compared to the overall U.S. average farm size of 463 acres. — USDA Economic Research Service



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# Why forage is the cornerstone of a working ranch horse's diet

For ranch horses, a forage-based diet is not just a recommendation; it's essential for their health, energy and overall performance. Understanding their unique diges-

tive system helps highlight why forage is a critical component of their diet.

Working ranch horses play a vital role in daily ranch operations, and their ability to perform these tasks effectively relies heavily on their overall health, which begins with fueling their bodies to perform optimally.

Whether its checking fence lines, herding cattle or rotating pastures, these tasks demand a steady supply of energy for ranch horses. Forage provides the nutrients that help sustain energy levels throughout the day. The slow fermentation process in the hindgut allows for a gradual release of energy.

## Benefits of a forage-based diet

"The horse is an amazing athlete and is uniquely designed to perform the diverse set of tasks required on the ranch," said Jennifer Zoller, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horse specialist and associate professor in the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science.

"Thankfully their digestive system is built to help them survive and thrive on a natural forage-based diet, supplementation with concentrates is not always necessary," Zoller said.

A diet high in forage can help prevent gut-health issues in horses. When ranch horses graze forage, they continuously have something in their stomach to absorb naturally produced stomach acid. Horses that are not provided a minimum of 1% of their body weight in forage can have a diminished buffer, which can lead to very painful gastric ulcers.

A horse's teeth grow continuously throughout its life-

time, and the grinding motion of chewing helps maintain an even wear pattern. However, if a horse doesn't receive enough long-stem roughage, its teeth may develop hooks and points due to uneven wear, leading to painful dental issues later in life.

Long-stem roughage also has a "scratch factor" that can aid in the overall digestive health of the horse. As the roughage passes through the tract, the rigid structure of the forage can gently "scratch" the intestinal lining to sluff off old cells and promote the generation of new healthy cells.

"Forage should be the cornerstone of a working ranch horse's diet, and in many cases can provide a balanced intake of nutrients to promote the overall health and longevity of your ranching partners."

## A horse's digestive system

Horses are non-ruminant herbivores, designed to graze continuously throughout the day. Their small stomachs mean they can only consume small amounts of feed at a time, which is why a continuous grazing diet rich in forage is ideal, Zoller said.

When horses ingest forage, it enters the stomach, where gastric acids begin the digestion process. This acidic environment prepares the forage for further digestion.

The partially digested forage then moves to the small intestine, where enzymatic digestion occurs. This process breaks down complex carbohydrates into simple sugars. Additionally, fats and proteins are also simplified and absorbed into the bloodstream.

Any forage that isn't fully digested in the small intestine proceeds to the hindgut for complex fermentation to take place, allowing for the breakdown of fibrous materials. The horse absorbs the volatile fatty acids produced during this fermentation, which can serve as a significant and sustaining energy source.

## Balancing forage, nutrients

Horses may require additional energy if their workload demands it, and the easiest way to know if supplementation is required is to monitor their body condition score, Zoller said. The body condition score is a subjective assessment of fat coverage and overall condition.

Depending on the quality of forage available and the specific energy demands of the horse, some ranchers will choose to supplement with grains or commercial feeds.

"The hardest part of supplementing your horse is choosing what source of supplement you're going to use," said Zoller.

There are many national and local brands of feed suppliers to choose from that can all provide quality supplementation to horses. When choosing which supplement to feed ranch horses, it's crucial to select one that best fits the class of the horse, and then feed the supplement as directed on the tag.

"Forage should be the cornerstone of a working ranch horse's diet, and in many cases can provide a balanced intake of nutrients to promote the overall health and longevity of your ranching partners," said Zoller. — **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension**

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\$M 76 \$C 373

### Lot 80 SydGen Alpha 3715

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BW 68 WW 745 YW 1318 ADG 3.58 SC 37.0  
A moderate, well-balanced, power bull with 15 EPDs in the top 15%, including \$C in the top 1% and both foot EPDs ranking in top 20%.



\$M 67 \$C 382

### Lot 81D SydGen Volunteer GA 3760

DOB: 9/15/23 Reg.# 20960079  
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A top performing prospect with a top 1% \$C value! Additionally he ranks top 4% for 15 other traits—this guy does a lot of things right!

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- 100% of the cattle three years of age and younger are genomic tested and parentage verified. Most of the older cows are as well.
- Of the 434 head selling (not counting commercials and fall baby calves), the average \$Combination Value is \$296, with 199 ranking above \$300.
- The 111 fall yearling bulls offered average 1,325 adj. YW, 37.7 cm SC, 5.7 frame, 3.80% IMF, 15.7 adj. RE and rib fat cover of .35.
- The 179 total bulls offered average EPDs are 8 CED, 136 YW, 14.5 HP, .43 Claw, 1.07 MARB, +71 \$M, +185 \$B and +311 \$C.
- Also, selling progeny of Connealy **Cool** 39L, H P C A **Early Bird** 65, SydGen **Black Pearl** 2006, SydGen **Blueprint** 7169, SydGen **Bonus** 8084, SydGen **Brickyard**, SydGen **Enhance**, SydGen **Eternity** 0046, SydGen **Exceed** 3223, SydGen **FATE** 2800, SydGen II Lombardi 9045 (**Vince**), SydGen KCF **Gavel** 8361, SydGen **Ozark**, SydGen **Smokey** 2001, SydGen **Stealth** 8556, SydGen **Wake Up Call** 9446, Basin Jameson, Car Don Annuity, Connealy Clarity, Connealy Commerce, Connealy Craftsman, RSA True Balance 1311, and Square B True North 8052.

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# Ranch with a view, rancher with a vision

Houston Dobbins manages his family's 2,500-acre ranch in Val Verde County, near Del Rio, TX. An area of transition, located between the hill country and the Trans-Pecos region, it is referred to as South Texas brush country. The area's vegetation is varied, a mix of shrubs, cactus and low growing grasses. With a desert-like climate, everything living here must be able to withstand the rigors of this area.

Though challenging, it also contains unexpected beauty and hidden gems of history.

With help from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas, Dobbins is working to maintain and improve his piece of the landscape.

Dobbins has been managing his ranch for more than six years, but this fourth-generation rancher has family connections to the property that began long before. Dobbins' great grandfather, a Swiss immigrant, purchased the property—site unseen—from a newspaper article in 1890. The land was passed down to Dobbins' grandparents and eventually, to his mother.

"It's nice being out here on the ranch, it's just something I always enjoyed doing," said Dobbins.

His great grandfather's gamble proved to be a smart one, the desert-like property has an unexpected resource.

The ranch has 30 miles of waterfront that rolls down to Amistad Reservoir and the Rio Grande River. For an area that averages less than 20 inches of rainfall yearly, this water source is precious and makes ranching possible.

"Being located along Lake Amistad, I don't have to worry about water. It helps my operation as there's a constant source of water," said Dobbins.

Though the land has remained unchanged, the ranch's livestock operation has transitioned over time.

Cattle, sheep and goats have all been raised on the ranch at some point. Dobbins grew up raising Rambouillet sheep and Spanish goats. He recalls it being everything from a show lamb operation to more commercial animal production, which it is now. Currently, most of the livestock are Dorper sheep, a breed more suited to arid regions.

Though not new to ranching when he took over the family operation, Dobbins was new to being the lead at the ranch and making all the decisions. His initial struggles included several things, but infrastructure was his main concern.

He reached out to the NRCS and Val Verde County District Conservationist Reagan Gage for assistance with managing his family's property.

Both men agreed the ranch needed work.

"NRCS has been able to help tackle issues with the landscape more than anything," said Gage. "Our first meeting was getting together and looking at the ranch. Being able to see what kind of (brush) species we're working with, what the situation was, and what the soils were like to narrow it down. We were able to find the best recipe to help meet his goals."

Dobbins utilized the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the conservation work he has accomplished on the property. EQIP

provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns. NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. EQIP helps producers make conservation work for them.

Bringing his fences up to par was a large part of that process.

Without the fences, Dobbins could not have an effective rotational grazing system. Planning and installing cross-fencing allowed for better rotational grazing, further improving the health of the land and keeping his livestock thriving.

Another major challenge for the ranch was brush management.

"Houston's place was pretty much brush dominated," said Gage. "It had some grass, but not as much as the potential—not as much as Houston would've like to see. And so, it's been very rewarding to see the difference before and after."

They decided to use chemical control methods to attack the brush problem.

"Reagan got me interested in the idea, telling me how beneficial it would be towards my operation," said Dobbins. "It would help me with my stocking rates, promote grass growth and kind of get rid of things that are in over abundance."

The recommendation for chemical control also came from the challenges Gage saw.

Traditional mechanical methods can be time-consuming, expensive and invasive. In arid areas, less ground disturbance is often beneficial for recovery. For his situation, chemical control was the best solution.

"We had an area that is very dry, rocky, often steep slopes—country that you would really have a hard time adapting any mechanical brush work," said Gage.

They targeted species like cenizo, guajillo, white brush, black brush and prickly pear, all common to the area.

The changes in management and infrastructure have worked, providing several benefits to the ranch.

"It's helped me with the diversity of plants for the sheep and goats," said Dobbins. "We've been months without any rain and the sheep are still healthy and a lot of it's because of the work we've done."

## Ancient art within the rocks

The property holds another resource as special, or maybe more so, than the rest.

The property is home to several caves, some of which have numerous Lower Pecos Region Rock Art or pictographs, along their walls.

The pictograph sites found on the Dobbins's ranch are estimated to cover a time span from the 19th century to over 10,000 years ago. They demonstrate some of the earliest forms of human communication and storytelling.

"The Indians that inhabited (the area), they wanted to live here for a reason," said Dobbins.

The cave walls reveal red monochrome figures, including people and animals of various size and scale. The artwork tells the story and records

the history of the people who called it home.

While the cave art has an incredible amount of historical value, it is also something that Dobbins likes to share.

"I try to bring as many people down here as possible, especially friends," he said.

## Past, present and future

Vision, commitment, and lessons learned are all part of carrying on the legacy of those that came before him.

Whether it's with the animals, the land, or the history of the area, Dobbins will continue to evolve on his journey as a rancher and becoming part of its story.

"Being here, (this ranch) has a deep history of the people that inhabited this area," said Dobbins. "Its natural resources—the water, the plants, and the diversity of animals that live (here)—it's just rich in history. That's what draws me to being around here. It's a family history."

Knowing where you came from is the first lesson but making it work may be the hardest.

Dobbins's attitude, determination, and willingness to learn and implement new ways of doing things has proven to be a winning combination.

"With ranching you have to care about the animals that you're raising and give them the best opportunity you can to survive and thrive in this kind of area," said Dobbins. "Being outside every day, working with the sheep and goats, it's a rewarding job. You actually get to see things progress and there's always something you could be doing better."

The assistance and collaboration with NRCS has helped to bridge that gap.

"Whenever I have an idea, or something that might work, or something I've heard about, I talk to the NRCS," said Dobbins. "(They) know what other producers are doing and what works in this area—awesome

to bounce ideas off of."

The same can be said of Dobbins as well.

"It's been great working with

Houston because he's been very open-minded and willing to adapt to new ideas," said Gage. "He wants the best for

the land and that's what you want to see when you work with someone." — **Wade Day, USDA public affairs specialist**

# The Berry's

*New Sale Date!*

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CE 5.4 BW 3.7 WW 68 YW 115 MM 38 MG 72 REA .44 MARB .06 CHB 110



**B 1235 DOMINO 40L** • 44463809 • 3/29/2023 • Horned  
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## NEW SALE DATE!

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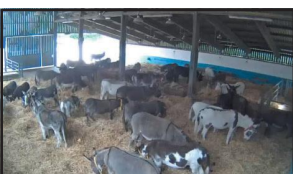
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# SALE REPORTS

**JAMISON QUARTER HORSES PRODUCTION SALE**  
**Oct. 10, Quinter, KS**  
**7 Brood mares... \$5,643**  
**50 Foals... 5,460**  
**Auctioneers: Lynn & Seth Weishaar**  
**TOPS—Ranch geldings:** JA Frostem Jaydrift, 5/20/2019 by PC Frost Em

Peppy; to Alice Lawaetz, Plains, VA, \$40,000. JA Dandy Sunfrost, 4/5/2021 by JD Dandy Streaker; to CW Ranch, Howard, PA, \$37,000. JA Frostem Rosebush, 5/14/2021 by PC Frost Em Peppy; to Hy-Plains, Montezuma, KS, \$36,500. **Brood mare:** Red Fox Starlight, 5/13/2010 by

Chics Red Fox; to HCM Farm Partners, Cherry Valley, AR, \$36,000. **Foals:** PC Redwood Manny X Miss Tuff colt, 5/8/2024; to BV Livestock, Cimarron, KS, \$18,000. The Rockin Cowboy X JA Elegancolt, 5/29/2024; to Martin Ranch, Keystone, NE, \$14,000. JA Wily Sun Frost X JA Lady THR filly,

5/11/2024; to Vicki Kinser, Morristown, TN, \$12,500. PC Cajunistic X JA Lady Baretta filly, 4/25/2024 by PA Cajunistic; to Jordan Diehl, Bradford, OH, \$11,000. — **TY GROSHANS**

**DAL PORTO LIVESTOCK FEMALE SALE**  
**Oct. 28, Brewster, NE**  
**43 Total lots... \$8,668**  
**Auctioneer: Greg Goggins**  
**Sale Manager: Rance Long**

**TOPS—Openheifers:** Dal Porto Sandy 4547, 5/7/2024 by PVF DLX King Pin 0058; to Rick Smith, CO, \$51,000. Dal Porto Sandy 4561, 5/14/2024 by EXAR Classen 1422B; \$32,500. Dal Porto Sandy 4563, 5/18/2024 by PVF DLX King Pin 0058; \$26,000. 4M Princess 2436, 2/9/2024 by PVF DLX King Pin 0058; \$14,500. **Flush:** DPL Sandy 9560 x Bull of buyer's choice; \$12,500. — **TY GROSHANS**

**SPRINGLAKE ANGUS DISPERSAL SALE**  
**Oct. 30, Lynch, NE**  
**252 Angus total**  
**lots... \$3,948**  
**Auctioneers: Dustin Carter & Cody Lowderman**  
**Sale Manager: CK Sales & Marketing LLC**  
**TOPS:** Carlson Lady 4005, 1/28/2014 by Sinclair

Fortunate Son bred to Rito 707 Ideal 3407; to Trendsetter Genetics, Sulphur, OK, \$12,500. SLA RB Lady Standard 6033, 3/11/2016 by RR Rito 707 bred to SLA Rainmaker 6169; to Josh Scheckel, Bellvue, IA, \$9,500. — **TY GROSHANS**

**BIRCH CREEK ANGUS BULL SALE**  
**Oct. 25, Ruby Valley, NV**  
**53 Angus bulls... \$6,555**  
**11 Red Angus**  
**bulls... 4,195**

**Auctioneer: Rick Machado**  
**TOPS:** Birch Creek Alternative 3229, by Baldrige Alternative E125; to Neff Livestock, Ruby Valley, NV, \$13,000. Coleman Rock 3818, by Coleman Rock 7200; to Neil McQueary, Ruby Valley, NV, \$13,000. Birch Creek Scale House 386, by S A V Scale House 0845; to Neil McQueary, Ruby Valley, NV, \$10,000. — **JARED PATTERSON**

**WORLD OF BULLS BULL SALE**  
**Nov. 2, Galt, CA**  
**51 Angus bulls... \$5,635**  
**1 Gelbvieh bull... 4,750**  
**2 Beefmaster**  
**bulls... 4,300**  
**4 Brangus bulls... 4,100**  
**2 Ultrablacks**  
**bulls... 3,600**  
**1 Charolais bull... 3,250**

**Auctioneer: Jake Parnell**  
**TOPS:** Avilas 2007 Upward 2357, by Thomas Upward 01202; to Dittmer Ranch, CA, \$12,000. Roadrunner Bomber 4960, by Casino Bomber S39; to Slagowski Ranches, NV, \$9,250. HCC Transcendent 304, by GAR Transcendent; to J. M. Lasgoity, Madera, CA, \$9,000. Roadrunner Grit 4954, by Roadrunner Grit 2197; to Slagowski Ranches, NV, \$8,500. — **JARED PATTERSON**

**BET ON RED SALE**  
**Nov. 2, Reno, NV**  
**1 Red Angus bred**  
**heifer... \$40,000**  
**44 Red Angus open**  
**heifers... 6,159**  
**Auctioneer: Matt Lowery**  
**Sale Manager: Garrett Knebel**

**TOPS—Bred heifer:** OOO Hayley 23144, by Lacy Mov'N On 417 063G bred to Alternative 21041; to Sand Ridge L&C, OK, \$40,000. **Open heifers:** BRTL Mandy 407M, by Duff HD 2046; to Jacob Jung, Mina, SD, \$18,000. LASO Rainbow E29M, by Duff No Regrets; to Todd Hillegas, Montoursville, PA, \$10,000. MHC Chica 214M ET, by Red Diamond EL REV 102; to Steven Rodgers, MO, \$10,000. — **LOGAN IPSEN**

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*Special Stocker & Feeder Sale*

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH, 2024**

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**RUSHCREEK LAND & LIVESTOCK – SOUTH (825)** Ang & BWF str. 375-525#  
**EMERALD RANCH / MAURY HORST (275)** Ang & SimAng str & hfrs, 550-650#  
**EDWARDS RANCH / TAD EDWARDS (270)** (180) Ang & BWF str. 550-650#, (90) Ang & BWF hfrs, 550-650#, High Elevation Cattle.  
**JERRY & SALLY WEEKES (210)** Ang & BWF str & hfrs, 500-625#  
**SEVENTEEN RANCH (145)** Rd Ang str & hfrs, 500-600#  
**T LAZY S – CARR (130)** Ang str & hfrs, 475-575#  
**CAMERON CHRISTENSON (130)** Ang, Few Rd & Char X str & hfrs, 525-650#  
**TRIPLE D RANCH (120)** Rd & Blk Ang str & hfrs, 300-450#  
**LOGAN & MEGAN CRISWELL (100)** SimAng str & hfrs, 500-650#

Yearlings

**JUSTIN & AILENE CLEVINGER (145)** (62) Ang, Rd Ang, Few Char X str, 700-750#, (83) Ang, Rd Ang & Few Char X str & hfrs, 550-600#

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## SALE CALENDAR

### CLASSIFIED CORRAL

WESTERN LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

- Real Estate Plains 20E
- Real Estate Plains 20E
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- Real Estate Plains 20E

# STERLING FARM & FEEDLOT AUCTION

Logan County, CO

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024**  
10:30 am MT - Reck Agri Auction Center

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5,000 Hd - CAFO Permit + Pasture - NSID Water & Live Creek Bottom | Possession upon closing Located 7.5± miles north of Sterling, CO

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  - 404.6± ac pasture, improvement site
  - 5,000 hd feedlot – Fully permitted
  - 23 feeding pens – commercial well + cattle processing facilities
  - 4 Parcels / East - Farm - Single Unit
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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.

**ANGUS**

- 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
- Nov. 16** – TLC Ranch & Sugar Top Angus, Bull Sale, Jerome, ID
- Nov. 18** – J&L Livestock, Bred Females Sale, Billings, MT
- Nov. 21** – JR Ranch & Sackmann Cattle, Bull Sale, Othello, WA
- Nov. 22** – TD Angus, Female Sale, North Platte, NE
- Nov. 23** – Baldrige/Tiedeman & Frank Cattle and Genetics, Female Sale, Chappell, NE
- Nov. 23** – Diamond Peak Cattle Co., Female Sale, Loma, CO
- Nov. 23** – Redland Angus, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
- Nov. 23** – Spring Cove Ranch, Female Sale, Bliss, ID
- Nov. 23** – Queen Ann Cattle, Female Sale, Loma, CO
- Nov. 26** – Paint Rock Angus, Bull Sale, Hyattville, WY
- Nov. 29** – Vermilion Ranch, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
- Dec. 2** – Jacobsen Ranch, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT
- Dec. 2** – Stevenson's

- Diamond Dot, Bull Sale, Hobson, MT
- Dec. 3** – Stevenson Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Hobson, MT
- Dec. 3** – ZumBrunnen Angus, Production Sale, Lusk, WY
- Dec. 4** – Beef Country Breeders, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
- Dec. 5** – Kern Cattle, Bull Sale, Visalia, CA
- Dec. 5** – Sitz Angus, Bull Sale, Harrison, MT
- Dec. 6** – KG Ranch, Bull Sale, Three Forks, MT

**HEREFORD**

- Nov. 25** – Berry Herefords, Bull Sale, Cheyenne, WY
- Dec. 6** – Western States Hereford Sale, Reno, NV

**RED ANGUS**

- Nov. 11** – Ludvigson Stock Farms, Bull Sale, Park City, MT
- Nov. 18** – Lautenschlager Red Angus, Female Sale, Othello, WA
- Dec. 4** – Big Sky Elite Female Sale, Three Forks, MT

**SALERS**

- Dec. 2** – Jacobsen Ranch, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT

**SIMANGUS**

- Dec. 6** – Yardley Cattle Co., Female Sale, Beaver, UT

**STABILIZER**

- Nov. 16** – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Alma, NE

**COMMERCIAL**

- Nov. 15** – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bred Heifer Sale, Pilot Rock, OR
- Nov. 18** – COLA's 21st Century Female Sale, Madras, OR
- Nov. 23** – Spring Cove Ranch, Female Sale, Bliss, ID

# KG RANCH Production Sale

**DECEMBER 6, 2024**  
**BLACK ANGUS FRIDAY**

12PM MST at the Ranch  
Three Forks, Montana

*Selling* **250** COMING 2-YR-OLD BULLS **120** COMMERCIAL BRED HEIFERS

*KG Impulse 3003*



| CED | BW | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|----|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +5  | +1 | +86 | +139 | +24  | +2.20 | +15.3 | +83 | +67 |

AAA: 20869182  
SIRE: SITZ Impulse 732J  
MGS: HA Cowboy Kind 8157

*KG Cowboy Kind 3018*



| CED | BW | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|----|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +10 | +0 | +73 | +128 | +31  | +1.33 | +14.2 | +80 | +83 |

AAA: 20869202  
SIRE: HA Cowboy Kind 8157  
MGS: KG Justified 3023

*KG Cowboy Kind 3024*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +15 | -3.0 | +70 | +131 | +42  | +1.50 | +18.5 | +89 | +95 |

AAA: 20869207  
SIRE: HA Cowboy Kind 8157  
MGS: KG Justified 3023

*KG Logo 3034*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC   | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|
| +9  | +1.5 | +78 | +144 | +22  | +8.5 | +12.3 | +68 | +58 |

AAA: 20868797  
SIRE: JCH Logo 0193  
MGS: HA Cowboy Kind 8157

*KG Justified 3049*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +2  | +2.6 | +88 | +151 | +16  | +1.96 | +15.5 | +69 | +74 |

AAA: 20869216  
SIRE: KG Justified 3023  
MGS: KG Premium Asset 7161

*KG Just Cause 3066*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +17 | -2.4 | +61 | +118 | +40  | +1.32 | +20.5 | +76 | +95 |

AAA: 20868813  
SIRE: KG Just Cause  
MGS: Sitz Powerball 737E

*KG Logo 3077*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC   | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|
| +14 | -2.4 | +83 | +140 | +26  | +9.8 | +19.0 | +87 | +76 |

AAA: 20869151  
SIRE: JCH Logo 0193  
MGS: HA Cowboy Kind 8157

*KG Opportunity 3176*



| CED | BW   | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC    | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| +5  | +1.6 | +78 | +131 | +34  | +1.79 | +15.9 | +84 | +74 |

AAA: 20869234  
SIRE: HA Opportunity H695  
MGS: SITZ Response 405C

*KG Incentive 3207*



| CED | BW  | WW  | YW   | Milk | SC   | HP    | SW  | SM  |
|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|
| +13 | -.9 | +71 | +122 | +25  | +6.0 | +17.0 | +74 | +98 |

AAA: 20877023  
SIRE: SITZ Incentive 704H  
MGS: HA Double 07 5007

**RFM**  
RON FRYE MARKETING  
www.RonFryeMarketing.com  
406-600-7514 Call. Text. Email.  
Ronfryemarketing@gmail.com

**KG Ranch**  
Registered Angus  
Three Forks, Montana

Paul & Kaye Doddridge - Owners 406-285-3660  
Cody Jackson - General Manager 406-580-7366  
Scott Clarke - Cattle Operations 406-580-7666  
Greg Strohecker - Consultant 406-580-3660

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