

INSIDE WLJ

HAPPY
New Year!

NWSS — Take a look inside for the 2026 National Western Stock Show schedule of events. Page 11

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

"On Dec. 15, 2011, a Park County judge barred Vernon E. Wagner of Park County from owning, managing, controlling, or otherwise possessing cattle in Park County. The ruling stems from a joint investigation by the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) and Park County Sheriff's Office," read the Dec. 26, 2011, *WLJ* article.

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House panel probes greens' use of Equal Access to Justice Act



A House committee examined in a hearing whether environmental organizations are abusing the Equal Access to Justice Act against federal land management agencies. Pictured here, the Agua Fria National Monument in Arizona.

—Lawmakers disagree on reform

The House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations convened a Dec. 10 hearing to examine potential abuse of the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) by environmental organizations. Chaired by Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ-04), the hearing brought together a wide range of stakeholders to debate whether EAJA has strayed from its original intent and whether reforms are needed to curb excessive litigation against federal land management agencies. Enacted in 1980 and permanently authorized in 1985, the EAJA was intended to help individuals, veterans, Social Security recipients and small businesses recover attorneys' fees when they successfully challenge unjustified federal actions. EAJA allows courts to award attorneys'

See EAJA HEARING on page 12

Three key environmental management bills advance

—ESA and NEPA reform

In late December, Congress advanced several bills that would have direct impacts on ranchers and public lands, restoring management to those most directly affected. Two bills were passed in the House, while another was moved forward by a House committee for a full floor vote. The Pet and Livestock Protection Act and the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act were each passed by the House with bipartisan support. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) Amendments Act of 2025 was advanced by the House Natural Resources Committee. Industry groups urge members to contact their senators to express support for the Pet and Livestock Protection Act and SPEED Act, and contact their

See BILL TRACKER on page 5

House representatives to urge passage of the ESA Amendments Act.

Gray wolf delisting

The Pet and Livestock Protection Act passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 211-204. The legislation would delist the gray wolf from the ESA and restore authority to state lawmakers and wildlife officials for gray wolf management. The bill was introduced by Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO-04) in January. "The science has been clear for years: gray wolves are fully recovered, and their resurgence deserves to be celebrated as a true conservation success story," Boebert said. The bill would require the secretary of the Interior to reissue the 2020 Department of the Interior

Senate confirms key Trump nominees for ag

—Industry applauds nominations

The U.S. Senate recently confirmed a slate of Trump administration nominees who will oversee agricultural trade negotiations, food safety enforcement and key leadership posts across the USDA. The confirmations were part of a broader package of more than 90 nominees spanning multiple federal agencies. Among those approved were Dr. Julie Callahan as chief agricultural negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), Dr. Mindy Brashears as USDA under secretary for food safety, former U.S. Rep. Yvette Herrell as assistant secretary of Agriculture for congressional affairs and external relations, and John Walk as USDA inspector general.

Agricultural organizations broadly welcomed the confirmations, emphasizing the importance of continuity and experience at a time of heightened global trade negotiations, evolving food safety standards and increased congressional scrutiny of USDA programs.

Callahan as chief ag negotiator

Callahan had been serving as assistant U.S. trade representative for agricultural affairs and commodity policy prior to her confirmation. Callahan joined USTR in 2016 and has held multiple senior roles within the agency, including deputy assistant U.S. trade representative and senior director in the USTR agriculture office, according to her LinkedIn profile. Before moving to

USTR, she worked in senior leadership positions at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, where she focused on aligning regulatory policy with international trade objectives and resolving trade-related regulatory disputes. Agricultural groups praised the Senate's action, noting the central role of agricultural negotiations in expanding access to overseas markets. "Julie Callahan brings an unparalleled level of knowledge, experience and dedication to this position," said Dan Halstrom, president and CEO of the U.S. Meat Export Federation. "This is an especially critical time for agricultural trade, with ongoing negotiations between the U.S. and many key trading partners."

See AG NOMINEES on page 7

Markets trade lower into slow holiday week

(Editor's note: This report contains market information available as of Tuesday afternoon due to an earlier Christmas press schedule.) Quiet holiday trade and reduced packer activity pushed futures mostly lower into the Christmas week. Live cattle futures traded mostly lower through Tuesday. The December contract closed at \$228.82, and the February contract closed at \$230. "To no one's real surprise, following Monday's stronger trade, the live cattle complex is back to trading lower as the market's resistance at its 100-day moving average remains a difficult barrier to conquer," wrote ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, in her Tuesday midday comments. Cash trade through Tuesday totaled 7,000 head. Live steers sold from \$228-229, and dressed steers sold for \$356. "The week's volume will likely be rather thin given that it's the week of Christmas and packers will run reduced kill schedules both this week and next," Stewart said. Cash trade for the week ending Dec. 21 totaled 34,798 head. Live steers averaged \$228.98, and dressed steers averaged \$356.87. Slaughter through Tuesday totaled about 244,000 head,

compared to 231,000 head a week earlier. Total slaughter for a week earlier was estimated at 587,000 head. Actual slaughter for two weeks earlier was not yet reported as of *WLJ* press time. Discussion has been swirling about Tyson closing its Lexington, NE, beef plant, with many wondering when operations will begin to slow. Cassie Fish, market analyst in The Beef, noted on Tuesday that expectations are for the plant to run only a single shift after Christmas until shutting down on Jan. 20.

"This massive change will have repercussions

See MARKETS on page 9



PERIODICAL : Time Sensitive Priority Handling

COMMENTS

Initiative marketing

In *WLJ*'s Sept. 11, 2023, "Comments" column, I focused on Initiative Petition 3 (IP3 but also known as IP13 in the prior election cycle) happening in the state of Oregon. Back then, the activist groups were marketing themselves with the second attempt at a broad-spectrum measure that essentially banned most traditional uses of farm animals, wild animals, fish and research. The warning at the time was that these groups aren't done. Guess what? We were right.

Now IP28 has been introduced, officially known by its sponsors as the People for the Elimination of Animal Cruelty Exemption (PEACE) Act. The initiative seeks to amend Oregon's animal cruelty statutes by eliminating long-standing exemptions that currently apply to agricultural production, livestock management, hunting, fishing, trapping, veterinary care, research and other animal-related activities.

Oregon's current laws regarding animal cruelty are base lined for companion animals, with exemptions in place recognizing that animals are used for food production, husbandry, wildlife management, fisheries and research. These exemptions provide legal clarity for routine practices including breeding, castration, dehorning, branding, euthanasia, transportation, slaughter and veterinary treatment in accordance with industry standards. IP28 removes most of these exemptions, which means these actions that are currently legal would now be regulated with potential criminal liability.

For those in livestock production, aquaculture and hunters, the main concern this time around is the broader scope of the language proposed in this initiative. By applying animal cruelty standards universally without clear carve-outs for normal livestock operations, IP28 could allow routine practices to be challenged under criminal law. Supporters behind this initiative argue equal legal protections to all animals regardless of how they are being used.

That's the perceived craziness behind this initiative. It's so broad in its language, and targets nearly every animal across the board. David Michelson has served as one of the chief petitioners in all three measures. In a previous statement for IP3, he said, "We want to assure you that there are ample resources to feed all Oregonians if IP3 were to pass. We are already producing far more food than needed to feed everyone."

Here lies what agriculture is now up against: the use of ballot initiatives to market themselves for the next campaign. It's stepping into a ring knowing they're going to lose this fight but using donations to fund the next campaign and build a bigger network. In a Q&A with the magazine *Current Affairs* in late September, Michelson said, "We believe this initiative will help shift society towards no longer using the killing of animals as a strategy to meet human needs. Given the radical nature of the campaign, we're aware that it is almost certainly not going to pass in 2026. Despite that, we believe getting it on the ballot now will make it more likely to pass in a future election cycle, and that it will help us build the organization we'd need to keep getting it on the ballot. Our goal is to be persistent, and we take part of our inspiration from the U.S. Women's Suffrage Movement, which used the same strategy to get the right to vote."

The language being used in IP28 is far less invasive compared to the prior initiatives. Opponents have already expressed concern regarding prosecutorial discretion and enforcement variability, meaning without clear exemptions, law enforcement could inevitably be inconsistent in their regulation of the measure. Previous initiatives were more specific about care and practices. IP28 essentially broadens its language and has allowed the marketing of the initiative to the public under the guise of a general animal welfare bill that aims to simply prevent slaughter and animal cruelty. This has been a far more effective approach, albeit it is extremely misguiding and lacks transparency.

Comparing the past initiative failure to this year's efforts raises alarms. In Oregon, 117,173 signatures are needed from registered voters. IP3 gained shy of 35,000 signatures. Now, IP28 already has nearly 90,000 signatures and the deadline isn't until July 2, 2026, to qualify for the Nov. 3, 2026, election. With a recent \$10,000 donation from PETA, IP28 has raised over \$135,000 in donations, which has led to the hiring of nearly 30 signature gatherers. The Oregon Hunters Association is already saying the expectation is that they will submit enough signatures by early July 2026 to gain the ballot.

This summer, Michelson spoke at the Animal Law and Advocacy Conference where his bio read, "David began working on building the foundations for this campaign in 2020, after recognizing the untapped potential of ballot initiatives to accelerate the animal rights movement." His session was titled "Shifting the Status Quo: Legal Tools for Reimagining Animals in Society."

Combining agriculture, hunting, fishing and wildlife watching together, the economic impact is nearly \$7 billion, making this one of the state's largest sectors. The impact and precedence this could set for other states to follow suite is my biggest concern.

With all the drama the beef industry has had over the last couple months, this seems like something that all the ag groups could work together on with several other industries to fight this wide-sweeping initiative. They're building a framework to get it passed, so it makes sense we'd do the same to keep it failing. — **LOGAN IPSEN**



IPSEN

UNITED WE STAND



with Lesley Robinson

This monthly column highlights the common ground in the livestock industry, uniting us around the issues that impact us all.

As cattle producers, we don't always agree on everything. We raise cattle in different landscapes, operate at different scales and face unique challenges depending on where we call home. But if there's one thing I've learned through years in this industry, it's that when ranchers set aside our differences and work together, real progress follows.

As we close out another year and look ahead to 2026, I feel a sense of cautious optimism. Not because the road ahead will be easy, but because I've seen what unity can accomplish when the agriculture industry speaks with one voice.

This past year provided a clear example of that. Recent

tax reform included meaningful tax provisions that directly benefit producers and rural families.

Agriculture prevailed as the "death tax" exemption was increased to \$15 million per individual or \$30 million per couple, adjusted annually for inflation. This means if the value of your farm or ranch plus equipment, cattle and other assets are less than \$15 million individually or \$30 million as a couple, you will pay no death tax. This a huge victory for not only the ranching industry but all small businesses. The death tax has forced many farmers and ranchers to sell off land, equipment or cattle to pay the high tax. This increased threshold is a huge victory for protecting more family farms and ranches than ever before. In addition to the death tax, we saw significant and permanent provisions put into place for bonus depreciation, the small business tax deduction, and Section 179, which allows small businesses to deduct the cost of equipment.

Those victories didn't happen by accident but were the result of sustained collaboration among agricultural organizations, lawmakers and grassroots producers who stayed engaged and focused on shared goals. It was a reminder that unity, even on technical policy issues, can lead to practical, meaningful results for producers.

Looking ahead, that same cooperative approach will be

essential as we confront one of the most persistent challenges facing agriculture today: labor. The agricultural labor shortage affects nearly every segment of our industry. It doesn't matter whether you're a cow-calf producer, a feeder or part of an allied business, finding and retaining a dependable workforce has become increasingly difficult. Addressing this challenge won't come from one idea, one policy change or one organization acting alone. It will take open dialogue, shared experiences and a willingness to collaborate across sectors.

That belief is what's driving the upcoming Agricultural Labor Summit in Billings, MT, this January. Hosted by the Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) in partnership with other agricultural organizations, the summit is designed to bring stakeholders together for focused conversations about workforce issues impacting our industry. The goal is to create space for producers and partners to explore practical paths forward. That could mean a variety of things including strengthening domestic labor pipelines, improving access to non-immigrant labor programs like H-2A or identifying new approaches altogether.

This kind of collaboration is not new to agriculture, but it is increasingly important. Complex issues like workforce availability, domestic labor pipelines and access to non-immigrant labor programs require coordination, shared knowl-

edge and a willingness to listen. No one organization has all the answers, but together, we can identify workable paths forward.

That mindset is also reflected in MSGA's Producer Profitability Initiative, which is a grassroots effort led by cattle producers who believe the future of our industry depends on unity, adaptability and long-term sustainability. It's an acknowledgment that no matter our age, operation size or management style, our success is tied together.

As we look toward 2026, I hope we continue choosing cooperation over division. There will always be tough conversations in agriculture, but there are also principles nearly all of us agree on: the importance of keeping ag land in production, the need to remain profitable, the desire to pass our operations on to the next generation and the responsibility we share to produce a safe, reliable food supply. Progress happens when we remember that our collective voice is stronger than any single one. United, we've already seen what's possible. Now it's on us to keep building from there.

For those interested in learning more about the Agricultural Labor Summit and the conversations shaping the future of our workforce, visit mtbeef.org. — **Lesley Robinson, Montana cattle producer and MSGA president**



GUEST OPINION

HOW AG PERSEVERED THROUGH CHALLENGES THIS YEAR

It's fair to say that 2025 has been a year of meaningful progress for agriculture, on top of some very big challenges. The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) helped farmers and ranchers across the country navigate the roller coaster ride. From policy wins that strengthen farm families to initiatives that support rural communities—our members, leaders and Farm Bureau staff rallied to ensure farmers and ranchers could hold on through the ups and downs. Here's a look at some of the key victories and steps forward that shaped the year.

Congress took some big steps to provide certainty for farmers with the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. It extends critical tax provisions that farm and ranch families rely on to keep their businesses running. It also improves access to and affordability of critical risk management programs like crop insurance and commodity support programs, increases funding for conservation programs and enhances risk management support for dairy farmers. However, the farm bill program changes don't take effect until next year. That's why the recently authorized \$12 billion aid package was so important. It will help bridge the gap so farmers can pay bills, maintain their machinery and plan for the next season with greater certainty. But this is just one piece of what farmers and ranchers will need to turn the corner.

A spike in farm bankruptcies is a warning flare for all of us who rely on farmers to feed our families. Financial relief is an essential lifeline, but it's just one piece of the puzzle to help farmers and ranchers navigate these challenging times.

Farm Bureau has long advocated for changes to the antiquated wage rate formula, called the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, for agricultural guestworkers in the H-2A program. This year we achieved a new wage rate rule that brings wages into balance, so they are fair to both workers and farmers. Labor costs can be nearly half the cost of production, making it hard for farmers to break even and more expensive to grow food domestically. More labor reforms are needed to avoid increased dependence on imported foods.

Earlier in the year, the Department of Labor also pulled back a far-reaching regulation after several successful lawsuits, one of which was co-led by AFBF. This marked a significant win for farmers and ranchers because elements of this egregious rule

placed new regulatory burdens on farmers whom Congress had explicitly exempted. Farmers appreciate and depend upon the men and women who choose to work on their farms, so fair labor standards are important to them.

The proposed 2025 Waters of the United States rule, from the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers, is welcome news for agriculture. Clean water is essential for farmers and ranchers: it's the foundation of everything they do. The new rule strikes an important balance by protecting critical water sources while respecting the stewardship farmers practice every day to safeguard natural resources.

Several years ago, the Supreme Court made it clear that the government had overreached in its interpretation of what fell under federal jurisdiction. This proposal finally addresses those concerns and takes steps toward providing much-needed clarity. AFBF will share feedback with EPA to ensure farmers can continue protecting the environment while growing the food America's families rely on.

Farmers and ranchers face economic uncertainty unlike anything seen in a generation, putting enormous pressure on them to support their families and make ends meet. This makes Farm Bureau's work to deliver mental health resources through our Farm State of Mind program critically important. In 2025, AFBF took a big step to expand its Farm State of Mind initiative by partnering with the Farm Family Wellness Alliance to launch the Farm State of Mind Alliance. This collaboration brings together resources and messaging to make an even greater impact on rural mental health. The Alliance builds on work started in 2020 and expanded in 2023 to offer tools like Togetherall and Personal Assistance Services to farm families nationwide. Now, under Farm State of Mind, these lifechanging efforts will be centralized and amplified.

With the 2025 roller coaster nearly in the books, I stand in awe of the women and men we serve. Farmers and ranchers are some of the most resilient, optimistic people I've ever met. Investing in the people who work every day to ensure a safe, healthy and affordable food supply is a win every time—the benefits of which are visible on every dinner table in America. — **Joby Young, AFBF executive vice president**

WLJ

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ID partners with USFS with goal to double timber sales

Idaho is planning to work with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to significantly boost logging and timber sales from National Forest trees in the Gem State.

Idaho Gov. Brad Little (R) and fellow Idahoan, Chief of the Forest Service Tom Schultz, announced the renewal of the state's Shared Stewardship agreement with the U.S. Forest Service.

The state and federal entity have had an agreement in place since 2018, but the new one comes with goals such as to roughly double current timber sales from National Forest land to 100 million board feet annually within five years.

Little, Schultz and Idaho Department of Lands Director Dustin Miller emphasized that the idea is to reduce wildfire risk.

"This broader approach allows us to reduce fuels at a meaningful scale, protecting communities, improving forest health, strengthening local economies," Little said at a press conference. "I deeply value our partnership as we work to prevent devastating fires, protect property and safeguard Idaho."

Schultz said the goals in the updated agreement align with President Donald Trump's "Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production" executive order issued in March that directs federal agencies to pursue ways to boost logging production and timber sales from federal lands.

Officials in the USDA, where the Forest Service is housed, are predicting a 25% increase in the volume of timber product sales over the next four years, Schultz said.

The Forest Service is providing about \$4 million upfront to ramp up the effort, he said, and the boosted timber sales are expected to cover ongoing costs. Other goals include working with private landowners to create fuel breaks and reduce fuels in areas where people live close to the wildland interface.

The Idaho Department of Lands has developed a map of priority areas for

logging and other fuel reduction, such as prescribed burns. Forested areas near McCall and in north Idaho around Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint are among the primary focus areas.

The agreement also includes plans to use the revenue from timber sales for fish and wildlife habitat restoration, tree replanting, and recreation improvements.

Idaho is facing a projected budget shortfall of about \$58 million for the current fiscal year, and a roughly \$600 million deficit in the next fiscal year. Agencies are not expected to be able to increase staffing or request new employees during the upcoming legislative session. Miller said the state lands department has unique authority to be able to hire foresters to scale up activities if the income from it is sufficient.

Miller said the plan is to "bring on additional foresters to grow the program commensurate to the need."

Schultz says Forest Service staffing is stable, conservation leaders worry it's not enough.

The partnership will be executed by federal, state, Tribal and private land managers or forest owners.

Around 40% of Idaho's land is forested, and nearly 90% of that forest land is owned and managed by the USFS.

A group of Democratic U.S. senators from mostly western states wrote to Shultz questioning if the Forest Service was doing enough to reduce wildfire fuels, Boise State Public Radio reported. The federal lawmakers' letter came after an analysis from the advocacy group Grassroots Wildland Firefighters that found a nearly 40% drop in fuel reduction projects compared to previous years.

Idaho and federal authorities have worked closely together since 2015, when the state implemented "Good Neighbor Authority" agreements to use state personnel and resources to assist with federal management.

Little said the Shared Stewardship agreement

uses the Good Neighbor Authority model and expands the cooperation across Idaho's landscape, regardless of ownership.

"Both models allow the state of Idaho, through our Idaho Department lands, to help get more work done on the ground," Little said.

Idaho Conservation League Public Lands and Wildlife Director John Robison said that the collaborative approach to reducing wildfire fuels in Idaho has been largely successful.

The challenge has been to ensure that timber activity doesn't return to the "timber wars of yesteryear," he said.

He said a key component will be to avoid old growth trees.

"There is an overabundance of small- and medium-sized trees on the National Forest in Idaho that wouldn't otherwise be there, if not for decades of fire suppression," Robison said. "And these overstock stands could actually benefit from some targeted thinning and prescribed fire. Those activities can both improve forest health and protect communities if they're combined with hazardous fuel reduction efforts on private property."

Robison attributed Idaho's success in this area to robust public participation. However, recent changes under the National Environmental Policy Act, known as NEPA, may limit opportunities for public comment.

This summer, federal agencies, including the USDA, proposed regulation updates that include options to expedite environmental reviews and reduce or eliminate chances for the public to weigh in.

"The public is in danger of being shut out from decisions made on our National Forests," Robison said, "at a time when that is a core component for successful restoration and management." — **Laura Guido, Idaho Capital Sun**

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HOOVES & HORNS

BY A.W. ERWIN



"Gosh, Sis! I said, 'I'll have the Black-Eye Peas! Not a Black-Eye please!'"

Railroads tout transcontinental benefits of merger

Lawmakers, businesses and unions are weighing in after Union Pacific (UP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) railroads filed their official merger application to combine the two railroads, a deal that would create the country's first transcontinental railroad.

The railroads filed a 7,000-page application with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) on the \$85 billion deal, which would create a single railroad capable of moving freight from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The railroads cite that combining the companies would reduce or eliminate "time-consuming handoffs between railroads," improving the efficiency and speed of cargo moving across the country as a result.

The application includes 2,000 letters of support from various stakeholders. Shareholders from both companies voted 99% in favor of the

merger last month.

The STB is now tasked with deciding whether to greenlight the merger—a process that is expected to take as long as two years. Under the last major railroad merger between Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern (CPKC), it took the STB nearly two years to approve the deal, which was less than half the scale of the UP-NS deal.

Business groups question value

The Rail Customer Coalition—a collection of industry trade associations—"issued a stark warning" and called for a rigorous review.

"The proposed merger would mark the largest railroad consolidation in U.S. history and the most consequential case ever reviewed by the STB. It is an unprecedented test of the board's updated merger standards

that were adopted after previous mergers upended the rail network and crippled the national supply chain," the coalition stated in a news release.

The Rail Customer Coalition release included statements from the head of the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM), the American Chemistry Council, the American Cement Association, the Essential Elements Association and the Agricultural Retailers Association.

"Farmers and ag retailers operate on razor-thin margins, so even a small, artificial cost increase can have a big impact," said Daren Coppock, president and CEO of the Agricultural Retailers Association. "When rail service is dominated by just a few players, they hold the power to set terms that work for them—not for the shippers and customers who depend on rail to move agricultural

commodities, fertilizer, ag chemicals, fuel, and other essential supplies. That imbalance drives up costs and threatens the reliability of our entire supply chain."

The Fertilizer Institute also raised concerns about limited railroad options and increased costs, questioning how a coast-to-coast merger would improve the imbalance between railroad companies and shippers.

"Today, railroads hold all the cards, and larger railroads only give carriers a bigger deck," The Fertilizer Institute stated. "Now that UP and NS have submitted their merger application, we urge the Board to make the merger's impact on carload shippers, including fertilizer and agriculture, a priority during the review process."

Lawmakers, other officials weigh in

Lawmakers weighed in

with a collection of mixed messages to the STB on how to handle the giant merger.

Union Pacific is based in Omaha, so it may come as no surprise that the five-member Nebraska congressional delegation urged the STB to approve the merger. In a letter led by Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), the Nebraska lawmakers said they believe the merged rail line "will enhance competition and provide value to the public." The Nebraska lawmakers added that there was limited overlap between the existing UP and NS networks, resulting in "only a handful of shippers seeing service decreased from two freight rail carriers to one."

Along with Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS), Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) had written the STB back in July, questioning the impact the merger would have on areas that already face poor rail service. Baldwin also noted that railroad consolidation since the 1950s had reduced the number of Class I railroads from more than 100 freight railroads down to just six now.

In late October, a bipartisan group of 18 senators led by Sens. John Hoeven (R-ND) and Amy Klobuchar

(D-MN) also sent a letter to STB members asking for "a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation" of the proposal to ensure competition remains among Class I railroads. The senators specifically said the STB "should take into account the long-term implications for the movement of agricultural products across the domestic rail network, including potential impacts on shipping costs and market access."

Last month, nine Republican attorneys general also sent the STB a letter challenging the merger from the states of Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio and Tennessee.

Unions are split on the deal as well. The Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Transportation Division union announced in September that the group backs the deal, as does the International Brotherhood of Railway Boilermakers. Two other unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, announced that they oppose the deal. — **Chris Clayton, DTN ag policy editor**

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Measuring what matters is key to managing a herd

Kansas State (K-State) University cow-calf specialist Jason Warner encourages cattle producers to consider tracking a few key numbers to help them make more informed management decisions for the year ahead.

"It's a great time to come back and take a look at the metrics we are seeing with a given group of cows and females to help navigate decision making," Warner said.

Warner outlined three primary metrics producers should consider when reviewing herd data this season: conception percentage, calving percentage and weaning percentage.

Warner said the first step is determining conception rate, which begins with identifying how many females were exposed to breeding and how many became pregnant.

"The first thing is what is your conception percentage?" Warner said.

"It is being able to identify what that group was exposed to (during) breeding and the number (that got) pregnant—what's that percentage?"

Understanding conception rate provides an important foundation for reproductive efficiency and helps identify potential issues with nutrition, bull performance or environmental factors that may have affected breeding outcomes.

Next, producers should look at the number of calves born relative to the number of cows confirmed pregnant.

"We want to know how many cows calved, dead or alive," Warner said. "We also want to know what degree of pregnancy loss we have. Typically, that's about 2-3%."

Tracking calving percentage allows producers to monitor herd health and pregnancy loss, giving insight into calving management practices and environmental or disease-related challenges.

Finally, Warner recommends calculating the weaning percentage—the number of calves weaned and shipped compared to the number originally born.

"The third measurement is calculating a weaning percentage number," Warner said.

"How many did we put on the trailer to ship in relation to how many we had born on the ground?"

This final number provides a complete picture of herd productivity, reflecting management success from breeding to marketing.

Warner said regularly reviewing these metrics not only highlights areas of strength, but also helps pinpoint where adjustments can improve overall herd efficiency and profitability.

"These are straightforward calculations that can tell us a lot about our management," he said. "By taking time to measure and understand these numbers, we can make better decisions to improve herd performance next season." — **K-State Research and Extension**

ESA Amendments Act advances to a House vote

BILL TRACKER (from page 1)

final rule that delisted gray wolves in the lower 48 states, which was overturned by a California judge in 2022. The bill would also ensure the rule could not be overturned through judicial review.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) said that activist group lawsuits have forced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to keep the wolf listed. Restoring the 2020 wolf delisting will give management decisions and certainty back to cattle producers, NCBA said, who are suffering financially and financially from the toll of wolf depredations.

"Since being listed under the ESA in 1974, the gray wolf population has seen tremendous recovery, exceeding recovery goals by 300%," the group said.

The Public Lands Council (PLC) said the legislation is essential to protecting livestock from depredation and restoring a balance to wildlife management.

"Returning management authority to the states ensures that decisions are made closer to those directly impacted on the ground," said PLC President and Colorado rancher Tim Canterbury.

Environmental groups expressed their opposition to the bill.

"The bill removes science from the federal endangered species list and plays on communities' love for pets and livestock to curry public support," Defenders of Wildlife said in a statement.

Modernizing the NEPA process

The SPEED Act passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 221-196. The legislation would amend the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to facilitate more efficient and timely environmental reviews. The bill was introduced by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR-04) in July.

"Reforming the National Environmental Policy Act permitting process through the SPEED Act will ultimately reduce unnecessary delays and make it easier for local governments to access the resources they need in order to complete economy-stimulating projects in a timely manner," Westerman said.

The legislation would simplify the analysis required in NEPA documents and clarify when NEPA is triggered. The

bill also establishes judicial review limitations for NEPA claims, including a 150-day deadline for filing claims, and eliminates vacatur and injunction as court remedies.

PLC said many livestock producers rely on federal permitting under NEPA to make range improvements and carry out other conservation work.

"Unfortunately, outdated NEPA processes have made permitting for livestock grazing much more difficult and costly, which limits the amount of conservation work that can be done and leaves working lands in worse condition," said

NCBA Executive Director of Natural Resources and PLC Executive Director Kaitlynn Glover. "This legislation speeds up federal permitting by reducing bureaucratic red tape and avoiding NEPA weaponization by frivolous litigation."

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) called the legislation an attack on bedrock environmental laws.

"This bill is another way for the Trump administration to allow polluters to write their own ticket to pollute while disregarding the people who are impacted by their actions," said SELC Director of Federal Affairs Nat Mund in a statement.

fairs Nat Mund in a statement.

Reforming the ESA

The House Committee on Natural Resources marked up and advanced the ESA Amendments Act, moving the bill to a final floor vote. The bill was introduced by Westerman in March.

"(The bill) restores science, conservation, and sustainable economic development to America's endangered species policy and returns the ESA to its original, bipartisan purpose as a tool for species recovery," Westerman said.

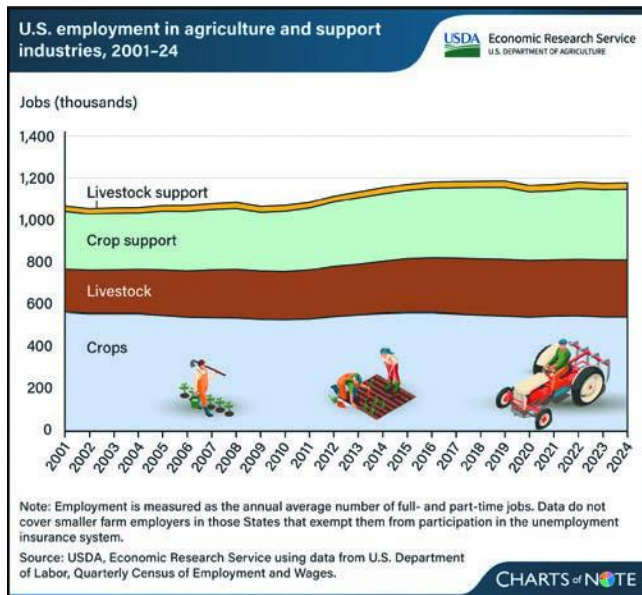
The legislation would re-

form the ESA by establishing clear statutory definitions, incentivizing wildlife conservation on private lands and recovering listed species, and streamlining the permitting process.

"These bipartisan reforms would require economic and national security analyses for listing decisions, prioritize resources for species most in need, increase transparency in recovery planning, and streamline permitting," PLC said.

The next step is securing full passage in the House. — Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor

Employment in US ag grew 10% from 2010-24



Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) show wage and salaried employment in agriculture stabilized in the 2000s and increased gradually since 2010.

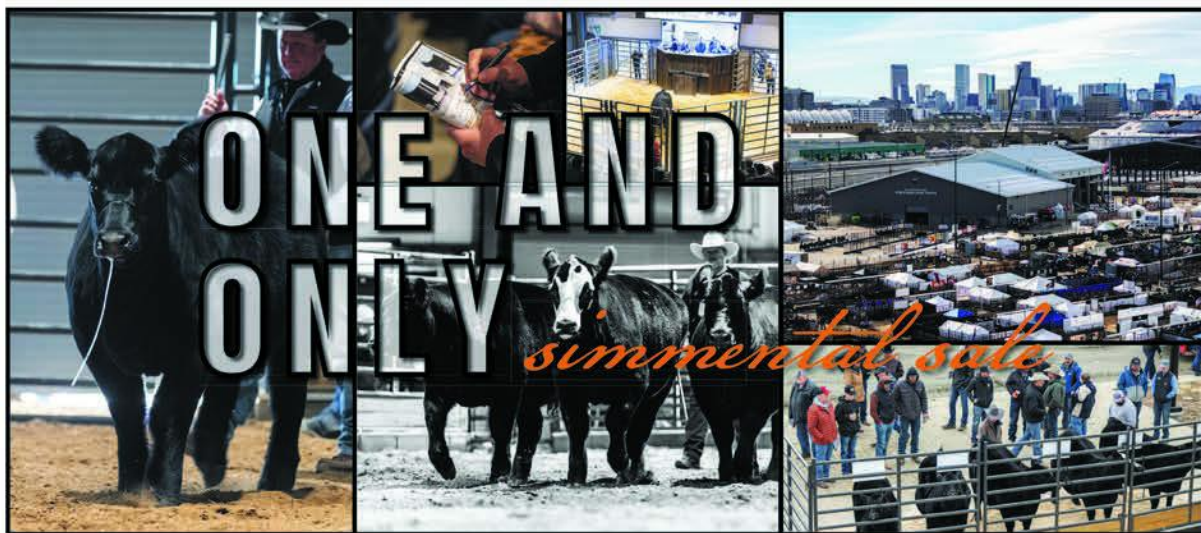
U.S. agriculture employment rose from 1.07 million jobs in 2010 to 1.18 million jobs in 2024, a gain of 10%. From 2010 to 2024, employment increases were highest in crop support services (which added about 48,400 jobs, a 17% increase) and the livestock sector (which added about 42,000 jobs, a 19% increase).

Crop support services firms provide specialized services to farmers, including labor con-

tracting and custom harvesting. Data from QCEW are based on unemployment insurance records, not on surveys of farms or households. As a result, they do not cover smaller farm employers in states that exempt such employers from participating in the unemployment insurance system; therefore any changes in employment from these small employers are omitted from the chart.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau's American Community Survey and Current Population Survey data also show rising farm employment since the turn of the 21st century. — USDA Economic Research Service

» PLEASE JOIN US



DON'T MISS THIS EVENT <<

2026 NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW SIMMENTAL SCHEDULE:

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2026

Progress Through Performance (PTP) and Phenotype & Genotype (P&G) Bull Pen Shows
- 9:00 AM - Hutchison Western Stockyards Events Center

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026

Female Pen Shows and Rancher's Best Pen Show
- 9:00 AM - Hutchison Western Stockyards Events Center

One and Only Sale Preview

- 1:00 PM - Hutchison Western Stockyards Events Center
Power Simmental Selection - Fundraising

One and Only Simmental Sale

2:00 PM - Wagner Equipment Auction Arena
- Stockyards Events Center

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2026

PTP Youth Shows - 9:00 AM - CoBank Arena

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026

PTP National Simmental Show - 9:00 AM - CoBank Arena
All times Mountain Standard Time.



21st Annual PEOPLE'S CHOICE POWER SIMMENTAL JUDGING
at the 2026 National Western Stock Show

Judging cards will be sold in advance or on-site. Judging will take place during the Simmental female pen show on Jan. 19 and bull pen show on Jan. 18. The winner will be announced at the start of "The One & Only" Simmental Sale at 2 pm, Sunday, Jan. 19, with the selection of the Power Simmental from the qualifying bull or female finalist.

»»

ONE AND ONLY
simmental sale

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2:00 PM MST
AT THE HISTORIC NATIONAL WESTERN COMPLEX

Elite Bred and Open Heifers - Herd Bull Prospects - Donor Cows - Semen
Flushes - Pregnancies - Picks

live auction and
broadcast on

CCI
LIVE

NATIONAL
WESTERN
Stock Show

SALE SPONSORED BY

COLORADO SIMMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Susan Russell 719-469-0020
Paul Hill 417-849-6851

AUCTIONEER:
Jered Shipman 806-983-7226

M³
Matt Macfarlane
MARKETING

Matt Macfarlane
916-803-3113
m3cattlemarketing@gmail.com
www.m3cattlemarketing.com



COMING EVENTS

(Send calendar of events information to editorial@wlj.net.)
Jan. 21-22, 2026 – The Montana Stockgrowers Association is proud to announce the

Agriculture Labor Summit at the Northern Hotel in Billings. This event was created to address the ongoing labor shortage. Details: mtbeef.org/event/laborsummit.



SALE CALENDAR

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

ALL BREEDS

Jan. 17, 2026 – Western Elite Bull & Female Sale at NWSS, Denver, CO
Jan. 28 – Red Bluff Bull & Gelding Sale, Red Bluff, CA
Feb. 7 – Klamath Cattlemen's Association, Bull Sale, Klamath Falls, OR

Feb. 14 – Great Basin Bull Sale, Fallon, NV

ANGUS

Jan. 16, 2026 – Foundation Angus Sale, Denver, CO
Jan. 17 – Redland Angus, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
Jan. 20 – Ken Haas Angus, Bull Sale, La Grange, WY
Jan. 23 – Flesch Angus, Production Sale, Shelby, MT
Jan. 23 – McConnell Angus, Production Sale, Dix, NE
Jan. 23 – Ruggles Angus, Production Sale, McCook, NE
Jan. 24 – Little Goose Ranch, Production Sale, Buffalo, WY
Jan. 26 – APEX Cattle, Bull &

Female Sale, Dannebrog, NE
Jan. 30 – Kovarik Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Ord, NE
Jan. 31 – 21 Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, New England, ND
Jan. 31 – Baldridge Performance Angus, Bull Sale, North Platte, NE
Jan. 31 – Schaff Angus Valley, Production Sale, St. Anthony, ND
Feb. 1 – Frey Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Granville, ND
Feb. 4 – Huwa Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Roggen, CO
Feb. 5 – Bear Mountain Angus, Bull Sale, Palisade, NE
Feb. 6 – Burgess Angus, Bull Sale, Homedale, ID
Feb. 6 – Poss Angus, Bull Sale, Scotia, NE

Feb. 6 – TJS Red Angus, Production Sale, Buffalo, WY
Feb. 7 – Ellingson Angus, Bull Sale, St. Anthony, ND
Feb. 9 – BB Cattle, Bull Sale, Connell, WA
Feb. 10 – South Mountain Cattle, Bull Sale, Marsing, ID
Feb. 10 – Werning Cattle Co., Production Sale, Emery, SD
Feb. 11 – Jindra Angus, Bull Sale, Clarkson, NE
Feb. 11 – Meadow Acres Angus, Bull Sale, Stanfield, OR
Feb. 12 – Booth's Cherry Creek Ranch, Bull Sale, Veteran, WY
Feb. 12 – Stokrose Angus, Bull Sale, Warden, WA

Feb. 13 – Bar KD Ranch, Bull Sale, Alturas, CA
Feb. 13 – Dutch Flat Angus & CX Ranch, Production Sale, Lewiston, ID
Feb. 13 – Powder River Angus, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
Feb. 13 – Raml Cattle, Production Sale, Goodwin, SD
Feb. 13 – Rees Bros., Production Sale, Morgan, UT
Feb. 14 – Big Rok Angus, Bull Sale, Detroit Lakes, MN
Feb. 15 – Bruner Angus, Bull Sale, Drake, ND
Feb. 16 – Eagle Pass Ranch, Bull Sale, Highmore, SD
Feb. 16 – Frank Cattle & Genetics, Bull Sale, Lodgepole, NE
Feb. 16 – Teixeira Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Terrebonne, OR
Feb. 16 – Weaver Ranch Angus, Production Sale, Fort Collins, CO
Feb. 17 – Coleman Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Charlo, MT
Feb. 17 – Kessler Angus, Bull Sale, Milton-Freewater, OR
Feb. 17 – McClun's Lazy JM Ranch, Production Sale, Torrington, WY
Feb. 18 – Shaw Cattle, Bull Sale, Caldwell, ID
Feb. 18 – Skyline Angus, Bull Sale, Stevensville, MT
Feb. 19 – Krebs Ranch, Bull Sale, Gordon, NE
Feb. 19 – Small Livestock, Bull Sale, Winnemucca, NV
Feb. 19 – Van Dyke Angus, Bull Sale, Manhattan, MT
Feb. 20 – Hoffman Ranch & Stellpflug Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Thedford, NE

BALANCER

Feb. 2, 2026 – Taubenheim Gelbvieh, Bull Sale, Amherst, NE
Feb. 16 – Eagle Pass Ranch, Bull Sale, Highmore, SD

CHAROLAIS

Feb. 11, 2026 – Broberg Charolais, Bull Sale, Tilden, NE
Feb. 17 – V-A-L Charolais Ranch, Bull Sale, Nyssa, OR
Feb. 19 – Small Livestock, Bull Sale, Winnemucca, NV

GELBVIEH

Feb. 2, 2026 – Taubenheim Gelbvieh, Bull Sale, Amherst, NE

HEREFORD

Jan. 4, 2026 – Durbin Creek Ranch, Bull Sale, Worland, WY
Jan. 19 – Van Newkirk Herefords, Bull Sale, Oshkosh, NE
Jan. 20 – Mrnak Hereford Ranch, Production Sale, Bowman, ND
Jan. 27 – Churchill Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Manhattan, MT
Jan. 29 – Ridder Herefords, Bull Sale, Callaway, NE
Feb. 2 – Pelton Polled Herefords, Bull Sale, Halliday, ND
Feb. 4 – Durbin Creek Ranch, Bull Sale, Worland, WY
Feb. 5 – Stroh Herefords, Production Sale, Killdeer, ND
Feb. 6 – Baumgarten Cattle Co., Production Sale, Belfield, ND
Feb. 6 – Elkington Polled Hereford & South Devons, Production Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Feb. 7 – Upstream Ranch, Production Sale, Taylor, NE
Feb. 9 – BB Cattle, Bull Sale, Connell, WA
Feb. 11 – Friedt Herefords, Production Sale, Dickinson, ND
Feb. 13 – Dutch Flat Angus & CX Ranch, Production Sale, Lewiston, ID
Feb. 13 – Rees Bros., Production Sale, Morgan, UT
Feb. 13 – Topp Herefords,

Bull Sale, Grace City, ND
Feb. 17 – McClun's Lazy JM Ranch, Production Sale, Torrington, WY
Feb. 18 – Shaw Cattle, Bull Sale, Caldwell, ID
Feb. 20 – Hoffman Ranch & Stellpflug Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Thedford, NE

RED ANGUS

Feb. 6, 2026 – TJS Red Angus, Production Sale, Buffalo, WY
Feb. 14 – Ludvigson Red Angus, Bull Sale, Meriden, WY
Feb. 16 – Eagle Pass Ranch, Bull Sale, Highmore, SD
Feb. 16 – Frank Cattle & Genetics, Bull Sale, Lodgepole, NE
Feb. 18 – Shaw Cattle, Bull Sale, Caldwell, ID

SIMANGUS

Jan. 18, 2026 – The One & Only Simmental Sale at NWSS, Denver, CO
Jan. 20 – Powerline Genetics, Bull Sale, Arapahoe, NE
Jan. 26 – APEX Cattle, Bull & Female Sale, Dannebrog, NE
Feb. 2 – Gateway Ranch Simmentals, Bull Sale, Lewistown, MT
Feb. 10 – Werning Cattle Co., Production Sale, Emery, SD
Feb. 12 – Bar CK Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Culver, OR
Feb. 12 – Lassle Ranch Simmentals, Production Sale, Glendive, ND
Feb. 13 – Bar KD Angus, Bull Sale, Alturas, CA
Feb. 13 – Raml Cattle, Production Sale, Goodwin, SD
Feb. 16 – Bulls of the Big Sky, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Feb. 16 – Eagle Pass Ranch, Bull Sale, Highmore, SD
Feb. 19 – Small Livestock, Bull Sale, Winnemucca, NV

SIMMENTAL

Jan. 18, 2026 – The One & Only Simmental Sale at NWSS, Denver, CO
Jan. 20 – Powerline Genetics, Bull Sale, Arapahoe, NE
Jan. 26 – APEX Cattle, Bull & Female Sale, Dannebrog, NE
Feb. 2 – Gateway Ranch Simmentals, Bull Sale, Lewistown, MT
Feb. 10 – Werning Cattle Co., Production Sale, Emery, SD
Feb. 12 – Lassle Ranch Simmentals, Production Sale, Glendive, ND
Feb. 13 – Raml Cattle, Production Sale, Goodwin, SD
Feb. 16 – Bulls of the Big Sky, Bull Sale, Billings, MT

SOUTH DEVON

Feb. 6, 2026 – Elkington Polled Hereford & South Devons, Production Sale, Idaho Falls, ID

STABILIZER

Jan. 9, 2026 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Meriden, WY

COMMERCIAL

Jan. 6, 2026 – Western Video Market Auction, North Platte, NE
Jan. 14 – Maternal Merit, Bred Heifer Sale, Denver, CO
Jan. 29 – Western Video Market Auction, Red Bluff, CA

HORSE

Jan. 28, 2026 – Red Bluff Bull & Gelding Sale, Red Bluff, CA

DOG

Jan. 28, 2026 – Red Bluff Stock Dog Sale, Red Bluff, CA



SALE REPORT

BOBCAT ANGUS PRODUCTION SALE
Dec. 18, Great Falls, MT
64 Angus fall yearling bulls **\$9,733**
14 Angus bull calves.....**8,964**
94 Angus 2-year-old bulls**8,929**
162 Commercial bred cows.....**4,675**
740 Commercial AI bred heifers **4,164**

21 Angus bred cows.....**4,086**
29 Commercial bred cows.....**2,974**
Auctioneers: Joe Goggins and Greg Goggins
TOPS—Bred cow: Bobcat Lass 845, 3/11/2018 by Mytty Natural bred to Spring Cove Feat K70; to Flesch Angus, Shelby, MT, \$7,000. **Bull calf:** Bobcat

Bedrock N5, 2/8/2025 by Boyd Bedrock; to CBD Ranch Inc., Chester, MT, \$16,000. **Fall yearling bulls:** Bobcat Prolific M286, 8/29/2024 by Ellingson Prolific; to Midland Angus Ranch, Joliet, MT, \$18,000, 2/3 interest. Bobcat Prolific M219, 8/18/2025 by Ellingson Prolific; to The Glennie Ranches, TwoDott, MT, \$18,000. Bobcat Pro-

lific M204, 8/15/2024 by Ellingson Prolific; to The Glennie Ranches, TwoDott, MT, \$16,000. Bobcat Prolific M244, 8/20/2024 by Ellingson Prolific; to The Glennie Ranches, TwoDott, MT, \$15,000. Bobcat Prolific M195, 8/12/2024 by Ellingson Prolific; to Dafoe Ranch Inc., Chester, MT, \$15,000. — **KEVIN MURNIN**



COMMERCIAL CATTLEMEN'S DAY

MATERNAL MERIT BRED HEIFER SALE

Join Us

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2026

2026 National Western Stock Show - Yards Sale Arena | Denver, CO

Schedule

10:00 am Educational Sessions: Adding Value in a Competitive Market

- 10:00 am *Tools to Differentiate Your Calf Crop* | Troy Marshall, AAA Director of Commercial Industry Relations
- 10:30 am *Capitalizing on Value with Zinpro* | Dr. Clay Burson, Zinpro
- 11:00 am *Optimizing Cowherd Efficiencies* | Dr. Ryan Rathmann, Texas Tech University
- 11:45 am *Panel Discussion: Differentiating Yourself in the Market* | Moderated by Kevin Ochsner
- 12:30 pm Lunch and Social (Located outside the Maternal Merit Sale Pens)

2:00 pm Maternal Merit Elite Commercial Bred Heifer Sale

AI-Bred to ABS Sires: TRUE NORTH, DYNAMIC, REPUBLIC, DEFINITIVE, PILOT

Consignors: Hermes Livestock, Valhalla Ranch, Warner Beef, Livingston Ranch, Stockmens Source

Breeds: Angus, F1 Black Baldies, Red Baldies, Red Angus, Balancers, SimAngus

New: SimAngus and Black Baldy open replacement heifers from Hermes Livestock and Weathers Family Farms



Mark your calendars!

Reach out to anyone below if you have questions!

BOBBY STRECKER | ABS District Sales Manager | 970.571.2722

ANTON HERMES | Hermes Livestock | 970.554.0996

DON MACLENNAN | Valhalla Ranch | 303.906.4374

DAN WARNER | Warner Beef Genetics | 308.962.6511

MT judge allows wolf hunting regulations to stand

A Helena, MT, judge has allowed the wolf hunting and trapping regulations the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted earlier this year to stand, despite flagging “serious concerns” about the state’s ability to accurately estimate Montana’s wolf population.

In a 43-page opinion, district court Judge Christopher Abbott wrote that leaving the 2025-2025 hunting and trapping regulations in place while he considers an underlying lawsuit will not “push wolf populations to an unsustainable level.”

In its lawsuit, first filed in 2022, WildEarth Guardians, Project Coyote, Footloose Montana and Gallatin Wildlife Association challenged four laws adopted by the 2021 Montana Legislature aimed at driving wolf numbers down. Earlier this year, the environmental groups added new claims to their lawsuit and asked the court to stop the 2025-2026 regulations from taking effect. The groups argued that a record-high wolf hunting and trapping quota of 458 wolves, paired with the potential for another 100 wolves to be killed for preying on livestock or otherwise getting into conflict with humans, would push the state’s wolf population “toward long-term decline and irreparable harm.”

According to the state’s population estimates—figures that the environmental groups dispute—there are approximately 1,100 wolves across the state.

In a Dec. 19 press release

about the decision, Connie Poten with Footloose Montana described the ruling as a “severe setback,” but argued that the “resulting slaughter will only strengthen our ongoing case for the protection of this vital species.”

The order comes more than a month after a two-hour hearing on the request for an injunction, and about three weeks after the trapping season opened across the majority of the state. The trapping season is set to close no later than March 15, 2026.

During the Nov. 14 hearing at the Lewis and Clark County courthouse, Alexander Scolavino argued on behalf of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission that hunters, trappers and wildlife managers won’t come close to killing 558 wolves this season. Scolavino added that the highest number shot or trapped in a single season was 350 wolves in 2020—well shy of the 458-wolf quota the commission, the governor-appointed board that sets hunting seasons for game species and furbearers, adopted in August.

Abbott agreed with Scolavino’s argument, writing in his order that it’s unlikely that hunters and trappers will “achieve anything near the quota established by the commission.” To reinforce his claim, he noted that hunters and trappers have not killed 334 wolves—the quota commissioners adopted for the 2024-2025 season—in any of the past five seasons.

“In short, nothing suggests that the 2025/2026 season is likely to push wolf populations to an unsustainable level or cause them irreparable injury,” he concluded.

Abbott seemed to suggest that livestock-oriented conflicts are waning and that it’s unlikely that the state will authorize the killing of 100 “conflict” wolves. He noted

that livestock depredations dropped from “a high of 233 in 2009 to 100 per year or less today.”

On other issues—namely the constitutional environmental rights asserted by the plaintiffs and the reliability of the state’s wolf population-estimation model—Abbott appeared to side with the plaintiffs. Those issues re-

main unresolved in the ongoing litigation before the court.

Abbott wrote that the plaintiffs “are likely to show that a sustainable wolf population in Montana forms part of the ‘environmental life support system’ of the state.” The environmental groups had argued in their filings that the existing wolf-management framework “will

deplete and degrade Montana’s wolf population,” running afoul of the state’s duty to “preserve the right to a clean and healthful environment.”

According to the state’s wolf management dashboard, 83 wolves have been shot or trapped as of Dec. 22. —**Amanda Eggert, Montana Free Press**

Brashears returns to USDA in FSIS role

AG NOMINEES (from page 1)

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) also welcomed Callahan’s confirmation.

“Chief agricultural negotiator is a vital seat at the table for U.S. agriculture,” said NPPC President Duane Stahler, adding that the organization is confident Callahan will “champion America’s pork producers by breaking down unfair trade practices and opening new markets for U.S. pork.”

The National Sorghum Producers (NSP) also expressed their support, emphasizing the sector’s reliance on export markets.

“Julie Callahan’s confirmation comes at an important moment for U.S. agriculture,” said NSP Chair Amy France. “Sorghum growers depend on strong, reliable trade relationships, and Julie understands both the technical and practical realities of agricultural trade.”

Under secretary role filled

The Senate also confirmed Brashears as USDA under secretary for food safety, a position she previously held from 2020 to 2021 during President Donald Trump’s first term.

In that role, Brashears oversees the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), which is responsible for ensuring the safety of the nation’s meat, poultry and egg products. After leaving the USDA, Brashears returned to Texas Tech University, where she served as a professor of food microbiology and food safety and directed the International Center for Food Industry Excellence, according to Meating Place.

Her research focused on pre- and post-harvest food safety interventions and the emergence of antimicrobial resistance. During her earlier tenure at USDA, Brashears helped launch FSIS’ “Roadmap to Reducing Salmonella: Driving Change Through Sci-

ence-Based Policy,” emphasizing data-driven approaches and modern technologies to target the most pathogenic strains.

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) welcomed Brashears’ return.

“Dr. Brashears brings extensive knowledge of the cattle industry and the beef supply chain, as well as experience from President Trump’s first term,” said Sigrid Johannes, NCBA senior director of government affairs. “We look forward to working with Under Secretary Brashears to help ensure a safe, wholesome food supply while protecting consumers’ trust.”

Herrell and Walk

Herrell was confirmed as assistant secretary of agriculture for congressional affairs and external relations. Herrell represented New Mexico’s second congressional district from 2021 to 2023 and previously served in the New Mexico

House of Representatives from 2011 to 2019. She made history as the first Republican Native American woman elected to Congress and the first Cherokee woman to serve in the House.

In addition, the Senate confirmed John Walk as USDA inspector general. Walk also serves as senior advisor to the secretary of Agriculture and carries additional responsibilities as judicial officer, acting as the department’s final decision-maker in certain formal adjudicatory and regulatory proceedings.

Before joining USDA, Walk served as associate counsel to Trump in the White House Counsel’s Office from 2017 through 2020, advising on constitutional authority, regulatory matters and executive actions. Earlier in his career, he worked as an attorney at the Department of Homeland Security, providing legal counsel on agency operations and federal litigation. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**



RED BLUFF

Bull & Gelding Sale

JANUARY 27-31, 2026



400 BULLS



100 GELDINGS



20 STOCK DOGS

plus WVM FEEDER/REPLACEMENT FEMALE SALE
AND HUGE WESTERN TRADE SHOW!

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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: 12/23/2025	Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	229.00	▲	228.22
CME Feeder Index	353.08	▲	350.05
Boxed Beef Average	355.77	▼	357.28
Average Dressed Steers	N/A	▲	N/A
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,467	▲	1,463
Weekly Slaughter**	587,000	▼	596,000
Weekly Beef Production***	525.8	▼	532.4
Hide/Offal Value	11.76	▼	11.83
Corn Price	4.49	▲	4.46
*Average weight for previous week. **Total slaughter for previous week. ***Estimated year-to-date figure in million pounds for previous week.			

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle						
	12/19	12/22	12/23	12/24	12/25	High*
Dec.	23040	23188	23058	N/A	N/A	24678
Feb.	23080	23233	23163	N/A	N/A	24830
Apr.	23000	23170	23153	N/A	N/A	25018
Jun.	22383	22558	22540	N/A	N/A	25093
CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle						
	12/19	12/22	12/23	12/24	12/25	High*
Jan.	34560	34885	34735	N/A	N/A	38103
Mar.	33940	34283	34128	N/A	N/A	38280
Apr.	33760	34000	33998	N/A	N/A	38020
May	33488	33715	33745	N/A	N/A	37860
*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	168	1,165	229.00
Live FOB Heifer	87	1,100	229.00
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	661	1,617	228.22
Live FOB Heifer	570	1,292	229.28
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Live FOB Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: DECEMBER 21, 2025		
	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	36,276	4,652
Formula	238,331	2,118
Negotiated Cash	84,967	144
Negotiated Grid	42,217	1,390
Packer Owned	10,388	N/A
Total	412,179	8,304

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS		FORWARD BEEF SALES	
Delivery Month		Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,978
Dec. '25	186,522	Neg. Sales 21+ days	1,277
Jan. '26	133,791	Formula sales	3,561
Feb. '26	152,479	Forward contract sales	157
Mar. '26	129,986	Domestic sales	6,218
Apr. '26	163,164	NAFTA Exports	156

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		213.83	+5.06
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		212.40	+5.48
Ontario Auctions			
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs		217.12	+7.17
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		N/A	N/A
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs		129.85	+3.06
*Price comparison from one week ago.			

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, December 23, 2025			
Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	458.70	456.74	433.49
601-700 lbs	407.12	415.39	399.07
701-800 lbs	366.94	366.55	368.39
801-900 lbs	334.75	319.23	334.58
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	456.73	462.57	395.20
501-600 lbs	403.10	412.22	361.18
601-700 lbs	367.16	366.89	328.56
701-800 lbs	326.81	322.40	284.45

USDA MEXICO TO U.S. WEEKLY LIVESTOCK IMPORTS				
Feeder cattle imports weekly and yearly volume.				
Species	Current Week	Previous Week	Current Year-to-date	Previous Year-to-date
	12/15/2025	12/8/2025		
Feeders	0	0	230,638	1,242,833

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE			
December 23, 2025			
Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary			
Receipts EST: N/A		Week Ago EST: N/A	Year Ago Act: N/A
THIS REPORT WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED AFTER MAY 12TH. THE BORDER WILL BE CLOSED FOR LIVESTOCK IMPORTS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.			
Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2		Feeder heifers: Medium and large 1&2	
500-600 lbs	N/A	500-600 lbs	N/A
600-700 lbs	N/A	600-700 lbs	N/A
700-800 lbs	N/A	700-800 lbs	N/A
Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2		Feeder steers: Medium and large 1&2	
500-600 lbs	N/A	500-600 lbs	N/A
600-700 lbs	N/A	600-700 lbs	N/A
700-800 lbs	N/A	700-800 lbs	N/A

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

Selected Auctions Week Ending December 23, 2025				Feeder prices for steers & heifers reflect medium and large 1 cattle, unless otherwise noted; * Indicates medium and large 1-2							
DATE			200-300 lb.	300-400 lb.	400-500 lb.	500-600 lb.	600-700 lb.	700-800 lb.	800 lb. -up	SLAUGHTER COWS SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
No report available Blackfoot, ID											
December 18 Burley, ID	346		533	482.50 430-434	387-417	382-395 376-380	182-355 328	205-323.50 267-272	103-162 161-167		
No report available Emmett, ID											
December 20 Eugene, OR	1,036		330-500* 330-420*	330-405* 310-400*	325-379* 265-341*	322-355* 255-305*	290-340* 247-310*	285-325*	145-153		1,200-2,600
No report available Madras, OR											
December 17 Vale, OR	2,612		522-577 425-515	450-538 410-507	375-463 350-430	350-396 335-390	335-372 300-335	275-337	152-168 160-185		
No report available Davenport, WA											
December 18 Toppenish, WA	1,080			370*	352.50*	335* 275*			148-157.50 160-179.50		

NORTHWEST

December 18	Orland, CA	3,595		400-665 380-560	300-578 280-530	300-485 280-455	275-424 255-370	275-366 255-330	250-334 230-307	140-164 135-190	2,500-5,300 2,200-4,275
No report available Escalon, CA											
No report available Famoso, CA											
December 17	Galt, CA	1,153		420-530	375-485 350-435	340-430 300-380	300-360 285-350	270-340 275-325		100-165 140-180	3,500-5,000
No report available Turlock, CA											
No report available Salina, UT											

December 22	Iowa	9,043		545-564 400-552.50	427.50-532.50 375-482	417-530 346-479	337.50-439 329-405.50	334-398 315-356	315-360 302.50-325	115-245 140-199	
No report available Miles City, MT											
No report available Bassett, NE											
December 20	Ericson, NE	4,620		555-587.50 490-562.50	512.50-595 447-505	452-532 400-470	409-471 382-410	391-413 349-397.50	347-375 327-345		
No report available Imperial, NE											
December 17	Kearney, NE	5,400		565	522-541 469-495	409-516 384.50-480	388-431 365-411	362.50-392.50 330-376.58	325-370 288-337.50		
December 19	Lexington, NE	1,593		555	501-511 449-488	470-488 408-451	387-438 357-404	357.50-386 347-349.50	348.50-362.50		
December 18	Ogallala, NE	2,570		557.50-560 515-522	520-582.50 452.50-487	452-532.50 390-472	387-417 362-390	370-378 343	280-360.50 285.50-292		
December 18	Valentine, NE	3,319		595 540-580	495-575 442.50-485	455-509 391-423	401-451 390-429	389-417			
December 19	Herreid, SD	3,449		555-560 520-530	480-505 412.50-477.50	447-492.50 387-437.50	370-433 362.50-382.50	367-395	314.50-351.50 293-306.75		
December 17	Torrington, WY	4,332		625-680 525-558	545-609 469-522	420-489 381-447	379-429 340-385	361-379.50 327-329.50	340-351 288-326.50		

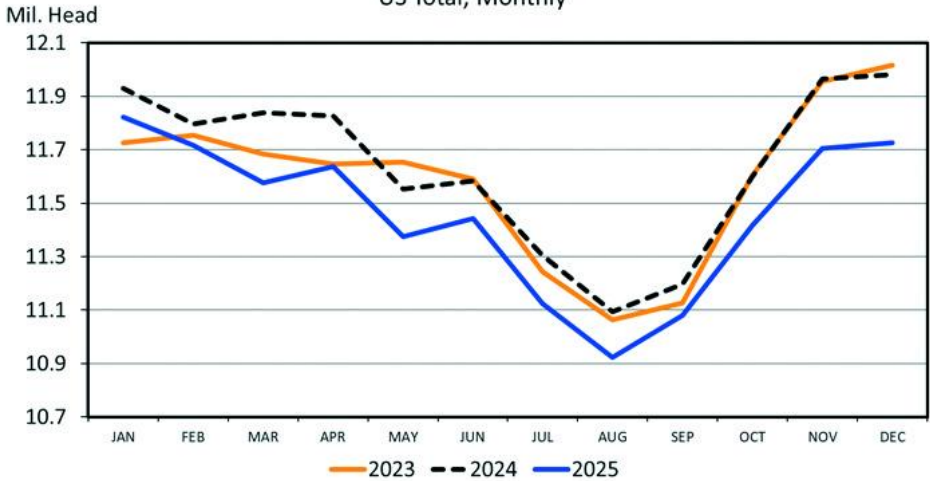
December 18	Willcox, AZ	1,213	550-635 500-570	250-620 235-570	250-535 150-425	160-452.50 100-398	160-385 105-350			130-165 155-180	4,250-4,700 2,850-3,000
December 22	Colorado	6,746	620-770 517.50-570	555-712.50 410-560	475-585 385-505	402.50-496 320-422.50	322.50-428 270-359	292.50-373 255-326	257.50-343 215-309	140-163 139-193	
December 17	La Junta, CO	2,464		555-725 440-497.50	480-585 357.50-480	402.50-475 345-410	350-390 312-342.50	275-285 310-360	267.50-300 292.50-322.50	148-163 171-193	
No report available Loma, CO											
December 17	Dodge City, KS	3,145		539-600 510	472.50-491 517.50	420-490 390-447.50	372-424 337-365	323-376 319-343	304.50-359 288-342	117.50-177 143-190	2,850-3,750 1,700-3,200
December 18	Pratt, KS	3,072		602.50-640 482.50-557.50	487.50-577.50 402.50-455	452.50-494 335-422.50	360-454 322-366	338-382 307-329.50	285-360 287-322	151-178 163-189	1,550-2,900
December 18	Salina, KS	2,894	560 520	480-575 490-530	520-548 435-495	425-500 352-427.50	384-424 342-369	340-382 317-356.50	325-358 314-320		
December 19	Clovis, NM	2,638	417-715 575-635	500-655 440-550	412-558 365-455	390-470 332-457	328-422 311-347	327-366 290-322	223-333 220-286	144-165 127-182	2,200-3,950 1,250-4,150
December 17	El Reno, OK	8,162	580-680 540-630	560-640 450-570	460-570 410-510	430-490 370-440	355-440 320-380	340-390 310-342	297.50-353 220-319.50		
No report available McAlester, OK											
No report available Oklahoma City, OK											
December 19	Cuero, TX	1,260	520-680 441-635	478-615 422-600	430-520 385-475	387-455 349-418	356-408 330-400	331-356 272-360		135-162 181-185	2,500-3,200
December 18	Dalhart, TX	2,227		632.50 495-515	460-547.50 450-477.50	390-454 355-417.50	360-405 320-350	345-368.50 315-337.50	225-345 300-315	130-172 162-186	3,300-3,700 2,550-3,400
December 18	San Angelo, TX	510	555-575	475-560	425-545 435-480	380-425 345-427.50	355-385 335-350	310-352.50	297.50-313 282.50	132-172 164-200	2,200-3,150
December 18	Tulia, TX	997		490 425-495	455-480 350-377	445 337-385	315-435 327-330	311-378.50 310-320	316-340.50	135-155 165	3,100 2,000

December 19	Alabama	7,862	535-615 435-650	460-605 417-500	420-480 365-437.50	360-435 335-387.50	348-370 300-342	320-350 285-312	310-311	130-179 148-207	2,200-4,600 1,200-4,500
No report available Lexington, KY											
No report available Joplin, MO											
December 22	Tennessee	5,189	450-660 430-500	430-540 365-445	395-500 352-427.50	360-469 295-408	327.50-390 270-354.50	285-365 250-317.50	305-336 220-272	120-190 155-210	1,450-4,900 1,325-4,300
December 22	Virginia	1,800		405-480 340-402.50	420-476 307-405	345-447.50 285-353	300-380 280-330	316.50-350 220-325	285-343 218-285		

CANADA		
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Cattle feedlot production is dropping fast

Figure 1. Cattle On Feed
US Total, Monthly



The December Cattle on Feed report showed a feedlot inventory of 11.727 million head, down 2.1% year over year and the smallest December feedlot inventory since 2017 (Figure 1). Feedlot inventories have declined year over

Table 1. December Cattle on Feed and June-November Placements

State	COF December	% Change YOY	Jun-Nov Placements	% Change YOY
	1000 Head		1000 Head	
Nebraska	2670	+2.7	2880	-7.2
Texas	2610	-9.4	2015	-16.2
Kansas	2440	+0.8	2510	-5.6
Colorado	910	-14.2	755	-21.8
Iowa	700	+6.1	454	+4.1
California	495	-2.9	345	+1.2
Idaho	345	+4.5	278	+1.5
Oklahoma	340	-6.8	275	-11.6
U.S.	11727	-2.1	10475	-8.6

Figure 2. Feedlot Placements and Marketings
1000 head, 12 Month Moving Average



ings in November were down 11.8% from one year ago and have decreased 7.9% in the last six months compared to last year.

Figure 2 shows the 12-month moving average annual trends for both placements and marketings. As of November, average feedlot placements for the past year are at the lowest level since April 2016, and average marketings are the lowest since August 2016. Average feedlot placements and marketings have decreased more

dramatically in 2025 as tightening feeder supplies were exacerbated by the lack of Mexican cattle imports.

The regional changes are significant. Feedlot inventories in Texas have been smaller than Nebraska the past two months, which has only happened a few times since 1971. Table 1 shows the current on-feed inventories and feedlot placement totals the past six months for the top eight cattle feeding states.

Placements have decreased

16.2% year over year in Texas compared to 7.2% in Nebraska. December feedlot inventories are down 9.4% in Texas but are up 2.7% year over year in Nebraska. Colorado, the No. 4 cattle feeding state, has also dropped sharply with the six-month total of placements down 21.8% and the on-feed total for December down 14.2% compared to last year. —Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist

Barns close for Christmas

MARKETS (from page 1)

throughout the cattle feeding and packing industry as cattle feeders establish new relationships with competing packers in some cases,” Fish said. “Plans for the timing of the elimination of the second shift at the Amarillo plants are less specific at this time. Bottom-line, 7,800 head of fed cattle slaughter capacity will be terminated as of January 20.”

Boxed beef prices began trading lower over the week. The Choice cutout closed at \$355.77, and the Select cutout closed at \$349.59.

USDA released its latest Cattle on Feed report on Dec. 19. As of Dec. 1, total cattle and calves on feed totaled 11.7 million head, down 2% from year-ago levels. Placements were 11% lower, and marketings were 12% lower—the second lowest for November since reporting began in 1996. Other disappearance totaled 53,000 head.

Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures also traded mostly lower. The January contract closed at \$344.62, and the March contract closed at \$339.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index closed higher at \$353.08.

Corn futures traded mostly higher, with the March contract closing at \$4.47 and the May contract at \$4.55.

Most sale barns were closed through Christmas week.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 3,205 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, steer calves under 700 lbs. sold \$20-40 higher and over 700 lbs. sold steady to \$4 higher. Heifer calves under 600 lbs. sold \$5-12 higher. Yearling feeder steers sold \$3-7 higher, and yearling heifers sold steady to \$5 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 757 lbs. sold from \$375-382, averaging \$376.90. — Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor

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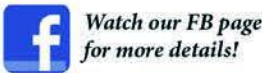
Lot #	Tattoo	BD	Reg No.	Sire Name	CED EPD	BW EPD	WW EPD	YW EPD	SC EPD	PAP EPD	Milk EPD	CW EPD	Marb EPD	RE EPD	\$W	\$F	\$G	\$B	\$C	
1	874	29-Dec	21266071	Crouch Congress	10	73	0.2	84	148	0.60	-0.93	28	81	1.56	0.97	91	131	99	230	369
2	05	3-Feb	21263882	Crouch Congress	4	78	2.1	89	155	1.44	-1.09	34	73	1.28	0.78	96	100	85	185	317
5	039	26-Dec	21263888	Crouch Congress	9	67	-0.6	71	127	-0.24	-1.80	26	54	1.33	1.08	74	99	91	191	322
7	900	29-Dec	21264242	Roseda Powerplant	12	66	1.0	89	157	0.82	1.75	32	83	1.43	0.77	92	133	90	223	343
10	016	4-Jan	21263885	Roseda Powerplant	6	72	1.8	88	155	0.34	0.00	31	74	1.55	0.88	88	128	95	224	344
11	346	25-Jan	21263967	Virginia Tech Statesman	9	74	0.6	82	143	0.38	-0.27	26	72	1.62	0.65	84	123	94	217	340
13	347	30-Jan	21263968	Virginia Tech Statesman	11	73	-1.0	72	135	0.84	-0.01	26	66	1.13	0.69	74	116	71	188	335
14	7038	9-Feb	21263852	Virginia Tech Statesman	4	75	0.0	88	163	1.12	0.33	24	75	1.37	0.60	82	117	84	201	335
18	201	11-Feb	21263924	Virginia Tech Statesman	4	85	2.1	85	149	1.11	-0.90	24	73	1.35	0.88	80	122	87	210	328
19	044	1-Feb	21263889	Crouch Congress	1	77	1.0	73	127	1.40	-1.29	34	70	1.29	1.20	85	120	93	214	342
20	308	27-Jan	21263953	Virginia Tech Statesman	8	72	0.7	80	145	0.72	1.34	23	84	1.21	1.07	75	146	81	227	356
21	18	1-Feb	21263898	Crouch Congress	9	79	0.3	80	135	0.79	-3.84	32	67	1.14	0.78	94	103	80	184	318
27	131	29-Jan	21263911	Crouch Congress	11	72	-0.1	71	130	0.94	-1.34	25	68	1.62	1.24	71	123	110	234	372
35	130	25-Feb	21263910	Crouch Congress	8	60	0.6	82	136	0.82	0.41	31	84	1.21	1.25	95	135	88	223	374
78	911	21-Mar	21263870	Virginia Tech Statesman	10	77	-0.5	84	154	0.40	1.31	25	79	1.26	0.72	81	137	78	216	333

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Haas Avg.	6	75	1.1	752	78	139	0.92	-0.57	27	67	1.27	0.79	76	114	83	197	316							
National Avg.	6	78	1.2	655	68	120	0.89	1.16	27	56	0.78	0.71	65	95	57	155	268							



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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

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

March 1, 2026 – The Harvey L. & Maud C. Sorensen Foundation is proud to honor the legacy of

Duncan C. McCormack III—an avid rancher, outdoorsman and educator—through an annual scholarship for students pursuing degrees in livestock management. To view the application, visit tinyurl.com/44ye4u7d.
March 15 – The Montana Stockgrowers Foundation is encouraging students to apply for scholarships through its Heritage Scholarship Program. Applications: mtbeeffoundation.org.

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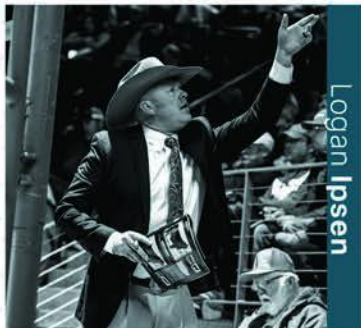
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NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW

2026 STOCK SHOW SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

7:30 AM – Open, Intermediate and Nursery Stock Dog Handler Meeting (Williams Yards)
8 AM – Stockyard Sort - Open Cattle Judging Contest (Williams Yards)
8:30 AM – Open and Nursery Stock Dog Trials (HW Stockyards Event Center)
9 AM – Breeding Sheep Wool and Meat Breeds (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Catch A Calf Market classes and showmanship (CoBank Arena)
9 AM – Rabbit Show Stadium Hall 1 (Stadium Arena)
9 AM – Wool Show Stadium Arena Perimeter (Stadium Arena)
10 AM – Stockmen in the Stockyards - Cattle Producer Education (HW Stockyards Event Center)
11 AM – Gelbvieh Futurity (HW Stockyards Event Center)
1 PM – Aberdeen Bull Show, Pen Show then Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
1 PM – Miniature Hereford Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
1 PM – Stockmen in the Stockyards - Cattle Producer Education (HW Stockyards Event Center)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

7:30 AM – Catch A Calf Awards Breakfast (The Legacy)
7:30 AM – Stockyard Sort - Open Cattle Judging Contest (Williams Yards)
8 AM – Aberdeen Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Intermediate, Open Finals and Nursery Stock Dog Trials (HW Stockyards Event Center)
8 AM – Open, and Intermediate Stock Dog Trials (Williams Yards)
9 AM – Breeding Sheep Wool and Meat Breeds (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Rabbit Show Stadium Hall 1 (Stadium Arena)
10 AM – Miniature Hereford Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
11 AM – Stockmen in the Stockyards Commercial Heifer Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
12 PM – Stockmen in the Stockyards Lunch Cattlemen's Lunch and Halter (HW Stockyards Event Center)
2 PM – Gelbvieh Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
2 PM – South Devon Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
4:30 PM – Stockmen in the Stockyards Commercial Heifer Live and Video Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)

MONDAY, JANUARY 12

8 AM – Intermediate, Open and Nursery Cattle Dog Classes (Williams Yards)
8 AM – Limousin Junior show followed by Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – South Devon Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
10 AM – Gelbvieh Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13

8 AM – Sheep Dog Trials (Stadium Arena)
9 AM – Gelbvieh Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Limousin Pen Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
2 PM – Junior Market Lamb Showmanship (Rodgers Livestock Center)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14

8 AM – Shorthorn Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Junior Market Lamb Show (Stadium Arena)
2 PM – Maternal Merit Heifer Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
6 PM – Junior Market Lamb Show Grand Drive (Rodgers Livestock Center)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15

8 AM – Hereford Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Wool Judging Collegiate/4-H/FFA Contest (Adams County Fairgrounds)
10 AM – Shorthorn Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
2 PM – Maine Sale Cattle Feature (HW Stockyards Event Center)
5:30 PM – Summit Shorthorn Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16

8 AM – Angus Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Shorthorn Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8:30 AM – Collegiate Livestock Contest (Stadium Arena)
9 AM – Hereford Pen and Carload Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
12 PM – Angus Foundation Female Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
1 PM – Maine Anjou Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
3 PM – Junior Market Goat Showmanship (Rodgers Livestock Center)
4 PM – Junior Wether Doe Show (Stadium Arena)
4 PM – National Western Hereford Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
5:30 PM – Embryos on Snow Cattle Genetics Sale (The Legacy)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

8 AM – Angus ROV Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Hereford Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8:30 AM – Collegiate Livestock Carload Judging Contest (HW Stockyards Event Center)
9 AM – Junior Market Goat Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Simmental Bull Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
11 AM – Maine Anjou Power in the Pens Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
2 PM – 45th National Charolais Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
4:30 PM – Western Elite Female and Bull Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
6 PM – Collegiate Livestock Judging Awards Banquet (The Legacy)
6 PM – Junior Market Goat Show Grand Drive (Rodgers

Livestock Center)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

8 AM – Charolais Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Chianina Junior Show followed by Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Collegiate Meats Judging Contest (Offsite)
9 AM – Angus Pen and Carload Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
9 AM – Simmental Heifer Pen Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
10 AM – Maine Anjou Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
2 PM – The One and Only Simmental Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)

MONDAY, JANUARY 19

7:30 AM – Collegiate Meats Judging Banquet (National Western Club)
8 AM – Maine Anjou Junior Show (CoBank Arena)
9 AM – Charolais Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)

2 PM – Junior Market Swine Showmanship (Rodgers Livestock Center)
2 PM – Simmental Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20

8 AM – Junior Market Swine Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Red Angus Junior then Open Show (CoBank Arena)
8 AM – Simmental Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
1:30 PM – Junior Market Steer Showmanship (CoBank Arena)
6 PM – Junior Market Swine Show Grand Drive (CoBank Arena)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

8 AM – Junior Market Steer Show (CoBank Arena)
8 AM – Red Angus Pen Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
6 PM – Junior Market Steer Show Grand Drive (CoBank Arena)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

ALL DAY – Yaks on Display (Stockyards Display Pens)
8 AM – Highland Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

ALL DAY – Yaks on Display (Stockyards Display Pens)
7:45 AM – Junior Market Premier Exhibitor Interviews (HW Stockyards Event Center)
8 AM – Highland Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
9 AM – Bison Events (HW Stockyards Event Center)
10 AM – Alpaca Show (Stadium Arena)
10 AM – Llama Show and Events (Stadium Arena)
12 PM – Longhorn Youth and Haltered (HW Stockyards Event Center)
2 PM – Zebu Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
6 PM – Auction of Junior Livestock Champions (Rodgers Livestock Center)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

ALL DAY – Yaks On Display

(Williams Yards)
9 AM – Longhorn Non Haltered Show (HW Stockyards Event Center)
10 AM – Alpaca Show (Stadium Arena)
10 AM – Llama Show and Events (Stadium Arena)
10 AM – National Bison Sale (HW Stockyards Event Center)
10 AM – National Highland Sale (Rodgers Livestock Center)
10 AM – Prospect Heifer Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
2 PM – Galloway Open Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
7 PM – The Drive - Supreme Heifer - Pre Show (Stadium Arena)
8 PM – The Drive - Awarding Supreme Junior Heifer during rodeo performance (Denver Coliseum)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

8 AM – Boer Goat Open and Junior Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)
8 AM – Prospect Steer Show (Rodgers Livestock Center)

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Agencies paid out over \$119M in EAJA awards in 2024

EAJA HEARING (from page 1)

fees when a party prevails against the federal government and the government’s position was not substantially justified. Gosar argued that loopholes now allow well-funded environmental nonprofits to sue federal agencies and recover taxpayer-funded legal fees repeatedly. Gosar pointed out that from fiscal years 2019 through 2024, the Interior Department and USDA paid approximately \$24.8 million in EAJA awards, with about 76% going to a “handful” of envi-

ronmental groups and their lawyers, who have been “reimbursed at rates as high as \$500 per hour, paid for by American taxpayers.”

Rancher perspective

A central witness was Todd Wilkinson, owner of Wilkinson Livestock in South Dakota and former president of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, who detailed how repeated litigation affects ranchers who rely on timely federal decisions to sustain their operations on public lands. “EAJA was created with the

best intentions, to allow Americans to challenge government actions without facing crushing legal costs,” Wilkinson said. “Unfortunately, like so many well-intentioned programs, it became vulnerable to abuse when oversight faded.”

Wilkinson told lawmakers that ranchers pay the price when agencies are tied up in court.

“When a federal agency can’t make a decision because it’s buried in litigation, that affects our ability to graze, plan, and operate,” he said. “Delay isn’t just an inconvenience in agriculture—delay can be dev-

astating to a family operation.”

Sharp divide at hearing

Ranking Member Rep. Maxine Dexter (D-OR-3) defended EAJA as a critical access-to-justice statute, arguing that awards are only granted when plaintiffs prevail and when the government’s position is not “substantially justified.” Dexter warned that narrowing eligibility could undermine the ability of veterans, Tribes, rural communities and small organizations to hold the federal government accountable. Dexter

noted that the vast majority of EAJA awards are tied to Social Security and veterans’ claims rather than environmental litigation.

According to the Administrative Conference of the U.S., in fiscal year 2024, 19 agencies paid out over \$119 million, with the Interior Department paying over \$2.2 million and the USDA paying over \$1.5 million.

Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR-04) said exemptions for tax-exempt organizations have created incentives for serial litigation in the natural resources arena. Westerman pointed to repeated procedural lawsuits under statutes such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act that can trigger fee awards even when agency decisions ultimately remain unchanged.

Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA-02) rejected that characterization, arguing that environmental litigation often arises from understaffed agencies missing statutory deadlines and that courts already apply multiple safeguards before awarding fees.

Several representatives focused on how EAJA awards affect agency budgets. Rep. Jeff Crank (R-CO-05) argued that when fees are paid from agency appropriations, money is diverted from core mission areas such as forest management, permitting and wildfire mitigation. Rep. Pete Stauber (R-MN-08) and Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-WI-07) raised similar concerns, citing U.S. Forest Service budget documents showing millions of dollars redirected toward litigation-related costs in recent years.

Witnesses also echoed these concerns. Travis Joseph, president and CEO of the American Forest Resource Council, testified that litigation rarely improves environmental out-

comes but frequently adds years of delay.

“Winning a lawsuit isn’t leading to better conservation,” Joseph said. “It’s leading to more process, more cost, and less work on the ground.”

He described projects designed to reduce wildfire risk or improve forest health that were stalled for years despite ultimately unchanged outcomes.

Regina Lennox, senior litigation counsel for Safari Club International, recommended reforms, including hard caps on attorneys’ fees, limits on repeat awards and narrowing the definition of a “prevailing party.” She told lawmakers that some attorneys receive EAJA reimbursements at rates exceeding \$500 per hour, even when they are salaried, in-house counsel for nonprofit organizations.

Providing a counterpoint, Daniel Rohlf, a professor at Lewis and Clark Law School, testified that EAJA already contains multiple safeguards against abuse. Rohlf said that plaintiffs must establish standing, prevail on the merits and overcome the government’s “substantially justified” defense before any fee award is granted. Rohlf argued that environmental and administrative law are highly specialized fields and that higher fee rates reflect the expertise required to litigate complex federal cases.

Throughout the hearing, witnesses and lawmakers emphasized that restoring EAJA’s original intent will require continued congressional oversight and targeted reforms, including enforcing a true hourly fee cap, limiting repeat awards, narrowing the definition of a prevailing party, applying net-worth limits to large nonprofits and restricting eligibility to plaintiffs with direct, personal interests. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

How to choose the right type of cow for the land

As the beef industry evolves, Kansas State (K-State) University beef cattle experts say producers may benefit from rethinking long-held assumptions about cow size, milk production and grazing efficiency.

In a recent episode of the “Cattle Chat” podcast produced by the university’s Beef Cattle Institute, experts discussed how modern feedlot trends are influencing decisions at the cow-calf level—including whether bigger cows or smaller cows create more value on pasture.

One topic raised was whether weaning weight should remain the primary benchmark for cow-calf operations. With more calves moving earlier into backgrounding or short feeding periods, some producers may get better insight from the final sale weight according to the experts.

“Maybe it’s not weaning weight we should worry about; it’s sale weight,” beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said. “Earlier weaning paired with a short feeding period could change the long-term profit-

ability picture.”

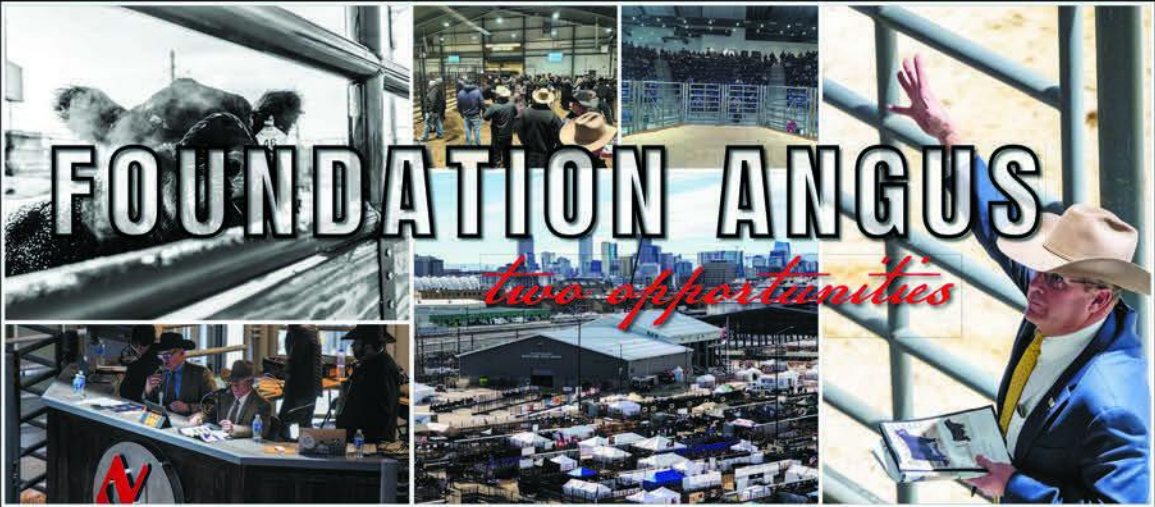
The specialists also questioned whether today’s larger, higher-milking cows best fit grass-based systems, where forage quality remains largely unchanged.

“Maybe we should be a lot smaller and lower milk production because that is (a lower) nutrient demand; our grass, the calories per bite, is the same now as it was a hundred years ago,” Lancaster said.

As mature cow size increases, so do maintenance requirements, which can shift stocking rates and pasture economics.

Still, the team acknowledged that bigger cows offer advantages in some environments, especially where affordable by-product feeds are available. K-State veterinarian Bob Larson noted that supplementing cows on pasture could help support larger, heavier-milking genetics.

The discussion reflects a broader industry trend as producers weigh cow size, feed resources, calf weights and profitability. — **K-State Research and Extension**



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