

INSIDE WLJ

PONZI SCHEME — North Dakota cattle broker pleads guilty to Ponzi scheme. Page 4

COST OF FUEL — California diesel prices skyrocket, adding to farmers’ financial stress. Page 9

A LOOK BACK IN HISTORY

“The Hillshire Brands Company’s Ball Park brand announced it has teamed up with pro football legends Deion Sanders, Jason Taylor and Tony Siragusa to launch its ‘Burgers Across America’ Facebook contest. The contest calls on consumers to share how they top Ball Park Flame Grilled Patties using regionally inspired ingredients by entering the contest on the Ball Park Brand Facebook page,” read the Oct. 15, 2012, “Beef Bits” WLJ article.

INDEX

Opinion..... P-2

Markets..... P-10

Classifieds P-14

Sale Calendar..... P-15

Sale Reports..... P-15

Judge weighs injunction blocking USDA reorganization

— **Stay extended through Oct. 13**

A federal judge is considering whether to block the USDA from

moving forward with a sweeping reorganization that unions and other plaintiffs argue violates congressional spending restrictions. Judge Vince Chhabria in the

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California told attorneys during a Sept. 29 hearing that he had not determined whether to grant a preliminary

injunction.

“I’m not firmly decided as to whether I’m going to grant the preliminary injunction motion or not,” Chhabria said, according to Government Executive.

Chhabria extended an administrative stay through Oct. 13, temporarily keeping USDA from enforcing deadlines tied to management-directed reassignment letters.

A preliminary injunction could halt relocation plans affecting roughly 2,600 USDA employees while the case moves forward. Chhabria also indicated that if he grants the injunction, he would not stay his own order while the administration pursues an appeal, Government Executive reported.

Congressional authority

A coalition of federal employee unions, nonprofit organizations and local governments brought the lawsuit, challenging USDA’s reorganization. At the center of the dispute is language Congress included in fiscal year 2026 appropriations laws

See LAWSUIT on page 13



Lance Cheung/USDA

A federal judge has yet to decide whether to block the USDA from carrying out its reorganization plan. Pictured here, the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building in Washington, D.C., the main USDA administrative building.

Report: Imports have not lowered beef prices

— **Allocation not met**

A recent American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) report indicates that increased beef imports have not actually lowered prices for consumers.

In late August, President Donald Trump signed a proclamation temporarily expanding the in-quota quantity for lean beef trimmings by 300,000 metric tons (mt) in an effort to “ensure affordable beef for American consumers.” The proclamation also encouraged retailers to sell the beef at a 25% discount.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) commodity status reports, monthly imports under the additional tariff-free beef quota have so far remained below the allocated quantities. Trump’s import plan allows an additional 100,000 metric tons

of tariff-rate quota beef each month from September through November, amounting to a total of 300,000 mt, or about 661 million pounds.

CBP reports the additional imports under the “affordable beef” quota description in its weekly commodity status reports.

September was the first month under the three-month tranche plan. As of Sept. 28, CBP reported 37,486 mt of “affordable beef” had been imported through the month, approximately 37.5% of the monthly allocation.

In its latest Oct. 5 weekly report, CBP reported about 2,180 mt of imported “affordable beef” since October began, or 2.18% of the month’s allocated total.

AFBF report

In a Sept. 23 Intel report, AFBF

See IMPORT REPORT on page 8

Newsom signs California farm labor reform bills

— **Ag groups oppose measures**

California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) has signed two agricultural labor bills that will set a \$19.75 minimum wage for certain workers and double farm labor contractor bond requirements, drawing concerns from farm groups about rising costs and regulatory burdens.

Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 2227 on Sept. 18, increasing bonding requirements and expanding penalties for farm labor contractors, followed by AB 2646 on Sept. 30, which establishes a higher minimum wage for certain agricultural workers.

AB 2646

AB 2646, authored by Assembly member Maggy Krell (D-Sacra-

mento), establishes a \$19.75 hourly minimum wage beginning Jan. 1, 2027, for what the law defines as “approved agricultural employees” and “corresponding employees.” The wage will be adjusted annually based on the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment.

Although the law does not specifically mention H-2A workers in its definition, employment law firm Fisher & Phillips LLP said workers brought into California through the H-2A program will realistically fall under the “approved agricultural employee” category.

The law also applies the higher wage to California residents who perform the same or substantially similar agricultural work during the same period for the same employer and in the same county as a covered temporary worker.

Supporters, including the United

Farm Workers, argued the higher rate is needed to protect farmworkers from downward wage pressure as food, housing and other living expenses rise.

Ag opposition

Agricultural organizations strongly opposed the measure, arguing the higher wage will increase production costs for farms already facing tight margins.

California Farm Bureau (CFB) opposed both measures, raising concerns about the additional costs and regulatory requirements they place on agricultural employers and farm labor contractors.

Steven Fenaroli, director of political advocacy for CFB, told WLJ the new laws come as producers

See LABOR BILLS on page 6

Slaughter recovery supports market

Cattle futures traded sideways week over week. Cash trade volume remained light, while slaughter volumes have recovered from the previous weeks’ disruptions.

Live cattle futures closed modestly higher over the week. The October contract gained a little over \$2 to close at \$221.87, and the December contract gained 38 cents to close at \$223.55.

Cash trade through Thursday totaled about 4,000 head. Live steers sold for \$218, and dressed steers sold for \$345.

“There’s still a chance that trade could be delayed until Friday as feedlot managers may hold out to see if packer demand improves as time passes,” wrote ShayLe Stewart, DTN livestock analyst, in her Thursday midday comments. “It’s unlikely packers will get too much more aggressive this week as they were able to secure just over 88,000 head in last week’s market.”

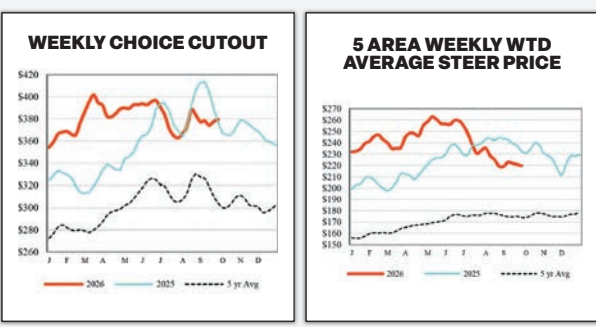
Cash trade for the week ending Oct. 4 totaled 88,019 head. Live steers averaged \$219.01, and dressed steers averaged \$345.

The national weekly direct beef type price distribution for

- the week of Sept. 28 to Oct. 5 was the following on a live basis:
- Negotiated purchases: \$221.41.
 - Formula net purchases: \$227.63.
 - Forward contract net purchases: \$230.11.
 - Negotiated grid net purchases: \$232.95.
- On a dressed basis
- Negotiated purchases: \$346.27.

- Formula net purchases: \$358.73.
- Forward contract net purchases: \$376.63.

See MARKETS on page 11



PERIODICAL: Time Sensitive Priority Handling

↑ LIVE STEERS N/A

↑ DRESSED STEERS N/A

↓ CME FEEDER \$337.87

WEEK ENDING: 10-8-26

COMMENTS

What ‘roadless’ means

On Aug. 20, the USDA published a proposed rule to rescind what is commonly known as the “Roadless Rule,” which has largely constrained certain activities in designated roadless areas since 2001. For National Forest System grazing permittees, rescission of the Roadless Rule is less about gaining new grazing rights or necessarily changing existing rights, and more about what may change around existing allotments. Changes may include increased opportunities for road access and improved allotment conditions through expanded timber harvest and vegetation management.

The Roadless Rule’s enactment did not generally prohibit livestock grazing or terminate grazing permits, so rescission does not suddenly “open” allotments or new acres to livestock. Rather, the rule established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction and timber harvesting within “roadless areas” on National Forest System lands. Currently, the Roadless Rule applies to more than 44 million acres across the U.S.

Practically, if rescission is finalized, this does not mean that roads can suddenly be built or timber harvested without restriction. Decisions regarding these activities would rest with individual forest managers and be guided by their land management plans. These plans, required under the National Forest Management Act of 1976, are extensive roadmaps that guide vegetation management, grazing considerations, species management, timber harvesting and other “multiple uses.”

Specific to timber harvest, the Roadless Rule prohibits the cutting, sale or removal of timber unless limited exceptions are met. Yet, those exceptions are “expected to be infrequent.” Upon successful rescission, individual forests would have greater flexibility to authorize timber harvest in otherwise prohibited areas, as long as land management plans and other regulations are followed. This will expand the opportunities for fuels reduction and wildfire mitigation. Meaning national forest timber production may see some of the most significant effects of rescission.

For grazing permittees, these management decisions and otherwise prohibited acts under the Roadless Rule can have practical consequences on the ground. Vehicle and road access is necessary to maintain fences, maintain stock tanks or water developments, move livestock, haul materials, and allow ranchers to more easily respond to changing conditions across an allotment. Rescission of the Roadless Rule does not give permittees an unrestricted right to construct roads or operate vehicles wherever they choose. Rather, local managers would have greater flexibility to determine when and where such access is appropriate.

Vegetation and timber management is equally important as a potential increase in access. Timber harvest and fuels reduction measures can affect range health and forage availability. Removing dense timber can change forage conditions and improve livestock distribution. Those changes may also improve access to portions of an allotment that are difficult to effectively utilize. Perhaps the most important consideration for the West is greater flexibility for reducing wildfire risk. Rescission does not guarantee that a particular timber sale or harvest will occur, but it opens the door for those activities to be considered, where previously prohibited.

So, what does this rescission mean for public lands ranchers? The significance of rescinding the Roadless Rule is unlikely to be found in the grazing permit itself. Instead, it will be found in the management decisions made around that permit, where roads can be constructed or reconstructed, where vegetation can be treated, how forests address wildfire risk, and how individual forests balance those activities. This may be a win-win for industry and agriculture. None of those outcomes are guaranteed by rescission alone. But allowing those decisions to be made based on the local on-the-ground realities of individual forests creates opportunities that a nationwide prohibition cannot.

However, it is critical to note that since the Roadless Rule was enacted in 2001, it has been subject to extensive debate, rescissions, reregulation and litigation. Will this proposal be the end of the Roadless Rule forever? I am not so sure. But it is a step in the right direction to remove broad regulatory red tape and allow more effective management.

For National Forest System permittees located in Colorado and Idaho, state-specific roadless regulations will remain unchanged if the proposal is finalized. It is also important to note that the USDA’s proposed Aug. 20 action is just that, a proposal. The public comment period required under the Administrative Procedure Act closed on Oct. 6. The USDA must now consider public comments prior to issuing any final rule, which may include edits or changes to the August proposal. Following a final rescission of the Roadless Rule, the effects may be gradual, but the change offers hope for more effective forest management, improved access, and reduced wildfire risk in the years ahead. — **ELISE BALIN HILL**

(Elise Balin Hill is an attorney for Nicholas Law in Cheyenne, WY, where she covers civil litigation, agriculture, natural resources, water, environmental and energy law.)



BALIN HILL



GUEST OPINION

WHY THE SHRINKING CASH MARKET MATTERS TO EVERY PRODUCER

America’s entire cattle industry depends on a market that is disappearing before our eyes: the negotiated cash cattle market. Restoring that market must be a priority as USDA and the Justice Department carry out the president’s executive order calling for stronger enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act.

The negotiated cash market is where cattle producers and packers bargain directly over price. Those transactions establish benchmarks used to price cattle sold through other arrangements. They also influence what feedlots can pay for feeder cattle, what stocker operators can pay for calves and, ultimately, what cow-calf producers receive.

Whether you sell finished cattle, yearlings or calves, this market affects your livelihood.

Yet the national negotiated cash share of cattle purchases fell from 52.1% in 2005 to just 17.8% in 2025. That is a decline of nearly two-thirds and the lowest annual share in the 21-year USDA series. These figures exclude negotiated-grid purchases, which are reported separately.

USDA has also documented regional cash transactions approaching zero in some weeks, notably in Texas and Kansas.

The damage to public price information is already visible. For the week ending Sept. 13, confidentiality restrictions prevented publication of negotiated cash prices in Texas-Oklahoma-New Mexico and Kansas. Colorado’s negotiated-purchase report remained withheld. Three of the five traditional reporting regions lacked these public cash prices.

Producers need competing bids and reliable information to evaluate them. A thin market puts both at risk.

When producers have fewer practical buyers, they can face delayed sales, additional feed and financing costs, and pressure to accept marketing arrangements they would otherwise reject. Packers can benefit when weakened competition lowers acquisition costs, including payments on cattle priced using cash-market benchmarks.

That is why the agencies must investigate how procurement practices weaken independent bidding, restrict producers’ selling opportunities and suppress prices below the level that competitive conditions would produce. They should also measure how that harm travels upstream to feeder-cattle, stocker and cow-calf operations.

Record cattle prices do not answer this question. The question is whether producers would receive more in a competitive market.

The Packers and Stockyards Act prohibits conduct undertaken for the purpose or with the effect of manipulating or controlling prices. USDA should use that authority to investigate specific practices and pursue enforcement supported by the evidence.

Investigators should examine whether packers agree to delay bidding, refrain from bidding during particular peri-

ods, divide suppliers or territories, or avoid competing against designated buyers. They should obtain bidding records, procurement instructions, communications and delivery schedules to establish what happened and who was harmed.

They should also investigate whether packers strategically back up market-ready cattle, redirect purchases outside the region that sets their contract prices, or use imported supplies to weaken domestic cash competition. Coordination with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission should examine suspected links between futures trading and manipulation of cash cattle prices.

Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, USA (R-CALF USA) recommends three rulemaking proposals to strengthen these enforcement efforts.

First, prevent business justifications from excusing procurement practices demonstrated to reduce competition and thereby manipulate or control cattle prices. Once that harm is established, calling the practice a business strategy should not provide a shield.

Second, remove the separate competitive-injury prerequisite under Section 202(a). Producers should be able to challenge unfair, unjustly discriminatory or deceptive practices without also proving harm to competition across the broader market.

Third, require minimum weekly negotiated cash purchases at each covered cattle slaughtering plant, regardless of common ownership. Each plant must meet its own obligation. Companies should not satisfy that requirement by pooling purchases across plants or counting negotiated-grid transactions that merely use a reported cash benchmark.

USDA should establish regional standards that support genuine independent bidding, timely market access and representative price discovery. Reporting reforms must accompany those standards so producers regain useful regional price information.

Where statutory barriers prevent effective action, USDA and the Justice Department should seek targeted legislation from Congress. Congress can expressly establish these protections and provide the authority needed to enforce them.

Success must be measured where it matters: Can producers obtain competing bids, sell cattle promptly and evaluate offers using reliable prices?

These are steps toward restoring producers’ bargaining power and preserving opportunities for the next generation of ranchers.

Restoring the negotiated cash market protects the entire cattle production chain. The president has called for stronger enforcement. USDA, the Justice Department and Congress must now deliver meaningful competition for America’s independent cattle producers. — **Bill Bullard, CEO, R-CALF USA**



OBITUARY



Richard Merrill Ostrum; 1940-2026

Richard Merrill Ostrum was born March 5, 1940, in Columbus, MT. He was the oldest son of Richard and Cora Ostrum. He joined his older sister, Coral Jean, and years later his younger brother, Robert, was born. The family made their home on the banks of Butcher Creek raising cattle, sheep and hay.

He attended Absarokee Elementary School and graduated from Absarokee High School in 1958. On Dec. 4, 1953, at age 13, he lost his mother to cancer, which had a profound impact on his life.

On Aug. 18, 1958, he married Kathleen Pelton, and they had a love story that would last 68 years. With a broken heart, he made it 17 days from her passing.

After marriage, they made their home on a small lease on Fishtail Creek. From there, they settled on the banks of the West Rosebud River behind the town of Fishtail. Their daughter, Venessa, was born, along with their son, Terrill, a year and a half later.

Merrill had a true passion for merchandising livestock utilizing the auction method. In the mid-70s to the mid-80s he launched a ranch production sale under the name of R.M. Ostrum Ranch Co. With his mom at his side, he

was a force in the industry. They sold registered and commercial Angus cattle, registered and commercial sheep, ranch geldings, work horse teams and stock dogs! He truly loved hosting those events and entertaining people across the country.

To stay engaged, he later partnered with Joe Goggins on many cow and bred heifer projects, marketing them in the J&L sale. There is one more to go that he will be watching from above.

Merrill served on the board of the Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE) and was president. NILE was a true passion of his for the people he met and the opportunity that it gave to young people in agriculture.

Merrill led a great life filled with faith, family and friends. He enjoyed swinging Kathleen around the dance floor and trips with friends. But he enjoyed, most of all, his family, and was

so proud of them.

Merrill is survived by his daughter, Venessa (Ken) Monson; son, Terrill Ostrum; grandchildren, Brande (Clayton) Young, Dustin (Nikki) Ostrum and Jenessa (Adam) Sawyer; great-grandchildren, Caitlin (Tyler) Fowler, Keara Young, Tysen Young, Preston and Stetson Ostrum, Augustus and Truett Sawyer; great great-grandchildren, Delaney Fowler and Baby Fowler; brother, Robert Ostrum; and many nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends. He is preceded in death by his parents, Richard and Cora Ostrum; wife, Kathleen; and sister, Coral Jean Delger.

Memorials may be made to the Absarokee Fire Department (P.O. Box 743, Absarokee, MT 59001), Absarokee Senior Center (P.O. Box 92, Absarokee, MT 59001) or Museum of the Beartooths (P.O. Box 1, Columbus, MT 59019)

Letters to the editor: Letters for publication must be no longer than 675 words and must include the writer’s name, location and phone number. Phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be shortened for space requirements. Obituaries must be no longer than 700 words. Send a letter to the editor or obituary by emailing editorial@wlj.net or mailing to Western Livestock Journal, Attn: Editorial Dept., P.O. Box 20605, Oklahoma City, OK 73156.

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Mountain hayfields can filter nutrients and support clean water

Irrigated mountain hayfields can act as large filtration systems that reduce sediment, phosphorus and other contaminants from runoff, sometimes improving the quality of water flowing back into the environment, Colorado State University (CSU) research has found.

The findings result from a producer-driven, three-year study by CSU's Agricultural Water Quality Program in the Yampa, Gunnison and Colorado River basins.

The examination of agricultural impacts on water quality found consistently low nutrient concentrations in runoff from Colorado hayfields—lower than levels warranting concern and sometimes lower than when the water was applied to fields.

"These irrigated ag lands in the mountains are essentially large grass filter strips," said Erik Wardle, director of the Agricultural Water Quality Program,

who conducted the research. "Their impacts are very low, and in some cases, they even have the potential to clean the water, depending on management and localized conditions."

Excess nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can cause algal blooms, which are unhealthy for people and animals, especially aquatic life. These nutrients are found in fertilizer, but they're also found in nature, wastewater and urban stormwater.

Planting perennial grass strips along the edges of fields where row crops such as corn and soybeans are grown is a best practice to prevent fertilizer and sediment from running off into water supplies. The study found that Colorado's mountain meadows, which are large perennial grass fields, serve this purpose when nutrients required for plant growth are managed judiciously.

Data from the study ben-

efits producers and state agencies by providing baseline measurements and showing that voluntary adoption of best management practices can effectively mitigate the impacts of agricultural nutrient use in mountain meadow hay systems.

CSU's Agricultural Water Quality Program monitored irrigation water quality before and after it was applied to mountain hayfields, finding that hayfield irrigation has low impact on surface water and sometimes filters nutrients and sediment from water.

Colorado's nutrient control Regulation 85 restricts nutrients to protect water quality. The Water Quality Control Division monitors wastewater treatment plants and some industrial sources but currently does not regulate most agricultural systems. However, agriculture is continually evaluated, and the division has the authority to recom-

mend regulations if deemed necessary. For now, agricultural producers are tasked with using best management practices and demonstrating sufficient progress in water quality protection.

The Colorado Ag Water Alliance, a group of producers and partner organizations dedicated to preserving water resources, requested the study to understand whether hay production and grazing were contributing nutrients to mountain surface water. The study was funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency. Several producers, one in each basin, volunteered their property for water quality monitoring. CSU's Agricultural Water Quality Program tested irrigation water before and after it was applied to fields.

Greg Peterson, executive director of Colorado Ag Water Alliance, said this

was the first study of its kind to examine mountain meadow hay operations and water quality.

"A lot of us in the agricultural community were a bit worried about experimenting with these kinds of practices, because what if we see something wrong? Are we going to get in trouble?" Peterson said. "But it really gave participating producers the freedom to experiment and identify things that were a benefit to them and water quality."

Mountain meadow hay has a short growing season, and producers in these systems typically don't use much fertilizer, which is expensive. Participating in the project allowed them to test different management practices to optimize fertilizer use and water quality.

"One of the sites was just open space, and there wasn't much difference from the local ranch and that open space site," Peterson added.

Colorado Farm Bureau President Carlyle Currier, who is also a board member of the Colorado Ag Water Alliance, said he was pleased with the results of the study. Currier chose to evaluate the area of his ranch he was concerned had the most potential for contamination. Results

validated that the water leaving his field was generally better quality than the water used to irrigate it.

"Farmers and ranchers are the original environmentalists," Currier said. "We use natural resources to produce our crops and livestock, and they're very dependent on having a good clean environment. We'd destroy our livelihood if we destroy the environment. My family's been in operation on the same land for well over 100 years. To know that we are protecting the environment and doing things right is very good for us."

Hay production and forage pastures feed livestock, Colorado's top agricultural commodity. Wardle said ranches are important to mountain communities and the economy.

"Many of these ranches have been there 100 years or more, so they're very much a part of the ecosystem in the mountains," he said.

The mountain meadow hay study has led to a new Colorado Water Plan project in the Yampa River Basin. The new project will demonstrate and evaluate best management practices in mountain meadow hay systems, building on this producer-driven research. — CSU Extension

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ND man pleads guilty in cattle Ponzi scheme

A North Dakota cattle broker has pleaded guilty to a charge stemming from an investigation that found a beef marketing company operated as a Ponzi scheme.

Taylor Bang of Killdeer, ND, pleaded guilty Sept. 9 to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud in U.S. District Court in Texas, according to court records.

Sentencing has been set for Jan. 7. The maximum sentence could include up to five years in prison, a fine and restitution payments.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture Oct. 5 ordered Taylor Bang Cattle Sales to cease any livestock-related sales. Bang's guilty plea triggered the cease and desist order and the revocation of Bang's livestock dealer license.

Bang was among five people charged earlier this year in the Agridime investigation. The charges were filed in Texas, where Agridime was based.

A judge in August 2024 determined that Agridime had operated as a Ponzi scheme, paying off early investors with money raised from new investors, instead of paying investors with profits from the company.

The company bought cattle and sold frozen beef from its website to consumers. But payments to investors and cattle producers dried up, with the company owing investors \$220 million, court records alleged.

Many of those owed money were in western North Dakota, where Bang bought cattle for Agridime. The North Dakota Securities Commission has said North Dakota investors were owed about \$40 million when federal authorities took over the business late in 2023.

The North Dakota Securities Department has said Bang earned \$6 million in commissions from Agridime. Bang told the North Dakota Monitor in December 2023 that the figure was "way high."

A voicemail message and text message sent to Bang was not returned. His attorney in Texas, Dan Cogdell, was not available for comment, according to office staff.

Bang in February was charged with eight counts of wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and one count of money laundering.

A court filing by Bang's attorney in March contended Bang did not engage in fraud or knowingly take part in a Ponzi scheme.

The indictment said someone sent \$240,000 to an account controlled by Bang rather than to an account controlled by Agridime in order to conceal the transaction. The indictment also said Bang falsified dates on records and gave investors false information about identification tags for cattle. — Jeff Beach, North Dakota Monitor

LEGAL LEDGER

CO measure would establish right to hunt, fish

A measure on Colorado's upcoming Nov. 3 ballot seeks to amend the state constitution to establish a right to hunt and fish, and take fish and wildlife through traditional methods. Amendment 83 would add a section to Article XVIII of the Colorado Constitution, which covers "miscellaneous provisions," and affirm that there is an established right of the people of Colorado to hunt and fish, including by using traditional methods. Hunting and fishing would be the primary and preferred way to manage fish and wildlife populations. "The right applies to all species of fish and wildlife managed by the state except nongame species, endangered species, or any species that is illegal to hunt under federal law," the section would read. The measure would not authorize trespassing on private lands. Amendment 83 would also not limit the authority of the state to regulate wildlife management so long as it's necessary for sound scientific wildlife conservation and management, public safety or to preserve the future of hunting and fishing opportunities for all species statewide. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Alliance is leading the campaign in support of the amendment.

CME proposes amendments to cattle futures

The CME Group is proposing changes to the daily price limits for live and feeder cattle futures. First, the group is requesting approval to implement a bi-annual reset of daily price limits for both live and feeder cattle contracts rather than an annual reset. Price limits are currently updated on the first trading day in June each year. The CME Group proposes adding a second price limit update on the first trading day in December each year. "This mechanism will provide additional relevance and accuracy to the price limits of the Contracts," the group said. In addition, the CME Group is requesting to decrease the percentage utilized to establish initial price limits for the live cattle futures contract bi-annually from 3.5% to 3%. The CME Group said that a price limit set at 3% for live cattle futures will "likely capture daily price moves with approximately 99 percent confidence on average." The changes are pending approval by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

Bill would allow ranchers to process own meat

The recently introduced Red Meat Inspection Exemption Act would allow small ranchers to slaughter and process their own livestock for direct-to-consumer sale. The bill, introduced by Reps. Thomas Massie (R-KY-04) and Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01), would create a federal meat-inspection exemption for small livestock producers. "The Red Meat Inspection Exemption Act will reduce the regulatory burden placed on small meat producers and enhance their ability to sell directly to local consumers," Massie said. Ranchers would be able to slaughter no more than 25 cattle, 60 swine, 250 sheep or 250 goats annually. Meat products would remain subject to federal adulteration and misbranding standards and would be required to comply with any USDA food safety or special handling requirements. The bill also preserves state laws that provide broader exemptions for on-farm slaughter, processing or sale of meat.

Lawmakers support sheep producers in letter

Dozens of lawmakers have signed a letter in support of an investigation into imports of lamb meat under sections 201 and 202 of the Trade Act of 1974. A coalition of 68 bicameral members of Congress penned a letter Oct. 6 to the U.S. International Trade Commission, supporting an affirmative determination in its global safeguard investigation. The letter comes following a July letter from the U.S. Trade Representative directing the commission to initiate an investigation into how lamb imports are affecting domestic producers. "During this investigation, we urge the Commission to carefully consider the data and testimony before it regarding the significant challenges faced by American sheep producers," the lawmakers' letter read. "And should the Commission make an affirmative determination in accordance with the statute, we urge the Commission to recommend a remedy that provides prompt and meaningful relief to the domestic industry."

Trump lifts taxes on dyed diesel

On Oct. 5, President Donald Trump issued an executive order to ease limits on the use of tax-exempt dyed diesel fuel. The order will apply through the end of the year. "Allowing dyed diesel fuel to be used over-the-road will bring welcome relief for farmers because every cent per gallon matters when you're running a fleet of grain trucks or hauling cattle hundreds of miles," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. "The federal highway diesel tax is currently more than 24-cents per gallon, so it's a big deal to farmers to be able to use tax exempt diesel more broadly to get their harvest to market."

BLM seeks resource advisory council members

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking nominations for its resource advisory councils. There are current and upcoming vacancies on 20 statewide and regional councils and two statutory councils. "If you've been seeking an opportunity to have a voice in how America's public lands are managed, this is your chance," said BLM Director Steve Pearce. BLM is seeking nominations from a wide range of backgrounds, including ranchers and holders of federal grazing permits. The deadline for nominations is Oct. 26. For more information and to apply, visit tinyurl.com/mturzatu.

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Ag says bills move farming in wrong direction

LABOR BILLS (from page 1)

already face rising expenses, labor shortages and competitive pressures. “California farmers and ranchers already operate under some of the most stringent labor regulations in the nation, while facing escalating costs, workforce shortages and intense competitive pressures,” Fenaroli said. “Unfortunately, these bills (now laws) move farming in the state the wrong direction by adding new regulatory requirements, administrative burdens and higher costs at a time when many family farms are struggling to stay in business.” Western Growers President and CEO Dave Puglia said farmers cannot simply absorb the additional labor expense. Puglia also pointed to the continued decline in the number of California farms as evidence of the economic pressure facing producers. “Next time you hear peo-

ple in Sacramento talk about their love of California’s farms and the wonderful food we grow here, remember that we have lost nearly 30 percent of our family farms in the last 25 years,” Puglia said. “That is because of the economic injuries that have been caused by foolish public policies. Californians are proud of our state’s farmers. They deserve better from Sacramento.”

AB 2227

AB 2227, authored by Assemblymember Damon Connolly (D-San Rafael), makes separate changes to California’s regulation of farm labor contractors. The law doubles required surety bonds for licensed contractors. Contractors with annual payrolls of up to \$500,000 will need a \$50,000 bond, up from \$25,000. Those with payrolls between \$500,000 and \$2 million will need a \$100,000 bond, while contractors with payrolls exceeding \$2 million will need

a \$150,000 bond.

The measure also expands existing civil penalty provisions to cover violations involving licensed and unlicensed farm labor contractors. It requires bond information to be included in the state’s public contractor license database.

CFB joined other agricultural organizations in opposing AB 2227 unless it was amended. Fenaroli said the organization was particularly concerned that the changes to farm labor contractor licensing and bond-

ing requirements would increase costs and administrative complexity without clearly showing how they would improve protections for workers. The coalition also raised concerns about the bill’s new public disclosure requirements.

Fenaroli said CFB will continue reviewing how the new laws are implemented and plans to engage in the process to make sure agricultural employers’ concerns are considered. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

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

Oct. 15 – The New Mexico Cattle

Growers’ Association has opened applications for three opportunities designed to support students and young agricultural professionals: the 2026 Fall Scholarship Program, Class III of the Linda Davis Young Cattleman’s Leadership Academy and the 2026 Allied Industry Mentorship Program. Details: nmagriculture.org.

STORY SHORTS

USDA: Meat distributor used invalid mark

A North Carolina meat distributor that recalled 167,639 pounds of raw pork, beef and goat had started, but never completed, the process to obtain federal inspection, USDA told news outlet Meatingplace. Star Meat Delivery Inc. produced the recalled products without federal inspection for four years. USDA told Meatingplace that Food Safety and Inspection Service investigators discovered the products during routine surveillance at a South Carolina store. Officials became suspicious after finding an invalid establishment number on the USDA inspection mark. USDA said the number had been reserved for Star Meat when it applied for federal inspection, but the company never completed the process. No illnesses or injuries have been confirmed. FSIS continues to review the circumstances surrounding the incident.

FDA closes Cyclospora investigation

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced on Oct. 2 that it concluded its investigation into a Cyclospora outbreak linked to recalled iceberg lettuce Taylor Farms de Mexico sourced from central Mexico. The agency traced the lettuce to several farms and a processing facility in Mexico and conducted inspections with Mexican officials. Two environmental samples tested positive for Cyclospora. One came from a wastewater tank at the processing facility and another from a drainage ditch at a lettuce farm. FDA said there is not enough evidence to determine exactly how contamination occurred, but the findings support the outbreak’s link to the recalled lettuce. The agency said all affected lettuce is believed to be off the market.

Pillen recognizes Sandhills fire fund

The Nebraska Sandhills Ranchers Fire Fund was recognized by Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen (R) as the honored nonprofit during an Oct. 3 Husker football tailgate at the Governor’s Mansion. The event highlights a Nebraska nonprofit during each home game. The recognition comes as the fund continues helping ranchers recover from wildfires that swept through the Sandhills. The fund received \$1.8 million in cash donations and distributed \$1.2 million directly to ranchers this summer. It has also helped deliver an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 semi-loads of hay and feed. Additional distributions are continuing as ranchers face ongoing recovery needs. The fund plans to provide assistance through the end of the year and beyond. For more information, contact 308-778-6262.

CCIA seeks input on traceability systems

The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) is asking cattle producers and livestock industry stakeholders to help shape the next generation of livestock traceability systems. The survey covers reducing duplicate data entry, integrating livestock management systems, mobile and automated reporting, and data privacy and security. It also asks what tools could provide greater value to producers and where future investments should be made. CCIA is seeking input from regular and occasional users of livestock information and record-keeping systems. The survey is open through Nov. 25. For more information and to complete the survey, visit tinyurl.com/3j4y2zsv.

USDA settles \$25M livestock case

USDA has reached a settlement with ADD Enterprises Inc. and Salvatore Anthony DiMaria of Pico Rivera, CA, over alleged violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act. A USDA investigation found that the company and DiMaria failed to pay \$25.27 million for livestock purchased between August 2022 and August 2025. When USDA filed its complaint in January, nearly \$24.6 million remained unpaid to livestock sellers. USDA also assessed a \$24.59 million civil penalty. The penalty can be reduced dollar for dollar by payments made to livestock sellers or amounts otherwise satisfied with sellers’ approval.

NE feedlot begins renewable fuel project

Ameresco has started construction on a renewable natural gas facility at the Adams Land & Cattle feedlot in Broken Bow, NE, through its Neogenyx Fuels subsidiary. Construction began following an Aug. 26 groundbreaking. The facility will capture manure from the feedlot and process it through eight anaerobic digesters that could generate more than 4,400 standard cubic feet per minute of biogas. The biogas will be upgraded to pipeline-quality renewable natural gas for transportation and other energy uses. The process byproducts will be reused at the feedlot as livestock bedding and fertilizer. The project is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 63,700 metric tons annually.

Two TX feedlot employees found dead

Two 18-year-old feedyard employees were found dead in a runoff pond in Parmer County, TX. According to local news outlet KDFA, Parmer County deputies and Texas game wardens responded and used specialized boats and sonar during the search. The two employees were found on Sept. 27, and the initial investigation indicated both died the previous day. The Parmer County Sheriff’s Office said the runoff pond is normally dry but had filled following recent rainfall. The deaths remain under investigation, and officials said no additional information would be released at this time.

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Forest fuel treatments reduce wildfire spread, prevent \$2.8B in damage

Every dollar spent on forest fuel treatments saves about \$3.75 in wildfire damages, according to a new study led by researchers at the University of California (UC), Davis, of nearly 300 fires in the western U.S. The study estimated that the treatments, such as forest thinning and prescribed burns, prevented \$2.8 billion in losses, reduced wildfire spread and fire severity.

The researchers analyzed the nearly 300 wildfires that intersected U.S. Forest Service (USFS) fuel reduction treatments in 11 states between 2017 and 2023. The study is the first to evaluate the economic value of USFS fuel treatments across the West at a large-scale using data from wildfires that encountered fuel treatments rather than relying on wildfire simulation models. It was published in the journal *Science*.

"Fuel treatments and forest management are critically underfunded public goods," said lead author

Frederik Strabo, a postdoctoral scholar with the UC Davis Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. "Our results suggest that when fewer resources are available to agencies like the Forest Service, more of the economic burden of wildfires falls on the public."

The researchers measured wildfire damages including structure losses, carbon emissions and the health impacts of exposure to fine particulate matter. As climate change has intensified wildfires in recent decades, those damages are estimated to total \$185 billion to \$540 billion a year.

Preventing wildfire spread

Researchers compared how fires behaved when they spread into treated areas versus untreated forests, accounting for predictable patterns of fire spread using fire-simulation modeling, while controlling for weath-

er conditions and suppression efforts.

Fires were more than 13 percentage points less likely to continue spreading after reaching a treatment area. Treatments were especially effective at reducing high-severity fire—those that kill more than 75% of the tree canopy—lowering burned area by 20% to 35%.

Prescribed burning was significantly more effective than mechanical thinning alone at limiting wildfire spread. Treatment size also mattered: landscape-scale treatments larger than 2,400

acres were the most effective at reducing wildfire spread.

Investments pay off

Across the fires studied, fuel treatments reduced total burned area by 36%, or about 152,000 acres, relative to a scenario without treatments. They also prevented the loss of more than 4,000 buildings, avoided the release of 2.7 million tons of CO₂, reduced 25,757 tons of fine particle pollution and prevented an estimated 59 premature deaths. Together, these avoided

damages totaled about \$2.8 billion, including:

- \$895 million from avoided structure loss.
- \$503 million from reduced CO2 emissions.
- \$1.39 billion from avoided health impacts and productivity losses linked to smoke pollution.

Strabo said the findings underscore the importance of investing more in preventive forest management.

“Wildfire policy has historically focused on suppression, but our results suggest greater investment in prevention could sub-

stantially reduce wildfire damages,” said Strabo. “That will become even more important as the climate continues to change and forests face more large wildfires and other disturbances.”

The research was supported by the Giannini Foundation for Agricultural Economics and the USFS. Other authors include Matthew N. Reimer with UC Davis and Calvin Bryan with the Department of Economics at Washington and Lee University. — **UC Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Knowing a cow's contribution margin

One of the most useful numbers to know on a cow-calf operation is a cow's contribution margin (CM). It is a number that most producers have a feel for, but may not always formally calculate. While attending the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management's Managing the Cow-Calf Business program in March, this concept was discussed illustrating how it can help make practical decisions on the ranch. Decisions such as: how much can I invest to keep a cow through drought? Or, what is the impact of increasing my numbers by a certain number of head?

The calculation is simple, but an understanding of different cost types is necessary. Calculating CM focuses only on direct variable costs; costs that would immediately stop if a cow was removed (culled, sold, died). Specifically, we would think about feed, hay and vet expenses. Also, things that may be slightly more difficult to quantify like the depreciation of the cow, etc.

There is a long list of other costs associated with running the ranch like machinery, equipment, fuel and land, but those items won't change much, if at all, in the production year based on the addition or subtraction of a cow in the operation. A revenue history or projection completes the other side of the equation.

The following numbers won't reflect your specific operation. Yet for discussion's sake, let's assume that we typically have an 89% weaning rate, 500-pound weaning weight, and expect our average calf price to be \$3.49/lb. next year. The ranch records show that we have had direct variable

costs of \$500 per cow.

- Expected revenue: 500 lbs. * \$3.49/lb. * 0.9 = \$1,553 per cow.
- Variable costs: Feed + hay + vet + cow depreciation + others = \$500 per cow.
- CM: \$1,553 - 500 = \$1,053 per cow.

What will a single cow contribute to the fixed costs of the operation? \$1,053.

What extra could we pay to keep a cow in times such as drought? \$1,053.

What does adding a cow to the herd contribute?
\$1,053.

This number may seem alarming right now. The cause of alarm is likely because of historic calf prices. Refiguring this calculation with a calf price average of \$1.85 changes the CM to \$323 per cow. In times of drought where hay supplies tighten and the market price of hay increases, \$323 does not go very far. Sustained high calf prices can—and have—altered what the math says about our decision making. High calf prices usually encourage expansion, but it also provides incentive to keep the existing herd intact.

Forage conditions in Oklahoma have suffered and could lead to tough decisions. From a 10,000-foot view on a spring-calving herd, we need to have the working capital (or access to it) to support the investment until the next calf crop is ready to be sold. We might want to consider a form of price protection as well, like Livestock Risk Protection.

Go to work on your numbers and figure out what your contribution margin is on your operation and evaluate the ranch's capacity to fund this through 2027. — **Scott Clawson, Oklahoma State University northeast area ag economics specialist**

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National Western launches Ranches of the West Heritage Award

The National Western announced the inaugural class of Ranches of the West, a new heritage award recognizing ranches whose leadership and contributions have shaped the American beef industry and Western way of life.

The 10 honorees will be formally inducted as part of an expanded National Western Stock Show Cattlemen's Week, Jan. 13-18. An exhibit featuring the honorees will be on display at National Western's premier event venue, The Legacy. The exhibit will be on display inside the Wold Heritage Center at The Legacy through the fall.

Ranches of the West was created to celebrate ranches selected not simply for their size, age or fame, but for their lasting contributions to the

beef industry. Those contributions span genetics and seed-stock development, beef quality and carcass improvement, innovative production systems, conservation and land stewardship, and leadership that has helped move the industry forward.

"The connection between the National Western Stock Show and Western ranching runs more than 120 years deep," said Wes Allison, president and CEO of the National Western. "Since our founding, ranchers and cattlemen have traveled to Denver each January to exhibit livestock, build relationships, market genetics and conduct the business of the beef industry. Ranches of the West was created to recognize that history and share it

with a new generation. This inaugural class represents the diverse people, places and operations that have built the Western cattle industry."

The award's launch coincides with an expanded six-day Cattlemen's Week, designed to strengthen National Western's focus on commercial cattle producers and the business of the beef industry. By honoring ranches for their contributions to commercial cattle production—not simply their history—Ranches of the West reinforces the National Western Stock Show's longstanding role as a gathering place for working ranchers and cattle producers from across the West.

Honorees and their families will be celebrated at an induction ceremony and reception

Jan. 14 at 4 p.m. at The Legacy, followed by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association rodeo. The inaugural class will join thousands of producers, exhibitors and visitors who travel to Denver, CO, each January for the National Western Stock Show.

2027 Ranches of the West inaugural class

- **Colorado:** Bledsoe Ranch, Silver Spur Ranch and Spann Ranches.
- **Arizona:** K4 Ranch.
- **New Mexico:** CS Ranch.

- **Montana:** Vermilion Ranch.
- **Nebraska:** Timmerman Ranch.
- **North Dakota/South Dakota:** Thomas Ranch.
- **Utah:** Ensign Ranches.
- **Wyoming:** Padlock Ranch. — NWSS

Farm Bureau calls on Trump to roll back import plan

IMPORT REPORT (from page 1)

released its findings from tracking beef prices over the first month of the lower tariff rate. The organization tracked daily prices of 80% lean ground beef at 41 grocery stores in 22 states beginning Sept. 2, the day after the proclamation went into effect.

"We selected a variety of chain grocery stores and independent grocers across America, in major cities to rural areas, to see how ground beef prices reacted to the additional supply of beef," AFBF said.

Across their sample, the average price of ground beef moved minimally, from \$7.29/lb. on Sept. 2 to \$7.13/lb. on Sept. 23, a 2% difference. The group charted the lowest, highest and average price across all stores each day, and the average line stayed nearly flat for three weeks, never rising above \$7.38 or falling below \$7.13.

Prices ranged from \$4.99/lb. to \$10.49/lb. across the 41 stores. More than half of the stores charged above \$7/lb., and no store sold 80% lean ground beef for less than \$4.99/lb.

"Whether shoppers are in a major city or a rural community, they are still paying elevated prices for ground beef," the report read.

At 30 of the 41 stores, ground beef at the end of the month cost exactly what it did on Sept.

2. A total of seven stores ended the period lower, but only three stores reached the 25% discount the proclamation encouraged.

"Removal or expansion of the TRQ (tariff-rate quota) on ground beef does lower the tariff-related (26.4%) price of bringing that additional imported beef into the United States," the group reported. "This, however, has not translated into lower grocery store prices."

Rather, retail prices are based on supply chain costs, including cattle prices, but also processing, transportation, labor and retail margins, AFBF said.

Policies to increase imports under the assumption that prices will lower for consumers have yet to deliver meaningful savings, AFBF said, while creating uncertainty for U.S. ranchers. The group pointed to the latest USDA Cattle on Feed report, which demonstrates that the industry's challenge is not insufficient imports but rather a shrinking supply of cattle.

September's Cattle on Feed report showed that inventories remain relatively high but placements have fallen sharply as fewer calves move through

the beef production pipeline, the report read.

"Ground beef prices have remained historically high despite record imports, while cattle and feeder cattle futures have moved sharply lower since the proclamation," AFBF said. "Cash cattle prices in many regions have also fallen, with some farmers and ranchers reporting prices \$300 to \$400 per head below levels seen just two months earlier."

Ultimately, the most sustainable path toward greater beef availability and improved prices is not more imports but expansion of the domestic herd and growth in beef production, the report concluded.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall called on Trump to roll back his import plan.

"While we appreciate Mr. Trump's goal of reducing grocery costs for America's families, increasing beef imports has not brought prices down," Duvall said. "We urge the president to stop importing additional beef and focus on long-term solutions that support rebuilding the U.S. herd, which benefits both farmers and consumers who want home-grown beef." — Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor



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August beef exports above year-ago levels

Fueled by a near-record performance in Taiwan and a rebound in South Korea, August exports of U.S. beef increased year-over-year, according to data released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF).

Beef exports reached 86,362 metric tons (mt) in August, up 4% from a year ago, while export value climbed 13% to \$785.9 million. In addition to year-over-year growth in Taiwan and Korea, August exports also trended higher to the Middle East, the ASEAN region, Colombia and Cote d'Ivoire, while volumes were steady to Mexico and Central America.

Export value increased to Japan and the Caribbean in August, despite lower volumes. Beef exports to China were above last year's minimal total, but still reflected ongoing technical trade barriers.

"USMEF expected to see stronger beef exports to Korea in the second half of the year, as reflected in the August data," said USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom. "And I cannot say enough about the outstanding demand in Taiwan, which has truly been a star performer for U.S. beef in 2026."

"As for China, the August increase is just a fraction of what would be possible in that

market, especially since Australian beef has faced a 55% safeguard tariff since June 20," Halstrom said. "But China still needs to relist suspended facilities and the U.S. industry needs further clarity on technical requirements before beef exports to China will significantly rebound."

For January through August, beef exports were down 7% year-over-year in volume (721,150 mt) and were just 1% lower in value (\$6.32 billion). This decline is largely attributable to lower exports to China compared to the early months of 2025, before market access obstacles began to heavily impact U.S. exports. When excluding China from the January-August results, beef exports were 1% below last year in volume but 6% higher in value.

Despite larger shipments to Mexico and the Netherlands Antilles, August exports of U.S. lamb muscle cuts totaled 129 mt, down 41% from a year ago and the lowest of 2026, as volumes slowed to other top markets including the Bahamas and Leeward-Windward Islands. August export value fell 29% to just over \$900,000.

For January through August, lamb muscle cut exports totaled 1,827 mt, down 11% from a year ago, but remained 1% higher in value at just under \$11 million. — USMEF



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Diesel price spike increases financial stress for farmers

California diesel prices skyrocketed in September, adding another layer of stress for farmers and truck fleet owners who depend on the fuel for daily work.

According to AAA, California's average diesel price on Oct. 1 was more than \$8 a gallon, up sharply from \$5.16 a year ago. California's average price represents the highest in the nation, about \$2 more than the current national average of about \$6.

Experts attribute the price spike in part to continued disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz amid the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. Ships transiting through the Middle Eastern waterway normally carry about one-fifth of the world's petroleum, making disruptions there a significant risk to global energy supplies.

Diesel and gas prices have dramatically increased since the war began in February. Other global stressors, including Ukraine's attacks on Russian refineries, also play a part.

Ryan Cummings, an economist with the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, said California's taxes and fees are among the factors driving the state's higher price. He also pointed to broader global market pressures that are pushing up diesel costs nationwide.

California has historically supplied most of its own gas and diesel, but refinery closures in recent years have led the state to import more from other countries. Even so, Cummings said gas and diesel prices are largely set by the global market, making the impact of in-state refinery closures on current diesel prices negligible.

"There's some transportation costs, but those are pretty small," he said. "Whether a refinery opens here or a refinery closes here, as long as you have free trade, it's the global market that's going to dictate the price rather than the local production."

Cummings said this dynamic is why the Trump administration is considering a diesel export ban, even as some warn the policy could eventually push up prices at the pump.

"That cuts off the competition for those barrels from the rest of the world," he said.

For farmers, the use of diesel is often unavoidable.

Yolo County farmer Bill Cruickshank, who serves as chairman of the California Wheat Commission, said he and other wheat growers already felt the sting of rising diesel prices when they harvested their crop earlier this year.

With the recent price surge, he said wheat farmers are seeing their fuel costs increase by about 6% overall.

Jeromy Geiger, a Glenn County farmer and co-owner of an agricultural trucking business, said diesel powers all his farm equipment—from tractors to pump engines. His trucking business is entirely dependent on diesel to keep its fleet running.

He said he raised the seasonal rate this year on his trucking customers to account for higher diesel costs

but is trying to avoid changing them again in the middle of the season.

"We'd like to hope that we don't adjust immediately and that we've factored enough to where we can weather the storm and not hammer our customers, who are all farmers," he said. "Our trucking business is built entirely on agriculture, so we feel the pain of the farmer as well."

Geiger said he considered adding electric vehicles to his fleet to reduce his reliance on diesel. He contacted Pacific Gas & Electric Co. three or four years ago about installing a charging station in his truck yard. But he said the company told him it wasn't feasible because the necessary energy infrastructure wasn't available in the rural area where he works and lives. As a result, he has continued to rely on diesel.

"For some people, it makes total sense, and it's totally doable," Geiger said. "But it can't work for everybody."

Colusa County farmer Chris Torres, who also owns an agricultural trucking business, said he faces similar challenges as diesel prices soar. He said fuel is a major expense across his 400 acres of rice, from powering harvesters and tractors to managing rice straw after harvest. Overall, he estimated his fuel costs have gone up by at least 50%.

"It's all expensive," Torres said.

With his trucking business, he said he has already had to increase the fuel surcharge for customers. In the past, he adjusted the surcharge seasonally, but rising prices may force him to update it weekly. He said he hopes to avoid daily adjustments but acknowledged the cost of fuel has increased considerably.

Cummings, the Stanford economist, said an end to the war in Iran and a resumption of regular oil shipments would likely bring prices down. But without knowing when those conditions will return, he said it's hard to predict when diesel prices will fall.

He said global inventories of crude oil and refined products were well-stocked before the war but have steadily declined since it began. The longer the conflict continues, the greater the risk that fuel prices could reach levels that make the current increase seem mild in comparison, he added.

Even if the war ended tomorrow, Cummings said, it would take time for fuel prices to ease, as refineries would need time to process crude oil and replenish depleted inventories.

If all of the inventories are gone, then there's an acute physical scarcity, which is going to take weeks to get sorted out," he said.

For growers, Cruickshank said the price of wheat has climbed due to reduced exports from Russia and Ukraine amid their ongoing conflict. But he said farmers have few options for cutting costs in response to the higher diesel prices because many already operate on tight margins.

He said he hopes disruptions to oil shipments end

soon, particularly because he doesn't expect assistance from state officials.

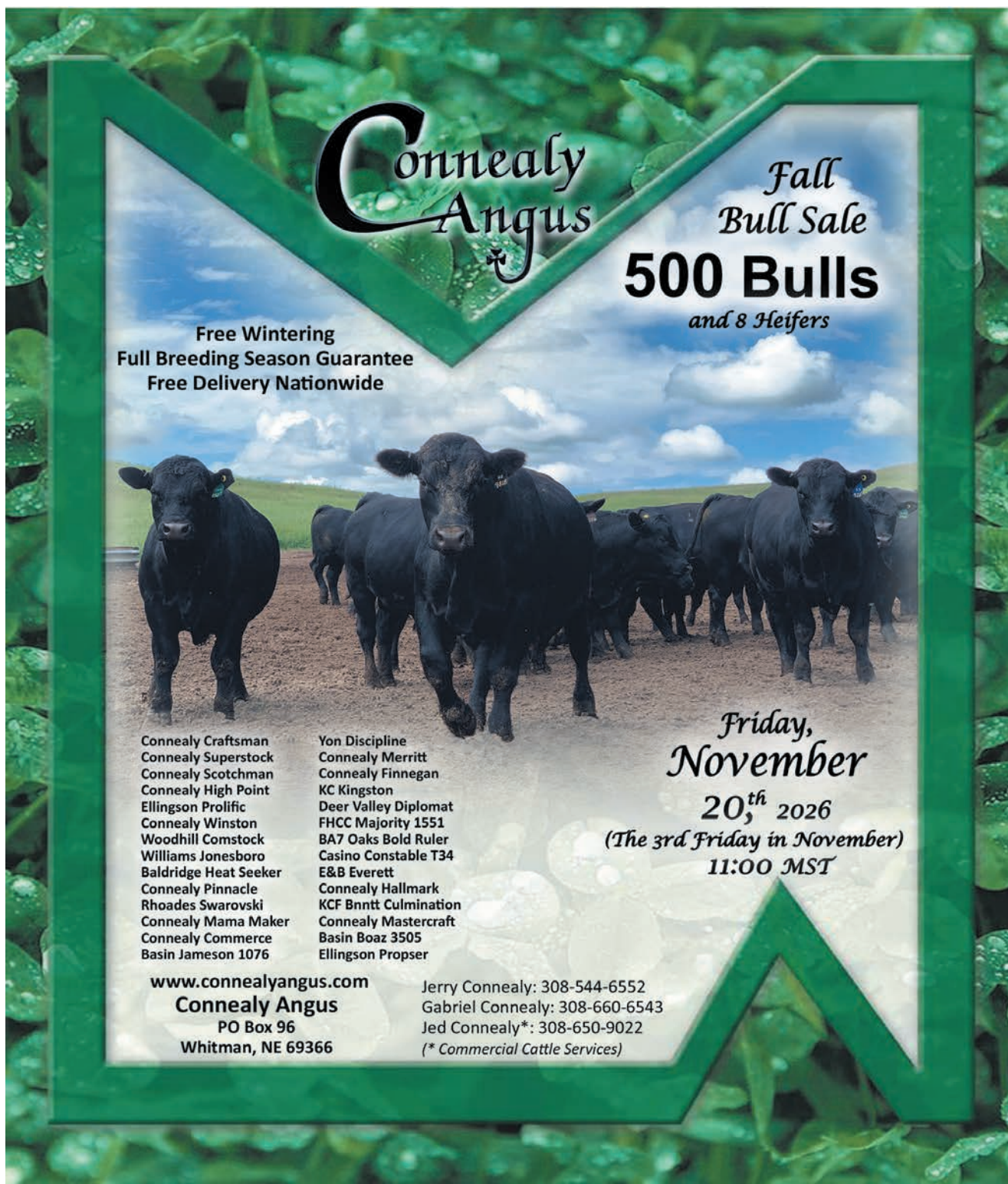
Torres said he hopes profits

from last year's crop will be enough to cover the loans needed to plant this year's crop. Beyond that, he said it's

hard to plan for what comes next.

"Volatility is extremely challenging," he said. "There's

not much we can do." — **Manola Secaira, Ag Alert staff writer, California Farm Bureau**



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MARKET NEWS

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

MARKET AT A GLANCE	This Week: 10/8/2026		Week Ago	Year Ago
Choice Fed Steers	N/A	▲	218.65	230.64
CME Feeder Index	337.87	▼	338.03	365.51
Boxed Beef Average	374.85	▼	376.79	365.22
Average Dressed Steers	N/A	▲	348.01	N/A
Live Slaughter Weight*	1,451	▲	1,450	N/A
Weekly Slaughter**	548,000	▲	484,000	N/A
Weekly Beef Production***	487.0	▲	430.1	N/A
Hide/Offal Value	15.12	▲	15.12	11.25
Corn Price	5.04	▼	5.05	4.23
*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	
October 2	6,995	380.01	306	414.22	1,361	383.42	2,113	376.00	505	355.45	2,710	330.67
September 25	6,290	378.71	296	413.33	1,245	381.70	1,913	374.99	507	353.03	2,329	328.67
September 18	6,837	379.13	299	416.89	1,323	383.22	2,131	376.19	536	354.17	2,548	327.41
September 11	5,948	377.26	215	416.36	1,033	383.71	1,941	375.60	529	354.70	2,230	334.84
Cutouts			FED BOXED BEEF									
DATE	CHOICE		SELECT		COW BEEF CUTOUT			50% LEAN		90% LEAN		
October 8	374.85		351.73		318.12			102.46		N/A		
October 7	375.62		354.21		317.55			87.48		401.74		
October 6	378.93		356.34		317.81			91.86		N/A		
October 5	378.26		358.57		317.92			N/A		403.25		
October 2	374.19		354.49		315.95			95.96		N/A		

CATTLE FUTURES: CME Live Cattle						
	10/2	10/5	10/6	10/7	10/8	High* Low*
Oct.	21885	21905	22153	22170	22208	25873 16853
Dec.	22148	22220	22463	22418	22428	25598 16668
Feb. '27	22315	22405	22760	22723	22695	25120 17005
Apr. '27	22455	22525	22908	22883	22870	25093 18068
CATTLE FUTURES: CME Feeder Cattle						
	10/2	10/5	10/6	10/7	10/8	High* Low*
Oct.	33463	33550	34095	34068	33898	38103 21920
Nov.	33115	33243	33900	33820	33705	38280 22268
Jan. '27	32455	32580	33273	33200	33113	38020 22460
Mar. '27	32083	32195	32843	32810	32718	37860 24118
*High and low figures are for the life of the contract.						

FED CATTLE TRADE	Head Count	Avg. Weight	Avg. Price
WEEKLY WEIGHTED AVERAGES			
Live FOB Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Live FOB Heifer	76	1,425	218.00
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	337	882	350.20
SAME PERIOD LAST WEEK			
Live FOB Steer	1,708	1,606	218.65
Live FOB Heifer	260	1,400	218.84
Dressed Del Steer	3,473	1,018	348.01
Dressed Del Heifer	994	888	350.21
SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR			
Live FOB Steer	417	1,459	230.64
Live FOB Heifer	36	1,325	228.00
Dressed Del Steer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dressed Del Heifer	N/A	N/A	N/A

NATIONAL WEEKLY FED BEEF SLAUGHTER VOLUME: OCTOBER 4, 2026		
	Domestic	Imported
Forward Contract	24,004	2,844
Formula	235,724	3,094
Negotiated Cash	74,116	145
Negotiated Grid	35,021	476
Packer Owned	9,830	N/A
Total	378,695	6,559

SLAUGHTER FORWARD CONTRACTS		FORWARD BEEF SALES	
Delivery Month		Neg. Sales 0-21 days	1,906
Oct. '26	117,568	Neg. Sales 21+ days	909
Nov. '26	110,733	Formula sales	4,043
Dec. '26	93,599	Forward contract sales	137
Jan. '27	53,634	Domestic sales	6,337
Feb. '27	58,320	NAFTA Exports	92

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		211.26 +1.50
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		209.36 +1.63
Ontario Auctions		
Slaughter Steers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1300-1500 lbs		214.19 -0.50
Slaughter Heifers, mostly Choice & Select 1-3, 1200-1400 lbs		212.61 +0.35
Slaughter Cows, Cutter and Utility 1-3, 1100-1400 lbs		132.17 -0.59
*Price comparison from one week ago.		

Average feeder cattle prices (CND) for week ending Tuesday, October 6, 2026			
Steers:	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Ontario
501-600 lbs	451.11	449.55	442.04
601-700 lbs	399.45	400.54	399.38
701-800 lbs	362.02	360.87	355.09
801-900 lbs	348.87	344.24	339.06
Heifers:			
401-500 lbs	458.80	454.97	445.44
501-600 lbs	397.00	378.16	398.26
601-700 lbs	360.66	348.99	345.71
701-800 lbs	331.14	328.64	314.96

USDA MEXICO TO U.S. WEEKLY LIVESTOCK IMPORTS				
Feeder cattle imports weekly and yearly volume.				
Species	Current Week	Previous Week	Current Year-to-date	Previous Year-to-date
	9/28/2026	9/21/2026		
Feeders	5,963	6,984	24,186	230,638

USDA WEEKLY IMPORTED FEEDER CATTLE			
October 7, 2026			
Mexico to United States Feeder Cattle Import Summary			
Receipts EST: 5,650	Week Ago EST: 3,550	Year Ago Act: N/A	
Santa Teresa, NM - Compared to Monday, steer calves and yearlings sold steady. Heifers not tested. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers weighing 400-800 lbs.		Douglas, AZ - Compared to Tuesday, steer calves and yearlings sold steady. Heifers not tested. Trade active, demand good. Supply consisted of steers weighing 400-800 lbs.	
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	375-385	500-600 lbs	375-385
600-700 lbs	345-355	600-700 lbs	340-350
700-800 lbs	315-325	700-800 lbs	310-320

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

Selected Auctions Week Ending October 8, 2026						Feeder prices for steers & heifers reflect medium and large 1 cattle, unless otherwise noted; * Indicates medium and large 1-2				
DATE MARKET		200-300 lb.	300-400 lb.	400-500 lb.	500-600 lb.	600-700 lb.	700-800 lb.	800 lb. -up	SLAUGHTER COWS SLAUGHTER BULLS	PAIRS REPLACEMENTS
No report available Blackfoot, ID										
October1 Burley, ID	544			463-502 395-427	387-440 368-394	368 340-344	322	298	119-168 169-182	
No report available Emmett, ID										
October3 Eugene, OR	802		390-440* 280-400*	350-465* 285-400*	320-390* 270-350*	240-325* 260-315*	225-300* 220-255*	220-253*	135-155 180-198	2,900-3,850 750-2,650
October5 Madras, OR	974		370-395	450-525 415-485	415-435 370-425	380-405 335-378	340-375 320-340	275-310	145-165 160-180	
September30 Vale, OR	1,389		521-582 465-560	470-520 405-485	409-464 345-392	350-403 325-394	320-352 305-337	308-332 295-311	141-155 160-187	
October6 Davenport, WA	825	420-470 445	345-527.50 350-410	345-512.50 225-442.50	185-442.50 200-392.50	312.50-400 245-359	225-340 250-315	137.50-327.50 170-291	111-252.50 135-242.50	1,600-3,000
October1 Toppenish, WA	1,150			480* 372.50*	445* 360-375*	367.50-390* 341*			139-160 172-190	

October1 Orland, CA	1,268			350-530 330-500	350-455 330-435	300-436 280-388	300-378 280-ww320	275-338	125-150 120-175	
No report available Escalon, CA										
No report available Famoso, CA										
October7 Galt, CA	1,282			400-525 400-480	380-455 360-431	370-410 330-370	320-355 290-335	275-340 285-315	100-160 135-180	2,700-3,800
October6 Turlock, CA	2,075		400-530	450-525 395-470	420-500 370-475	385-430 370-393	344-378 330-358	325-342 300-326	118-153 149-189	
September29 Salina, UT	1,791	435-625 310-550	410-595 260-530	380-525 240-452.50	350-467.50 225-397	315-410 227.50-335	270-380 225-317.50	247.50-325 210-282.50	130-180 140-238	

October4 Iowa	4,563	565	505-570 465-540	434-550 402.50-457.50	389-477 354-402.50	356-412 347-384	323-379.25 308-340.50	314-343.75 295-314	116-232.50 100-222	
October6 Miles City, MT	2,517	585-655	552.50-600 490-540	461-539 411-505	420.50-491 375-432.50	399.50-427.50 375	330.50	282-320	108-164 143-185.50	
October7 Bassett, NE	1,045		555-567.50	475 455	412.50-450 385-419	400-436		347 283-327		
October3 Ericson, NE	3,340		567.50	462.50-495 450-465	430-475 377.50-425	385-396 365		331-344.50 291-333		3,600-4,000
No report available Imperial, NE										
No report available Kearney, NE										
October2 Lexington, NE	1,043		501-511 457-461	502-511 444	452-453			270-444		
October1 Ogallala, NE	2,307		596-665 535-565	490-570 443-501	444-478 410-426	392.50-438 372.50	358-372.50 327.50-348	347 286-337.50		
October1 Valentine, NE	1,900		552.50 465	475-535 432.50-452	425-487 382-436	412-423 382	390			
October2 Herreid, SD	2,338						339.75 361.50	327-361 296-361.50		
October7 Torrington, WY	3,501		599-672 495-528	485-551 435-449	409-551 384-471	395-432 361-372	364-380.50 331-340	320-364 280-336		

October 1 Willcox, AZ	N/A	1,050	499-535 447-466	443-480 400-420	367-390 362-375	355-360 303.50-320			125-200 155-195	3,600	SOUTH CENTRAL
October 5 Colorado	3,180		545-565 425-480	421-520 376-435	345-418 326-417.50	330-375 300-315	318-355 316-331	270.50-315 227.50-312.50	110-189 128-186.50	2,650-4,100 1,250-3,450	
September 30 La Junta, CO	608		380-470 335-405	342.50-400 322.50-371	342.50-352.50 285-354	312.50-322.50 277.50-285		267.50-272.50	141-154 160-178		
No report available Loma, CO											
October 7 Dodge City, KS	3,363		507-515 420	431-490 388.50-426	381-433 347.50-392	387-410 313-380.10	342-385 323.25-354	313.50-353.85 302.25-320	90-154 145-251	2,975-3,550 1,350-4,385	
October 1 Pratt, KS	1,380		510	402.50-525 380-405	418-457.50 351-386	358-399.75 327-360.50	330-362.50 315-322	321-350 277.50-313	141-293 157.50-217.50	2,850-3,600 1,800-2,650	
October 1 Salina, KS	1,637			392.50-445 400-440	421-429 365-383	348-393 304.50-345	337.50-367 314-324.50	303.50-345 273.50-324.50			
October 7 Clovis, NM	1,891	630-635 505	500-605 427-518	400-520 370-452	382-462 317-412	310-407 282-332	314-321 279.50-285	256-308.50 272			
October 7 El Reno, OK	4,598		450-540 400-480	390-480 345-425	365-437.50 305-360	332.50-400 320-347.50	315-362 300-334.50	275-350 257.50-314			
October 6 McAlester, OK	920		405-575 401-452	390-493 363-419	320-400 330-380	321-382 301-341	295-347 261-300	225-290 220-269	134-161 170-191	3,400 1,700-3,450	
October 6 Oklahoma City, OK	4,242	560	485-550 407.50-525	397.50-485 363-420	354-400 325-369	340-375 306-360	327-358 312-333.50	260-347.50 260-301			
October 2 Cuero, TX	839	511-550 435-500	420-518 395-450	370-445 354-610	337-386 314-450	327-351 312-525	304-326 288-312		127-158 180-190	4,450 2,500-3,050	
October 1 Dalhart, TX	907	475	560 485	500		344.50	343	343.50	131-141 158-176		
October 1 San Angelo, TX	692	460-470	550 435-455	405 352-400	388-395 324-355	362 300-312	316-326 280-289	292-298 267	125-160 157-190	3,350 2,650-2,750	
October 1 Tulia, TX	458		455-490 450-460	505	378-435 337-380	339-385 315-334	312-336	310	125-127	2,500	

Understanding the beef import market

Recent highly publicized plans to allow up to an additional 300,000 metric tons (661 million pounds) of beef imports tariff-free have received much attention and have been the subject of considerable misinformation and disinformation. Reasonable and useful discussion about beef trade policy is appropriate when it is based on valid information rather than mistaken information and wild social media speculation.

The U.S. has imported beef for many years to supplement certain products in the total

U.S. beef supply (Figure 1). Through much of the period, the major sources were Australia, Canada and New Zealand. More recently, Mexico has become a bigger source of beef imports.

Beef imports have increased sharply since 2024 in response to declining total beef production. Brazil has increased rapidly and is currently the No. 2 source of beef imports, slightly behind Australia. For the first seven months of 2026, Canada, Mexico and New Zealand ranked three, four and five, in that order, followed by Uru-

guay, Argentina, Nicaragua and Paraguay. Beef imports are up 12.9% year over year thus far in 2026.

Most beef imports are used in food service with very little showing up in retail grocery stores. An estimated 68% of beef imports are lean trimmings and lean beef used primarily as ingredients for the U.S. ground beef industry (Figure 2). The U.S. does not directly import ground beef.

Imported beef is most fre-

quently used as an ingredient in ground beef formulations for quick service restaurants. Various fast-food restaurants may use imported beef in ground beef in very specific proportions with stringent specifications.

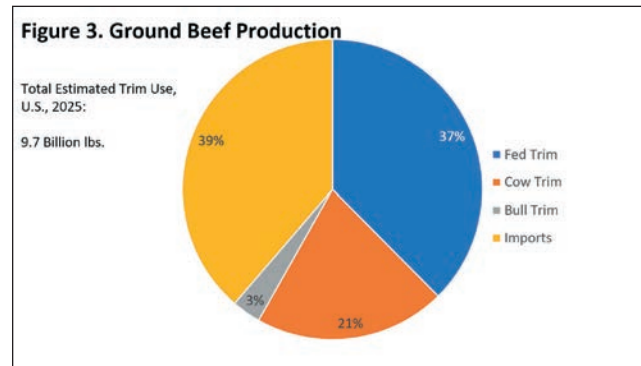
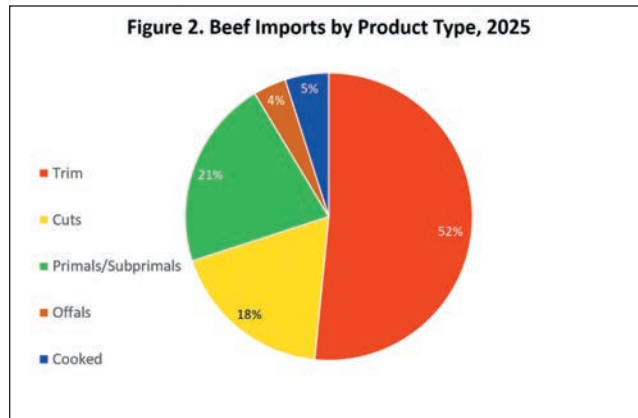
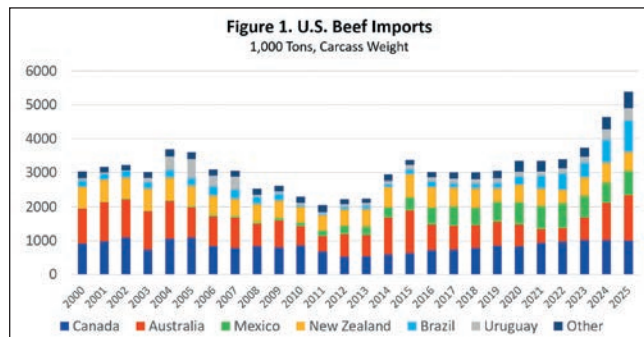
Imported beef currently makes up an estimated 39% of the total beef used for ground beef (Figure 3). This is a significantly higher percentage than average over the past twenty years due to the current

reduction in domestic cow and bull beef supplies.

Brazil will likely be the biggest beneficiary of the removal of over-quota tariffs this fall. Beef imports that would have been subject to the tariff will now enter the U.S. tariff-free. However, it is unlikely that beef imports will increase an additional 300,000 metric tons. Imported beef is used in specific markets and in specific ways that were being met even with tariffs. Reducing the tariffs may change the sources of beef im-

ports with Australia and New Zealand likely losing market share to South America.

Total beef imports will probably increase some beyond what would have happened anyway but not the full amount. Imported beef has little impact on ground beef in retail grocery stores and ground beef prices at retail are not expected to be much impacted by this policy change. — **Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist**



Boxed beef closes lower

MARKETS (from page 1)

• Negotiated grid net purchases: \$352.50.

Slaughter through Thursday totaled 424,000 head, compared to 410,000 head a week earlier. Total slaughter for a week earlier is estimated at 548,000 head. Actual slaughter for the week ending Sept. 26 was 486,910 head. The average steer dressed weight was 980 lbs., up 3 lbs. from the prior week.

"This week recovered slaughter volumes to a normalized 548,000 head—64,000 over the previous week and on one of the largest volumes this year," the Cattle Report wrote on Thursday. "It fell 20,000 under last year. The threat of immigration arrests caused beef plant workers to stay at home last week but reassurances of safety from harassment brought them back to work."

Boxed beef prices traded lower over the week. The Choice cutout lost about \$2 to close at \$374.85, and the Select cutout lost about a dollar to close at \$351.73.

The lean beef trim futures contracts continue to trade lower week over week. The October 50% lean trim contract closed at \$88 (-\$1.30), and the October 90% lean trim contract closed at \$418 (-\$4.50).

Feeder cattle

Feeder cattle futures traded mostly sideways. The October contract lost 86 cents to close at \$338.02, and the November contract lost a little over a dollar to close at \$334.87.

"Until either the live cattle contracts or the fed cash cattle market trade higher, it's likely that this slightly weaker tone will remain the theme for the feeder cattle market," Stewart said.

The CME Feeder Cattle Index lost 16 cents to close at \$337.87.

"The movement of cattle, both large and small, from Mexico to the U.S. is becoming more normalized as the second crossing of St. Teresa near El Paso opens," the Cattle Report said. "Recent rains have

hampered smooth, steady and consistent crossing volumes. Inspection on both sides of the border have been subjected to extra scrutiny as government people work to do their job and prevent new closings. All Mexican cattle are now required to have a RFID tag."

Corn futures traded sideways. The December contract lost 2 cents to close at \$5, and the March contract lost 4 cents to close at \$5.12.

Colorado: Winter Livestock in La Junta sold 1,720 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, feeder steers under 450 lbs. sold sharply lower and over 450 lbs. sold mostly sharply higher. Feeder heifers under 550 lbs. sold unevenly steady, and over 550 lbs. sold sharply higher. Benchmark steers averaging 783 lbs. sold for \$335.

Missouri: Joplin Regional Stockyards in Carthage sold 7,000 head on Monday. Compared to a week earlier, feeder steers and heifers sold steady to \$5 lower at the mid-session. A group of benchmark steers averaging 763 lbs. sold for \$338.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma National Stockyards in Oklahoma City sold 4,700 head on Monday. Compared to the previous sale, feeder steers over 800 lbs. sold steady to \$2 lower and under 800 lbs. sold \$3-8 lower. Feeder heifers sold mostly steady, and 600-700-lb. heifers sold \$5 higher. Benchmark steers averaging 785 lbs. sold for \$337-\$353.50, averaging \$340.47.

South Dakota: Sioux Falls Regional in Worthing sold 1,568 head on Monday. Yearling feeder steers sold with higher undertones, and heifers were not well compared. A group of benchmark steers averaging 773 lbs. sold for \$348.

Wyoming: Winter Livestock in Riverton sold 4,364 head on Tuesday. Compared to the last auction, this was the first major calf and yearling special offering of the fall run, with steers and heifers selling at higher overtones on strong buyer participation and demand. Benchmark steers averaging 738 lbs. sold from \$351-\$385.25, averaging \$381.17. — **Anna Miller Fortozo, WLJ managing editor**

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OCT. 31, 2026
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Female Sale

Selling Donors, Donor Prospects, Spring Bred Heifers, Proven Cows, Fall Pairs, Open Spring & Fall Heifers and 150 Commercial Bred Heifers

BEAR MTN PRIDE DENT 0550

She Sells!
reg #19850202

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC
+11	+0	+80	+140	+2.29
MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+34	+76	+73	+80	+311

This proven donor sells with a fall heifer calf at side ready to flush.

BEAR MTN PRIDE DENT 5510

She Sells!
reg #21390978

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+3	+2.0	+78	+142	+1.97	+24	+86	+51	+95	+323

BEAR MTN PRIDE DENT 5524

She Sells!
reg #21390986

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+8	+1.8	+94	+164	+2.15	+28	+93	+81	+80	+326

BEAR MTN MRS JAMIE 5518

She Sells!
reg #21352363

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+9	-9	+77	+136	+1.24	+26	+90	+1.27	+58	+334

Selling choice of these 2 Prolific bred heifers out of 0550. They are both AI bred and due 1/13/27 with heifers.

BEAR MTN EAF EISA ERICA 5746

She Sells!
reg #21535048

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+2	+2.4	+89	+162	+1.27	+24	+1.19	+1.25	+67	+370

This Covert daughter is out of the Justice daughter who was Champion PGS at Reno and twice at the Nebraska State Show.

BEAR MTN MARCIA 5618

She Sells!
reg #21391038

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+1	+3.5	+98	+172	+1.71	+20	+86	+1.21	+60	+327

This Justice bred heifer is due 1/13/27 to Real Deal with a heifer calf.

BEAR MTN PRIDE 5508

She Sells!
reg #21399710

CED	BW	WW	YW	SC	MILK	MB	RE	SM	SC
+10	-9	+86	+156	+1.51	+27	+1.37	+75	+96	+398

This Statesman bred heifer is due in February to Real Deal with a heifer. Her granddam is a full sister to Turning Point.

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Take stock of forage supply before winter feeding begins

Now is a good time for cattle producers to evaluate forage supplies and develop a feeding plan for winter, according to North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension specialists.

“Understanding how much forage is available, what it costs and how much may be lost during feeding can help producers manage one of the largest expenses in cattle operations,” said Vini-

cius de Souza Izquierdo, NDSU Extension beef cattle specialist.

The first step is to conduct an inventory of hay, silage and other feeds available for winter. For harvested hay,

by submitting a sample to a commercial laboratory. If dry matter is unknown, an estimate of 85-90% can be used for an initial hay inventory; however, laboratory analysis is recommended for ration

per does not mean all of it will be consumed. If forage is stored outside, dry matter losses could be as high as 20%, while losses may decrease to about 7% when stored inside.

Feeding losses also vary by feed quality and feeding system.

When hay is fed in bunks, waste may range from 3-14%, according to Rogers.

“If bales are rolled out on the ground, waste could reach 45%, particularly when cattle are provided multiple days of hay at one time,” Rogers said.

With free-choice access to large quantities of forage, intake also may increase beyond what is needed to meet requirements.

If conditions allow, daily feeding can help reduce waste. For example, if hay costs \$100 per ton, reducing waste by 25% could save approximately \$25 per ton. These savings may help offset the cost of investments in equipment such as feed bunks, bale processors or feed wagons.

Producers also should include an allowance for potential storage and feeding losses.

When purchasing hay, the price per ton or bale does not necessarily indicate the best value. Producers should consider bale weight, moisture content, nutrient concentration and transportation costs.

A less expensive bale is not necessarily a less expensive source of nutrients.

These calculations can help identify a potential forage shortage, but actual feeding decisions should consider forage quality and cattle nutrient requirements, according to Miranda Meehan, NDSU Extension livestock environmental stewardship specialist.

“Laboratory forage analysis and a balanced ration are recommended when developing the winter feeding program,” Meehan said.

Farmers and ranchers looking to buy or sell hay, corn and other feedstuffs can use NDSU’s FeedList to connect with other producers. The free service also includes pasture available for rent and information about available feeds.

In addition to NDSU’s FeedList ([ndsu.ag/feedlist-26](https://www.ndsu.edu/ag/feedlist-26)), the North Dakota Department of Agriculture’s Hay Hotline and interactive map can help producers locate hay and feed for sale, pasture or hay land for rent, and hay transportation services across the state. The map is available at [nd.gov/ndda](https://www.nd.gov/ndda).

Forage prices are likely to increase as the winter feeding period approaches. For assistance in completing a forage inventory, contact your local NDSU Extension agent. — **NDSU Extension**

“If bales are rolled out on the ground, waste could reach 45%, particularly when cattle are provided multiple days of hay at one time.”

— James Rogers

bales should be grouped by lot, defined as similar species harvested from the same field within a 48-hour period.

James Rogers, NDSU Extension forage crops production specialist, recommends using a commercial scale to estimate bale weight by weighing several loads or multiple individual bales. Once the weight is known, determine the dry matter content because moisture affects weight but does not provide nutrients to the animal.

Dry matter can be determined using a Koster moisture tester, the microwave moisture testing method, any other electronic method or

balancing.

The second step is to estimate feed needs, according to Karl Hoppe, NDSU Extension livestock systems specialist. Intake varies depending on forage quality, animal size, production stage, weather and supplementation.

“For initial planning, an estimate of 2.5% of body weight can be used to determine forage dry matter intake per animal per day,” Hoppe said.

For a comprehensive price breakdown that lets producers input their operations’ values into an equation, visit [ndsu.ag/forage-supply-26](https://www.ndsu.edu/forage-supply-26).

Having enough hay on pa-



COMING EVENTS

(Send calendar of events information to editorial@wlj.net.)
Dec. 2-4 – Registration is now open for the California Cattlemen’s Association and California CattleWomen Convention and California Cattle Industry Tradeshow in Reno NV. Visit [calcattlemen.org/convention2026](https://www.calcattlemen.org/convention2026) to register and make your hotel room reservations.

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BY A.W. ERWIN



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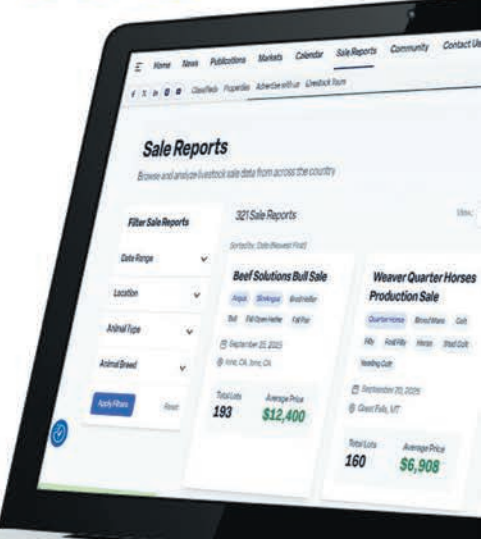


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Farmers urged to start thinking about ARC, PLC decisions

Kansas farmers may have more time than they think to decide which federal farm program will provide their best fit for the 2026 crop, and a Kansas State (K-State) University agricultural economist is encouraging producers to use that extra time.

The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced Sept. 15 that election and enrollment for the 2026 crop year will run from Sept. 16 through Dec. 11. The election and enrollment period for the 2027 crop year will run from Nov. 2 through March 15, 2027.

K-State Extension farm economist Robin Reid said the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs provide income protection based on revenue or commodity prices. Producers can choose ARC-County or PLC on a crop-by-crop basis, and make different decisions on different FSA farm numbers.

According to Reid, the delayed 2026 decision deadline gives farmers an unusual opportunity to have more information about their crop before making their election.

"There is a real advantage this year by harvesting this crop before we are required to make the ARC/PLC decision," Reid said.

The timing of the decision could make this year's harvest particularly useful in evaluating ARC and PLC. If relatively high grain prices persist through the marketing year, Reid said, the choice could depend largely on county yields.

"If there were dry conditions during the growing season and lower yields across the county, ARC might be the way to go because it will pay even at higher prices since it is a reve-

nue-based program," Reid said.

Conversely, if county yields are above average, ARC would require a lower price to generate a payment, potentially making PLC more relevant, Reid said. Farmers should use their own individual farm information when comparing the programs, however.

"Farmers need to run the numbers for their individual farm," Reid said. "As each farm has its own established program yield with FSA, that will determine how large PLC payments would be in relation to potential ARC payments."

K-State has developed an online spreadsheet to help producers evaluate potential ARC and PLC payments. The tool compares payment levels under different marketing-year average prices and is designed to help farmers examine the tradeoffs between the programs. A tutorial video and highlights from the video also are available through agmanager.info, a website maintained by the K-State Department of Agricultural Economics.

Reid said farmers should begin considering their options but do not need to immediately visit their local FSA office.

"As many have started or will soon be starting harvest, I would encourage farmers to be thinking about the decision but there is no need to rush into the local FSA office at this time," she said. "Get through harvest and evaluate how yields turned out, and then do the election and enrollment."

Reid also encouraged producers not to wait until the deadline because FSA offices could face heavy workloads and staffing constraints.

The USDA announcement

also included an update on new base acres, which farmers could qualify for if they were planting more acres than they had in base. More than 30 million acres were eligible for new base-acre allocations, exceed-

ing the national cap. As a result, FSA applied a 3.69% reduction to newly allocated base acres. Existing base acres are not affected, according to Reid.

Meanwhile, ARC and PLC payments for the 2025 crop are

scheduled to begin in October 2026. As a result of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, farmers will receive the higher of the calculated ARC or PLC payment for that crop year, regardless of the program they elected.

Reid said corn, soybeans, wheat and grain sorghum will receive PLC payments for 2025, although ARC payments are higher in some cases for corn and soybeans. — **K-State Research and Extension**

USDA relocations temporarily paused

LAWSUIT (from page 1)

that restrict certain reorganizations, relocations and office closures without approval from the House and Senate appropriations committees. The unions argue Congress intended those restrictions to prevent USDA from undertaking reorganizations without lawmakers' approval.

In a supplemental brief, the plaintiffs pointed to the 2018 relocation of Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) employees to Kansas City. They noted that Congress later withheld money to complete those relocations. They also cited a proposed 2024 Rural Business-Cooperative Service reorganization that USDA abandoned after congressional committees did not approve it.

"Over the years, Congress has consistently resisted reorganization attempts by USDA that it does not approve in a myriad of ways—just as it has done here," the brief stated.

USDA sees that history differently. In its supplemental brief, the agency said it has historically notified Congress about actions covered by the appropriations language but has not waited for committee approval. USDA cited the ERS

and NIFA relocation, saying the department provided notice but did not seek congressional committee approval before proceeding.

The earlier moves also show what can happen when agencies relocate large numbers of employees. The Government Accountability Office found that ERS and NIFA saw temporary drops in staffing and productivity following the move. ERS produced fewer key reports, while NIFA took longer to process grants. Both agencies had largely recovered by the end of fiscal 2021, although their workforces were less experienced than before the relocation.

USDA also argues that requiring congressional committee approval is unconstitutional and that the spending provision only restricts certain ways of moving money, not the department's broader authority to reorganize offices or relocate employees.

Government Executive reported that Chhabria wrestled with that issue during the hearing. Although he described the committee-approval mechanism as "obviously unconstitutional," he also focused on

Congress' decision to strengthen the language from a notice-and-wait requirement to one requiring approval.

The two sides are also fighting over how broadly the court's temporary stay, and any eventual injunction, should apply.

In an Oct. 1 filing, the unions said the parties agreed that the stay would not prevent USDA from closing physical offices that were already empty or processing relocation payments for employees who had already moved. But they disagreed over several other proposed exceptions.

USDA sought to exclude some voluntary relocations, employees already in the relocation process and certain personnel actions involving job announcements, expressions of interest or position matching. The plaintiffs argued those exceptions could create loopholes that allow portions of the reorganization to continue before the court decides whether a preliminary injunction is warranted.

In an Oct. 2 brief, USDA argued that the spending restrictions cited by the plaintiffs do not provide grounds for broad-

ly stopping the reorganization. The department said it has not used the reprogramming or transfer authorities covered by the appropriations provision and does not expect to do so while the current continuing resolution remains in effect.

USDA also maintained that even if the court finds the spending provision applies, its restrictions are narrower than the plaintiffs contend and do not prohibit employee relocations or office closures that can be carried out without using those specific funding mechanisms.

Chhabria acknowledged that whichever side loses the preliminary injunction fight is likely to appeal. According to Government Executive, he told the parties that if he grants the injunction, he does not intend to stay his own ruling while an appeal is pursued.

For now, USDA's relocation deadlines remain paused as the court considers how far Congress' spending restrictions reach and whether they provide grounds to stop the department's reorganization while the lawsuit continues. — **Charles Wallace, WLJ contributing editor**

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11 Cattle Wanted
12 AI/Semen/Embryos
13 Brands
14 Dogs for Sale
15 Horses/Mules
16 Bison/Buffalo
17 Sheep/Goats/Hogs
18 Livestock Supplies
19 Ranch/Livestock Services
20 Real Estate Opportunities
20A Pacific Real Estate For Sale
20B Intermountain Real Estate For Sale
20C Mountain Real Estate For Sale
20D Southwest Real Estate For Sale
20E Plains Real Estate For Sale
20F Midwest Real Estate For Sale
20G Southeast Real Estate For Sale
- 20H Northeast Real Estate For Sale
20I Foreign Real Estate For Sale
21 Real Estate Wanted
22 Real Estate Rent/Lease/Trade
23 Pasture Available
24 Pasture Wanted
25 Mineral Rights
26 Hay/Feed/Seed
27 Irrigation
28 Ag/Industrial Supplies
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VIDEO AUCTION

Oct. 1, Hudson Oaks, TX
Feeders and calves sold steady across the board with the last offering at Superior Livestock Auction's Oct. 1 video auction, where producers marketed 19,213 head. Cattle producers sold a total of

143 lots consigned from 23 states, with 54 successful buyers. Cattle sold on contract to deliver immediately through March 2027. Bidding stayed active from open to close. Midwest feeder steers weighing 825 pounds brought approximately \$2,895 per head.

Premiums were shown for weaned calves with weaned calves out of the southern states bringing up to \$300 more per head than unweaned calves. Beef-dairy cross cattle traded steady to \$20 higher, led by Kansas offerings, with 680-lb. steers bringing approximately

\$2,686 per head, reversing the softness that class showed two weeks earlier. The fundamentals under the market have not changed. Feeder supplies remain historically tight, with USDA putting the 2026 calf crop at 32.5 million head, down 1.5% from a year ago, and feedlot placements running at record lows, leaving fewer cattle available to either retain or place through 2027.

Heifer retention is improving, though it has not reached the levels that marked herd expansion in past cycles. Winter wheat pasture draws lightweight calves out of the fall run, and that grazing base is going in on about its normal schedule. Winter wheat planting across the major producing states reached 34% by Sept. 27, slightly ahead of the 32% five-year average and double last

year's pace, with 11% emerged against a 12% average. Drought conditions improved almost everywhere across the High Plains as tropical moisture delivered 5 to 10 inches to the Southwest and into Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska. The southern Plains stayed hot and dry through most of the week before heavy rain crossed Oklahoma and north Texas on the eve of the auction.

Hunting rights and land leases

Amid ongoing market volatility, some producers may be exploring additional income opportunities, including leasing hunting access. This often raises an important question: Who holds the hunting rights when land is leased?

For written cropland or pasture leases, hunting rights can be specifically addressed in the lease agreement. If the lease does not reserve those rights to the landowner, they generally belong to the tenant for the duration of the lease.

The same is typically true for verbal cropland leases.

Unless the parties agree otherwise, hunting rights usually default to the tenant because the tenant has the right to possess and use the property during the lease term, including the right to exclude others, even the landowner.

Verbal grazing and pasture leases are somewhat different. Because many of these leases end before hunting season begins, hunting rights often return to the landowner once the lease expires. However, if a verbal grazing lease remains active during hunting season, hunting rights

generally belong to the tenant for the duration of the lease unless the parties have agreed otherwise. Landowners do not automatically retain hunting rights simply because they own the property.

Written leases are the best option to avoid misunderstandings, landowners and tenants should clearly address hunting rights when negotiating lease terms and review applicable Nebraska law regarding verbal cropland and pasture leases. — **Shannon Sand, Nebraska Extension**



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Oct. 17 – Western Stockman's Market, Macfarland, CA

ANGUS

Oct. 13 – 9 Peaks Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Fort Rock, OR
Oct. 13 – Coleman Angus, Female Sale, Charlo, MT
Oct. 14 – Montana Ranch, Female Sale, Big Fork, MT
Oct. 15 – Thomas Angus Ranch, Bull Sale, Baker City, OR
Oct. 16 – NILE Angus Female Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 17 – Basin Angus Ranch, Female Sale, Billings, MT
Oct. 17 – Lambert Ranch, Bull Sale, Oroville, CA
Oct. 17 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Dinuba, CA
Oct. 24 – 44 Farms, Bull Sale, Cameron, TX
Oct. 26 – Dal Porto Livestock, Female Sale, Anselmo, NE
Oct. 28 – Riverbend Ranch, Bull Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Oct. 30 – Birch Creek Angus, Bull Sale, Ruby Valley, NV
Oct. 31 – Bear Mountain Angus, Bull Sale, Palisade, NE
Oct. 31 – Evergreen Exclusive, Female Sale, Ellensburg, WA
Nov. 4 – Hornung Livestock, Female Sale, Stratton, CO
Nov. 9 – Green Mountain Angus & Rooney Angus, Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 10 – Beartooth Angus, Bull and Female Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 11 – Riverbend Ranch, Bull Sale, Idaho Falls, ID
Nov. 12 – Hoffman Ranch, Bull Sale, Thedford, NE
Nov. 12 – JR Ranch & Sackmann Cattle, Production Sale, Othello, WA
Nov. 13 – Artzen Angus, Bred Cow Sale, Hilger, MT
Nov. 14 – Montana Ranch, Bull Sale, Big Fork, MT
Nov. 16 – Montana Angus

Female Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 20 – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bred Female Sale, Pilot Rock, OR
Nov. 21 – Baldridge/Tiedeman & Frank Cattle Co., Female Sale, Lodgepole, NE
Nov. 21 – Redland Angus, Bull Sale, Buffalo, WY
Nov. 21 – Spring Cove Ranch, Female Sale, Bliss, ID
Nov. 21 – TLC Angus, Bull Sale, Jerome, ID
Nov. 21 – Queen Ann Cattle Co., Bull & Female Sale, Loma, CO
Nov. 24 – Paint Rock Angus, Bull Sale, Hyattville, WY
Nov. 27 – Vermillion Angus, Bred Cow Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 28 – Vermillion Angus, Bull and Female Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 30 – Stevenson's Diamond Dot, Production Sale, Hobson, MT
Dec. 1 – Stevenson Angus, Bull Sale, Hobson, MT
Dec. 1 – ZumBrunnen Angus, Bull Sale, Lusk, WY
Dec. 2 – McDonnell Angus, Bull Sale, Columbus, MT
Dec. 3 – Sitz Angus, Production Sale, Harrison, MT
Dec. 4 – KG Ranch, Bull Sale, Three Forks, MT
Dec. 5 – Reverse Rocking R Ranch, Bull Sale, Maxwell, NM
Dec. 7 – Hollow Top Angus, Bull Sale, Pony, MT
Dec. 7 – Jacobsen Ranch, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT
Dec. 9 – Shipwheel Cattle Co., Bull Sale, Chinkook, MT
Dec. 12 – Gaugler Angus, Bull Sale, Judith Gap, MT
Dec. 14 – TK Angus, Bull Sale, Valentine, NE
Dec. 17 – Bobcat Angus, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT

BRANGUS

Nov. 20 – Cavender Ranches, Production Sale, Jacksonville, TX

HEREFORD

Oct. 17 – Lambert Ranch, Bull Sale, Oroville, CA
Nov. 12 – Hoffman Ranch, Bull Sale, Thedford, NE
Nov. 19 – Largent & Sons, Bull Sale, Kaycee, WY
Nov. 23 – Berry Herefords, Bull Sale, Cheyenne, WY

OPTIMIZER

Dec. 7 – Jacobsen Ranch, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT

RED ANGUS

Oct. 16 – NILE Red Angus Bull Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 5 – Memory Ranches, Bull Sale, Wells, NV
Nov. 21 – Baldridge/Tiedeman & Frank Cattle Co., Female Sale, Lodgepole, NE
Dec. 3 – Green Mountain Red Angus, Female Sale, Three Forks, MT

SALERS

Dec. 7 – Jacobsen Ranch, Bull Sale, Great Falls, MT

SIMANGUS

Oct. 17 – Lambert Ranch, Bull Sale, Oroville, CA
Nov. 4 – Hornung Livestock, Female Sale, Stratton, CO
Nov. 12 – JR Ranch & Sackmann Cattle, Bull Sale, Othello, WA
Dec. 5 – Montana Simmental Association, Female Sale, Billings, MT

SIMMENTAL

Dec. 1 – Reflected R Ranch, Female Dispersal Sale, Ordway, CO
Dec. 5 – Montana Simmental Association, Female Sale, Billings, MT

STABILIZER

Oct. 17 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Dinuba, CA
Nov. 20 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Meriden, WY
Dec. 5 – Leachman Cattle, Bull Sale, Loma, CO

COMMERCIAL

Oct. 16 – Western Video Market Auction, Cottonwood, CA
Nov. 5 – Weaver Ranch, Female Sale, Lewistown, MT
Nov. 6 – Western Video Market Auction, Amarillo, TX
Nov. 7 – World of Bulls & CLM, Bull & Female Sale, Galt, CA
Nov. 13 – Artzen Angus, Bred Cow Sale, Hilger, MT
Nov. 16 – J&L Livestock, Female Sale, Billings, MT
Nov. 20 – Rollin' Rock Angus, Bred Female Sale, Pilot Rock, OR
Nov. 21 – Queen Ann Cattle Co., Bull & Female Sale, Loma, CO
Nov. 27 – Vermillion Angus, Bred Cow Sale, Billings, MT
Dec. 2 – Western Video Market Auction, Reno, NV



SALE REPORTS

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Auctioneer: Rick Machado
Sale Manager: M3 Marketing

TOPS: Elwood North Star 5048, 7/21/2025 by Bear Mtn North Star; to Hoffman Ranch, Thedford, CA, \$45,000. Elwood North Star 5036, 7/18/2025 by Bear Mtn North Star; to Y Cross Herefords & Angus, Klamath Falls, OR, \$45,000. Elwood Bedrock 5455, 7/26/2025 by Boyd Bedrock; to Grimmus Cattle Co., Hanford, CA, \$41,000. Elwood Grant 5205, 6/22/2025 by Spring Cove Grant 200K; to O & De Cattle Co., Cedarville, CA, \$40,000. Elwood Grant 5223, 6/28/2025 by Spring Cove Grant 200K; to Shufelberger Ranch, Redding, CA, \$30,000.

Elwood North Star 5025, 7/15/2025 by Bear Mtn North Star; to Ward Ranches, Gardnerville, NV, \$30,000. Elwood Bedrock 5421, 7/17/2025 by Boyd Bedrock; to Shufelberger Ranch, Redding, CA, \$30,000. — **JARED PATTERSON**

COLYER HEREFORD & ANGUS FEMALE SALE

Oct. 3, Bruneau, ID
25 Hereford open heifers . . . \$26,490
7 Hereford bred cows . . . 19,179
27 Hereford bred heifers . . . 16,129
10 Angus open heifers . . . 10,700
7 Angus bred cows . . . 10,000
13 Hereford bred heifers . . . 8,019
127 Hereford embryos . . . 1,108
Auctioneers: Butch Booker, Dustin Layton,

Kyle Colyer
TOPS—Bred heifer: C 2015 Blair 4279, 8/22/2024 by C Denali HD 2135 ET bred to C Overtime 5020 ET; to Potter Hereford Ranch, Winton, CA, \$119,000, 1/2 interest. **Donor cow:** C 0321 Tresha 3126, 1/10/2023 by C 6474D Endure 0321 ET; to Lindskov LT Ranch, Isabel, SD, \$70,000, 1/2 interest. **Angus open heifer:** CCC Bonnie 6017 ET, 12/28/2025 by Boyd Bedrock; to Basin Angus Ranch, Reed Point, MT, \$32,500. **Hereford open heifers:** C PRH Mercy Me 6228 ET, 1/6/2026 by CC 133J 25K Lifetime 15M; to GKB Cattle Co., Waxahachie, TX, \$150,000. C PRH Bailee 6161 ET, 2/9/2026 by HL Stimulus 2108 ET; to show heifer buyer, Eagle, ID, \$140,000. C 15M Blair 6101 ET, 1/14/2026 by CC 133J 25K Lifetime 15M; to GKB Cattle Co., Waxahachie, TX, \$72,500. — **JARED PATTERSON**



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FALL ROUND UP SPECIAL FEEDER SALES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

20TH ANNIVERSARY FEEDER SALE & CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

Tuesday, DECEMBER 15

TLAY STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE VACCINATION PROGRAM

Healthier calves from your ranch to our market

Elite Level
5 way viral (modified live) 2x
Clostridial 2x
Mannheimia / Pasteurella 2x
Dewormer
Weaned 45 days
2nd vaccinations given 30 days prior to sale date

Premium Level
5 way viral (modified live) 2x
Clostridial 2x
Mannheimia / Pasteurella 2x
Dewormer
Not weaned
2nd vaccinations given 30 days prior to sale date

Upcoming 2026 WWM western video market Sales

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WWM
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DEADLINE NOV. 18

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GENETIC EDGE FALL BULL SALE

Wednesday • OCTOBER 28, 2026 • 11 A.M.
Idaho Falls, ID

New Date!

RIVERBEND COMMERCE N1814



LOT 1
4/24/2025
+*21335695

Sire: Connealy Commerce • Dam: EXAR Elba 9501
MGS: Connealy Confidence Plus

RIVERBEND BOUGIE N399



LOT 4
2/11/2025
+*21281675

Sire: BNWZ Bougie 1588 • Dam: EXAR Elba 9501
MGS: Connealy Confidence Plus

RIVERBEND BLUE COLLAR N1171



LOT 90
4/13/2026
*21326405

Sire: Cherry Crk Blue Collar G275 • Dam: Baldrige Isabel J132
MGS: Mill Brae Identified 4031

RIVERBEND JAMESON N1350



LOT 11
4/23/2025
+*21333340

Sire: Basin Jameson 1076 • Dam: Spruce Mtn Rita 0028
MGS: Hoover No Doubt

RIVERBEND BOUGIE N1012



LOT 23
4/1/2025
+*21333292

Sire: BNWZ Bougie 1588 • Dam: Riverbend Lucy H292
MGS: MOGCK Entice

RIVERBEND AMBITIOUS N365



LOT 7
2/5/2025
+*21280967

Sire: FF Rito Ambitious • Dam: EXAR Elba 9501
MGS: Connealy Confidence Plus



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Rhett Jacobs | General Manager | 208-681-9841
Dale Meek | Purebred Operations Manager | 208-681-9840
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