



CAROLINA CATTLE CONNECTION

Spotlight on FORAGES

FEBRUARY 2026 • Vol. 40, Issue No. 2

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THE CAROLINA

CATTLE CONNECTION

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FROM PASTURE TO PROFIT

Practical Management for Profitable Cattle Operations



Friday, February 20, 2026

7:30 a.m.	Board of Directors Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	Registration & Trade Show Open
8:45 a.m.	Welcome
9:00-9:45 a.m.	Opening Session
	• Efficiency & Genomics in Commercial Cattle
10:00 a.m.	Morning Break
	• Hay Sampling Demonstration
10:15-11:15 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
	• Animal Health & Production
	• Nutrition & Pasture Management
	• Market Outlook & Risk Management
11:45 a.m.	Awards Luncheon
	• Keynote Address
1:30 p.m.	Trade Show Continues
2:00 p.m.	Committee Meetings (Everyone Welcome)
	• N.C. Forage & Grasslands Council
	• Stocker & Cattle Feeders
	• From Pasture to People: Getting Your Farm Ready for the Public
3:00 p.m.	Afternoon Break
	• Hay Sampling Demonstration
3:00 p.m.	Committee Meetings Continue (Everyone Welcome)
	• Purebred Breeders Council
	• N.C. Beef Cattle Improvement Program (NC BCIP)
	• Joint Legislative & Membership
5:15 p.m.	NCCA Annual Business Meeting (Everyone Welcome)
5:00-8:00 p.m.	Social & NCBA PAC/NCCA Support Auction
6:00-7:00 p.m.	Poster Presentations of NCCA Funded Research Projects
8:30 p.m.	Social Ends & Trade Show Closes

Educational Program, Presented By



Saturday, February 21, 2026

7:00 a.m.	Registration Opens
7:30 a.m.	Youth Recognition Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Trade Show Opens
9:00-12:00 noon	Trade Show Activities
	• Skillathon Contest
	• Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Certification
9:00-10:00 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
	• Enhancing Beef Efficiency in the Fescue Belt
	• Estate and Succession Planning
10:00 a.m.	Morning Break
	• Hay Sampling Demonstration
10:15-11:15 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
	• Farmland Preservation
	• From Pasture to Plate: Marketing Strategies from Local Beef Producers (Moderated by N.C. Choices)
12:00 noon	Adjourn

Sponsored by NC Farm Bureau	(Hickory 3)
	(Lobby)
Dr. Todd See, N.C. State University	(Hickory 4)
Lee Leachman, Leachman Cattle	(Hickory 4)
	(Hickory 1&2)
Dr. Tomas Gonzalez, N.C. State University CVM	(Conover 1)
Dr. Maggie Justice, Auburn University	(Conover 2)
Dr. Charles Martinez, University of Tennessee	(Conover 3)
Sponsored by Farm Credit Associations of NC	(Hickory 3&4)
Russ Uselton, Region II Federation Vice President	(Hickory 1&2)
	(Conover 4)
	(Conover 3)
Janice Wright, Rooted in NC	(Board Room)
	(Hickory 1&2)
	(Lake Hickory Meeting Room)
	(Conover 3)
	(Conover 1&2)
	(Conover 1&2)
	(Hickory 2&4)
	(Hickory 1&2)

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	(Lobby)
Sponsored by First Bank & Trust Company	(Hickory 4)
	(Hickory 1&2)
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	(NCSU Extension Booth)
Dr. Benjamin Rojo, N.C. State University	(Conover 4)
Stephen Bishop, N.C. Farmlink	(Conover 3)
Sponsored by Performance Livestock & Feed	(Hickory 1&2)
Leslie Vanden Herik, American Farmland Trust	(Conover 2)
Melissa Falcone, Anna Jackson, & Jeff Bradley	(Conover 1)



2026
NC CATTLE CONFERENCE

Attendee Information

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Email

Additional Attendee Name(s)

Phone #

NUMBER

☐ FULL REGISTRATION – ALL Events on Friday & Saturday

☐ FRIDAY ONLY – ALL Events on Friday

☐ FRIDAY TRADE SHOW ONLY

☐ SATURDAY ONLY – All Events on Saturday

☐ SATURDAY TRADE SHOW ONLY

☐ STUDENT REGISTRATION

\$150

\$120

\$50

\$75

\$25

\$75

GRAND TOTAL

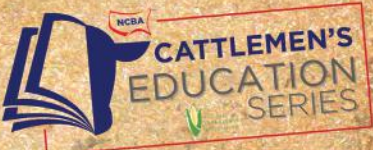
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By MILO LEWIS, N.C. Cattlemen's Association

Director's Report

Strength in Preparation

The cattle industry rarely offers predictability, but it consistently rewards preparation, adaptability, and strong relationships. As we move into a new year, North Carolina cattle producers are once again navigating a landscape shaped by animal health risk, economic pressure, and evolving consumer expectations. While challenges are nothing new to agriculture, the way we respond to them, together, continues to define the strength of our industry.

The past year reminded us how quickly uncertainty can emerge, from disease concerns and weather related impacts to ongoing market volatility. In times like these, education and communication become more than professional development tools — they are essential to sound decision making and long term resilience. Staying informed, sharing experiences, and learning from one another helps ensure producers are equipped not just to react — but to plan ahead.

At the heart of this effort is community. The North Carolina cattle industry has always been rooted in relationships between neighbors, across counties, and through organizations that bring producers together. Whether through county cattlemen's associations, Extension programs, or statewide educational events, these connections create opportunities to exchange ideas, address challenges, and strengthen our collective voice.

Even amid uncertainty, there are encouraging signs that reinforce why preparation matters. Consumer demand for beef remains strong, with shoppers continuing to choose beef at retail and in foodservice. While price pressures and production costs remain front of mind for producers, steady demand underscores the importance of maintaining product quality, efficiency, and trust throughout the supply chain. It also reinforces the value of staying informed about market trends and consumer expectations as we look ahead.

Education plays a critical role in meeting these demands. From genetics and herd health to grazing management, risk mitigation, and economic outlooks, access to timely, practical information helps producers make decisions that strengthen both individual operations and the industry as a whole. Just as important are the conversations that happen alongside that education, the peer-to-peer exchanges that provide perspective no spreadsheet can replace.

One of the most effective ways we invest in both education and connection each year is through the N.C. Cattle Conference, returning

February 20–21 in Hickory. The conference is designed to bring producers together around timely topics, emerging challenges, and practical solutions that can be applied back home. It provides a space not only to learn from industry experts but also to reconnect with fellow producers who understand the realities of today's cattle business.

As a grassroots organization, the N.C. Cattlemen's Association is strongest when producers are engaged at the county level, through regional discussions, and at statewide events. Your participation, insight, and leadership continue to guide our priorities and strengthen our ability to advocate effectively on behalf of the industry.

As we move forward into the year ahead, preparation, education, and connection will remain key to navigating whatever lies ahead. I encourage you to stay involved, seek opportunities to learn, and make plans to join us in Hickory. Together, we will continue building a strong, informed, and united cattle industry for North Carolina.

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SPOTLIGHT on FORAGES

Timely Tips for Managing New Stands of Tall Fescue

By **MATT POORE**, *N.C. State University*

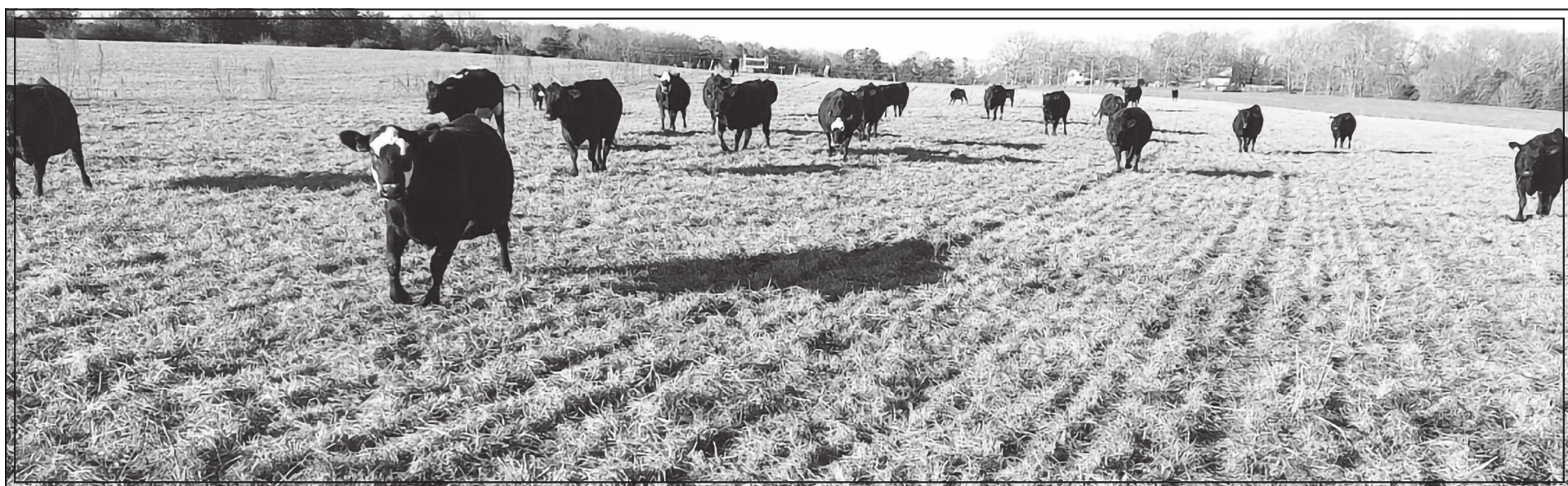
Farmers across the tall fescue belt periodically renovate pastures to improve forage production and, in some cases, to convert toxic tall fescue to novel endophyte tall fescue. It is important to provide good management to these new stands during the first two years following planting, which are considered the establishment phase of a new stand. These suggestions are intended to help farmers get the most out of their pasture renovation efforts. It is important for farmers to remember that new stands are sensitive to overgrazing and encroachment of weedy species, and steps should be taken to reduce those impacts.

New stands of tall fescue planted in the autumn of 2025 should be scouted now in preparation for spraying and fertility management. If substantial numbers of weed seedlings are found, plan to spray an herbicide as soon as the weather warms. In general, spray when the high temperature has been at least 60 for three days and is expected to stay in the 60s for the next few days. This usually comes in February in southern areas and March in more northern locations, and you should be ready to take advantage of that perfect day. The tall fescue seedlings should be at least in the four leaf stage and, preferably, tillering. This should be the case already for almost all plantings except those planted very late.

Make sure the herbicide selected is labeled for use on newly established tall fescue pastures and that it is effective against the species present. If most weeds are common winter annuals, then a broad spectrum herbicide like Weedmaster or generic versions (2-4 D and dicamba) might be adequate. If tough to control weed species are found, then an herbicide with a broader spectrum and residual activity might be called for. Make sure you get advice from someone who knows these herbicides and always follow the label directions.

New stands should be fertilized in the spring, with at least 50 lbs of nitrogen added. If the field was not fertilized with phosphorus and potassium in the autumn, use a complete fertilizer to provide some of those nutrients. Remember that if you plan on taking off a cutting of hay, it is important to add back the soil nutrients removed to maintain a healthy stand. Each ton of hay will remove approximately 40 lbs of nitrogen, 15 lbs of phosphate, and 40 lbs of potash. Early fertilization with nitrogen will boost yield and help the tall fescue develop a good level of ground cover by the time summer annual grasses germinate. Sufficient phosphorus and potash will keep the plants healthy and vigorous.

If the new stands happen to be KY-31, then be aware that the needed fertilizer will also stimulate the plant to produce a higher level of ergot



alkaloid toxins. It is critical to the survival of these stands to apply fertilizer, so it needs to be done, but the grower needs to be aware that the resulting forage will contain elevated levels of toxins, and it needs to be managed accordingly. Future management recommendations will limit fertilizer additions, especially nitrogen, due to the potential for high toxin levels. If the new stand is novel endophyte tall fescue then the grower can enjoy the high level of nutritious and non-toxic forage that will be produced with added fertility.

It is important to control the growth of new stands without overgrazing them or opening the stand up enough to leave bare ground where weeds can develop. If grazed, the fescue should be lightly “top grazed” leaving a significant amount of residual. Grazing will help stimulate tillering and can effectively create a canopy that is resilient to weed competition. These stands can be grazed several times during the first growing season as long as they are not overgrazed and are allowed to rest at least three weeks between grazing events. If there is significant annual ryegrass present in the stand, then early and frequent light grazing bouts can be very effective. Animals will seek out the ryegrass and graze it in preference to the tall fescue, strengthening the fescue stands.

If you plan on removing the first spring growth as hay, plan on cutting earlier than usual to allow the fescue time to regrow and create cover to compete with weeds. Set the cutter height as high as is practical (4–6 inches) to optimize regrowth, again helping with weed competition. If there is ryegrass present, make sure the hay is cut before viable seed is set to prevent an ongoing contamination problem.

Second year stands can be managed for high levels of forage production this coming year. Fertilize with nitrogen and other nutrients to optimize growth as described above. Use rotational grazing, allowing 21–30 days of rest between bouts. If the stand is novel endophyte tall fescue, it should be used strategically for the groups of animals with the highest requirements, like developing replacement heifers or lactating first calf heifers. Those non-toxic stands should support the performance of these animals without supplemental feed other than minerals. In contrast, if the stand is KY-31 then these high producing classes of cattle need to be provided with some supplemental energy and protein to make up for the depressed forage intake experienced with toxic tall fescue. If cutting for hay, cut at the early bloom stage to optimize yield and nutritive value, and don’t cut very short — leading to scalping — to optimize stand survival.

Scout for weeds as the season progresses and be prepared to control broadleaf weeds. If you plan on turning these fields into a tall fescue/clover system, then getting control of broadleaves before frost seeding clover is critical.

In early winter, make a plan to attend a tall fescue renovation workshop provided by the Alliance for Grassland Renewal. Whether you plan on planting novel endophyte tall fescue or not, learning more about tall fescue management will help you to better use this valuable grass.

If you plan on planting tall fescue next fall, try to attend our online fescue management webinars and/or one of the many other opportunities to learn more about managing tall fescue based systems. To learn more about these and other upcoming events and to learn more about managing tall fescue visit www.grasslandrenewal.org.

NCFGC 2026 WINTER CONFERENCE



February 19, 2026 | **Hickory Metro Convention Center**
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

9:30 - Registration Open

10:00 - Welcome

10:15 - Jim Elizondo

Stocking rate determines profits & The impact of total grazing on whole farm profitability and regeneration.

11:45 - Sponsors Talk:

Piedmont Custom Meats

12:00 - Lunch

12:45 - Extension, Amazing Grazing, Forage Weed Specialist Update

1:15 - Jim Elizondo

Genetics and Ecology, herbivores mold, and are molded by the environment.

2:15 - Sponsors Talk & Break

2:30 - Jim Elizondo:

Nutrition while grazing the importance of fiber for ruminants.

3:30 - Producer Panel & Wrap Up

4:00 - Meet & Greet at Trade Show

To register, scan the QR Code or visit
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Confessions of a Regenerative Farmer – Part 5: Pharmaceuticals

By DR. MATT POORE, N.C. State University



Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of interest in “regenerative farming.” I know many farmers who have had great success giving up many of their traditional inputs and building a system that produces with much lower inputs than they used in the past. Many farmers have realized that while they have productive farms, the cost of production often is high relative to their income. When they hear someone talk about the benefits of regenerative farming, where you can give up all your inputs and see a big improvement in the bottom line, they are likely to listen.

On my farm we have used rotational grazing and holistic management practices for a long time. With the introduction of the regenerative agriculture concept, I realize that most of what we have done has improved soil health across our farm, but that we have a long way to go restoring a productive ecosystem.

As we ponder which inputs we could give up, veterinary care supplies or pharmaceuticals come to mind. We have had a good relationship with a veterinarian throughout our years of ranching, and with my job at the university, we fully adopted the recommended vaccination programs back in the early ‘90s. Twenty years ago we vaccinated all calves for blackleg (7-way), IBR, PI3, BVD, BRSV, and Pasteurella (pneumonia) twice. All our cows received a modified live viral vaccine pre-breeding along with leptospirosis vaccine twice a year. In short, we gave a whole lot of shots.

Back at that same time, we regularly dewormed cattle, including the mature cows, and usually used pour-on ivermectin. This was done for all cattle mid-summer and again in the late fall before the

breeding season. These two ivermectin treatments perhaps helped with worm control but also gave us some horn fly control in summer and lice control during winter.

Finally, we used to have a pretty bad problem with pinkeye, so we have used a lot of tetracycline (LA-200) over the years as well. Foot rot (lameness) is also a common problem for us, and long acting tetracycline was our choice for treating that as well.

One thing I once heard a well known regenerative rancher say in a talk was that we should just quit giving all these vaccines, dewormers and antibiotics and go totally natural. As I reviewed in my mind the very many shots we routinely gave and the increasing cost, I started to question our program. Once I had asked a veterinarian friend of mine why we only have to vaccinate in childhood for many human diseases, but it seems like we have to vaccinate annually for all the major cattle diseases. In this discussion he revealed that many cattle vets believe that if a heifer is double vaccinated for the major viral diseases before she is bred the first time, she probably has adequate protection for her whole life. This discussion came back to my mind.

Another key thing that happened for us is we started raising local beef so that most of our animals never left the farm as feeder cattle. When we were marketing feeder cattle, we needed to give all those vaccines so the cattle had some level of protection at their new locations and so that we qualified for special sales. Without the exposure to the common diseases at the stockyard or feedlot, it was clear our cattle didn’t need as aggressive a program.



As I became more of a student of pastureland ecology, I became concerned about the impact of residual insecticides like ivermectin on the environment. I realized that the ivermectin we were putting on in mid-summer was killing horn fly larvae in the cow pies, but that it was also interrupting the breeding cycles of dung beetles and other beneficial soil organisms. I had been aware for many years that the mature cows didn't have very high worm levels anyway, so most of the benefit of the ivermectin on them was the reduction in horn fly and lice populations.

Today our program is very slimmed down compared to where we were 20 years ago. The mature cows no longer receive vaccinations. The calves get vaccinated for blackleg at about four months of age and again at weaning. At weaning, all calves get one shot of a modified live viral vaccine, and the heifers get a version with leptospirosis. Six weeks later, the heifers get another shot of the viral vaccine with leptospirosis as we prepare them for breeding.

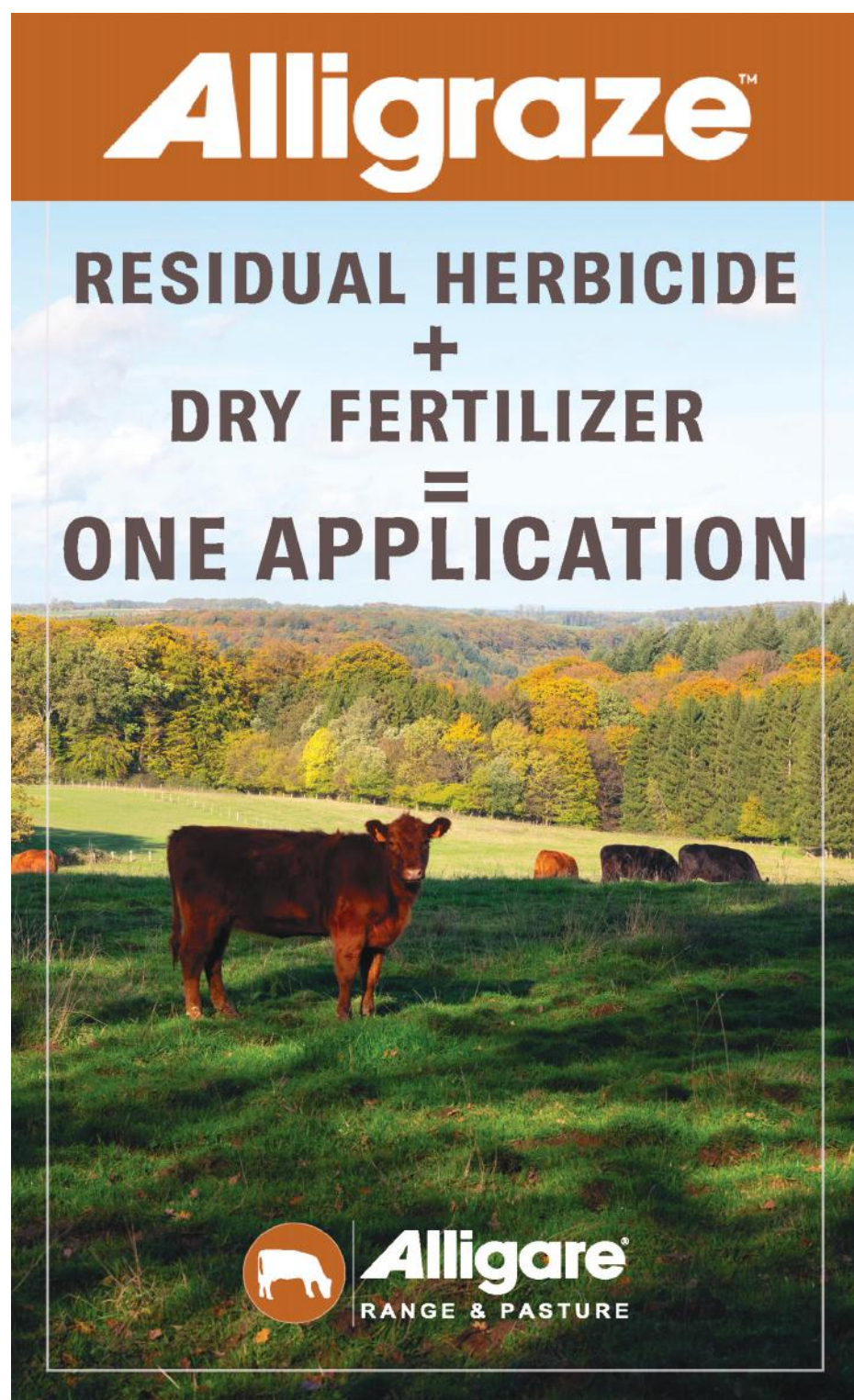
While we have a mostly closed herd, we occasionally purchase bulls, and we can't rule out that someone's cattle might break in with ours. The level of vaccination we now use seems to be consistent with this low chance of exposure, and so far we are getting along well.

We have also dramatically reduced our use of dewormers in recent years. Mature cows are no longer dewormed, and we now use periodic — but infrequent — spraying to control horn flies. We use dust or spray to prevent a lice outbreak in late winter. We generally use a "white" liquid dewormer on the calves at four months of age and again at weaning. Replacement heifers and finishers are dewormed if there is an indication that they need it, which rarely ever happens. By switching to the white dewormer and avoiding deworming in mid-summer when dung beetle activity is at its highest, we have seen dramatic increases in dung beetle populations.

Finally, we do still occasionally use an antibiotic. One constraint on this is the removal of antibiotics as over-the-counter drugs, but we continue to work to maintain a good relationship with our veterinarian. We know that a very quick response to treating pinkeye and foot rot will really make a big difference in preventing a major outbreak or long term damage to the animal. I will say we rarely have to use an antibiotic, but when it is called for, it is a tool I want in the cabinet.

As you consider your own farm, consider adopting the regenerative philosophy, and specifically consider what you might do to reduce inputs. Most of us can improve management or change our system in some way to allow good production with the removal of some of the inputs we have depended on in the past. Just beware of the idea that abruptly giving up everything is the answer. Many of the animal health products I have talked about are useful and can help us as long as we use them to address specific problems in the short term. Along the way, we should make system changes to reduce the incidence of problems in the future.

One thing we have done is to start breeding heifers using artificial insemination, so we now use the products needed to synchronize them, which we did not do 20 years ago. The use of A.I. has dramatically reduced our incidence of calving trouble with heifers and has brought high quality genetics into our population. These products we now have added to our program contribute greatly to our long term goals and the regeneration of our farming system.



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SPOTLIGHT on FORAGES

Body Condition Scoring is Still Your Most Important Management Tool

By **MATT POORE**, *N.C. State University*

There are many management tools you should be using as you make the day-to-day decisions it takes to make a successful beef enterprise. Many of these tools are very important, but none is more critical than body condition scoring.

Body condition scoring is a system of evaluating the amount of fat reserve a cow is carrying. The system is a simple visual assessment of cow fatness, with several areas of the body observed, including the brisket, the ribs, the tailhead, and across the top of the back, as seen in Figure 1.

The body condition scoring system used in beef cattle uses a 1–9 scale, with 1 being extremely thin and 9 being extremely fat. Other classes of livestock, like small ruminants and dairy cattle, are scored using a 1–5 scale. When you discuss this topic, you need to make sure that everyone involved is using the same 1–9 scale. Usually for practical application we use the whole numbers, but in some cases, such as in research, we use the half scores as well.



A body condition score 3 cow.

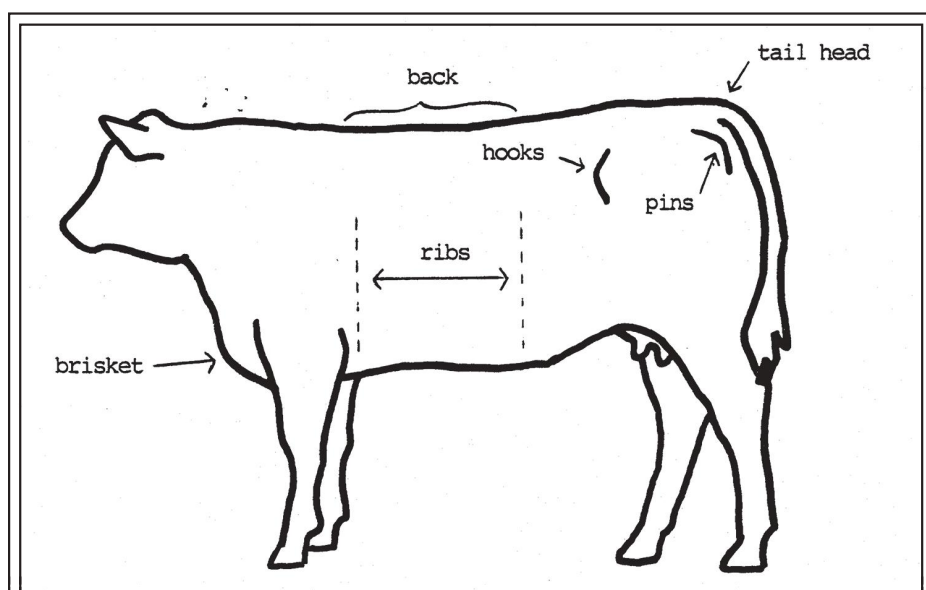
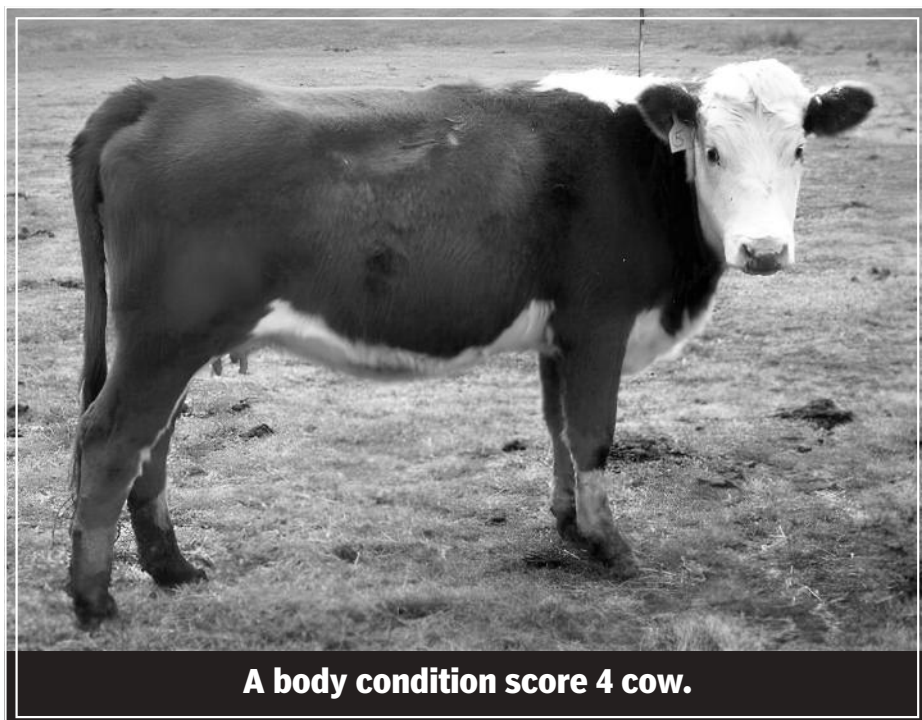


Figure 1. Areas to evaluate during body condition scoring.

The scoring is usually done with only visual evaluation, and that is one of the nice things about it. Cattle don't need to be gathered or worked through a chute for you to evaluate their body condition. Some factors — such as how thick their hair coat is and how full of feed they are — can have an impact on visual scores, and that should be considered. For example, if you are highly dependent on ribs in your scoring, a thick hair coat might obstruct your view and cause you to score high. This is the big reason for looking at various areas. If you have cows in a chute or want to get fine tuned, or are just learning the system, it is helpful to feel for fat over the ribs, around the backbone, etc.

I like the 1–9 scale partly because it is easy to teach to producers. Many producers don't use a formal system but do observe the condition of their cows. Most cattle producers have an idea if their cattle are thin, ok, or fat, and that is in essence a three point scale. The 1–9 scale is simply 3 divisions on the thin category (1–3), 3



A body condition score 4 cow.

divisions on the “ok” category (4–6), and 3 divisions on the fat category (7–9).

Descriptions of the scores follows:

- **BCS 1** – Extremely thin and weak. Severe muscle wasting. Animal is near death.

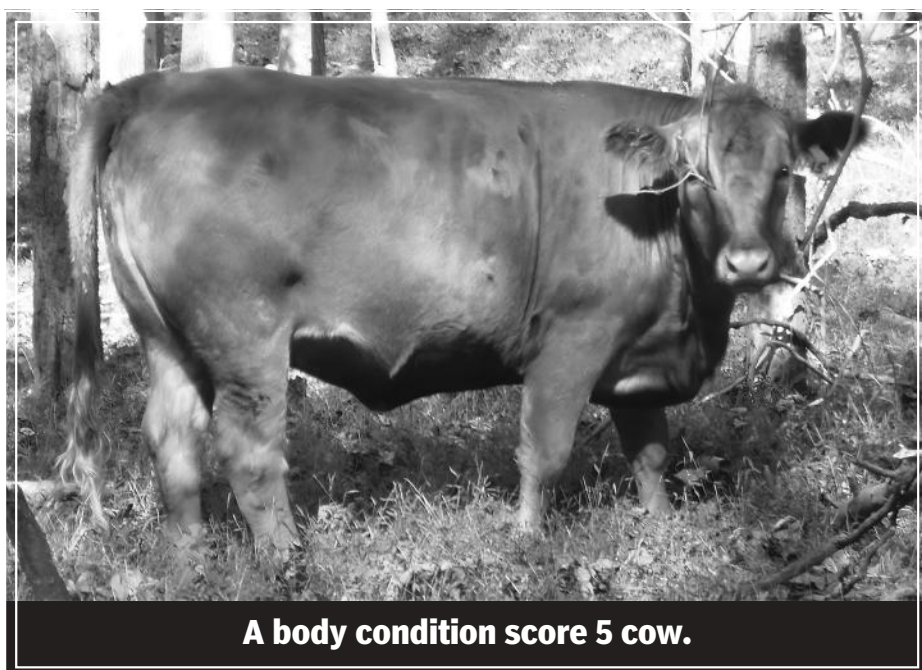
- **BCS 2** – Extremely thin but not weak. Muscle wasting is evident in the hind quarter.

- **BCS 3** – Very thin. All ribs and backbone easily visible and no apparent fat deposits anywhere on the body. Individual vertebrae are visible along the backbone. Some muscle wasting is evident in the hind quarter.

- **BCS 4** – Thin. Ribs and backbone visible, but individual vertebrae not visible. No muscle wasting. Sunk in appearance around the tailhead.

- **BCS 5** – Moderate condition. Last two or three ribs usually visible and little fat is evident in the brisket or around tailhead, but area around the tail head is not sunken.

- **BCS 6** – Smooth appearance. Ribs not easily visible. A small amount of fat is evident around the tailhead and in the brisket.



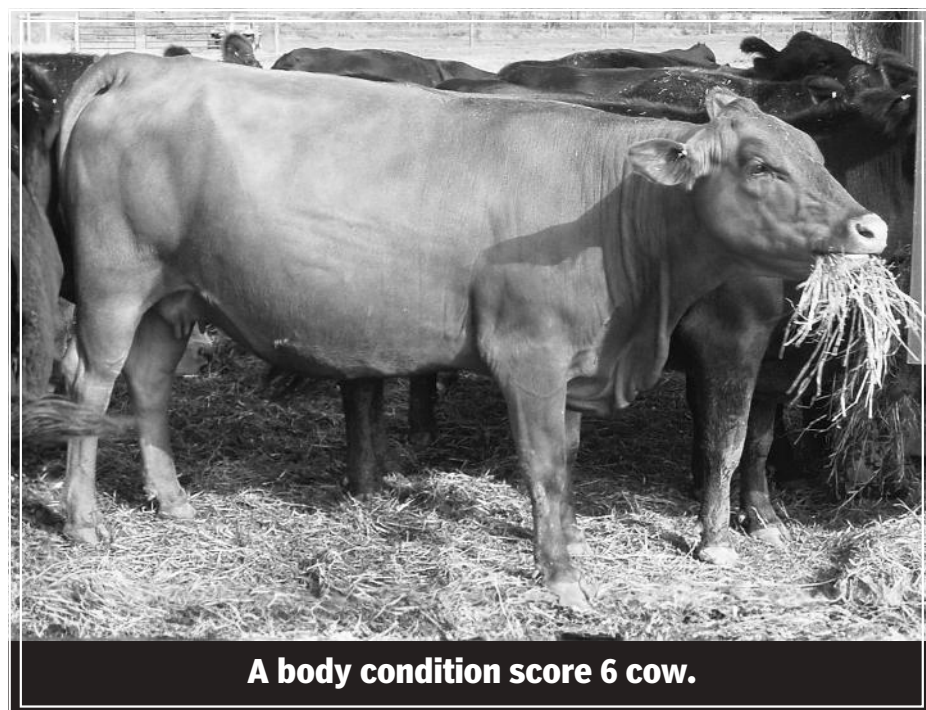
A body condition score 5 cow.

- **BCS 7** – Fleshy appearance. Brisket and tail head have considerable fat deposits, and the back has a flattened appearance.

- **BCS 8** – Obese. Neck appears short. Back is flat with dimples at the backbone. A lot of fat is present in the brisket and around the tail head.

- **BCS 9** – Extremely obese. Appearance is similar to an 8, but more exaggerated. Brisket is extremely full of fat, and large fat deposits are found around the tail head.

How you use the system will vary depending on the size of your operation and the level of management you wish to employ. Every producer should subconsciously assess body condition every time they look at their cows. Once you get familiar with the system, you should be able to just take one look at the herd and come pretty close to the average body condition score. You also should keep in mind the cows that consistently have the lowest scores, as they sometimes give you an indication that the condition of the whole herd is slipping.



A body condition score 6 cow.

If you are a larger producer with a higher level of management interest, then it is a good idea to keep a record of each cow’s body condition score when they go through the chute, and especially at the pre-breeding working and at pregnancy check time. These body condition scores give you a good indicator of the adequacy of the nutritional program and will help you in evaluating pregnancy rates.

The reason managing body condition is so important is that it influences general health and reproductive success. If cattle are very thin — BCS 3 and down — they may have a depressed immune system leading to more disease and parasite loads, and they will also have lower quality and quantity of colostrum, which will reduce calf health, vigor, and survival. Cows with a body condition score of 4 and lower will also have lower reproductive performance. There will always be individual cows that will be exceptions to the rule, but on a herd basis, having an average score lower than 5 will mean reduced breeding rates.

Body Condition Score continued on the next page

Body Condition Score *continued from the previous page*

There has been a lot of research on critical body condition scores, and all that work points to having cows in a 5 or better score at all times to optimize reproductive rate. In a study from Texas, 1,041 cows were body condition scored at the start of the breeding season. Those cows with a score of 4 had a 58 percent breeding rate, those with a 5 had an 85 percent breeding rate, and those with a 6 score had a 95 percent breeding rate. In a study from Florida at three locations, 624 cows were scored at the pregnancy check. Cows with a BCS of 3 had a 43 percent breeding rate, cows with a BCS of 4 had a 66 percent breeding rate, and cows with a BCS of 5 had a 94 percent breeding rate. There are many other studies available that agree closely with these results.

I talk to a lot of producers that don't have a controlled breeding season and often get the statement, "I don't need to worry about body condition and its influence on breeding rate because I leave my bull in all the time. That way none of my cows comes up open." This may be true, but a thin cow in this kind of year round calving system is more likely to have more than a year interval between calves, which also costs you money. Regardless of your management program, managing to maintain good body condition will pay off.

It is important to discuss ideal body condition scores at different times in the lifecycle. For mature cows, you need to shoot for a minimum body condition score of 6 at calving, 5 at the start — and end — of the breeding season, and 4 at weaning. For young cows — first and second calf — you need to target about a half score higher than the mature cows with 6–7 at calving, 5–6 during the breeding season, and not less than a 5 at weaning. Heifers tend to lose condition faster and are harder to put condition back on after



A body condition score 7 cow.

calving than mature cows, so don't let them get thin in the first place.

For most operations, the working range in body condition will be BCS 3–7. It should be very unusual to have 1s, 2s, 8s, or 9s in a good production system. The very low scores are an indicator of malnutrition, parasites, or perhaps very old age. The high scores will normally only be seen in barren cows or in extreme overfeeding.

The good thing about the body condition scoring system is that it is simple, inexpensive, and requires no investment in any equipment. Because of that, it is something you can start doing today! I encourage you to walk through your cows and write down some body condition scores. Start by trying to estimate the average for the whole herd and identify the high scoring and low scoring cow. If you find the average score is less than a 5, if the minimum score is less than a 4, or if the high score is higher than a 7, then you should take steps to alter your management program to get closer to the target scores.

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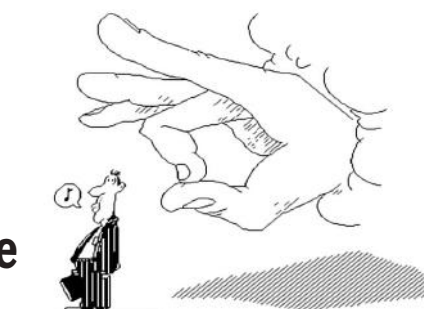
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for the MARCH issue

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SPOTLIGHT on FORAGES

Triple Creek Journal – From Out of the Ashes

By MATT POORE, N.C. State University

As I write this, we are entering another new year and have another chance to resolve to achieve lofty goals. I love the holidays, but after they are over, I look forward to every day getting longer and spring getting closer by the day. We had a very cold December, which was hard on our annuals and new fescue plantings, but a week of warmth and a good shot of rain in early January — which we badly needed — and things really greened up. Our novel endophyte fields have very good stands and are starting to tiller well. Our late planted annuals are just now germinating, and it is encouraging to see those seedlings finally emerging.

We have been busy getting the breeding season started. We turn bulls out on January 1 and breed our heifers as close to that date as



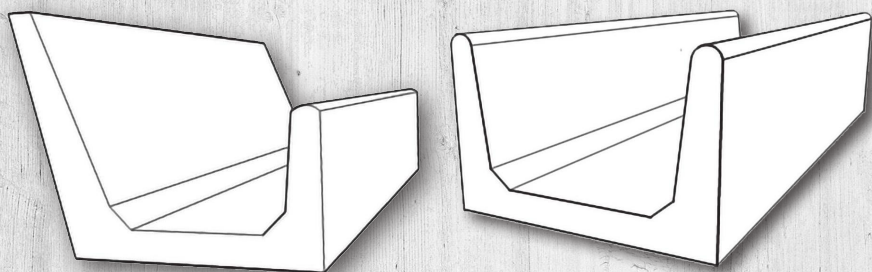
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we can. This year we synchronized and bred 27 heifers on January 7 and 8. We will be watching these to return to heat three weeks after that, and we will rebreed any that we see in heat. Again, we will not use a cleanup bull this year, and all the heifers that come up open will go to the beef program. This system has worked out really well for us in recent years, and you can really see the impact of the better genetics on our cattle.

The big news for us is that we are completing the construction of our new house to replace our old farmhouse that burned last December. This was a very traumatic event for us, and I have had my head spinning dealing with the insurance, finding a builder, and acting as the general contractor. My spouse, Jeannette Moore, is the project manager, and she has been staying busy getting all the materials bought and in place when they need to be there. We got the roof and siding finished this week, so I was excited to show a photo to our readers. Many of them had expressed their concern for our family after the fire, and I am very thankful for that.

I really miss the old house sometimes, especially the many memories that were so thick in there. But time heals our sorrow, and I have gotten used to the idea of adapting to a new house. When I realize I will not have to deal with a leaky roof, plumbing



prone to freezing up, and, in general, the drafty nature of an old farmhouse, I really warm to the idea. The new house is a single story and considerably smaller than the old house, but it is what we can afford with the insurance payment. It is a case in point for everyone — check the insurance on your house and make sure it has increased enough over time to keep up with the cost of new construction! We were very underinsured, and when we checked on our primary home, we found that we were in the same shape on that one.

We are still grazing stockpiled fescue with the main cow herd and are going back to grass with the first calf heifers this week. We have enough stockpiled novel endophyte tall fescue to get the heifers to spring. We are going to settle into about 60 more days of hay feeding for the main herd. We will be using the bale grazing technique again to reduce damage from vehicles and to help with our labor availability. We really like this practice and have adopted it across the farm. With the main herd, we will be using bale grazing some medium quality hay combined with unrolling one good quality bale with cottonseed poured on top. This has worked exceptionally well for us and effectively combines the benefits of bale grazing and hay unrolling in one system.



Finally, I will be gone from the farm a lot over the next several months due to our active schedule of educational programs we participate in. I am glad to have good help at home that understand our long term strategy of building soil health and producing a healthy food product. I hope the new year brings you hope for better weather, more grass and productive livestock!

This is the January edition of the Triple Creek Journal reprinted from Novel Notes, the newsletter of the Alliance for Grassland Renewal. To read this monthly column sign up for the newsletter at www.grasslandrenewal.org.



R.C. Hunt Named to the Board of Directors for Solutions from the Land.

Solutions from the Land (SfL) announces the appointment of R.C. Hunt of Wilson, N.C., to its board of directors. SfL President Ernie Shea said he will strengthen the board at a time when agriculture plays a central role in addressing global challenges.

“Livestock play a critical role in delivering agriculture’s solutions to global challenges such as food and nutrition security, biodiversity loss, water filtration and storage, carbon sequestration, and renewable energy development,” Shea said. “R.C.’s experience and insights into improving the sustainability and resilience of animal agriculture operations will make him a highly valuable member of the SfL Board of Directors.”

Hunt is a hog farmer from Wilson, N.C., and a past president of the National Pork Producers Council. In addition to hogs, he raises cattle and farms cropland. His leadership experience includes service on the board and executive committee of the N.C. Pork Council (NCPC), the N.C. Agribusiness Council, the board of trustees for Louisburg College, and the U.S. Aquaculture Cooperative. He is also a former chairman of the Rocky Mount-Wilson Regional Airport Authority and a past president of Wilson Wide-A-Wake Kiwanis. Hunt earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science from N.C. State University.

“I take great pride in being part of the SfL Board,” Hunt said. “My hope is to contribute by communicating agricultural and livestock practices that will be sustainable long term. Many past practices were instrumental in shaping today’s operations. If we study their evolution, we can better understand how they became common practice.”

About Solutions from the Land. *Solutions from the Land (SfL) is a farmer/scientist led non-profit focused on land based solutions to global challenges. SfL builds and facilitates state, national, and global initiatives and alliances through which farmers, ranchers, foresters, and collaborating partners showcase examples of innovation and proactively advocate for policies, partnerships, investments, and research that will enable agricultural landscapes to deliver near term, cost effective, integrated solutions to global mega challenges — food and energy security, sustainable economic development, and environmental improvement. For more information, visit www.solutionsfromtheland.org.*

ASHLEY'S

❖ BEEF CORNER ❖

Dampf Good BBQ Awarded for Excellence in Serving Beef

By ASHLEY HERRING, N.C. Cattlemen's Beef Council



Dampf Good BBQ, a popular food truck based in Cary, N.C., has been honored with the N.C. Beef Backer Award, recognizing independent restaurants that demonstrate excellence in serving high quality beef.

Known for its expertly smoked brisket and commitment to craftsmanship, Dampf Good BBQ has quickly earned a loyal following throughout the Triangle. The N.C. Beef Backer Award highlights the food truck's dedication to flavor, consistency, and showcasing beef as the centerpiece of its menu.

"We're incredibly honored to receive this recognition," said Nick Dampf, owner of Dampf Good BBQ. "Beef — especially brisket — is at the heart of what we do. This award reflects the care we put into sourcing, seasoning, and smoking our beef low and slow every single day."

The N.C. Beef Backer Award is presented to independent restaurants across North Carolina that exemplify outstanding use of beef while supporting the state's vibrant food and agriculture communities. Recipients are selected for their culinary excellence, creativity, and commitment to delivering exceptional beef dishes to their customers.

Operating as a food truck at Phillips Farm in Cary, Dampf Good BBQ brings Texas style brisket and bold barbecue flavors to the surrounding area. The business has built a reputation for restaurant quality barbecue and standout beef offerings.

For more information about Dampf Good BBQ, upcoming locations, or catering, visit www.dampfgoodbbq.com. Their hours are Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Go early!



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Seller’s Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Seller’s Signature _____

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National Beef Checkoff

Total Number of Cattle Sold _____ x \$1.00/head = \$ _____

North Carolina Cattle Industry Assessment

Total Number of Cattle Sold _____ x \$1.00/head = \$ _____

Total Amount Remitted \$ _____

Person remitting assessment ☐ Seller ☐ Buyer

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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Check No.: _____

Postmark Date: _____

❖ E.B.'s VIEW FROM THE COW PASTURE ❖

I Don't Know You

By E.B. HARRIS, Warrenton, N.C.

We had our annual Christmas dinner here at the house and had a full table of guests. We also cooked a beef tenderloin and had a table full of sides to go along with it.

We were finished, and the guests had gone. While Anne was cleaning the table and washing dishes, she told me that we should look at some of the dining room chairs. The dining room table and chairs have been here all of my life. My granddaddy and grandmama, along with my daddy and mama, had used them. I knew what she was talking about, so we sorted through the chairs. Some were getting a little wobbly.

I knew a man over at Ingleside in Franklin County who had a woodworking shop. He could do what needed to be done and tighten them up, so I made a call to him a few days after Christmas. I told him I needed to bring some chairs over to him that needed some attentio. I loaded them up and carried them to him.

His woodworking shop is where a country store used to be at the junction of Highways 39 and 401. I asked him if he knew who used to run the store. He said it was his daddy. This story goes back to the 1970s, when the gas crunch was on.

I was hauling cattle in and out of Lancaster Stockyards for Wilder Brothers and John Lee Wilder, located about five to six miles past Ingleside. At that time, you needed to know someone to get gas or fuel. I could always fill up at Wilder Brothers or John Lee's, and FCX was located next to the stockyards in Rocky Mount, so I could always fill up there. I always had some extra fuel in cans in the back of my truck.

That particular day, there was a big sale at Lancaster. When the sale was over, a fellow named Red Crowder had bought more than his truck could haul. He asked me if I would be able to make a haul to Chatham, Va., for me. I had never been to Chatham but knew it was a ways from where we were. I said, "If I go, I will need some fuel to get back home." He said, "No problem. I know folks all up and

down the road. We can get you gas — no sweat at all."

Red was a likable fellow, always carrying on with laughter. He never met a stranger.

We got loaded and headed on out. I was following him, and the first place he stopped was at the community of Ingleside, right across the county line from me. It's probably no more than six miles from me by the way the crow flies.

I did not know anything about Mr. May's store. This was not a place I normally stopped at. We pulled in there, and Red walked into the store while I walked behind him. Red said to Mr. May, "This fellow here is trying to help me get some cattle home. Can we get some gas here?" The man looked at Red and then at me and said, "Naw, I don't know you. You are not going to get you any gas here."

We headed back out to the trucks and headed on up to Chatham, Virginia. I thought to myself, "Red has run me off on a snag. He is going to get me off here in Chatham, Va., and I won't have any gas to get back home. I am going to be in a heck of a mess."

I had enough gas to get me to Chatham. We got to his place about 2:00 a.m. and got the cattle unloaded. Red said, "Follow me. We are going to get you some gas." I followed him to downtown Chatham. There was a small 24 hour gas station, and sure enough, I got a full tank of gas and headed on back home. I was sweating bullets all the way to Chatham, Va., thinking I would get there and not be able to get back home. Red was as good as his word, always.



COWBOYS FOR CHRIST



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORRAL

Keep Learning

By SKEETER SPAULDING, *Cowboys for Christ Chaplain*

To be a cattleman or cattlegirl, you must be an efficient multitasker. Think about all the skills you have learned from hands-on experience or continue to develop to be good at what you love doing. To be successful in this industry, you wear many hats, such as land and water manager, part time veterinarian, equipment operator, carpenter, mechanic, meteorologist, and conservationist. Plus, many of you work a full or part time job before coming home to manage your second job raising beef. Also, being a student of new ways of doing something means reading and studying, which is the goal you are striving for. That's why you're a part of this great cattlemen's association.

Living life with this mindset of continual learning has a Biblical principle to it. It reminds me of a passage of scripture. It tells us in *2 Timothy 2:15* – “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (NIV)

In my study of this text, I so appreciate the insight I get from multiple study Bibles I keep on my bookshelf. When it comes to our approach to the Bible we should read it, study it, and memorize it. The Bible – God's inspired word – is the only conclusive source of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of ultimate realities. Correctly handling the word of truth is likened to a furrow being plowed straight for planting and then harvesting a crop with a combine. The good workman must be accurate and clear in his or her exposition of God's word, keeping to the road themselves and making it easy for others to follow.

Another example of being a good cattleman or cattlegirl is that you're always learning to become better than the day/year before, and the reason to be in the Word is to have that better/best relationship with Christ. That way you know in your heart the day-to-day decisions you make are the right ones, no matter what the world is telling you contrary to the truth revealed in God's word.

The text calls us beyond a casual approach to the scriptures. Developing an attitude to learn so we can grow into a deeper

knowledge of God is sure worth having. The foremost thing you will find is that you are loved — yes, YOU! From that knowledge as the most fundamental truth, growing in Christ will take on new meaning. Ultimately, that's an eternal goal worth striving for.

We take seriously what's important to us; not a single cattleman or cattlegirl with money invested into their land or herd takes a casual approach to their operation. We receive a reward for stretching ourselves when it comes to achieving growth. I believe it's important to have knowledgeable resources to draw from for your business in one hand and a Bible for growing in obedience to Christ in the other hand. God bless you as you continue to do both.

A hardy thank you is due here to cattleman Mr. Norris for insight into this devotion.



“If you have cattle, pastureland, or raise hay like I do, you need to call Donna Byrum. In 10 minutes on the hood of my pickup, she signed me up for a program that I had no idea about. The next time she came by the farm, she brought me a check!”

~ E.B. Harris

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Have You Herd

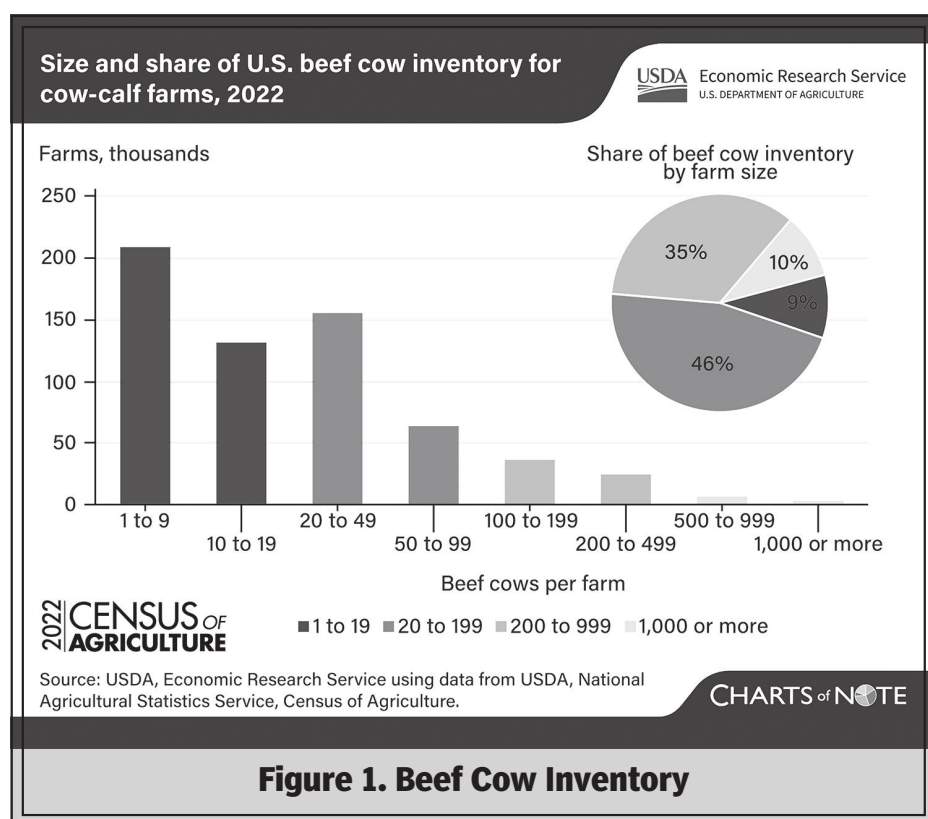
The Lost Generation and Recruiting a New One

By EMMA ROTZLER, N.C. State University -- ANS 402 Beef Management

While facing a decline in farming, agriculture is at a crossroads with its aging workers, lack of generational interest, and a reduction in the number of farms. The average age of farmers has increased to approximately 58 years old, according to the 2022 Census, due to fewer young people entering the field and a decline in the number of farms overall. This continuing trend will pose a significant threat to the sustainability of agriculture in the United States. Recruiting a new generation of producers is essential to the sustainability of agriculture, and it must extend beyond the traditional farm family model. The goal of this article is to explore the challenges and opportunities in attracting agriculturalists to ensure the future growth of cattle producing farms. By understanding the current trends, strategies can be developed to inspire and support the next generation of farmers.

As a part of the younger generation, we must understand the needs of farmers, especially those who work within the beef industry. According to the U.S. Special Committee on Aging, we are more likely to come across a farmer who is over the age of 65 than a farmer who is under the age of 44.⁹ This poses a variety of questions about our future. What will happen if the rate of farmers continues to decline? How will we provide enough products for consumers without importing more from other countries? Who is going to step up and accept the challenge of this declining industry? With this, the increase in aging farmers is only one problem within the cattle industry. According to [FarmWeekNow.com](https://www.farmweeknow.com), “As contraction of the U.S. cattle herd continues, farmers nearing retirement are faced with deciding whether to expand again, invest more into infrastructure, and whether someone is in line for succession who is willing to take on the responsibility.”³ Figure 1 shows that beef operations may be numerous but have small herds. This is one of the causes of the decline in this industry. There are many barriers in the cattle industry.

Raising beef cattle presents significant challenges for aging farmers as well as the new generations of producers joining the industry. Knowledge gaps and financial risks are two barriers. The impact of drought, rising production costs, and the struggle to sell cattle at lower market prices also creates substantial barriers for ranchers. According to a 2024 Charts of Note from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, “When drought conditions diminish forage production and availability, beef cattle producers often



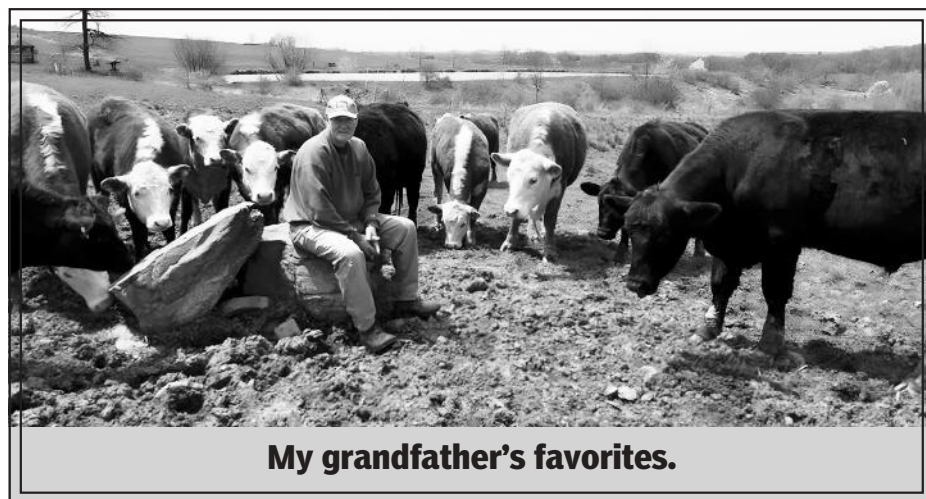
must buy supplemental feed and forage or reduce their herd size.”² This increases the production costs for farmers who are already struggling to get a fair market value for their cattle. It is also difficult for younger generations to begin their own operations. “It takes a lot of capital to start, join, or take over a family farm. There are high costs in equipment, land, and other inputs.”⁶ There is also the education component that is needed for a successful operation.

Teaching those about the beef industry is what can bridge the gap between the older and newer generations. There are a variety of educational pathways that can be taken to help those learn about the cattle industry. This can include university, trade school, extension programs, and even public presentations, most of which are additional financial burdens. Agricultural educators serve as one of the backbones of the expansion of the agricultural industry because they are on the front line between agriculture and the youth. Mentoring those young adults who show interest in the beef cattle industry can make a world of difference by helping them learn the ropes, make connections, and start a herd of their own. Connecting them within their community and speaking to students about the

decline can potentially spark a future career interest and encourage new ideas to make efficient beef producing farms.

In the beef industry, one new idea is intensive rotational grazing methods. In *The Guardian's* article "Can Colombia's 'crazy' cattle ranchers make beef an eco-friendly choice?, with this intensive grazing," "...each mini pasture only sees animals for 13 days a year, at most. The benefits, he says, include maximum grass growth, healthier cows rapidly gaining weight, concentrated fertilization from manure, and carbon capture." This particular study is also part of an agroforestry model.⁷ Not only do the cattle have fresh grass daily, but there are also native trees providing shade and habitats for other native species, providing for a working ecosystem as shown in Figure 2. With a fresh mindset, younger generations are willing to put new practices into place. In addition to conservation projects, *Food Business News* states, "These practices include no- or low-till agriculture, pasture grazing, limited or no use of pesticides and herbicides and deeply bedded pens for composting and manure management."⁴ *MassChallenge* reports that data driven technology creates better cattle farms, providing producers with valuable information and quality enhancements. To remove waste and create cleaner environments, automated cleaning systems help keep diseases out while automated feeders can control mixed feeds and an established amount. Along with these, as farms become more automated, "agricultural machinery, computer systems, electronics, chemical sensors, and data management to improve equipment operation and decision making, and ultimately, reduce human input and error."⁵

Growing up, I was a frequent visitor to my grandparents' farm in Pennsylvania. My grandfather became a beef producer in 2005 with ten years left before he would retire at the age of 63. He wasn't your typical



farmer, but he managed a herd of 30 beef cattle with age old practices, old equipment that needed constant repair, and the help of few. Rising costs were one of the main reasons he cut back on his production, selling a few to the market and using the rest to help feed his family.¹⁰ There are still plenty of animals on the farmland today, but of the smaller variety in market goats, a project started by his other granddaughter for 4-H. Agricultural production certainly skipped a generation in my family, but my generation is bringing it back and with fresh perspectives.

With all things considered, the beef industry is declining, and that's something we can't escape until we invest in the younger generation. The future is bright for young farmers as long as we supply them with the tools for success. As people in the agriculture industry, we have the opportunity to spark the transformation. As Brett Brian once said, "Farming is a profession of hope," and I believe that if we have a little hope, we can transform the future of the industry. I encourage you to be the change because the shift of our future is in your hands.

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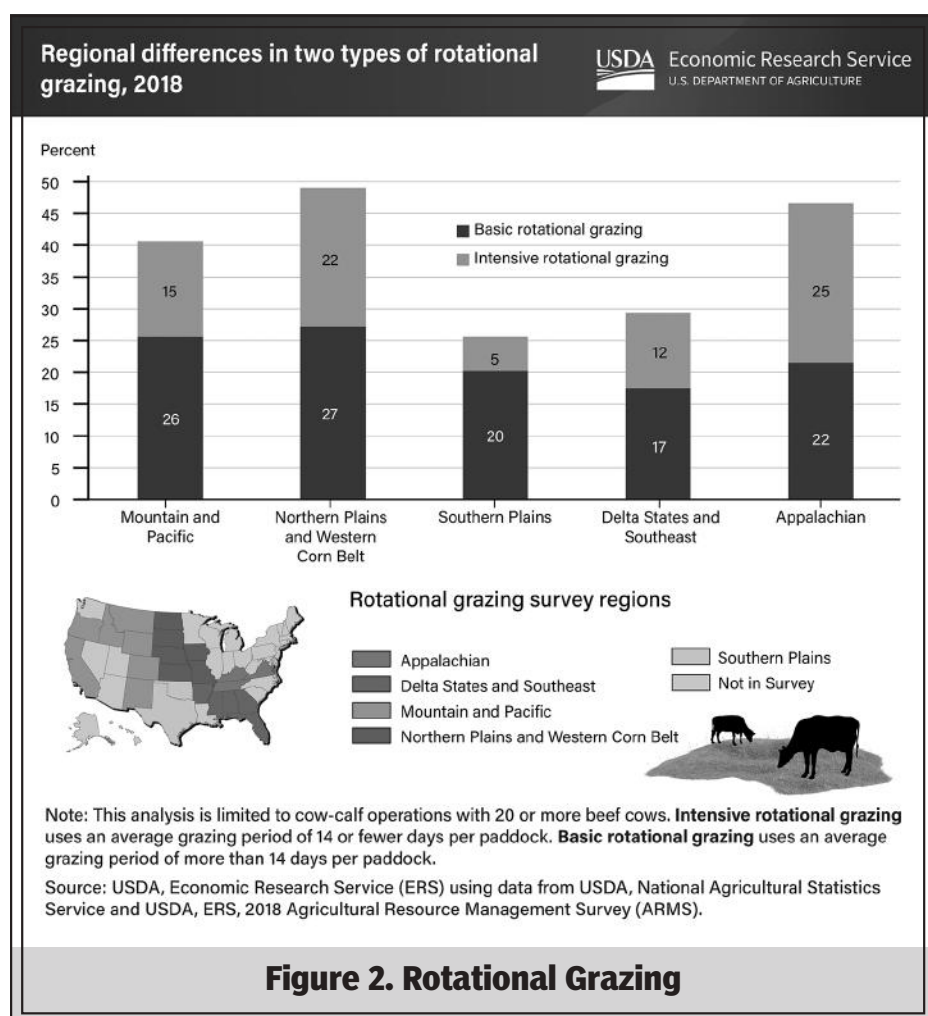
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Have You Herd is written as a portion of ANS 402 Beef Management course requirement at N.C. State University Department of Animal Science under the instruction of Dr. Carrie Pickworth. The opinions of Emma Rotzler are not necessarily those of N.C. State University or Dr. Carrie Pickworth.



You Decide!

By **DR. MIKE WALDEN**, *William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus, N.C. State University*

You Decide – Which Kevin Will Win? There's a new battle going on between two individuals named Kevin. No, they are not boxers, nor are they involved in any sport. Instead, they are competing for one of the most important positions in Washington: chair of the Federal Reserve.

Why should you be interested in this battle? The answer is simple. The Federal Reserve (the Fed) is one of the most important agencies in Washington, and the chair is the head of that agency. Some have called the Fed chair the second most powerful person in Washington, behind only the president.

While the Fed has numerous duties, the one that impacts all of us is called monetary policy. Monetary policy involves the Fed using its powers to influence interest rates and the supply of money to impact economic growth, inflation, and unemployment.

How? The Fed meets every six weeks to vote on monetary policy. If the Fed wants to stimulate economic growth and lower unemployment, it will reduce the interest rate it directly controls and expect other interest rates to follow. It will also push more money into the economy. Usually, both of these actions will result in more borrowing, more spending, and more jobs.

In contrast, if the Fed is worried about inflation, it will move in the opposite direction by increasing its interest rate and reducing the money supply. Ultimately, these actions will cause borrowing, spending, and job creation to slow. But with spending slowing, there will be less upward pressure on prices, meaning the inflation rate — which measures how fast prices are rising — will subside. The key risk is if the economy slows too much, a recession could occur.

These decisions are made by a 12 member group at the Fed called the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). Just like each member of the FOMC, the Fed chair has one vote in the FOMC's deliberations. However, the influence of the chair goes beyond these votes. The chair sets the agenda for discussions, effectively serves as the spokesperson for the Fed, testifies before Congress, and works to build consensus among FOMC members.

The bottom line is the Fed chair is a big deal. The chair must be a member of the Fed's board of governors, who vote on Fed policy. The president appoints the chair with confirmation by the Senate. The chair can be reappointed as long as the individual remains a Fed governor, which has a 14 year term.

The current Fed chair, Jerome Powell, is in his second term. But President Trump has said he will not reappoint Powell to a third term because he has disagreed with Powell's views about monetary policy. While the Fed has been pushing interest rates lower, the president thinks the interest rate cuts have been too small.

This means a new Fed chair will take over in May 2026. Recently, President Trump announced he had settled on two individuals to be finalists — Kevin Hassett and Kevin Warsh, hence the battle of the Kevins.

Both Kevins are accomplished, but in different ways. Kevin Hassett is a Ph.D. economist who has taught at the college level, has worked for think tanks, and has been a member of both Trump administrations, serving as chair of the President's Council of Economic Advisors in the first term and currently as director of the National Economic Council in the second term. This means he has been a key economic advisor to the president.

Kevin Warsh is a lawyer, has worked on Wall Street, has served in the federal government, has been affiliated with Stanford University, and has been on boards of directors for corporations. Perhaps his most significant job was serving on the board of governors of the Fed during the "Great Recession" of 2007–2009, when the financial and housing markets were crashing.

The Fed was established as an independent agency. Other than nominating members, the president is not given a formal role with the Fed. President Trump is not the first to complain about Fed policies. In most cases, like President Trump, presidents have complained the Fed has kept interest rates too high. Presidents tend to have short run views because their term is only four years. With Fed governors having 14 year terms, their viewpoints tend to be much longer.

Again, like most of his predecessors, President Trump would like a Fed chair who shares his economic views, like lower interest rates. My guess is both Kevins will indicate to President Trump that they, too, would like to see interest rates lower. But timing is also a key factor. How fast would the Kevins like to see rates drop? And even if they want a quick reduction in interest rates, the chair has only one vote among 12.

Ultimately, the Federal Reserve tries to keep the economy growing with low unemployment and low inflation. This is a tall task, but we have had periods with this kind of success. Alan Greenspan, who will turn 100 years old in late January, was Fed chair during the 1990s, a decade of low inflation, low unemployment, strong growth, and a federal budget that went from deficit to surplus. While the Fed was not solely responsible for this success, Greenspan has been called the "maestro" of the economy.

Do we have a new "maestro of the economy" waiting with one of the two Kevins? You decide.

You Decide – Can We Repeat the Success of the 1990s? I'm often asked if there is any chance we can create an economy that is growing and adding jobs, where households see their standard of

living rising, where inflation is modest, unemployment is low, and the federal government is not constantly adding to the national debt. In short, can the perfect economy be created?

Many people will likely say “no.” But history shows they’re wrong. We actually had an economy close to being perfect not that long ago, in the 1990s. The 1990s have been given numerous labels, including the “marvelous decade,” the “perfect decade,” the “golden era,” and others.

Why is there such praise for the 1990s? It’s because the 1990s had most of the ingredients of a wonderful economy. It was a decade of economic growth, low unemployment, low inflation, rising household income, and prosperity spread among most income groups.

Let me put some perspective on these accomplishments. The average yearly economic growth rate since 2000 has been 2 percent. But during the 1990s, the annual growth rate was 3 percent. The jobless rate fell from 7.5 percent in the early 1990s to only 4 percent at the end of the decade. Today’s jobless rate is 4.6 percent, and it has been rising. The annualized inflation rate in the 1990s remained mostly within the range of 2.5–3 percent and declined over time. And while we are now in the same range, the decade of the 2020s

has been a volatile time for inflation, with the annualized rate reaching over 9 percent in mid-2022.

One of the key concerns for people is whether their income is rising more than prices. During the 1990s, household income, after adjusting for price changes, rose 10 percent. In our current decade of the 2020s, household income is only ahead of price increases by 3 percent. Additionally, during the 1990s, the rise in income inequality almost stopped.

These comparative accomplishments in the 1990s are certainly significant, but the last accomplishment I’ll mention may be the most eye catching. Currently and continuing for several decades, the federal government has consistently added to the national debt. But during the 1990s, something unique occurred. While the 1990s began with ongoing budget deficits, by the end of the decade, annual budget surpluses were occurring. That’s right, in the last years of the 1990s, the federal government was spending less than it was receiving in revenue. The result was that the size of the national debt was dropping.

You Decide continued on the next page



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You Decide *continued from the previous page*

Hopefully, I have your attention and agreement that the 1990s was a different decade regarding the economy. Two questions follow. First, what caused this unique economy of the 1990s? Second, can we replicate the 1990s economy today?

Likely the biggest difference in the 1990s was changes in the federal budget. In order to balance the budget, Congress and the President agreed to reduce spending and increase taxes. Federal spending as a percent of the economy, which had been rising since the 1950s, actually fell in the 1990s. While taxes as a percentage of the economy initially increased, that ratio also fell by the end of the decade. In the last year of the 1990s, the federal budget ran an annual budget surplus of \$326 billion.

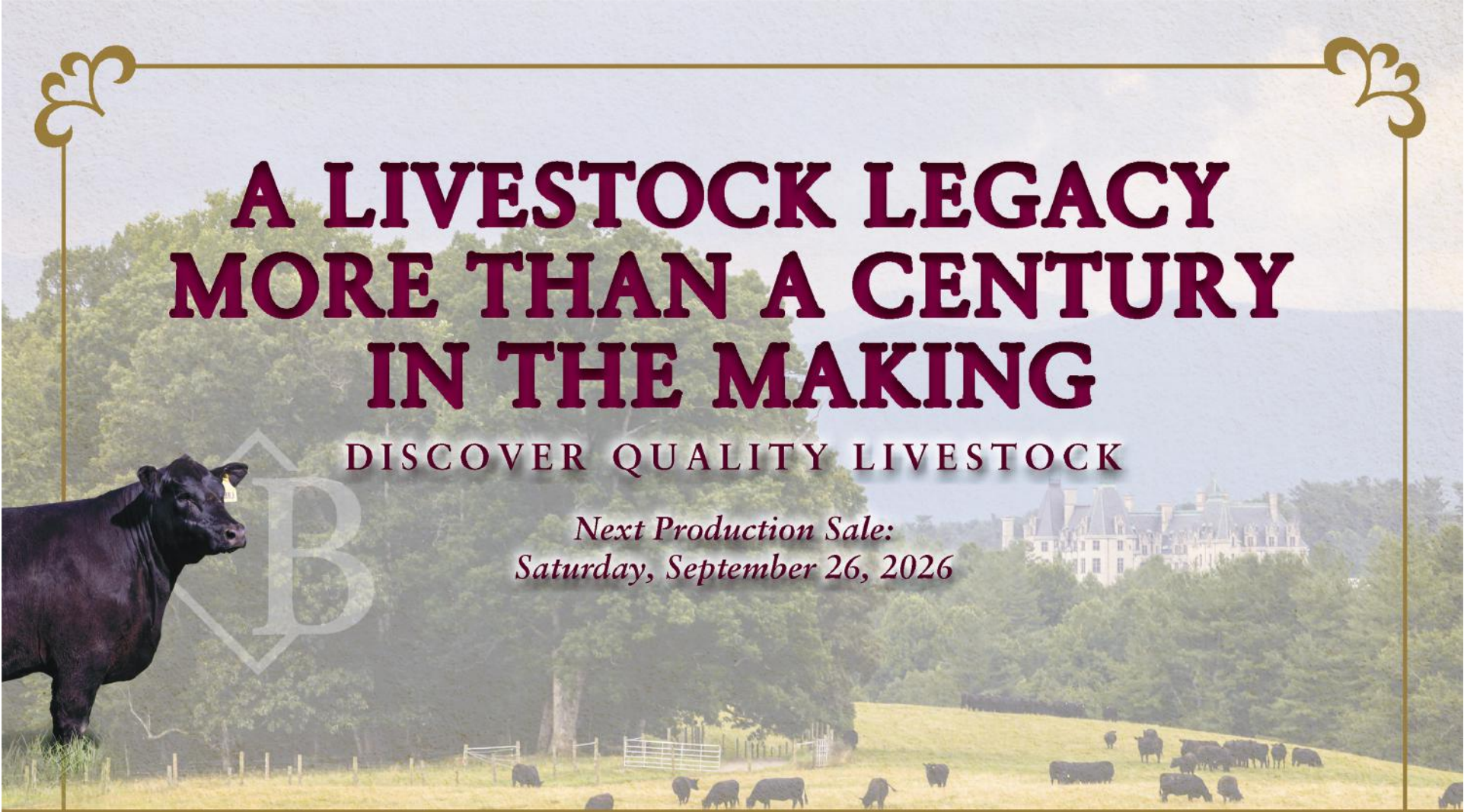
With the federal debt reduced, the federal government's borrowing declined. This meant the federal government was in less competition with private companies for borrowing money. This allowed the price of borrowing — interest rates — to fall. Mortgage rates fell from 10 percent to 7 percent, and commercial loan rates plunged from 15 percent to 4 percent. Lower interest rates allowed more households and businesses to borrow, spend, and expand the economy.

The Fed also gets high marks from economists for carefully and cautiously using their tools to support the decade's economic growth without sparking inflation. Under the leadership of Alan Greenspan, the Fed accurately assessed the economy and made policy changes that supported non-inflationary economic growth.

Last, new technology clearly improved the productivity and growth of the 1990s economy. The 1990s was the birth of the dot-com — or digital — era when computers and the internet were taking hold. Easy access to information and increased communication capabilities created new businesses and also made existing businesses more efficient and profitable. One downside was the dot-com recession of the early 2000s, which resulted from disappointment based on too much exuberance and too high expectations for investment returns.

What lessons can be taken from the 1990s that could help us produce another “marvelous decade?” Number one, success in controlling federal borrowing is important. A strong case can be

You Decide continued on page 27



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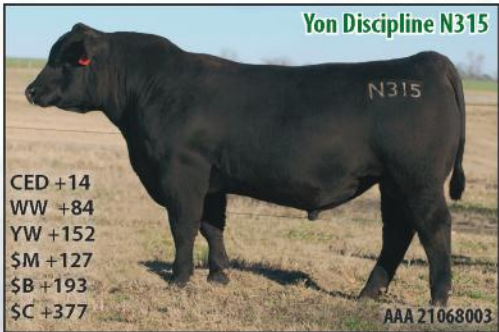
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You Decide *continued from page 24*

made that the budget agreements in the 1990s, ultimately leading to a surplus, were what started the marvelous decade. Second is a Federal Reserve that can read the trends in the economy and use its tools to support those trends. Third is the development and deployment of emerging technology that can make the economy more productive.

Interestingly, we already have the third component today in the form of artificial intelligence. The challenge is ensuring it is used in a positive way. We also have a pending change in leadership at the Fed. Moving the federal budget from deficit to surplus might be the biggest obstacle to repeating the 1990s.

I vividly remember the strong economy of the 1990s. Could the decade be re-created today? You decide.

You Decide: Can the Beat Go On? I know I am dating myself, but when I was in high school in the 1960s, one of my favorite songs was “The Beat Goes On” by Sonny and Cher. It was a song about change, which was appropriate for the fast changing ‘60s. Almost everything was becoming different, including music, dancing, clothing, hairstyles, and even food shopping, with the shift from small grocery stores to large supermarkets.

For North Carolina, there’s been a new beat going on for several decades, especially in the state’s economy. And while people in the ‘60s debated whether the changes then were positive or negative, my observation is that, for the most part, North Carolina’s economic changes have been considered positive.

Indeed, North Carolina has developed one of the top economies in the country. New businesses, and especially new and expanding “cutting edge” businesses like pharmaceuticals, technology, and aerospace, have moved to the state, bringing thousands of new jobs, many of which are high paying. All of North Carolina’s governors over the last 50 years have been successful business recruiters for the state, with both governors and legislators working together to lure new firms.

And the past year of 2025 was another success story for North Carolina, with a record \$23 billion in new business investments and a record 33,000 new jobs created. It’s no surprise the state was named the “top state for business” by CNBC in 2025, the third time North Carolina has won the honor in this decade.

So, just like the Sonny and Cher song says, the economic beat in North Carolina appears to be going on. But will it go on forever? Could something happen to eventually cause the state’s economic engine to sputter?

North Carolina’s success in economic development has revolved around five factors: a lower cost of living, a favorable climate, significant open space, good public services like transportation, electricity, and water, and a willingness of households and workers to leave their states for North Carolina. The question is, could any of these positive factors be in jeopardy in the coming years? The quick answer is, yes, they could.

We’ve already seen some erosion in the state’s cost of living advantage. Today, North Carolina’s cost of living is 6 percent lower

than the national average. But in 2019 it was 8 percent lower, and in 2009 it was 9 percent lower. To compound matters, North Carolina’s cost of living is no longer the lowest among the southeastern states — Tennessee is.

What happened? Strong growth happened, and growth puts upward pressure on some essential costs. Key among them is land. Growth means more building of homes, apartments, businesses, and highways, all of which use land. And if the motivation to use more land increases, so do land prices, especially in prime locations.

Strong growth also means greater use of essential public services, especially roads and power. It takes significant time to build more roads and power facilities. Until the expansion of public services occurs, traffic congestion becomes greater, and power prices rise.

North Carolina’s beautiful countryside of fields and forests has also suffered losses from the development that comes with growth. For example, the Triangle region has had a 24 percent increase in developed land since 2000. Forecasts predict North Carolina will rank second among the states in loss of farmland in future years.

What all these “growth causing” costs mean is that North Carolina could gradually become less attractive to new households, workers, and businesses. While this doesn’t mean economic growth will stop, it does mean it eventually could be slower.

Many might respond, “Good.” Roads won’t be as crowded, land and housing prices won’t rise as fast, and more fields and forests will be preserved. Others will disagree, arguing slower growth will mean fewer economic opportunities, fewer new higher paying jobs, and a longer time to close economic gaps between individuals and counties.

Is there a way to have the benefits of growth without the costs that typically go with it? Some say there’s a way if the correct strategies are used. Common recommendations include encouraging mass transit over individual vehicles, living in multi-level residences instead of single family homes, and developing “live-work-play” communities where households can find everything they need within easy walking distance. The question is how many households will freely choose these options.

If North Carolina continues on its current path, it is likely the costs of growth will at some point increase enough to dissuade many businesses and households from choosing the state as a destination. Ironically, the problems of faster rising prices, increased travel congestion, and reduced open space could naturally correct the problem by leading to less future economic growth. But, of course, this would happen after the growth causing costs occurred.

I predict that North Carolina will remain a magnet for economic growth in the immediate future. But at some point, a growth slowdown is likely unless we find better ways to address the downsides of fast growth. So, the big question for the state — and for all of us — is how to balance the benefits of being the No. 1 state in economic development against the downsides of being the No. 1 state in economic growth. Can we do this and find successful and agreeable answers? You decide.

ANGUS

THE BUSINESS BREED

UPDATE

2026 Angus Foundation Heifer Package Sells for \$150,000. With the final bid cast and the last gavel dropped, Express Angus Ranches, Nowatzke Cattle/Maple Lane, and Pollard Farms had the winning bid for WILKS Rita 4728, the centerpiece of the Angus Foundation Heifer Package and a symbol of commitment to the Foundation's pillars. .

Express Angus Ranches, Nowatzke Cattle/Maple Lane, and Pollard Farms purchased the 2026 Angus Foundation Heifer Package on January 9 for \$150,000 to continue the legacy of the Angus breed. The package, donated by Wilks Ranch of Eastland, Tex., led off the National Angus Bull Sale during Cattlemen's Congress in Oklahoma City.

"We are very grateful for our generous donors who continue to give unwavering support towards the foundation's mission," said Jaclyn Boester, Angus Foundation executive director. "They want the very best for the Angus breed and its legacy. We cannot thank Wilks and the buyers enough for their continued support and dedication towards this mission."

The leading lady in 2026's sale, WILKS Rita 4728 (AAA +*21207190), is a standout female from a maternal line that has proven itself. Her maternal sister, WILKS Rita 4067, commanded \$100,000 as Lot 6 in the 2024 Wilks Ranch Sale. The consistency of this cow family is a testament to the quality of female Wilks Ranch offered up as this year's Foundation female.

Rita 4728 ranks in the top 1% for both \$Beef and \$Combined indexes, offering a powerful growth spread, elite structural correctness, and eye catching phenotype. She's the kind of female that blends performance with presence, built and bred right, and backed by a story of success.



"She's cowy. That's what her mom is — she's just a good female," said Aaron Kaiser, seedstock manager at Wilks Ranch. "I think this female's going to be the same way, but does it in a really neat number package and a neat pedigree."

The heifer package also includes an Advanced Reproductive Technology Package from Trans Ova Genetics, trucking to the buyer donated by Lathrop Livestock Transportation, and 30 days of mortality insurance donated by Jeanne Conover, Livestock Insurance Agent with Conover Auction Service.

As a long time supporter of the Angus Foundation, Wilks Ranch recognizes the value of contributing to initiatives that promote education, youth, and research within the breed. Their donation of the 2026 Foundation Heifer highlights a continued commitment to supporting programs that strengthen the Foundation's mission.

"It's quite an honor," said Kevin Reed, asset manager for Wilks Ranches. "What [the Angus Foundation] does for the youth is to give them opportunities, tools, and the finances to grow, to do what they love, and to build a foundation for their future. We're proud to contribute."

Since 1980, the heifer package has been sold to generate unrestricted funds to further the foundation's mission of supporting education, youth, and research, and this tradition continues in 2026. Academic scholarships, leadership conferences, and cutting edge research are among the many programs sustained by the Angus Fund.

The Angus Foundation Heifer Package has raised more than \$3 million since the inception of the program. For more information about the Angus Foundation or the annual Angus Foundation Heifer Package Sale, visit AngusFoundation.org.

Nominate Influential People in the Angus Breed. Nominations are open through March 1 for the Angus Ambassador and Young Breeder Awards. The American Angus Association is calling for applicants for the 2026 Angus Ambassador of the Year and Young Breeder of the Year awards. The awards, established in 2023, highlight impactful individuals helping to drive the breed forward. This year's recipients will be recognized at the Angus Convention in Louisville, Ken., on November 13-16.

Angus Ambassador of the Year Award – The Angus Ambassador of the Year Award recognizes someone who goes above and beyond to promote or aid Angus efforts and broadens the influence of Angus cattle in the beef industry.

Applicants for this award can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else. Nominees do not need to be members



of the association and can be businesses or allied industry members.

Nominate an Angus Ambassador of the Year by March 1.

Young Breeder of the Year Award – The Young Breeder of the Year Award recognizes a young, registered Angus breeder for their leadership within the Angus breed, participation in Angus programs, and innovation within their herd.

Applicants for this award can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else. Applicants must be between 25 and 45 years old and be an active member of the association.

Couples or business partners can be nominated if they meet age requirements. Herd ownership and/or management responsibility is required of each individual applicant.

Nominate a Young Breeder of the Year by March 1.



Our 2025 Award Recipients

• **Don Denny, Slate Group** | *2025 Angus Ambassador of the Year* – As owner of Slate Group, a national printing company based in Lubbock, Tex., Don Denny has built a reputation for excellence by helping Angus breeders and the American Angus Association put their best foot forward, especially on sale day.

Denny's "do the right thing" approach to business has earned Slate Group a trusted reputation for marketing Angus cattle. Even when they send more than 80 Angus sale books to print in one month, he and his team ensure every detail is right. He has also helped to create standout marketing materials for breeders and award winning association annual reports that keep Angus front and center. Denny's responsiveness and integrity, whether answering emails or hand delivering reprints overnight, reflect his unwavering dedication to the breed and its people.

Since becoming members in 2015, Denny and his family have hosted the largest Raising the Bar Conference to date in 2022 and offered junior members a behind-the-scenes look at marketing and print production while encouraging them to think creatively.

• **Josh Worthington, Missouri** | *2025 Young Breeder of the Year* – As a first generation registered Angus breeder, Josh Worthington of Dadeville, Mo., practices a disciplined approach to breeding, valuing proven genetics and using data to guide decisions. In 2004, at the start of his 11 year stint as general manager of the Missouri Angus Association, Worthington and his wife Corry purchased their first four Angus cows. They've since expanded their operation — and their family with three sons — as their business has grown. He says they have been able to grow their herd by utilizing an ET program

and sexed semen. He desires success for his customers and goes the extra mile, helping them market their cattle and showing them how to capture added value from Worthington Angus bulls by targeting high quality beef production.

To view past recipients, learn more about the awards, and access the nomination forms for 2026, visit <https://tinyurl.com/AngusAwards>.

About the Angus Foundation. Established as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1980, the Angus Foundation remains focused on its mission to support Angus education, youth, and research. The organization has distributed more than \$4.9 million in youth scholarships since 1998 and has also invested more than \$1.4 million in beef cattle research in the past decade. For more information, contact the Angus Foundation at 816-383-5100.

ANGUS MEANS BUSINESS. The American Angus Association is the nation's largest beef breed organization, serving more than 21,000 members across the United States, Canada, and several other countries. It's home to an extensive breed registry that grows by more than 300,000 animals each year. The Association also provides programs and services to farmers, ranchers, and others who rely on Angus to produce quality genetics for the beef industry and quality beef for consumers. For more information about Angus cattle and the American Angus Association, visit www.angus.org.

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Behind the Brand

By JOHN STIKA, Certified Angus Beef President

From Decline to Dominance

“It’s a good time to be in the Angus business — in a lot of ways, never better. Demand for registered Angus genetics is soaring. Yet, it hasn’t always been like this.”

During the 1960s and 1970s, Americans were fighting a dietary war on fat. The beef industry basically discarded marbling and quality, with a desire to better compete with a boneless, skinless chicken breast. Focus was squarely placed on lean red meat yield and production efficiency as Continental breeds rapidly displaced British breeds to dominate the American herd. In the process, beef quality became increasingly inconsistent. Little did the industry know that these choices would cut overall beef demand

in half, leading to one in four steaks being tough.

Angus cattle didn’t fit this new landscape. From 1968 to 1978, the American Angus Association experienced a 45 percent decline in registrations from its all time high of 406,310 to 222,608 head.

The moment everything changed — One bad steak 50 years ago, experienced by Ohio Angus breeder Harold Etling, changed everything.

Harold knew Angus ranchers could produce better beef; after all, it’s one reason he chose the breed.

After his bad eating experience in 1975, he wrote a letter to the American Angus Association Board of Directors, outlining a certification process, complete with accountability, to provide a consistent, reliable source of premium Angus beef to restaurants and grocery stores. Three years later, the first pound of Certified Angus Beef (CAB) was sold to Ella Whitt at Renzetti’s IGA in Columbus, Ohio.

This started an Angus dominated branded beef revolution — a movement for the entire industry to produce higher quality beef. Yet, getting the first branded beef program up and running was no easy feat.

Within a month of selling the first pound of product, the USDA canceled the program, and it took six months to reinstate the brand. In 1981, the Association Board voted 14 to one to stop the program if it wasn’t profitable within a year.

When the brand still wasn’t covering its own expenses 12 months later, CAB survived by one vote — 8 to 7. Ultimately, the association invested \$281,276.44 to support the brand before it began covering its own expenses — a worthy investment.

Growing the advantage — Initiated from a simple yet visionary idea and pursued through the grit and tenacity of Angus breeders seeking a better future for the breed and Association members, it’s no accident CAB is where it is today. The brand continues to support the growing dominance of Angus in an industry that once sold them at a discount.

Since 1978, the brand’s mission has been to increase the demand for registered Angus cattle through a specification based, branded beef program to identify consistent, high quality beef with superior taste. Time has proven that the pull through demand model works,



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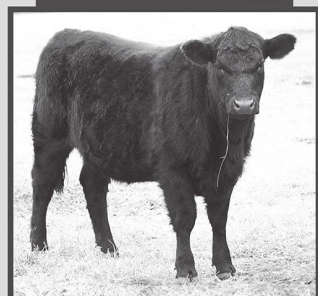
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rewarding Angus cattlemen and women whose cattle qualify for the brand.

CAB provides a consumer based target and creates demand for Angus cattle. However, Angus breeders are the true brand champions for focusing on high quality genetics to increase marbling.

That's been integral in turning the beef industry around so we

can enjoy the best beef demand we have seen in nearly 40 years.

As an association member, you ultimately own CAB. The goal of this new column is to help you learn more about how the brand works and is positioned in the marketplace.

It's more than just good marketing, and I'll uncover why as we go behind the brand.

COMMON GROUND



Meeting Members Where They Are

By MARK McCULLY, American Angus Association CEO

"Connecting with breeders."

At the American Angus Association, our mission is to serve you — the breeders, cattlemen, and industry partners who make Angus the leading beef breed in the world. One of the most important ways we fulfill that mission is through communication. But in today's fast paced, technology driven environment, communicating effectively is more challenging than ever.

Our membership is diverse, and our recent membership survey clearly illustrated that fact. Some of you prefer a printed magazine delivered to your mailbox. Others want quick updates on social media or detailed information via email. Many of you rely on our website and *Angus Journal* for in-depth articles, while others expect real time notifications through AAA Login or a mobile app.

We recognize this diversity as a strength, but it also means we must work harder to ensure every member receives the information

they need — when and how they want it.

The days of a single publication serving everyone are long gone. Today, information flows through multiple channels, and expectations are higher than ever regarding frequency and speed. If we send too many emails, important updates can get lost. If we rely solely on print, we miss members who live online. And if we don't adapt to new technologies, we risk falling behind.

Clearly, the challenge is: how do we meet these varied preferences without overwhelming you or missing you altogether?

The good news is we have opportunities for us to serve you better.

Personalization — We're exploring tools that allow us to better tailor communication based on your preferences. Whether you want board updates by podcast, educational material in webinars, account updates by email, or industry news in print, we aim to deliver information that matters most to you.

Strategic use of each platform — Each channel has its strengths. Social media is great for quick highlights and reminders. Email works for detailed information. Print remains a trusted source for in-depth stories and more technical topics. By using each platform strategically, we can keep you informed.

Two way engagement — Communication isn't just about sending information — it's about listening. Through surveys and member feedback, we're learning what works and what doesn't. Your input helps us improve and ensures we're meeting your needs.

Interestingly, I'm sure you can relate to these same challenges. As a registered Angus seedstock producer, your customers are also diverse. Some buyers want a printed sales book; others prefer videos and online bidding options. Some like personal phone calls, but others prefer a text, and many expect updates on social media. Your customer feedback can help you meet expectations, build trust, and keep your program top-of-mind. Our team at Angus Media can help you get started or fine tune what you are doing now.

Our commitment — We are committed to meeting you where you are — whether that's in your mailbox, inbox, or on your mobile device. By embracing diverse communication preferences and leveraging technology, we can turn complexity into connection and ensure that every member feels informed, engaged, and valued.

Ultimately, whether you're an association serving thousands of members or a seedstock producer marketing elite Angus genetics, the goal is the same: connect in ways that matter to your audience. By embracing this complex challenge, we can turn it into a powerful opportunity for growth.

In Loving Memory...

James I. Smith

October 4, 1931 – December 24, 2025

Weighing in at 12 pounds, James I. “Jim” Smith came into this world on October 4, 1931, born on a farm in Stokes County. As the third of five children born to the late Ernest and Lois Meadows Smith, Jim always joked that he spent his life “right in the middle of something.” He took great pride in his birthday being “10-4,” the radio code for a message received and understood. To those who knew him, that date perfectly reflected his outlook on life — he was always listening, always understood what needed to be done, and was always ready to help.

Jim was born to be on a farm. In the 1940s, his father built the first “Grade A” dairy in Stokes County, where they milked nearly 40 cows with electric milkers. It was during this time that Jim and his older brother, Bob, raised their first registered Jersey as a 4-H project, a memory that stayed with him throughout his life.

It was also during these early years that he earned his lifelong nickname. On his fourth birthday, Jim was cutting wood on his dad’s farm with a brand new birthday axe. He was chopping on a tree that the farmhand thought was too big for him and suggested that Jim try a smaller tree. Jim set his axe down and informed the man, “My dad hired you to work, not to tell me what to do.” The man replied, “Yes, Captain!” Though Jim later admitted his father would have “tanned his hinny” for such backtalk, the name stuck. Later shortened to “Cap’n,” it became his identity.

In 1951, Jim joined the U.S. Navy to serve his country. During his four years of service, Jim was stationed in San Diego on the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany, where he served as the elevator operator for

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planes headed to the flight deck. He returned to North Carolina to marry the love of his life, Nancy Stone. They were married on February 28, 1953, in Winston-Salem. After four years of service, Jim enrolled at State College (NCSSU) in 1955. He spent 40 hours a week working at the college dairy and bull barn, where Dr. Fred Knott was his boss. After graduating with honors in dairy husbandry in 1959, he began his 25-year-long career with the N.C. Department of Agriculture, where he worked as the livestock superintendent at John Umstead Hospital in Butner. In 1969, he was promoted to farm manager, where he managed a 13,000 acre farm — overseeing all poultry, swine, dairy, beef, and forestry responsibilities.

In 1970, Jim started his own farm, JANASTCI, where he raised Angus and Gelbvieh cattle and grew his herd to 120. As his farm grew, so did his passion for the cattle industry. He became a leader among cattlemen in North Carolina. He served as the president of the N.C. Cattlemen's Association, the N.C. Angus Association, the N.C. Gelbvieh Association, and the N.C. Holstein Association. Throughout his career, he served on numerous boards and was honored with inductions into the Angus Hall of Fame, the NCSSU Animal Science Hall of Fame, and the N.C. State Fair Hall of Fame. With Nancy by his side, they endowed scholarships at NCSSU and for the Special Dairy Show at the N.C. State Fair.

Jim's commitment to his community ran deep. Over the years, he served as a consultant to local farmers, helped start seven earthen roasts across North Carolina, and was a dedicated member of the Jim Smith Society. He shared his leadership with the next generation as the scoutmaster for Troop 648, and perhaps most remarkably, he never missed a year at the N.C. State Fair, supporting the dairy show for 71 consecutive years.

Beyond all of his professional success, Jim was a man of faith. He was a loyal member of Enon Baptist Church, where he deeply cherished his church family and often said, "There's no place like Enon."

Jim and Nancy were married for 66 years. When Nancy went to be with the Lord on April 30, 2019, a part of Jim went with her. Though he remained with us, he looked forward to the day they would be reunited. Whether you knew him as James, Cap'n, Smitty, J.I., Jim, Snuffy, Daddy, Grandpa, or Great Grandpa — it cannot be denied that he was a pillar in his community. His knowledge, advice, devotion, and hilarious dry sense of humor will be forever missed.

Jim is predeceased by his wife Nancy, his sister Betty Lou Shelton, and two brothers Frank and Bob Smith. He is survived by a son Stephen Smith (Rose - wife); a daughter Cindy Smith (Joe - significant other); granddaughter Dannielle Rice (Aaron - husband), three great grandchildren Alex, Will, and Gabbi Rice; one sister Brenda James; caregiver and great niece Jessica James; three nieces, four nephews, six great nieces, five great nephews, ten great great nieces, ten great great nephews, and one great great great nephew.

Rest in peace, our dear friend, until we meet again.

"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." – Matthew 25:23

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UPDATE

RAAA Names Luke Bolin Director of Communications. The Red Angus Association of America has named Luke Bolin as its new director of communications, bringing extensive experience in agricultural communications, creative services, and team leadership to RAAA's staff.

In this role, Bolin will lead RAAA's communications strategy across print, digital, and social platforms, working closely with staff, leadership, and members to strengthen the association's brand presence and enhance member engagement. He will oversee content development, design, messaging, and marketing support for key programs and initiatives that advance Red Angus cattle and Red Angus influenced genetics in the beef industry.

"Luke brings tremendous experience in communications and graphic design that will complement the ongoing efforts of the RAAA communications team," said Greg Ruehle, RAAA executive

vice president. "I look forward to seeing his leadership reflected in a refreshed visual identity that further increases Red Angus visibility and acceptance across the beef industry."

Bolin resides in Arkansas and is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, where he developed the foundation for his career in agricultural communications and creative services. Before joining RAAA, he spent more than ten years in a leadership role with Sullivan Supply, where he significantly grew the communications department and helped elevate the organization's visual and digital presence. His background includes graphic and brand design, content development, and building communication strategies that resonate across diverse audiences.

"Luke is a talented, visionary, and creative professional who comes to us with years of industry experience," said Halla Ramsey, RAAA executive director of operations. "We are excited to leverage



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bullhill2@prtcnet.com | bullhillredangus.com

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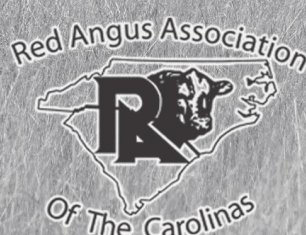
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his graphic design expertise to elevate the Red Angus breed and his leadership skills to guide our communications team into new areas of growth and impact. The association's strategic plan will serve as his compass as he brings fresh perspective, innovation, and momentum to RAAA."

Throughout his career, Bolin has worked within the livestock and agriculture sectors, combining creative talent with practical industry knowledge. His experience building and managing high performing creative teams, developing integrated campaigns, and supporting producer focused organizations positions him well to serve RAAA's membership and stakeholders.

"I'm excited to step into the role of director of communications for the Red Angus Association of America at such a great time for the breed and the organization," Bolin said. "Red Angus has an incredible story to tell, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to help share it through clear, consistent, and thoughtful communication. I look forward to working closely with our members and team to build

a communications program that strengthens connections, encourages engagement, and supports the long term success of Red Angus."

As director of communications, Bolin will support RAAA's ongoing efforts to provide strong, consistent messaging around its value added programs, breed improvement tools, and member services, while showcasing the strengths of Red Angus cattle throughout the beef supply chain.

For more information about RAAA or marketing programs for Red Angus influenced cattle, visit RedAngus.org.

About the Red Angus Association of America. *The RAAA serves the beef industry by enhancing and promoting the measurable advantages of Red Angus and Red Angus influenced cattle. The RAAA provides commercial producers with objectively described cattle by implementing new technologies and using scientifically sound principles that quantify traits of economic importance to beef producers in all segments of the beef industry. For more information, visit www.redangus.org.*

New \$2.35M Grant Expands Farm Stress Support

By JESSICA WILLIAMS, N.C. State University

Faculty with N.C. State University's Department of Agricultural and Human Sciences (AHS) and N.C. State Extension have received a \$2.35 million, one year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA/NIFA) to lead a major regional initiative focused on mental health and well being in agricultural communities.

The grant supports the Southern Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (SR-FRSAN), a collaborative project designed to strengthen and expand coordinated efforts to address stressors faced by farmers, ranchers, farm families, and farmworkers across 13 Southern states and two U.S. territories.

The project is led by Susan Jakes, associate state program leader for community and rural development for N.C. State Extension, with Sudha Sankar, assistant professor of agricultural and human sciences, and Michael Schulman, William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor, serving as co-directors. SR-FRSAN will build on existing partnerships using a hub-and-spoke network model to coordinate regional collaborations and strengthen state level and local leadership. The network will engage land grant institutions, extension services, farmer advocacy groups, and community based organizations to bring locally grounded approaches to addressing farm stress.

Key project activities include:

- Convening state level and regional partner networks
- Developing a shared resource clearinghouse and evaluation tools
- Providing technical assistance, training, and seed funding to partners
- Supporting a regional 24/7 farm stress hotline
- Elevating partner visibility through recognition campaigns and regional convenings
- Engaging youth through innovative GIS mapping initiatives of farm stress resources

The project emphasizes shared governance and relationship building for member states and stakeholders and youth STEM engagement through a GIS mapping partnership led by 4-H youth. The project will generate a variety of learning opportunities for stakeholders through best practice briefs, curated educational training and materials, and continuous evaluation of regional farm stress engagement and outcome metrics.

"Our goal is to support the well being of agricultural communities by building a strong network that amplifies the great work happening across the Southern Region and helps farmers, ranchers, and rural communities thrive," Jakes says.

Through this collaborative regional approach, SR-FRSAN aims to strengthen the Southern region's capacity to respond to farm stress and promote the resilience and well being of agricultural communities.

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ANews

Animal Ag Alliance

Early bird registration open for Animal Agriculture Alliance's 2026 Stakeholders Summit. The Animal Agriculture Alliance recently opened registration for its 2026 Stakeholders Summit, themed "High Steaks: Navigating Pressure on Animal Protein." The 2026 event is set for May 5–7 in Kansas City, Mo., and an initial agenda has been posted. Early bird registration rates are available through March 6, offering savings of up to \$100.

The animal agriculture and food communities are feeling the heat. With headlines, regulations, and expectations all bearing down, the stakes have never been higher. But this is a rare opportunity. Only at the 2026 Stakeholders Summit will attendees find the most passionate minds sparking together. It's the one place where conversation is alight and ideas sizzle. Time to dig in.

"The annual Stakeholders Summit brings together the best of the best, including farmers, ranchers, and industry professionals who are leading the conversation on important topics in food and farming," said Hannah Thompson-Weeman, Alliance president and CEO. "As we look to address common challenges and brighten animal agriculture's future, there's no better room to be in than the 2026 Summit. Take advantage of discounted registration rates and save your seat at the table today."

Get involved – Help us bring fresh perspectives to the table at the 2026 Summit. Invite a friend to join the conversation by referring someone who's never attended Summit before. Both parties need to be registered and will be entered to win a \$100 gift card.

Show your support for the Alliance's outreach efforts by becoming an official Summit sponsor today. Sponsor companies

are eligible for complimentary Summit registrations, opportunities to address event attendees, and exclusive access to attendee contact lists, depending on sponsorship level. Learn more about available sponsorship opportunities and contact Hannah Thompson-Weeman at hthompson@animalagalliance.org to start receiving your benefits.

The 2026 Summit would not be possible without the support of sponsors, including U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, Farm Journal, Meatingplace, Watt, Cargill, Zoetis, United Soybean Board, Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., Amick Farms, Aviagen, CoBank, Dairy MAX, Farm Credit Council, Mountaire Farms, National Pork Board, National Pork Producers Council, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Lamb Board, Cobb-Vantress LLC, National Chicken Council, N.C. Farm Bureau, Progressive Dairy, Tyson Foods, United Egg Producers, and Vivayic.

For general questions about the Summit, email summit@animalagalliance.org or call 703-562-5160..

About the Animal Agriculture Alliance. *The Alliance safeguards the future of animal agriculture and its value to society by bridging the communication gap between the farm and food communities. We connect key food industry stakeholders to arm them with responses to emerging issues. We engage food chain influencers and promote consumer choice by helping them better understand modern animal agriculture. We protect by exposing those who threaten our nation's food security with damaging misinformation. For more information, visit www.animalagalliance.org.*





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2026 Herd Assessments. The 2026 Herd Assessments are now available for completion on the AGA Online Registry Service. As a reminder, the annual herd assessment process is automatically completed by AGA’s registry system. Members must log onto the AGA Online Registry Service and fully complete a herd assessment for females in their herd. 2026 Herd Assessments are due on March 15.

International Letter Code for 2026 is ‘P.’ The international letter code for 2026 is ‘P.’ All animals within the AGA Online Registry must be assigned a tattoo at registration that contains the proper international letter code.

Beginning with calves born in 2018 and later, members can choose the permanent form of identification for that animal; however, a tattoo must still be denoted in the registry at the time of calf registration for record keeping purposes. Accepted forms of permanent identification with the AGA are tattoo, EID, and freeze brand. The permanent form of identification should be denoted in the registry and permanently affixed to the animal.

International codes can be found on the AGA Online Registry Service along the left side of your screen.

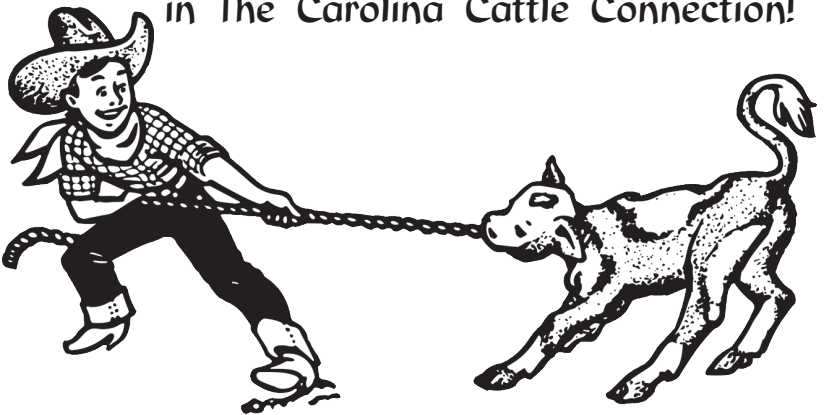
Introducing the Gelbvieh Genetics Guide. You’ve asked for it, and we’re making it happen in 2026! The *Gelbvieh Genetics Guide* will serve as the source of Gelbvieh genetics for seedstock and commercial producers this spring. Advertise your herd’s leading sires with semen available to purchase. Bulls listed in the *Gelbvieh*

Genetics Guide will all have a photo, a three generation pedigree, genetic conditions, EPDs, footnotes, and contact information for semen purchases. All bulls included in the guide **MUST** have an AI Permit on file with the AGA. Reach out to Megan Underwood, AGA communications coordinator, at meganu@gelbvieh.org or at 303-465-2333 with any questions or to commit your bulls today.

About the American Gelbvieh Association. AGA, started in 1971, is a progressive beef cattle breed association representing approximately 1,000 members and approximately 45,000 currently active Gelbvieh, Balancer, and Gelbvieh influenced cows assessed annually in a performance oriented total herd reporting system. The Gelbvieh breed is well known throughout the industry for their maternal strengths and superior growth. With these attributes, Gelbvieh and Balancer cattle fit well into a crossbreeding system.

N.C. Cattle Receipts, Trends, and Prices for the Month of DECEMBER 2025			
Cattle Receipts: 9,314 • Previous Month: 11,518 Feeder supply - 20% steers • 45% heifers • 35% bulls			
SLAUGHTER CLASSES			
	Avg. Wt.	Price	
Cows - % Lean			
Breaker	1,537	\$143.30	
Boner	1,341	\$148.01	
Lean	1,068	\$126.83	
Bulls - Yield Grade 1-2	1,623	\$171.83	
FEEDER CLASSES			
FEEDER STEERS (Medium and Large 1-2)			
Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	426	378.94	\$1,634.69
450-500	475	387.82	\$1,730.76
500-550	526	352.96	\$1,848.52
550-600	569	364.65	\$1,881.51
600-650	625	322.23	\$1,969.25
650-700	672	325.60	\$2,017.48
FEEDER BULLS (Medium and Large 1-2)			
Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	424	365.25	\$1,660.72
450-500	472	345.68	\$1,727.19
500-550	523	326.15	\$1,814.08
550-600	570	297.43	\$1,862.87
600-650	624	288.10	\$1,923.73
650-700	669	254.89	\$1,946.72
FEEDER HEIFERS (Medium and Large 1-2)			
Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	424	331.65	\$1,509.91
450-500	473	324.27	\$1,627.83
500-550	523	305.95	\$1,732.65
550-600	572	312.49	\$1,820.10
600-650	622	278.59	\$1,889.70
650-700	671	295.34	\$1,951.67
Source: N.C. Department of Agriculture - USDA Market News Service Raleigh, N.C. - 919-707-3156			

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LHC Franklin 4113M
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4203M ASA 4438430 PB SM
SCHOOLEY KRUIZ 848K x HOOK`S EAGLE 6E

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
14.9	95.1	150.5	16.0	0.32	0.82	157.7	97.3



4724M ASA 4438107 5/8 SM 3/8 AN
GIBBS KINGPIN 1140J x GW TRIPLE CROWN 018C

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
10.8	92.6	158.9	11.0	0.71	0.9	151.8	100.6



4113M ASA 4438114 5/8 SM 3/8 AN
CCR BEDROCK 5171J x GIBBS 3133A MOUNTAINEER

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
10.8	80.2	139.6	21.3	0.79	0.4	170.8	94.3



4255M ASA 4438493 5/8 SM 3/8 AN
SCHOOLEY HAGGARD A411H x CLRS HOMELAND 327H

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
11.6	92.8	145.9	19.2	1.11	0.61	187.5	108.9



4600M ASA 4437991 PB SM
LCDR RESERVE 210J x SLN AVONDALE E8062

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
11.1	80.5	125.0	19.9	0.46	0.96	164.3	92.3



4302M ASA 4438501 5/8 SM 3/8 AN
SCHOOLEY HAGGARD A411H x CLRS HOMELAND 327H

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
12.4	82.9	132.4	16.6	1.18	0.65	189.3	108.6



4111M ASA 4438034 PB SM
LCDR RESERVE 210J x GIBBS 7382E BROAD RANGE

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
15.5	77.3	116.6	17.3	0.44	0.93	166.4	93.4



4252M ASA 4438435 PB SM
GIBBS CULMINATION x GIBBS 9114G ESSENTIAL

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
13.2	93.4	150.6	18.0	0.71	1.2	183.1	107.4



4649M ASA 4438106 1/2 SM 1/2 AN
GIBBS KINGPIN 1140J x GW TRIPLE CROWN 018C

CE	WW	YW	STAY	MARB	RE	SAPI	STI
19.7	82.8	143.2	13.9	0.73	0.65	173.1	100.8

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solvet = UPDATE

CattleZen – Dual Pheromone Innovation for Safer, Calmer Cattle. Solvet announces CattleZen, a new cattle stress management tool designed to help producers maintain calmer, healthier beef and dairy cattle.

CattleZen is a proprietary blend of maternal bovine appeasing substance and a calming pheromone that, when applied just above the muzzle, stimulates a calming effect. This patented blend of two pheromones delivers fast acting and sustained calming through the animal's sensory system to help cattle stay calmer during common stressors such as weaning, vaccination, transportation, or weather changes.

CattleZen enhances cattle welfare, minimizing the impact of stressful events while improving safety for both animals and handlers. Its easy, single site application features a higher concentration, lower volume dose designed for strong detection and consistent results.

Doug Shane, DVM, Ph.D., Solvet veterinary technical support, says, "Stress triggers the release of cortisol and adrenaline in cattle, which can suppress the immune system and reduce feed intake. CattleZen helps reduce stress, supporting more consistent feed intake and better health and performance."

Dr. Shane added, "CattleZen provides a research proven, effective, affordable tool that enhances welfare, supports improved productivity, and helps protect a producer's investment."

To learn more, visit CattleZen.com.

About Solvet Animal Welfare Solutions. *Solvet is committed to deliver game changing, science backed innovations that support animal well being, handler safety, and operational efficiency. Our relentless quest for progress has given way to sustained expansion, and it is only the beginning of our exponential growth trajectory. As we are becoming an increasingly important player on the North American map, we take immense pride in the fact that our vision remains the same since day one: "Innovation by request". Addressing the reality and needs of the North American animal health industry, we work closely with producers and veterinarians to provide them with what they expect.*

We have our corporate headquarters and production facilities in Calgary, Canada. As part of our distribution network, we have U.S. based partners and distributors, which makes it easier for us to do business with clients in the country. For more information, visit solvet-us.com.

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 LIMOUSIN
North American Limousin Foundation
UPDATE

NALF Releases Two New Indexes, \$MPI and \$IPI, along with Mature Cow Weight and Cow Energy Requirement Yearly EPDs.

The NALF board approved two new indexes and EPDs. These were listed in January. In 2024, three new EPDs were implemented — Dry Matter Intake, ADG, Feed Efficiency sub-index (\$Gain), and a new terminal index utilizing iGENDEC software in 2024.

Upon completion of these EPDs, the NALF board moved forward with the development of two additional index’s — \$MPI (Maternal Profit Index) and \$IPI (Industry Profit Index), which is synonymous with an all purpose index in 2025.

These new indexes were built via iGENDEC with the help of Dr. Robert Weaber and Dr. Matt Spangler. iGENDEC was also the platform used to construct NALF’s new \$TPI (Terminal Profit Index) in 2024. The new indexes will be implemented in January of 2026. The new indexes will also coincide with the release of MWT EPD (mature cow weight) and CERY EPD (cow energy requirement yearly).

This full suite of indexes for terminal profit, maternal profit, and an all purpose index of IPI will give NALF breeders one of the most progressive index suites in the industry. They are all updated annually with current market price data for feeder cattle prices, fed cattle prices, and carcass prices. All price data uses the most recent ten year average for price data updates and incorporates marginal economic values that are relevant to each index produced.

For NALF membership, the description and definition of these new EPDs and indexes are detailed below:

• **Mature Weight** – Body weight of cows adjusted to six years of age at body condition score 5. MWT is reported in pounds and is computed from a genetic model that leverages information from weaning weight, post weaning gain, and mature weights of cows. Reported weights are adjusted for both age at observation and for body condition. Body weights of cows 2–12 years of age are utilized in the evaluation so producers can report data at any age for the evaluation. Preferably, cows should be evaluated at or shortly following weaning, as that’s a convenient time for many producers to process cows. Weights collected at other times in the production cycle are acceptable. Producers should measure full contemporary groups on the same day as the observation date, which helps form the contemporary group.

• **Cow Energy Requirement Yearly (CERY)** – Mature body weight, lactation potential, and birth weight are primary predictors

Presented to you by Nash & Wilson County Cooperative Extension



BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE TRAINING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH 2026
8:30am – 11:30 am
East Carolina Ag & Education Center
1175 Kingsboro Rd Rocky Mount, NC

 National Beef Quality Audit Update

 BQA Guidelines

 Trailer Check Off

 Learning & Understanding Flight Zones in Cattle



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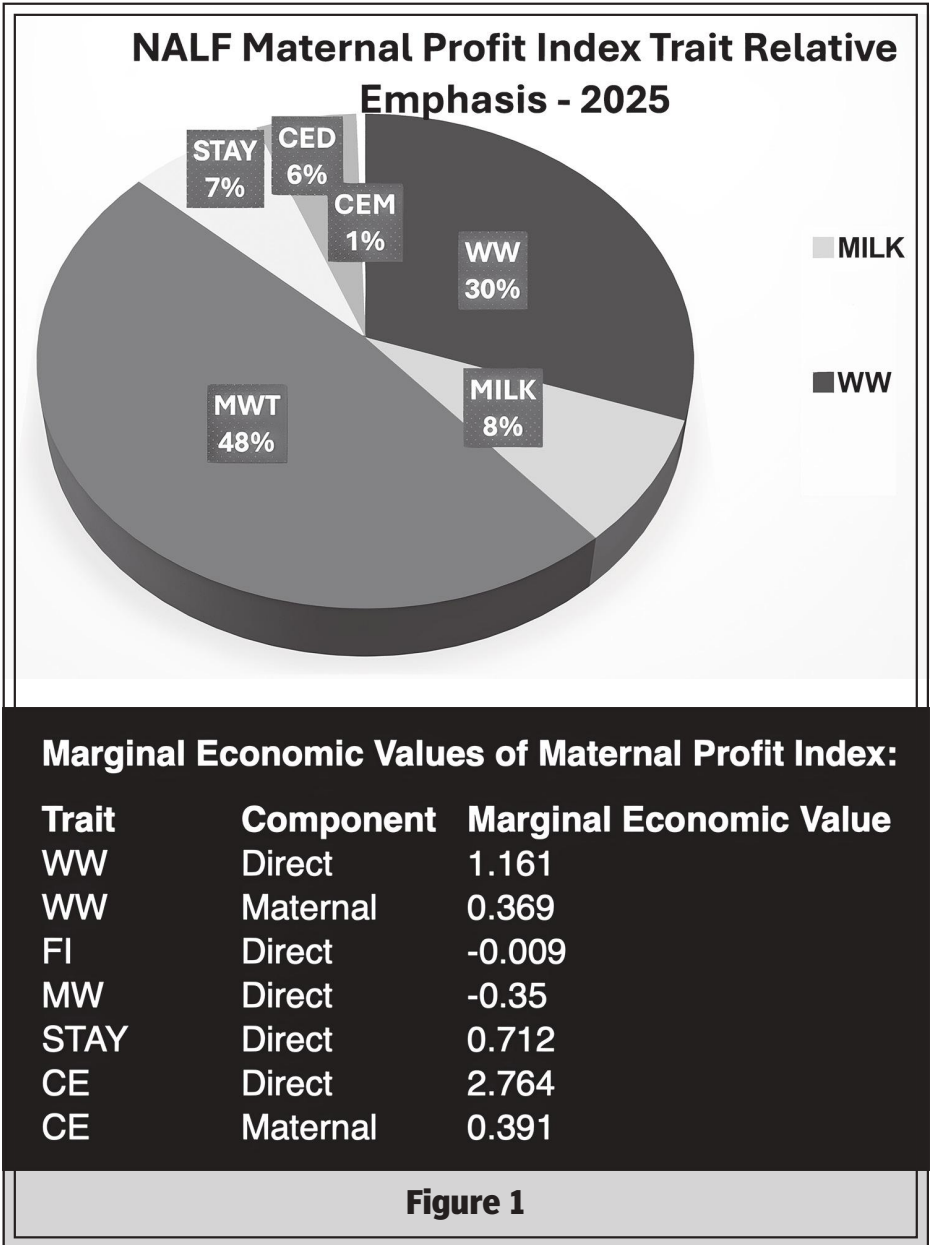


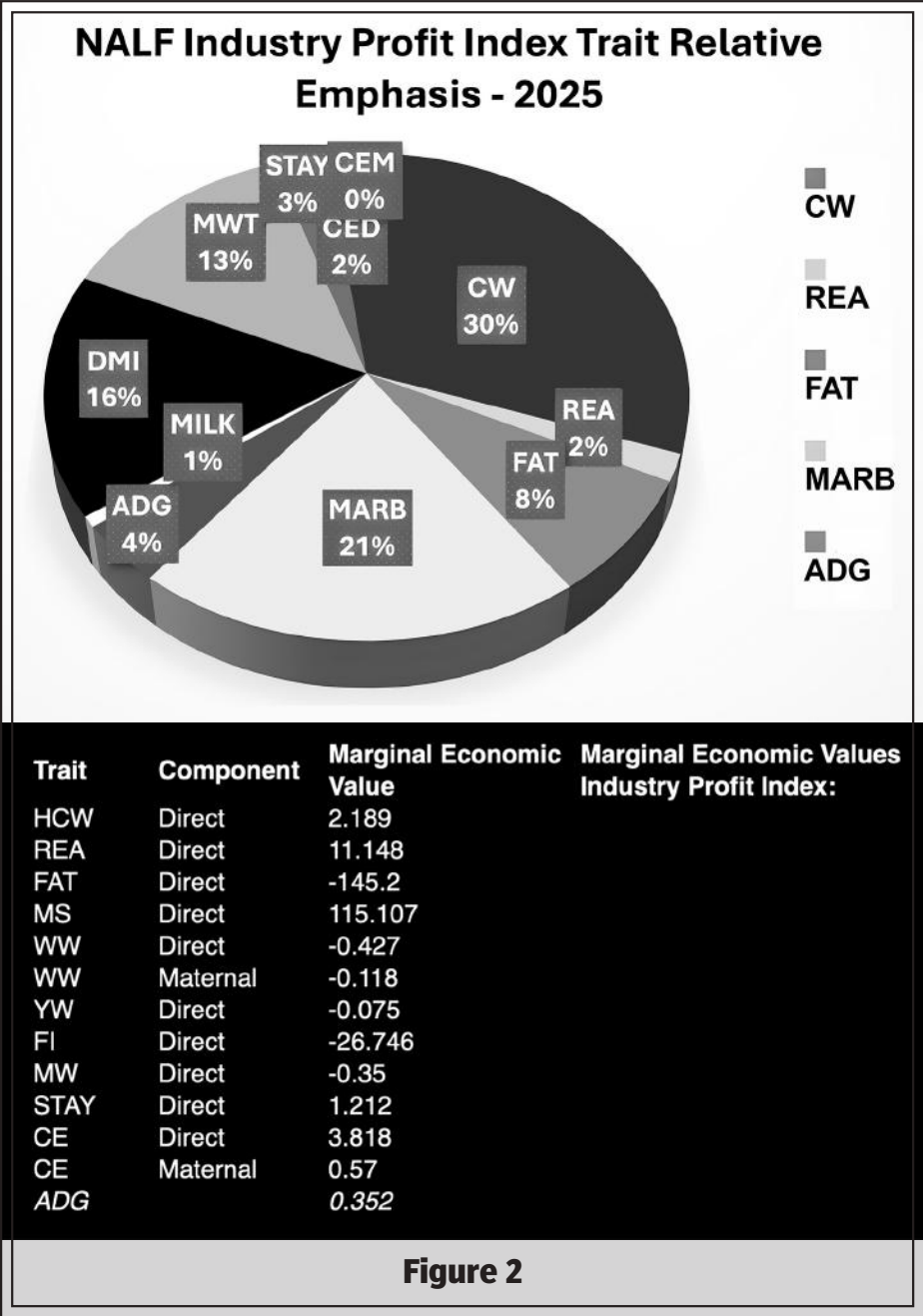
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of energy requirements. Mature Weight, Milk, and Birth Weight EPD are utilized to inform prediction equations from beef cow nutrition research to estimate differences in energy requirement over a production year. The CERY EPD is reported in pounds of Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) required for an age 6 cow.

• **Maternal Profit Index (\$MPI)** – In this production scenario, Limousin bulls are mated to Angus based cows with replacement heifers retained from the calf crop and surplus calves marketed at weaning. EPDs weighted in this index are Calving Ease Direct and Maternal, Weaning Weight, Milk, Mature Weight, Dry Matter Intake, and Stayability. Mature weight is the primary driver and represents the significant cost of maintenance energy requirements in the cow/calf sector. Weaning Weight and Milk (expressed in pounds of calf weaning weight) represent the principal revenue stream. Stayability helps account for differences in replacement costs in the system and the effect of heifer retention on revenue streams. This index should be used by commercial cattlemen whose production scenario includes marketing calves at weaning and retaining replacements from the herd. Figure 1 reports the relative emphasis of traits included in \$MPI.

• **Industry Profit Index (\$IPI)** – The production scenario for \$IPI includes mating Limousin sires to Angus-based cows with

retention of replacements from the herd and all other calves fed out and marketed on a value based grid that rewards quality and yield. IPI balances both maternal and terminal selection criteria by combining replacement female retention from the herd with carcass endpoint for marketed surplus heifers and all steers. Due to the challenges faced by commercial cattlemen in this production scenario, \$IPI incorporates the largest and most diverse set of EPDs, including carcass traits as the primary revenue drivers, along with cow Mature Weight, Stayability, and Dry Matter Intake as cost drivers. Figure 2 reports the relative emphasis of traits included in \$IPI.

About the North American Limousin Foundation. The North American Limousin Foundation, headquartered in Englewood, Colo., provides programs and services, including the documentation of more than 25,000 head of cattle annually, for approximately 4,000 members and their commercial customers. The Limousin breed and Lim-Flex hybrid offer industry leading growth and efficiency while being an ideal complement to British breeds. For more information about NALF, please visit www.nalf.org.

2026 SPOTLIGHT ISSUES SCHEDULE

Most of the breed associations in North and South Carolina have stepped forward and renewed their contracts for Spotlight sections in *The Carolina Cattle Connection* for 2026. If your breed is not featured as a Spotlight section and you would like to inquire on any open months please feel free to contact me. Below is the tentative schedule for the upcoming year.

2026 RESERVED SPOTLIGHT ISSUES

JANUARY	CHAROLAIS
FEBRUARY	FORAGES
MARCH	ANGUS
APRIL	PIEDMONTESE
MAY	BRAHMAN
JUNE	HEREFORD
JULY	BELTED GALLOWAY
AUGUST	SIMMENTAL
SEPTEMBER	SANTA GERTRUDIS
OCTOBER	WAGYU
NOVEMBER	BRANGUS
DECEMBER	

For more information
about your breed’s Spotlight Issue, contact:

THE CAROLINA CATTLE CONNECTION

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CattleFever – New AI Tool Can Take a Cow's Temperature With Only a Photo

What if you could look into a cow's face and know if it had a fever? A new tool from the Artificial Intelligence and Computer Vision Lab at the University of Arkansas uses artificial intelligence and thermal cameras to estimate the body temperature of cattle.

The system — called CattleFever — is the first step toward automated tools that ranchers could use to monitor the health of their herd.

Trong Thang Pham, a doctoral student at the UofA, was the primary researcher on the project. The AICV lab is led by Ngan Le, an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science, who researches medical imaging, computer vision, and robotics.

Today, cattle's temperature is measured rectally, a process that can stress the animal. The CattleFever system could both improve animal welfare and reduce the labor needed to track a herd's health. The technology could help ranchers detect diseases before symptoms appear, leading to earlier treatment and preventing outbreaks.

Building the Dataset – To build CattleFever, the researchers first needed data. A number of datasets exist for dogs, cats, horses, and sheep. The existing dataset of cattle, called CattleEyeView, only includes overhead photos of the animals and was built for tracking herds. The existing animal datasets were also mainly RGB photos of the animals, and for CattleFever, the researchers also needed thermal images.

The researchers had to build their own dataset with short videos and thermal images of thousands of calves. Each calf was held in a pen, and then 20 seconds of both video footage and thermal images were recorded. Each animal's temperature was also recorded with a rectal thermometer to create a benchmark, or ground truth.

The calf data was collected at the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station's Savoy Research Complex.

The RGB photos of the calves, which clearly show the animal's features, then needed to be linked to the thermal image on the computer. The researchers marked the photos with 13 landmarks, such as eyes, ears, muzzle, and mouth. The team manually annotated 600 frames, which were then used to train an AI tool that automatically labeled the remaining 4,000 frames in a dataset named CattleFace-RGBT. The resulting landmark detection tool can automatically localize a calf's face and identify its key facial features across RGB and thermal modalities.

Testing the Tool – Once they had the dataset, could a computer determine the temperature of the calf from the images alone? Through extensive ablation studies examining different facial landmark combinations, the researchers realized the temperature of the animal's eyes and nostrils were closest to the reading of the rectal thermometer. Using facial landmarks, the computer focused on the temperature of the thermal images from those spots.

The researchers then examined the data with various machine learning approaches to determine the animal's body temperature from those surface readings. The most accurate results came from

a random forest regression, a machine learning approach to predict results from complex data. In a random forest regression, many decision trees are created, each one trained on a different portion of the data. Then all the results of these decision trees are averaged together, which helps reduce noise.

The CattleFever system was able to automatically determine an animal temperature within 1°F of the reading from a thermometer.

Into the Fields? The researchers demonstrated that cattle's temperature could be accurately read from a thermal image, but all the images were taken with the animal directly facing the camera.

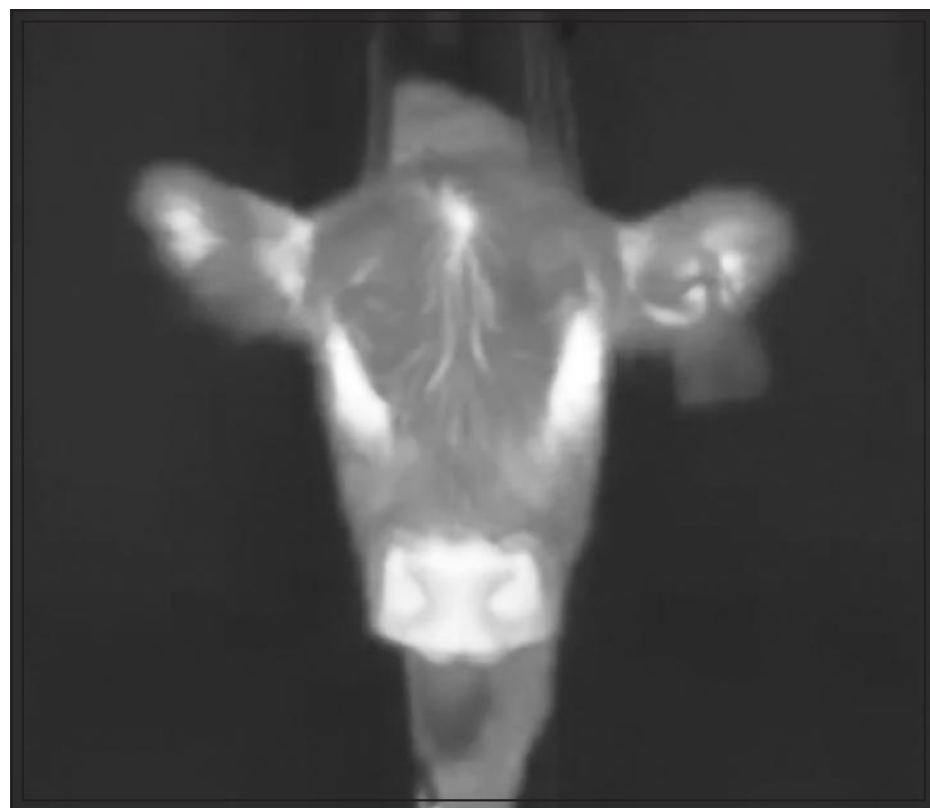
"We probably need to take more photos of them in the real world settings, such as running around, to capture their motion in the field," Pham said.

The next challenge is to handle cattle faces captured from diverse angles and natural poses, essentially teaching the computer to recognize and interpret a cow's face in real world field environments, rather than only when the cow is positioned directly in front of the camera inside a pen.

The UofA researchers have publicly shared their CattleFace-RGBT dataset, so other researchers can build on their work and help develop a system that ranchers could use.

"If we find something new, we share that with the world. That's the spirit," Pham said.

The results of the CattleFever research were published in the journal Smart Agricultural Technology. Pham was the first author, and Le was the senior author. The other authors were Ethan Coffman from Le's AICV Lab and Beth Kegley, Jeremy G. Powell, and Jiangchao Zhao of the Department of Animal Science in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences.





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My Ideal Cow

By **BOB LARSON**, *Kansas State University*

Frequently, producers will point out their ‘best cows’ to me and comment that they would like more just like them. When I ask what about the cows makes them better than their herd mates, the answers usually emphasize the cows’ own performance — such as getting bred early each breeding season, staying healthy and in good body condition throughout the year, and giving birth and mothering up with no problems. Typically, good calf performance is also mentioned, but only after the cows’ own low labor, easy keeping characteristics are praised.

Based on my own experience and what I learn from ag. economists, I think the producers are correctly identifying superior cows. Obviously, having calves that grow well and have other desirable characteristics is necessary for a cow to be considered among the ‘best,’ but a cow with a better-than-average calf at her side that calved late, needed assistance at calving or after calving, or that required excessive feed inputs to maintain body condition will not qualify as being among the ‘best.’ The best cows need to thrive on available forage and to present a healthy calf at weaning every year.

My list of characteristics that define a ‘best cow’ starts with heifers that reach puberty at a young age and light weight so that they are ready to breed early in their first breeding season. They need to be fertile and be able to maintain a pregnancy while staying in good body condition on available forage and a reasonable amount of supplementation. They need to calve without assistance, mother

up with their calves shortly after they are born, provide adequate colostrum, and have good udder confirmation that allows easy suckling. They then need to resume fertile cycles early enough so that they can be bred in the first 21 days of the breeding season and then remain healthy and in good body condition while they maintain that pregnancy until the next calving.

Because high reproductive efficiency (defined as weaning a healthy calf each year) is usually considered the most economically important trait of beef cows, and feed costs are among the highest expenses, identifying and replicating cows that excel at reproduction, calf care, and maintaining body condition on available forages is key to efficient cow herd production. Genetic selection, nutritional and health management, and good animal husbandry are all needed to create a herd full of ‘best cows.’ Successful beef producers gain a great deal of expertise in all of these areas and also rely on other local experts — such as their veterinarian, extension specialists, replacement suppliers, forage and grazing advisors, feed suppliers, and fellow cattlemen — to keep up with the demands of ever higher production expectations.

The goal of every producer should be that the herd’s ‘best cows’ today would be considered average cows in a few years, and a new standard for ‘best cows’ would be established. This is a daunting goal, but one that helps the beef industry meet the demand to continually improve the efficiency and quality of the meat we produce.



Saluda County Cattlemen's Association

34th Annual Replacement Heifer Sale

Saturday • February 28, 2026 • 12:30 p.m.

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email: rushtobw@gmail.com • website: www.saludacountycattlemen.com

Check us out on Facebook for sale videos and updates.





BBQ Beef Waffle Fry Nachos

Total Time — 40 minutes

- 1 lb cooked beef pot roast or brisket
- 1 package (20–24 ounces) frozen waffle fries
- 1 can (16 ounces) baked beans, drained
- 1/2 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup sour cream (optional)
- 1 green onion, chopped

Prepare the waffle fries according to the package directions. Shred the beef pot roast with two forks.

Cook’s Tip – Two packages (17 ounces each) of fully cooked pot roast or brisket may be substituted for the cooked pot roast or brisket. Remove the beef from the package, discarding au jus or gravy. Continue as directed in step 2.

Meanwhile, combine the beef and barbecue sauce in a medium saucepan. Heat the beef mixture over medium heat 8–10 minutes or until the beef is heated through, stirring occasionally.



Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. Top the waffle fries with the beef mixture, beans, and cheese. Bake in a 350°F oven for 5–7 minutes or until the mixture is heated through and the cheese is melted.

Cook’s Tip – The waffle fries may be transferred to an oven safe baking dish. Continue as directed in step 3.

Top the mixture with sour cream, if desired. Sprinkle with green onions.

Makes 12 servings.



By GEORGEANNE WEBB, S.C. Charolais Association

I will start off with good news of a birth announcement. Riley Friddle got two heifers from me, and her dad bought a bull from a different bloodline. Well, Peppa and Pearl decided to show out for Christmas. Pearl calved a few days before Christmas, and Peppa tried to calve on Christmas Day. She calved at 3:00 a.m., so it was the day after Christmas. Miss Riley has her first Charolais calves, and she is tickled to death. Her dad was so thankful that both had heifer calves because he knew Riley would never let him sell those calves. I told him he had better watch her, or she would have those calves in her bedroom playing with them and sleeping with them.

I hope everyone had great holidays. Luckily, I do not have any bad news to tell this month. I will go to the S.C. Cattlemen’s Association Annual Meeting at the end of this month in Clemson the night before the bull sale. I will give a report next month and let you know how many feelings I hurt with my opinions. Maybe old Hugh Weathers will be there to provide some excitement because you know how he likes to attend meetings and get questions from me. For instance, what’s happening with the USDA slaughterhouse that was supposed to be built in Laurens? It’s been four years since they announced that, and as far as I know, they have not turned a shovel of dirt.

Check on your neighbors because I know more cold weather is headed this way. They say to check on the elderly every morning, so if you come check on me, I get up at 6:30 a.m. Be sure to bring donuts.

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Sale starts at 12:00 noon

* Lunch provided before the sale at 11:00 a.m.

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Facebook - @marchmadnesscattlesale • Email - marchmadnesssale@gmail.com

Auctioneer - Darren Carter - 864-980-5695

Hunt's H+ Brangus Bull & Female Sale



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UPDATE

Welcome Cord Weinheimer as IBBA Director of Field Staff, Genetics, and Advertising. The International Brangus Breeders Association (IBBA) welcomes Cord Weinheimer of Taylor, Tex., to serve as the organization's director of field staff, genetics, and advertising.

Weinheimer will lead efforts to strengthen membership relations, drive growth in IBBA's genetic programs, and enhance communications that promote the value of the Brangus breed nationwide.

"We are thrilled to have Cord join the IBBA team," says Rick Cozzitorto, IBBA executive vice president. "His experience managing both commercial and registered cattle operations, combined with his expertise in member engagement and advertising, makes him uniquely qualified to serve our membership and advance the Brangus breed. We look forward to the energy and perspective he brings to our organization."

Weinheimer is a sixth generation rancher from the Texas Hill Country and earned a bachelor's degree in animal science from Texas A&M University in 2016. Following graduation, he gained hands-on experience as a herdsman with Rolke Ranch and Stalwart Ranch before serving as the Southwest regional field representative for the American Hereford Association.

"I am excited to step into this role at the IBBA," Weinheimer says. "My goal is to expand the footprint of the Brangus breed, enhance exposure nationally, and provide breeders with tools and programs that support sound genetics and strong operations. I look forward to engaging with members across the country, learning from them, and working together to move the breed and association forward."

Weinheimer steps into his role at IBBA as the association embarks on a new year of growth, innovation, and member focused initiatives.

Southeast Field Staff Opportunity. IBBA is seeking applicants for a Southeast Field Staff position serving Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee. This role functions as both a field representative and sales associate for IBBA and Brangus Publications, Inc., supporting members through relationship based outreach, program education, and promotion of the Brangus breed. The position reports to the Director of Field Staff, Genetics, and Advertising and involves extensive travel, particularly during peak sale seasons.

The Southeast Field Staff plays a key role in connecting IBBA with its membership, industry partners, users of Brangus genetics, and academic partners. Responsibilities include representing the association at industry events, supporting member marketing efforts, communicating IBBA programs and services, and assisting producers in adopting tools that strengthen their operations. Ideal candidates bring strong communication and sales skills, a working knowledge of the beef industry, and a commitment to delivering consistent, high quality service to Brangus breeders across the region.

Read the full job description and details on how to apply a <https://tinyurl.com/BrangusFieldStaff>.

About the International Brangus Breeders Association. IBBA, headquartered in San Antonio, Tex., strives to provide the commercial cattle industry, domestically and internationally, with the best genetics possible. Founded in 1949 as the American Brangus Breeders, the organization has since evolved into the IBBA. The IBBA's purpose is to enable its members to produce quality beef for the commercial cattle industry and its consumers. For more information about IBBA, visit www.gobrangus.com.

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Feb. 12	Fort Worth, TX	Feb 3
March 12	TBD	March 3

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Steven Mathews, DVM

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zoetis NEWS

Zoetis Surpasses \$2 Million in Donations to Folds of Honor With Patriots' Pledge Program. Proceeds from select livestock products fund academic scholarships for families of military and first responders. Through its Patriots' Pledge program, Zoetis has contributed over \$2 million to Folds of Honor in a four year span, advancing the organization's mission to provide academic scholarships for the families of fallen or disabled members of the U.S. Armed Forces and First Responders.

Since 2022, Zoetis has supported Folds of Honor by donating a portion of select cattle product sales, and in early 2025, expanded the program to include select pork and poultry products as well.

"Many of our customers have ties to a military service member or a first responder, or they know someone who does," says Kristin Kasselmann, senior vice president of the U.S. Livestock Business for Zoetis. "The animal agriculture industry takes pride in our country. Our customers also share a foundation of hard work, resilience, and commitment to community, making this collaboration with Folds of Honor a natural fit for Zoetis."

Lt. Col. Dan Rooney, Folds of Honor founder and CEO, couldn't agree more.

"Our collaboration and partnership with Zoetis is so powerful because of our common ground rooted in shared values," Rooney says. "That's the flawlessly authentic point of connection between Zoetis and Folds of Honor. I can't think of a better way to say 'thank you' to our military and first responder families, or a better way to invest in America and its future."

To date, Zoetis has helped support 361 scholarships. Providing scholarships for students who are pursuing agricultural and animal production studies is important to Zoetis and reiterates its commitment to supporting the future of agriculture and industry leaders.

For Oklahoma State University animal science student Erica Wells-Kleman, support from Patriots' Pledge will allow her to graduate debt free. She appreciates the commitment from Zoetis to support dedicated service members through select product sales and was eager to meet Lt. Col. Dan Rooney at a recent National Cattlemen's Beef Association convention.

"I grew up using Zoetis products on our cattle at home, and I've been using them in my animal science classes as well," says Wells-Kleman, who comes from an eighth generation cow/calf ranch near Glencoe, Oklahoma. "It's great to see that connection between Zoetis and the Folds of Honor scholarship program."

Throughout 2026, Zoetis will continue to donate a portion of sales of select cattle, poultry, and pork products to Folds of Honor. The Patriots' Pledge program continues to expand, with Synovex implants recently being added to the eligible product lineup. Visit ZoetisUS.com/PatriotsPledge to learn more about the program and read Folds of Honor scholarship recipient stories.

About Zoetis. As the world's leading animal health company, Zoetis is driven by a singular purpose — to nurture our world and humankind by advancing care for animals. After innovating ways to predict, prevent, detect, and treat animal illness for more than 70 years, Zoetis continues to stand by those raising and caring for animals worldwide — from veterinarians and pet owners to livestock producers. The company's leading portfolio and pipeline of medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, and technologies make a difference in over 100 countries. A Fortune 500 company, Zoetis generated revenue of \$9.3 billion in 2024 with approximately 13,800 employees. For more information, visit www.zoetis.com.



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COW CAMP 103: Back to the Basics

Area Beef producers are invited to join N.C. Cooperative Extension Wednesdays, Feb. 18 and March 11, from 4:00 - 8:30 p.m., at the Franklin County Center Annex, 103 S. Bickett Blvd., Louisburg, for a Winter learning series that will include discussions about beef cattle production.

Registration is required, register at the below links. Registration fee of \$35 each session includes a beef dinner. For more information, contact the Cooperative Extension office, 919-496-3344, or martha_mobley@ncsu.edu.



Meeting 1- Wednesday, February 18, 2026 4:00-8:30 p.m.

Part 1: Basic Infrastructure for Beef Production
Part 2: Reproductive Management for Beef Cattle
Part 3: Managing Health and Animal Welfare for Beef Cattle
Register Online at below link or Scan Code

<https://go.ncsu.edu/smallfarmbootcamppart1>

(Register by Feb. 16th)



Meeting 2 -Wednesday, March 11, 2026 4:00-8:30 p.m.

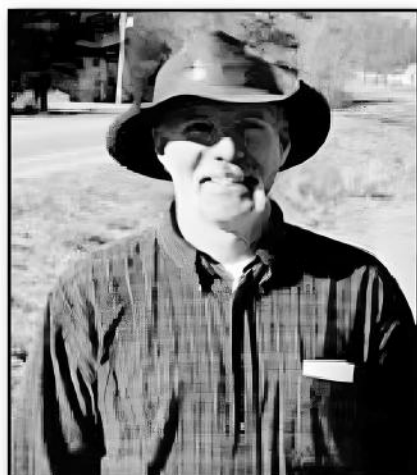
Part 4: Basics of Nutrition for Beef Cattle
Part 5: Forage Systems for Beef Cattle
Part 6: Genetics for Beef Cattle
Part 7: Direct Marketing Your Beef: In's and Out's
Register Online at below link or Scan Code

<https://go.ncsu.edu/smallfarmbootcamppart2>

(Register by March 9th)



The 5-County Beef Tour (3 farms) in June 2026 will conclude the series.



Paul Gonzalez, Agricultural Agent,
Sampson County



Martha Mobley, Agricultural Agent,
Franklin County

Join two of NC Cooperative Extension's livestock agents with over 60 years experience in the beef cattle industry in N.C. and over 53 years experience as livestock agents; Martha L. Mobley, Franklin County, and Paul Gonzalez, Sampson County, joke that their cattle farms are "experiment stations," as they usually try something out before it is recommended to regional producers.

In their spare time, Paul's family breeds and raises premier polled fullblood Salers cattle. Martha's family has produced quality commercial cattle, Black Angus x Simmental, either for direct marketing to the consumer, video stocker sales, or breeding stock. Both have in-depth knowledge of various aspects of marketing cattle, either individually or in truckload lots.

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NC State University and N.C. A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status. NC State, N.C. A&T, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating. Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate by contacting Martha Mobley at 919-496-3344 or email martha_mobley@ncsu.edu or fax 919-496-0222.

Cattle Theft – Check Your Animals

By **MARTHA MOBLEY**, *N.C. State University*

A regional cattle producer recently reported an incident in which cattle were stolen from the nearby farm.

In 2026, cattle producers continue to receive record prices for their livestock at local sale barns and auction markets. After years of discouraging events like drought and herd reduction, this surge in value draws unwanted attention. Many of you have worked hard on your cattle farms and hold your cattle and livelihood in high regard. Current market conditions provide thieves an opportunity to take advantage of those lucrative and unattended livestock.

Some people see it as an ‘easy way to earn a dollar’ by stealing cattle; they think that they can make a quick turnaround on some dollars. Livestock especially at risk are those that are easily accessible.

The first step in preventing livestock theft involves permanently identifying cattle through techniques like freeze brands and ear notches. On the other hand, thieves can easily remove ear tags and other temporary identifiers. Branding is the most surefire way to positively identify cattle. If someone is trying to sell them at a regional auction market, somebody else is most likely to recognize that brand and know that “hey, that isn’t who dropped them off.” I have conducted numerous demonstrations over the years on freeze branding and how easy it is to get your farm’s brand registered with the NCDA & CS. Contact 919-496-3344 if you would be interested in attending another branding clinic in the late winter to early spring.

Another crucial step in warding off theft includes restricting access to pens and pastures by using locks, chains, and other security measures such as wildlife cameras. Anything that causes someone to take an extra step that’s looking to steal cattle serves as a deterrent.

Other livestock theft prohibition methods:

- Do not leave cattle penned overnight.
- Be extra vigilant of activity near pens or pastures that sit near high traffic areas like highways or interstates.
- Check and count cattle frequently, keeping written records, especially if housed in multiple locations.
- Take note of any suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles driving by a property, within reason.

After a suspected crime, producers should first contact their local county sheriff’s office, then the NCDA & CS Veterinary Division and Livestock Markets Division. Hopefully, information can be sent quickly to auction markets around the state about the stolen livestock so they are aware of them.

Producers who are members of the N.C. Cattlemen’s Association can report stolen livestock to that organization’s office, which will institute a \$1,000 reward program and send out more information about the crime to other members.

Become a member of the NCCA today, and get your REWARD sign for \$2.00. Post one at each pasture entrance you have. I have several of these REWARD signs at the Franklin County Ag Center if you would like to purchase one. Make sure you are a current paid member of the NCCA in order to receive your funds once the thief is found.

If you have information about this incident, contact the Franklin County Cooperative Extension office at 919-496-3344. For more information, call the office or email Martha Mobley at martha.mobley@ncsu.edu.

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A Year of Putting South Carolina Farmers First

By **CODY SIMPSON**, *USDA FSA – South Carolina*

Since January 20, 2025, President Donald J. Trump has been working around the clock to put American farmers first after inheriting one of the toughest farm economies our country has faced in decades. Here in South Carolina, farmers and ranchers know the challenges firsthand — rising input costs, volatile markets, extreme weather, and years of policies that prioritize bureaucracy over producers. As a fifth generation farmer, I understand the impacts that these challenges have had on our family farms.

This past year, President Trump and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins worked at record speed to deliver real relief and long term reforms, working hand-in-hand with the Farm Service Agency to ensure these resources are reaching our farmers and rural communities right here at home.

The Trump Administration has delivered more than \$30 billion in ad hoc assistance to farmers nationwide since January 2025.

Here in South Carolina, this includes \$52 million through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP), \$42.7 million

in disaster relief through the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP), and \$23.6 million in assistance for specialty crop and livestock producers. After over 50 on-farm visits speaking with farmers and ranchers, these programs help farmers recover from weather disasters, inflation, and market losses that have been left unaddressed for years.

Just as important, the Trump Administration strengthened the farm safety net through legislation in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. For the first time in more than a decade, statutory reference prices for major commodities were raised by 10–21 percent, and more than 30 million new base acres were added to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs beginning in 2026. Crop insurance was also made more affordable, saving farmers over \$400 million annually, with expanded support for beginning farmers and ranchers, a critical investment in the future of agriculture.

USDA is also working to lower farmers' costs by restoring competition and cutting red tape. New actions with the Department of Justice are targeting price fixing and anti-competitive behavior in



2026 ANNUAL MEETING & AWARDS BANQUET

FEBRUARY 6

T. Ed Garrison Cattle Complex • Pendleton, S.C.

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. — Trade Show

3:00 – 4:00 p.m. — Business Meeting

4:00 p.m. — CUCES Guests

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. — Dinner with Keynote Speaker

6:30 p.m. — Awards

Scan to Register



key input markets like seed, fertilizer, and equipment. Partnerships with the Department of Labor (DOL) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have also led to significant reforms to the H-2A program. An Interim Final Rule published by DOL in October reformed the H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR)—providing over \$2 billion in annual savings for farmers—and a Final Rule published by DHS reduced the time it takes to navigate the H-2A application process by allowing concurrent filing. These reforms help make the H-2A program more affordable and accessible, ensuring producers have access to the labor they need at a more affordable cost.

USDA has been prioritizing the purchase of healthy, U.S. grown commodities with the intent to purchase up to \$970 million in this year alone, under Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935. These purchases support farmers while supplying food banks, schools, and

nutrition programs — strengthening agriculture and food security in communities like South Carolina.

One of the most significant actions of this year was the announcement of \$12 billion in Farmer Bridge Payments — designed to help farmers weather ongoing market disruptions, elevated production costs, and continued volatility while longer term reforms take hold. This bridge assistance reflects President Trump’s commitment to ensuring farmers are not left behind as the farm economy recovers.

These payments are intended to provide stability and certainty for producers as USDA continues to deliver disaster assistance and implement the improvements made under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. While SDRP signups are ongoing, USDA is ensuring farmers have access to immediate relief today while positioning them for expanded market opportunities ahead.

Under President Trump’s leadership, we are rebuilding American agriculture to be stronger, more competitive, and more resilient. The Trump Administration is expanding global market access for American agriculture. New trade deals and frameworks with more than 15 countries are opening doors for U.S. beef, grains, dairy, specialty crops, and biofuel exports. These wins matter here in South Carolina, where exports support farm income, rural jobs, and long term economic growth.

At the Farm Service Agency, our mission is simple but bold — serve farmers, not bureaucracy. The Trump Administration’s Farmers First agenda is delivering real results — relief today, stronger safety nets tomorrow, and expanded markets for the future — but this is just the beginning.

I have the honor to serve the wonderful farmers and ranchers in our beloved South Carolina. Every day, the Farm Service Agency will continue to fight to ensure they have the tools, freedom, and opportunity to succeed for generations to come. We are the greatest state in the nation.

S.C. Cattle Receipts, Trends, and Prices
for the Month of DECEMBER 2025

Cattle Receipts: 4,030 • Previous Month: 4,694
Feeder supply - 17% steers • 40% heifers • 43% bulls

SLAUGHTER CLASSES

	Avg. Wt.	Price
Cows - % Lean		
Breaker	1,448	\$159.08
Boner	1,239	\$156.91
Lean	1,204	\$141.77
Bulls - Yield Grade 1-2	1,658	\$185.46

FEEDER CLASSES

FEEDER STEERS (Medium and Large 1-2)

Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	418	441.14	\$1,728.17
450-500	465	408.72	\$1,890.53
500-550	522	371.97	\$1,893.41
550-600	567	362.32	\$1,956.48
600-650	615	351.53	\$2,108.87
650-700	670	314.55	\$2,055.38

FEEDER BULLS (Medium and Large 1-2)

Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	427	424.68	\$1,813.38
450-500	466	401.78	\$1,872.29
500-550	519	367.79	\$1,908.83
550-600	561	360.62	\$2,023.08
600-650	624	336.11	\$2,097.33
650-700	673	332.22	\$2,235.84

FEEDER HEIFERS (Medium and Large 1-2)

Wt. Range	Avg. Wt.	CWT	Avg. Price
400-450	416	379.24	\$1,577.64
450-500	466	366.49	\$1,707.84
500-550	519	337.47	\$1,751.47
550-600	571	330.20	\$1,885.44
600-650	622	311.58	\$1,938.03
650-700	676	275.83	\$1,864.61

Source: S.C. Department of Agriculture - USDA Market News Service
Columbia, S.C. - 803-737-4491



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AND your
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FEBRUARY 10, 2026

5-7 PM

MEAL PROVIDED

Iredell County Cooperative Extension
444 Bristol Dr, Statesville, NC 28677

TOPICS:
2026 BEEF CATTLE
MARKET OUTLOOK

CULLING AND
MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
FOR KY-31 SYSTEMS

NEW WORLD
SCREWORM UPDATE

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NCCA REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

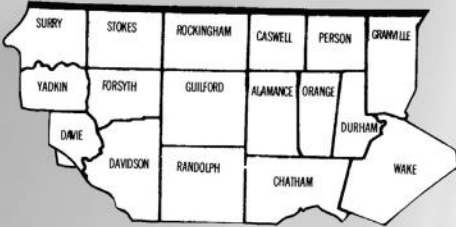
Mark your calendar for the meeting coming to your region soon!
Each meeting will be held in conjunction with an NC State Extension field day.

FEBRUARY 11 – 11:00 a.m.
Butner Beef Cattle Field Lab
Bahama, NC

FEBRUARY 10 – 4:00 p.m.
Iredell Cooperative Extension
Statesville, NC

WESTERN PIEDMONT	
Alexander	Gaston
Alleghany	Iredell
Anson	Lincoln
Ashe	Mecklenburg
Burke	Rowan
Cabarrus	Stanly
Caldwell	Union
Catawba	Watauga
Cleveland	Wilkes

NORTH CENTRAL	
Alamance	Orange
Caswell	Person
Chatham	Randolph
Davidson	Rockingham
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Durham	Surry
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Granville	Yadkin
Guilford	



WEST	
Avery	Madison
Buncombe	McDowell
Cherokee	Mitchell
Clay	Polk
Graham	Rutherford
Haywood	Swain
Henderson	Transylvania
Jackson	Yancey
Macon	



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Brunswick	New Hanover
Columbus	Onslow
Cumberland	Pender
Duplin	Richmond
Harnett	Robeson
Hoke	Sampson
Lee	Scotland
Montgomery	

NORTHEAST	
Beaufort	Jones
Bertie	Lenoir
Camden	Martin
Carteret	Nash
Chowan	Northampton
Craven	Pamlico
Currituck	Pasquotank
Dare	Perquimans
Edgecombe	Pitt
Franklin	Tyrrell
Gates	Vance
Greene	Warren
Halifax	Washington
Hertford	Wayne
Hyde	Wilson
Johnston	

JANUARY 15 – 5:00 p.m.
WNC Livestock Exchange
Canton, NC

JANUARY 20 – 4:00 p.m.
Southeastern Ag Center
Lumberton, NC

JANUARY 23 – 12:00 noon
East Carolina Livestock Arena
Rocky Mount, NC

New NCCA Members for 2026

During the Membership Committee meetin at the 2007 N.C. Cattle Conference, members decided to list the name and county of residence of **NEW** members of NCCA in *The Carolina Cattle Connection*. A new member is someone who has never been a member or has rejoined after a brief break in their membership. Below is a list of NCCA’s new members:

Out-of-State

Remy Nash – Kent & Blue Seal Feeds - Maryland

Buncombe County

Jacob Collins

Chatham County

Taylor Caldwell – Branch Hill
John Wesley Kidd

Currituck County

Marcus Robbins – WG Ranch

Forsyth County

Leo O. Whicker, Jr

Franklin County

Thomas L. Sifers, DVM, Med – Sifers’ Ranch Clinic

Granville County

John F. Brewer – Mile Away Farm

Greene County

Hunter C. Dixon – Dixon Farms

Haywood County

Chanie Brown
Patrick Brown – Brown Farms
Lilly Ciccotto
Brielle Collins
Riley Dickey
Mary Duckett
Dianna Hernandez Soria
Haven Jones
Ivy Jones
Boone Messer
Madyson Messer
Canyon Ramsey
Maggie Ray
Eli Simpson

Henderson County

Shia Barrett
Jackson Boughter
Micah Braznell
Peyton Ducker
Cooper Holden
Emma McGaha
Christian Miller – Triple Creek Livestock & Hay
Preston Odom
Greyson Payne
Davis Sitton

Iredell County

Dennis Phillips, II – Phillips Farm

Johnston County

Andrew Cain – C4 Cattle Company
Scott Cain – C&S Cattle Company

Lincoln County

Dale Shronce



**Are You A
Member Or
Know Someone
Who Should Be!
Join Now!**

North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
County _____ Phone No. _____
Email Address _____
Recruited by: _____

Please check type of membership you want:
☐ NCCA (1 year) - \$25.00 ☐ NCCA (5 years) - \$100.00
☐ NCCA (Lifetime) - \$500.00 ☐ NCCA Student Membership - \$10.00

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Macon County

Larry Penland – Penland's Hereford Farm

Moore County

Noah Richardson – T-Bone and Drumstick Ranch

Polk County

Janie Kay – KK Cattle Inc.

Kim Kay – KK Cattle Inc.

Randolph County

Tamia Bunch

Alexander Castillo-Medina

Denali Corona

Madelyn Craven

Reese Davis

Janiya Tarquintis Lynn Elliott

Samuel Greeson

Kacie Hazelwood

William Henderson

Jonathan McClain

Brandon Naquin

Anthony Pacheco

Arlet Puente Garza

Kaylee Ramirez Rodriguez

Zoey Sweeney

Emma Todd

Chloe Toomes

Nia Valko

Caleb Ward

Willow Elizabeth Ward

Richmond County

Paul Bryan Wilson

Robeson County

John F. Bass – J. Bass Farms

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New Members by County in 2025 (as of 12-31-25)

Alamance	3	Cumberland	10	Johnston	10	Randolph	49
Alexander	3	Currituck	1	Jones	1	Richmond	3
Alleghany	2	Dare	0	Lee	4	Robeson	25
Anson	3	Davidson	4	Lenoir	1	Rockingham	8
Ashe	0	Davie	5	Lincoln	3	Rowan	3
Avery	0	Duplin	12	McDowell	4	Rutherford	5
Beaufort	1	Durham	0	Macon	67	Sampson	5
Bertie	0	Edgecombe	4	Martin	2	Scotland	0
Bladen	1	Forsyth	6	Madison	3	Stanly	20
Brunswick	2	Franklin	13	Mecklenburg	0	Stokes	17
Buncombe	23	Gaston	1	Mitchell	0	Surry	8
Burke	24	Gates	0	Montgomery	0	Swain	0
Cabarrus	3	Graham	17	Moore	10	Transylvania	2
Caldwell	4	Granville	2	Nash	12	Tyrrell	0
Camden	0	Greene	3	New Hanover	0	Union	4
Carteret	0	Guilford	22	Northampton	0	Vance	1
Caswell	4	Halifax	1	Onslow	4	Wake	10
Catawba	19	Harnett	5	Orange	1	Warren	4
Chatham	6	Haywood	32	Pamlico	0	Washington	3
Cherokee	0	Henderson	14	Pasquotank	1	Watauga	2
Chowan	1	Hertford	0	Pender	0	Wayne	6
Clay	1	Hoke	1	Perquimans	4	Wilkes	18
Cleveland	7	Hyde	1	Person	1	Wilson	17
Columbus	3	Iredell	12	Pitt	9	Yadkin	1
Craven	2	Jackson	0	Polk	2	Yancey	2

Grand Total 630



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- 1 Knipex Wire Cutters
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- 4 Bags of 25 Speedrite HD end strainer insulators
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2025 MILE OF FENCE WINNER

Remy Wyatt Joins BioZyme Team. Remy Wyatt, Ph.D., of Olney, Tex., is the new Senior Manager of Formulation and Customer Tech Support for BioZyme Inc. In her role, Wyatt is responsible for demonstrating expertise in animal nutrition by formulating diets and products that minimize production deviations and maximize animal performance and health.

“Remy is a lifelong cattle producer with a passion for the beef industry. Furthermore, she has been involved with every segment of the industry. Her unique focus of study in vitamins and minerals in one of the best programs in the country makes her the ideal fit for this position,” said Chris Cassady, Ph.D., Director of Beef Technical Sales.

Meet Remy Wyatt – Wyatt earned her bachelor’s degree in animal science from West Texas A&M University and her master’s in meat science from Texas Tech University. She completed her Ph.D. in ruminant nutrition at Iowa State University, where she specialized in trace mineral metabolism and its effects on cattle health and performance. Born and raised in seedstock operations in Kentucky and Texas, she brings a depth of knowledge and real world experience to BioZyme. She most recently consulted for Great Plains Nutrition, working closely with backgrounders and stocker operators. She is the

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INCORPORATED

NEWS

past president of the North American Limousin Junior Association.

“I met Chris (Cassady) at a conference this fall and was very impressed by the way he described the workplace community. I can tell that BioZyme is a place where people enjoy their jobs, and people truly do care about animals and making products that help them live better lives,” Wyatt said. “I’ve experienced most arms of the industry, and I’m actually looking forward to settling down and working on formulations and helping our team with their questions.”

Wyatt and her husband, Ross, welcomed their son into their family this fall. They have bought some cattle, and she is excited to rebuild the family’s herd. Her hobbies include reading and cooking.

Celebrating Success, Preparing for More – Sure Champ Looks Ahead to 2026. “Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead.” This is a wonderful reminder to everyone who has celebrated the Sure Champ 40th birthday tour. As the tour comes to a close, we want to reflect on what an amazing year it has been and celebrate our products and the achievements of our exhibitors. However, as the quote above reminds us, part of celebrating 2025 means diligently preparing the Sure Champ family for 2026 and beyond.

Our Perspective – At BioZyme, we know that staying in the show livestock space for 40 years deserves a celebration. Show livestock supplements often come and go as quickly as the trends they fulfill, often meeting a need for a short time. We don’t take it lightly that show livestock exhibitors, their families, and feeders rely on Sure Champ products to help them #preptowin. Sure Champ strives to produce products that are of utmost importance to the show livestock industry. From daily vitamins and minerals to supporting gut health and immunity and providing joint support, as well as boosting appetite and hydration.

The Birthday Tour – To celebrate 40 years of the Sure Champ brand, the BioZyme team planned and orchestrated a six month long Birthday Tour. The tour officially kicked off in June during the BioZyme Dealer Retreat at the company’s headquarters in Saint Joseph, Missouri. Then, the tour traveled across the country, attending more than two dozen junior nationals, state fairs, and other youth livestock events. Its final stop is during the Arizona National at the year end.

During the tour, the BioZyme team engaged with youth, parents, advisors, and breeders about the products. Literally thousands of celebration t-shirts were distributed, as were other items, including Sure Champ branded buckets, sunglasses, party hats, and stickers.

Additionally, the Sure Champ Birthday Tour included both fun and education for all ages. We hosted birthday parties with cupcakes at several stops – both educational and fun.

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Finally, two long standing products — Sure Champ Cattle and Sure Champ Appetite Plus Gel — received a birthday makeover. For a limited time, they were made with birthday cake flavoring and in commemorative packaging for the milestone event.

Celebrating Our Customers – Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the Sure Champ Birthday Tour included celebrating our many customers and their successes. For instance, 80 percent of champion females at the five junior nationals we attended fed either Sure Champ or VitaFerm products. We are extremely proud of these individuals. Furthermore, at least 60 percent of the exhibitors at four junior nationals use at least one Sure Champ product.

“We use the [Sure Champ] Cattle Drench every day. It keeps our cattle balanced out, helps out with their gut, and really makes a difference. I have to give a big shout out to BioZyme for making such a great product,” said Tyler Loudon, Iowa, who exhibited several Maine-Anjou champions.

The grand champion Charolais bred-and-owned bull exhibitor Josi Schrader is also a big fan of Sure Champ products. “We start them on Liquid Boost leading up to the show. It helps them keep drinking and stay healthy and happy the entire time there,” said the young Kansan.

Looking Ahead – As we conclude our Birthday Tour, our team is already looking forward to great things for the Sure Champ brand in its

41st year. We know that champions don’t just happen. Finding your way to the backdrop takes long hours of barn time, dedication, and work at home. We want to be with you every step of the way — at home, on the road, and at the show. That’s why we offer comprehensive products for each of those steps of the showing process. We hope that your successes with Sure Champ products in 2025 encourage you to dig even further into the amazing show supplies we offer for exhibitors prepping to win.

About BioZyme Inc. With a continued commitment to excellence, the BioZyme Stockyards location earned the American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) and Feedstuffs 2024 Feed Facility of the Year honor. BioZyme Inc., founded in 1951, develops and manufactures natural, proprietary products focused on animal nutrition, health, and microbiology. With a continued commitment to research, BioZyme offers a complete line of feed additives and high density, highly available vitamin, mineral, trace mineral, and protein supplements for a variety of animals, including cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep, goats, horses, and dogs. BioZyme brands include AO-Biotics, VitaFerm, Gain Smart, Sure Champ, Vitalize, DuraFerm, and Backyard Boost. With headquarters in St. Joseph, Mo., the company reaches a global market of customers that stretches into countries across five continents. For more information about BioZyme, visit www.biozymeinc.com.



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N.C. BCIP 2025 Bull Test Summary

By **JOHNNY ROGERS**, *N.C. State University*

This year’s N.C. Beef Cattle Improvement Program (BCIP) Bull Test was marked by success and strong participation. Bulls arrived at the testing locations in early summer, with Waynesville receiving bulls in June and Butner in July. The structured 84 day testing period concluded in September at Waynesville and October at Butner, allowing for comprehensive evaluation of the animals.

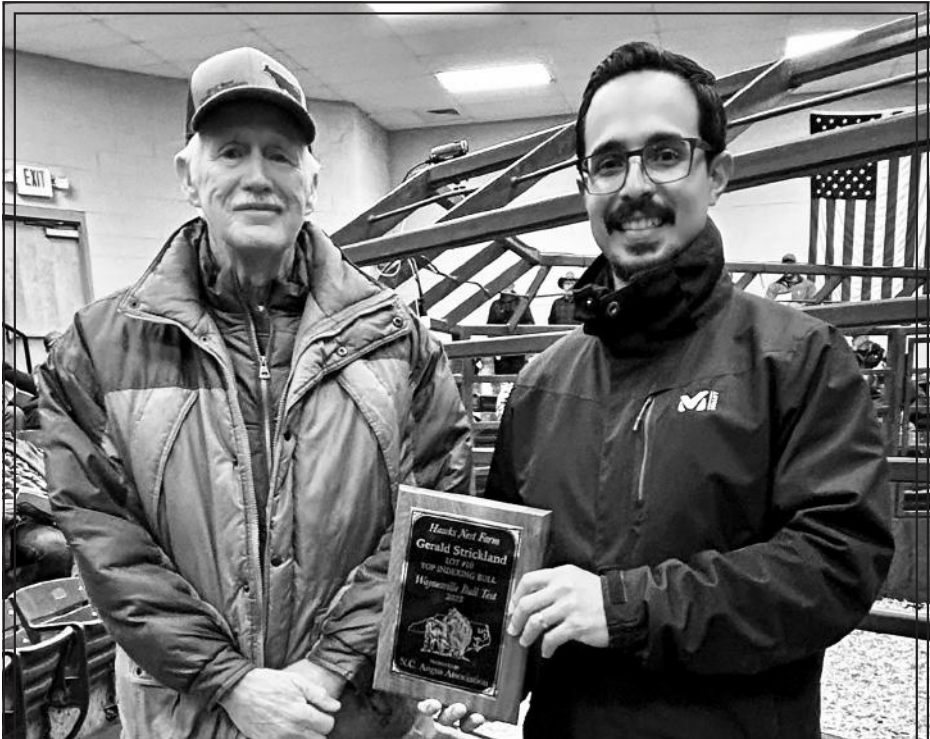
For the first time at Waynesville, the Vytelle Sense System was utilized. The system measures individual feed intake and allows for the calculation of residual feed intake (RFI). This is one method to determine feed efficiency in growing cattle, and improved efficiency can reduce feed cost and improve profitability. This technology is currently being installed at Butner and will be added to the 2026 bull test.



The high indexing SimAngus and high selling bull at Waynesville was consigned by Broadway Cattle.

The 33 bulls, averaging 869 pounds at the start of the test in July, were weighed at the Mountain Research Station. Consigned by eight seedstock operations — all based in North Carolina — the group included 21 Angus, 5 SimAngus, 2 Charolais, and 5 Polled Hereford. Bulls were developed on a corn silage based ration, evaluated for carcass merit using ultrasound, and underwent breeding soundness exams. The final weights, recorded on October 23, showed an average of 1,227 pounds across all breeds. The bulls achieved an average daily gain (ADG) of 4.2 pounds, surpassing expectations set by the ration formulation.

A selection index — combining adjusted yearling weight ratio and ADG ratio — determined sale order and identified high indexing bulls in each breed. The high indexing Angus was Lot 10, consigned by Hawk’s Nest Farm in Leicester. The high indexing



Gerald Strickland of Hawks Nest Farms, consigned of the Waynesville high indexing Angus bull.

SimAngus was Lot 32, bred by Broadway Cattle in Monroe, and the high indexing Charolais was Lot 40, raised by Roan Mountain Charolais in Bakersville. Sale eligibility required bulls to meet performance targets, demonstrate structural soundness, maintain good disposition, and pass a breeding soundness exam.



Stephen Wilson of Roan Mountain Charolais, consigned the Waynesville high indexing Charolais bull.

The 46th Annual Waynesville Bull Test Sale was held on December 6, offering 20 bulls. The top selling bull was Lot 32, consigned by Broadway Cattle and purchased by Dover Dillingham of Asheville. The bulls averaged \$6,036.84, with total sales amounting to \$114,700.



Adam English of English Farms, consigned the high indexing Angus bull at Butner.

There were 43 bulls, consigned by nine North Carolina seedstock operations, weighed on-test at the Butner Beef Cattle Field Lab in Bahama on July 15. Their average starting weight was 848 pounds. The test group included 42 Angus, 5 Santa Gertrudis, and 1 SimAngus bulls, all developed on a corn silage based ration. Carcass ultrasound measurements and breeding soundness exams were performed. The final test concluded on October 8, with an average off-test weight of



Tony Creech of Creech Farms, consigned the high indexing Santa Gertrudis bull at Butner.

1,193 pounds. Bulls demonstrated an impressive ADG of 3.9 pounds.

Index calculations identified Lot 33 as the high indexing Angus bull, consigned by English Farms in Sea Grove. The high indexing SimAngus was Lot 38, consigned by Winslow Genetics, and the high indexing Santa Gertrudis was bred by Creech Farms in Zebulon.



Ben Winslow of Winslow Genetics, consigned the Butner high indexing SimAngus bull.

The 42nd Annual Butner Bull Test Sale took place on December 13 at the Granville County Livestock Arena near Oxford. There were 26 bulls sold, averaging \$5,507.69 per bull. The highest selling bull was Lot 34, consigned by HI-LO Farms and purchased by John Hobbs of Hertford for \$7,750. The total sales for the Butner event reached \$143,200.

Thank you to the staff of the Mountain Research Station and Butner Beef Cattle Field Lab for their dedication and care of the bulls throughout the program. Appreciation is also given to the consignors and buyers for their participation in these events. The program looks forward to the arrival of next year's bull crop and encourages attendance at the 2026 N.C. BCIP Bull Test Sales. For information on consigning or purchasing performance tested bulls, please contact Johnny Rogers at jroger3@ncsu.edu.



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CASE IH

AGRICULTURE

NEWS

Case IH Awarded Three Agricultural Innovation Honors from ASABE. AE50 award winners represent the best innovations in engineering and technology across agriculture, food, and biological systems. The American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) recognized Case IH for the company's outstanding contributions in the agricultural, food, and biological industries with three awards. The awards — chosen by global engineering experts — highlight the continued focus of Case IH on innovative solutions to elevate farmer productivity around the world.

The following Case IH product innovations were recognized with AE50 awards:

- SenseApply Sense and Act Sprayer Automation
- Draft Tube Free Toolbar System for High Tech Planting
- Seedbed Sense Speed Control Tillage Automation

"We're not just creating products for the sake of innovation; we're designing solutions built to solve our customers' toughest challenges," said Kurt Coffey, Vice President Case IH North America. "Being honored with AE50 awards is a testament to our mission of empowering customers with state-of-the-art tools that not only transform their operations but also deliver meaningful results in efficiency and productivity."

Sense and Act Automation – SenseApply technology is an economical and adaptable automated Live Variable Rate Application (VRA) solution, built to maximize the output of every input. SenseApply, available for factory fit or as a kit, uses real-time sensing and advanced rate control to detect crop health and weeds, automatically adjusting application rates based on what the camera sees. The solution supports up to five Live VRA modes across liquid and granular applications and integrates seamlessly with existing precision farming tools. Its dual mode Selective Spray capability pairs green-on-brown spot spraying with a Base plus Boost mode to apply product only where needed.

Customers running this advanced spray technology report a one year payback on the technology investment.

Early Riser Planter Enhancements – The Draft Tube Free Toolbar System for the Case IH Early Riser 2160 24 row, 22 inch Large Front Fold Trailing planter delivers an industry first Large Front Fold planter with no draft tubes or telescoping hitch. This reduces toolbar weight, shortens transport length, streamlines harness and hose routing, and increases ease of accessibility.

The design provides access for Pro-Box placement underneath bulk fill seed tanks to empty remaining seed while also enabling seed tender, telehandler, or forklift access for greater tendering flexibility in transport or planting position. The unique toolbar hitch

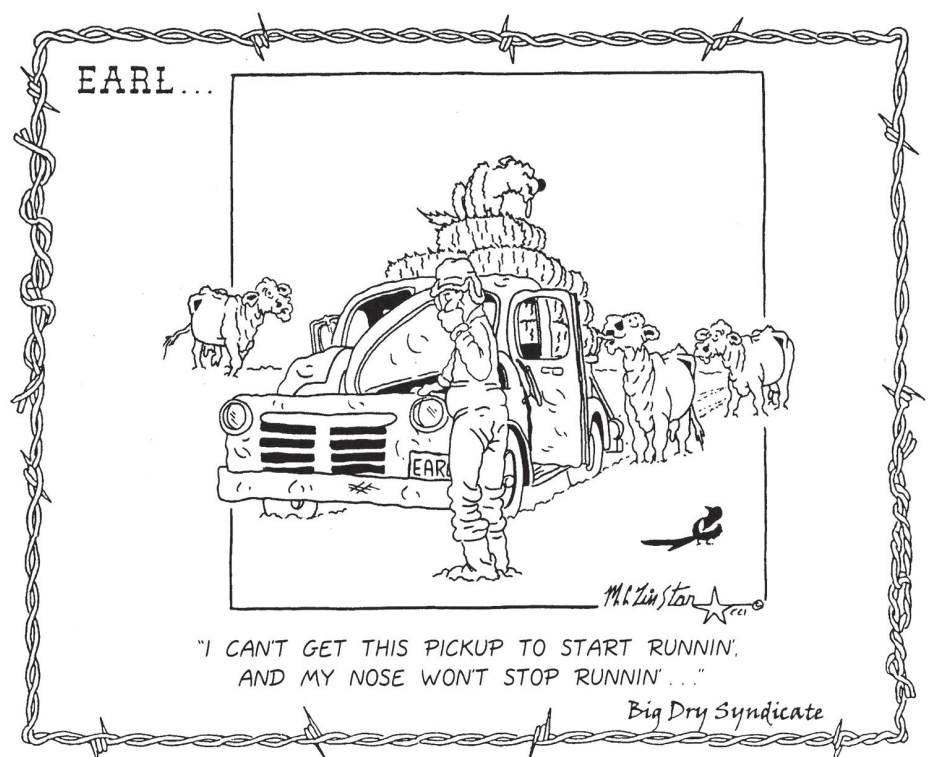
weldments, wing weldments, and wing fold cylinders are designed to handle 10 mph high speed planting and 650 lb automated hydraulic row unit downforce draft loads, reducing overall planter weight by 10 percent. This lighter footprint helps minimize soil compaction while increasing yield and profit potential.

Seedbed Innovation – Seedbed Sense Speed Control is a new advancement for the Case IH Tiger Mate255 field cultivator that monitors seedbed conditions in real time and adjusts tractor speed to maintain a consistent seedbed floor. Shank mounted sensors measure levelness and use Class 3 ISO control to automatically manage seed, giving operators immediate feedback on uniformity and allowing them to set speed targets up to 10 mph based on field conditions. Operators can also customize shank sensitivity and feedback thresholds to match soil variability as part of the Soil Command tillage automation portfolio.

By turning passive tillage into an intelligent, responsive process, Seedbed Sense Speed Control helps deliver a more uniform seedbed for improved planting consistency and emergence.

Along with the all-in-one FieldOps platform, these award winning solutions are among the latest innovations from Case IH, built to deliver enhanced productivity and connectivity for customer operations. Visit caseih.com to learn more.

About Case IH. Case IH is a global leader in agricultural equipment, committed to collaborating with its customers to develop the most powerful, productive, reliable equipment — designed to meet today's agricultural challenges. With headquarters in the U.S., Case IH has a network of dealers and distributors that operates in over 160 countries. Case IH provides agricultural equipment systems, flexible financial service offerings and parts and service support for professional farmers and commercial operators through a dedicated network of professional dealers and distributors. Productivity enhancing products include tractors; combines and harvesters; hay and forage equipment; tillage tools; planting and seeding systems; sprayers and applicators; and site specific farming tools.



IH Collectors Winter Worldwide Convention Comes to Clemmons, N.C.

Tractor and truck collecting has become an extensive hobby for many individuals, and Chapter 42 of the International Harvester Collectors (IHC) Association will welcome IH enthusiasts to Clemmons, N.C., in March for the 34th Annual IH Collectors Winter Worldwide Convention. The event is an opportunity to celebrate and preserve the diverse machines of the nearly 125-year-old brand. The IH brand has supported both small farms and large agricultural operations with tractors and implements as well as provided general consumers and industry with IH trucks and rugged Scout off road vehicles.

Collectors and fans from around the world are expected to attend the three day event from March 19-21 at the Village Inn Conference Center in Clemmons, North Carolina. There are three IHC collector chapters in North Carolina: Chapter 37, Chapter 43, and Chapter 42, which also hosted the event in 2020.

“International Harvester continues to be an important part of agriculture in North Carolina and is often considered a member of the ‘family’ for many farmers and enthusiasts,” said Chapter 42 President John Moon. “Many collectors still have the equipment and vehicles used by their parents and grandparents, which brings back precious memories.”

The “Culti-Vision” themed conference will include informative sessions, a trade show, scenic tours, and farm equipment tours. The Tarheel Farmer, Will Brinkley, a first generation North Carolina farmer who gained fame as a social media influencer, will provide entertainment, and Max Armstrong, producer and host of the daily

radio programs *Farm Progress America* and *Max Armstrong’s Midwest Digest*, will be the keynote speaker. Attendees may also tour nearby attractions such as the Billy Graham Library, Childress Vineyards and Race Shop, and the Andy Griffith Museum.

The trade show, with parts, manuals, collectibles, and wearables, is free and open to the public. Rogers Auctioneers will also conduct an IH auction. IH-related consignments are welcomed.

Tracto will be on display, which is a historical piece of IH merchandising built in the 1950s. The IH National Trust procured the early robot from a collector to preserve its history. It stands 8 ft tall. An IH company press release states, “The cheerful robot was built from 227 standard IH parts.” Also, Chapter 43 Appalachian will be displaying their Cut-A-Way educational Cub Farmall. A favorite of children, people can see the workings of the engine, pistons, pumps, transmission, bearings, and gears. It is a really neat and unique educational piece.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for the convention. Profits from the event will support the educational and philanthropic efforts of the chapter, including hurricane relief efforts in rural Western N.C., FFA tractor restoration, and educational scholarships.

As a group of enthusiasts, the goal of International Harvester Collectors of North Carolina, Chapter 42, is to promote, preserve, and educate others on agriculture, especially items made by International Harvester, with members collecting, restoring, and showing displays. cProceeds from our work support various charities, including but not limited to youth organizations such as FFA and 4-H. To learn more, please visit <https://ihcollectorsnc42.com/ihc-winter-convention-2026>.



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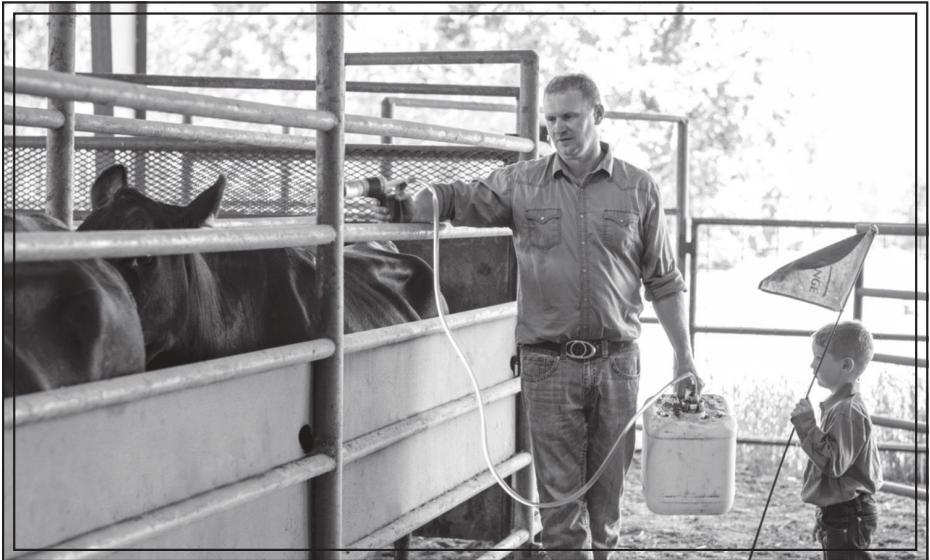
NEWS

Drive Cattle Productivity with Combination Deworming. Combination treatment provides different modes of action to enhance parasite control in cattle. Parasites are a hidden drain on cattle performance, quietly stealing productivity and profit from herds across the country.

For producers, the cost isn't just in lost weight gain but also in overall herd health and efficiency. That's why veterinarians and ranchers alike are turning to improved parasite control strategies, like combination treatment.

"Combination treatment is the use of two or more dewormers from different classes, each with a different mode of action, to get more effective control," said Matt Washburn, DVM, Boehringer Ingelheim.

The advantage? Each dewormer targets parasites in a different way. When used in combination, they can help reduce the number of parasites left behind. In fact, fecal egg counts in cattle herds have been shown to drop by nearly 99 percent when using dewormers from different classes.¹



Understand dewormer classes for smarter control – To get the most out of combination treatment, it helps to understand how each class of dewormer works.

Dewormers can be divided into three different classes based on their chemical structure and mechanism of action — macrocyclic lactones (endectocides), benzimidazoles (white dewormers), and imidazothiazoles. Each class controls a distinct spectrum of parasites, and for a different amount of time, as seen Figure 1.

"Some classes of dewormer do a better job controlling certain parasites than others," stated Dr. Washburn. "Endectocides provide strong coverage against both internal and external parasites, while white dewormers work well against only internal parasites."

There are also differences in how long the dewormers will persist in the animal.

"Most of our macrocyclic lactones have a persistence of about 28–30 days, with the exception of the extended release dewormer, with which we can get out to 150 days," shared Dr. Washburn. "On the other side of that, you've got the benzimidazoles, which are also known as purge dewormers, because they're going to clean the animal out, and in two days, they're gone."

Putting combination treatment into practice – Near Okemah, Okla., rancher Buck Rich has been using combination treatment for several years under the guidance of his veterinarian, Dr. Tyler Thomas, to protect his nearly 2,000 cow/calf pairs, as part of his deworming protocol at Leaning Oak Ranch.

"We'll normally use an injectable, and then we'll do an oral drench," said Rich. "It seems to work really well for us and cleans those cattle up a little quicker. That's our go to protocol now."

Depending on the time of the year, Rich may apply a pour-on dewormer to the calves instead of an injectable as part of his combination treatment protocol for additional coverage.

Strategic timing can also make combination treatment even more effective, especially when cattle are carrying their highest

CLASSES OF CATTLE DEWORMERS	
MACROCYCLIC LACTONES (ENDECTOCIDES)	
DRUG CLASS INCLUDES	CLASS KNOWN FOR
Ivermectin Eprinomectin Doramectin Moxidectin	Endectocides offer convenient injectable and pour-on formulations with internal and external parasite control. Read each product label for persistent efficacy claims.
BENZIMIDAZOLES (WHITE DEWORMERS)	
DRUG CLASS INCLUDES	CLASS KNOWN FOR
Oxfendazole Fenbendazole Albendazole	White dewormers deliver a rapid "purge effect" and only control internal parasites. Efficacy lasts no longer than two days. See efficacy claims listed on each label.
IMIDAZOTHIAZOLES	
DRUG CLASS INCLUDES	CLASS KNOWN FOR
Levamisole	Known for being quickly absorbed and distributed throughout the body but only controls internal parasites. Can be delivered orally, topically and by injection. See efficacy claims listed on each label.
Figure 1. The three classes of dewormers.	



parasite loads. “Using combination treatment, you get a better clean out up front, and you’ll see it on the cattle, particularly coming out of winter, when our highest parasite load occurs,” said Dr. Thomas. “They’ll shed that winter coat off, they get fat, and they look good.”

Recommending combination treatment to producers for the first time can sometimes be a tough conversation because of the additional cost of another dewormer.

“Going from a single class to combination therapy, producers are almost always on a macrocyclic lactone, and they’re adding a white dewormer to it,” noted Dr. Thomas. “I would just tell them it’s well worth it, it’s very economical, and it doesn’t take much more effort. If anybody tries combination treatment, they can see the results in the cattle.”

Rich is one of the producers Dr. Thomas has worked with who has seen benefits from implementing a combination treatment protocol.

“We’ve seen a drastic change,” said Rich. “The cattle look better. Their hair coat is better. I really think combination treatment is worth it for our operation.”

Combining parasite control programs – Healthy cattle that put on weight and stay in condition are reason enough for Rich to continue implementing combination treatment and other deworming practices advised by Dr. Thomas.

“We’re getting paid for pounds of beef at the end of the day,” related Rich. “Using a quality deworming program helps put on more pounds, which is always a benefit in our business.”

For long term success that helps drive performance and profitability, combination treatment should be part of a broader parasite control plan that includes:

- **Diagnostic testing** – Performing routine diagnostic tests, such

as fecal egg count reduction tests (FECRT) and coprocultures, can help assess the effectiveness of a deworming program and identify the parasites that may be surviving treatment.

- **Refugia** – Intentionally not deworming a small percentage of the herd is recognized as an important factor in delaying the onset of parasite resistance.²

- **Management** – Producers can increase overall herd immunity through routine vaccinations and enhanced nutrition. Limit overgrazing, maintain appropriate forage height, and rotate pastures, if possible.

When evaluating deworming practices, be sure to include a veterinarian in the process, similar to how Buck Rich and Dr. Tyler Thomas have collaborated to develop a parasite control plan for Leaning Oak Ranch.

To further investigate combination treatment and the other deworming strategies, tune into *Out Here with the Legends*, where Buck and Dr. Thomas discuss all things sustainable deworming.

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¹Beckett, J.L. Efficacy of pour-on dewormers differing in active ingredient and carrier on weight gain and fecal egg count in stocker beef cattle. 2001. Agricultural Research Institute, Cal Poly State University.

²FDA.gov. Antiparasitic Resistance in Cattle and Small Ruminants in the United States: How to Detect It and What to Do About It. Helpful Information for Veterinarians. Available at www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/ResourcesforYou/UCM347442.pdf. Accessed November 14, 2025.

About Boehringer Ingelheim. Boehringer Ingelheim provides innovation for preventing and treating diseases in animals. The company offers a wide range of vaccines, parasite control products, and medicines for pets, horses, and livestock to veterinarians, animal owners, farmers, and governments. As a leader in animal health, Boehringer Ingelheim values that the health of humans and animals is deeply connected and strives to make a difference for people, animals, and society. Learn more at www.bi-animalhealth.com.



FEDERATION OF
STATE BEEF COUNCILS UPDATE

State Beef Councils Bring “Girls Who Grill” Home. What started as a one time event to promote beef has blossomed into a popular activity extended by state beef councils across the country. Girls Who Grill was developed by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, to amplify beef’s summer grilling campaign with new audiences.

The Girls Who Grill event invites women with various skill sets and areas of influence to learn more about grilling beef while networking with other women. The concept has expanded into a state-national event, executable by state beef councils with national coordination.

“We wanted this event to bring lifestyle influencers together to learn about beef and encourage women to get out and grill,” said Erin Kreymborg, director of influencer communications at NCBA. “It turned out to be all that and so much more.”

From travel and fashion to parenting and technology, influencers are sharing their picks, tips, and tricks on social media. This audience often doesn’t have a connection with the cattle industry, and it is an important group to educate about beef so they can share with their followers.

The inaugural Girls Who Grill event was held in 2024 in Texas and brought together lifestyle, fashion, and travel influencers to learn about beef’s nutrition and versatility and experience firsthand

how to grill beef like a pro. BBQ pitmaster Erica Blaire Roby hosted the event at Houston Chef Marcia Smart’s Kitchenette Farm. The second event was hosted by cattle producer and recipe creator Kaylee Stevie in Ellensburg, Wash., in June 2025.

“Partnering with the Texas Beef Council and Washington State Beef Commission made these events possible,” Kreymborg said. “They helped us find the right event hosts to create an environment where attendees felt good about cooking beef.”

Attendees at the first two events posted content on social channels that had a reach of nearly 900,000 and generated more than 27,000 engagements. In addition to the positive social media exposure, Girls Who Grill created a new network of beef advocates who continue to share information about beef.

State beef councils quickly recognized the potential impact this event could have in their states. More than 20 state beef councils have expressed interest in hosting Girls Who Grill events in 2026, inviting regional influencers to experience their local beef community.

“This is a great example of the state-national partnership, and we are excited to help states coordinate events in the future,” Kreymborg concluded. “The best part is state beef councils can make Girls Who Grill their own to meet the needs of their guests and producers.”

2025 South Carolina Sale Barn Cattle Receipts												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Darlington	950	949	1,581	586	688	903	723	1,210	1,410	1,465	838	792
Laurens	966	779	603	614	619	726	499	1,141	800	1,079	635	458
Orangeburg	770	809	610	403	509	574	613	1,293	1,022	1,100	603	457
Saluda Livestock Market	2,218	2,297	2,089	1,773	2,353	2,829	2,348	4,060	3,254	2,100	2,094	2,172
Saluda Stockyards	760	507	604	466	465	796	379	1,282	946	1,403	370	439
Williamston	2,193	1,847	1,481	1,130	509	1,863	1,396	2,285	1,671	2,444	1,312	694

BEEF

Beef Promotion and Research Program

PRIVATE TREATY SALES CHECKOFF INVESTMENT FORM

Information is required by (7 CFR 1260.201). Failure to report can result in a fine.

Information is held confidential (7 CFR 1260.203).

Today's Date: _____

Seller's Name: _____

Buyer's Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Seller's Signature: _____

Buyer's Signature: _____

Both the seller & the buyer are responsible for making sure that the \$1.50 per head assessment is collected and remitted to the Beef Promotion & Research Board.

Total Number of Cattle Sold: _____ x \$1.50 Per Head = \$ _____

Date of Sale: _____

Person remitting assessment form:

Seller

☐

Buyer

☐

* State of Origin of Cattle: _____

* If cattle purchased came from another state within the last 30 days, indicate from which state the cattle were purchased.

Send Report and Remittance to:
SOUTH CAROLINA BEEF COUNCIL
P.O. Box 11280
Columbia, SC 29211

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NCBA President's Report

NCBA's Landmark Victories in 2025

By **BUCK WEHRBEIN**, *National Cattlemen's Beef Association*



It seems every year, we say we are living in “unprecedented times,” but this past year has been especially unique for us in the cattle business. As I think about how many issues our industry has faced in 2025, I am extremely grateful that we have representation through NCBA.

We began last year with a new presidential administration coming into office, already a busy time, coupled with an emerging animal health threat from the New World Screwworm moving up from South America. NCBA hit the ground running by educating all the new officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the White House so they could begin working to stop the screwworm's march north. While the threat still remains, USDA has designated a location to start building an NWS sterile fly facility, and the Food and Drug Administration has rolled out new products to treat NWS, both top priorities for NCBA. This year, we will continue encouraging USDA to expedite production of sterile flies so we can firmly push this pest away from our border.

This past year, NCBA secured passage of landmark tax legislation, which President Trump called the One Big Beautiful Bill. The bill was signed into law on July 4, 2025, after months of NCBA's hard work to get the bill through Congress. The One Big Beautiful Bill delivered record tax cuts to cattle producers, helping us keep more of our hard earned income. I am especially proud of the Death Tax reductions included in the bill, which will help farmers and ranchers transfer their land to the next generation and set them up for success.

Near the end of last year, NCBA delivered a new Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule that ends decades of overreach and uncertainty on cattle producers. Cattle producers have suffered under shifting rules that made it difficult for us to make management decisions on our land.

The new WOTUS rule limits federal authority over small, isolated water features like stock ponds, prairie potholes, or dry ditches. Once the Trump administration finalizes this WOTUS rule later this year, only water features that directly connect to a large lake, river, or ocean will be regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The rule also protects WOTUS exemptions for prior converted cropland, waste treatment systems, and groundwater,

making sure the federal government does not overreach into regulating these features. This is a tremendous victory for the cattle industry, and something NCBA has led the fight on for years.

As we enter 2026, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we are now in the U.S. semiquincentennial, or the 250th anniversary of our nation since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Despite all the issues we face, we can remember how blessed we are to live in this country with all the freedoms we enjoy. The American cattle industry has been feeding our nation for the last 250 years, and I am confident we will continue providing the highest quality protein for the next 250 years and beyond. NCBA has been there to support our livelihoods since 1898, and, as we reflect on America's history this year, I am also thinking about the value of having an advocate for our industry watching our backs every day.

We will have more policy updates to share at CattleCon. In addition to our grassroots policy process, CattleCon is a great way to get information on everything happening in Washington, D.C., network with vendors at the NCBA Trade Show, and learn about how NCBA is working for you. I hope to see you there!

Thank you for supporting NCBA and being part of the association that has fought for our rights for 128 years. We will continue proudly representing you for generations to come.



THE CAROLINA CATTLE CONNECTION

Producer/In State Advertising Rates & Sizes

For Commercial Rates, contact Livestock Advertising Network at 859-278-0899.

All rates listed are for BLACK & WHITE ads only!
An additional flat rate for color will be included, regardless of size.

1 Spot Color - \$100 • Full Color - \$300

FULL PAGE

10 W x 12¼ D

\$575 - Open Rate

\$530* - 6 Ads Annually

\$460* - 12 Ads Annually
**per month*

HALF PAGE

\$400 - Open Rate

\$375* - 6 Ads Annually

\$320* - 12 Ads Annually
**per month*

Half Page
Horizontal

10 W x 6⅞ D

Half
Page
Vertical

4⅞ W

x

12¼ D

¼ PAGE

\$225 - Open Rate

\$200* - 6 Ads Annually

\$180* - 12 Ads
Annually
**per month*

2¼
W

x

12¼
D

4⅞ W

x

6⅞ D

⅛ PAGE

\$200 - Open Rate

\$185* - 6 Ads Annually

\$160* - 12 Ads Annually
**per month*

4⅞ W
x
4⅞ D

2¼ W
x
6⅞ D

CLASSIFIED RATES

(Open Rate Examples)

Please contact for Contract Rates!

1¼ inch
x
1 column

\$40

2½ inches
x
1 column

\$80

1¼ inch
x
2 columns

\$80

2½ inches
x
2 columns

\$160

A Message from the CEO

Planning For Our Future

By COLIN WOODALL, *National Cattlemen's Beef Association*



By the time you read this, we will be hosting CattleCon in Nashville. While CattleCon is known for great entertainment and the NCBA Trade Show, it is also where NCBA conducts its business. This year, the NCBA Board of Directors will be considering a new strategic plan for the association. The plan the board will be reviewing is the result of more than a year and a half of work.

Strategic planning is the process by which the producer leadership identifies where they want to take the association and then develops a roadmap to get us there. It is meant to look at the “big picture” of the industry and NCBA’s role in serving it. Through this process, NCBA leadership has looked at industry issues, association resourcing, and the structure needed to achieve our vision of being “the trusted leader and definitive voice of the U.S. cattle and beef industry.”

Strategic planning can be tricky because it challenges us to look at the future knowing we don’t have all the facts and can’t envision every potential scenario. That is why a successful plan requires flexibility. The need for flexibility is captured in Mike Tyson’s quote about everybody having a plan until they get punched in the mouth. We have too many examples we can point to where this industry has been punched in the mouth. When done correctly, the strategic planning process breaks through all the noise and clutter and allows us to focus on the things that really matter and will have the biggest impact on our effectiveness. It instills confidence and empowers NCBA to make bold decisions. The strategic objectives this plan identifies will help continue the legacy built by this association since our founding in 1898.

Our process began during the Richard McDonald Leadership Institute held during the 2024 Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting. During that session, NCBA members, state partners, and stakeholders conducted a SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This is an easy but effective exercise to evaluate what we are getting right, where we are falling short, and what more we can do to serve our industry. The SWOT exercise gave us hundreds of data points that we compiled for NCBA’s Executive Committee to review.

In October of 2024, NCBA’s Executive Committee began the process of building the new strategic plan. They discussed the SWOT results and began to formulate the strategic objectives that serve as the basis of the plan. NCBA’s policy process influenced this plan through

a directive passed that instructed the strategic plan to prioritize, sustain, and enhance beginning and multi-generational family owned livestock production operations. This aims to ensure agricultural land stays in production, protecting the sustainability of the U.S. livestock industry and U.S. national food security by leading the effort to unify the livestock industry to secure the future of U.S. producers.

During their 2024 meeting, the Executive Committee made the decision to put a hold on the planning process until the Beef Industry Long Range Plan was completed. Just as a quick reminder, the Beef Industry Long Range Plan is a joint effort by NCBA and the Cattlemen’s Beef Board to identify the cattle and beef industry issues and challenges we must collectively address. It is specifically used in the formulation of the annual Authorization Requests, or ARs, which direct Checkoff funded work. The NCBA Strategic Plan, however, is specific to the work of NCBA, but the Executive Committee felt it was important to look at the final Beef Industry Long Range Plan to see how it could help build our plan. After the Beef Industry Long Range Plan was adopted during the 2025 Summer Business Meeting back in July, the NCBA officers appointed a task force to build us a draft strategic plan.

The task force was made up of NCBA officers, Executive Committee members, and a few NCBA staff. Throughout August, September, and early October, this task force talked to representatives from all segments of the cattle and beef supply chain to get their thoughts on the state of the industry and what NCBA should focus on moving forward. After their interviews, the task force spent two days in person drafting a plan to present to the Executive Committee. After reviewing the draft during their in-person fall meeting, the Executive Committee voted to approve it and send it to our state affiliate partners, State Beef Council partners, and breed partners for review.

It’s now been sent out to the board, who will have the chance to discuss it and ultimately vote on its adoption while we are at CattleCon in Nashville. Once that’s done, it will be up to us, as your staff, to execute the plan and report back on our progress. This is an exciting time that shows the thought and planning that our volunteer leaders put into protecting and growing NCBA. Our process has been inclusive, thorough, and well vetted. The 2026-2031 NCBA Strategic Plan will keep us focused and sharp as we build off our legacy while laying a solid foundation for a strong future.



The National Cattlemen's Beef Association is fighting for American Cattle Producer's rights in Washington, D.C. with policies created by cattlemen, for cattlemen. NCBA begins and ends with individual members.

As a grassroots driven organization, individual producers set the course for NCBA's advocacy work in Washington, D.C. by submitting policy resolutions on the local and state level. NCBA's 44 State Affiliate associations present their desired proposed policies at NCBA national committee meetings. From there, proposed resolutions are voted on. After proposed policies pass through national meetings, a ballot is sent to every NCBA member where they have the choice to vote for or against all proposed policies. Once approved, passed resolutions become official NCBA policy for the next 5 years.

NCBA MEMBER BENEFITS:

- **New Members** receive a FREE 1L Bottle of Cydectin Pour-On from Elanco
- **Members receive BIG discounts at:**
 - » AmeriWind Fans
 - » Big Bend Trailers
 - » Cabela's & Bass Pro Shops
 - » Caterpillar Equipment
 - » Cowboy Cauldron
 - » Dell Technologies
 - » Ferrellgas
 - » John Deere
 - » Montana Silversmiths
 - » New Holland
 - » Roper & Tin Haul Apparel
- **Communication**
 - » Monthly subscription to National Cattlemen Newspaper and Magazine
 - » Weekly Beef Bulletin email newsletter

NCBA POLICY WINS:

- Secured a Supreme Court victory to curb Waters of the United States (WOTUS) regulation.
- Sued the Environmental Protection Agency to block further WOTUS regulation.
- Led the call to halt beef imports from Brazil and Paraguay for animal health concerns.
- Secured reauthorization of animal health legislation to keep cattle medicines and treatments available to cattle producers.
- Defended farmers and ranchers from burdensome environmental regulations.



JOIN NCBA TODAY.

SCAN QR CODE
TO JOIN ONLINE



HONORING HERITAGE

Protecting What Matters



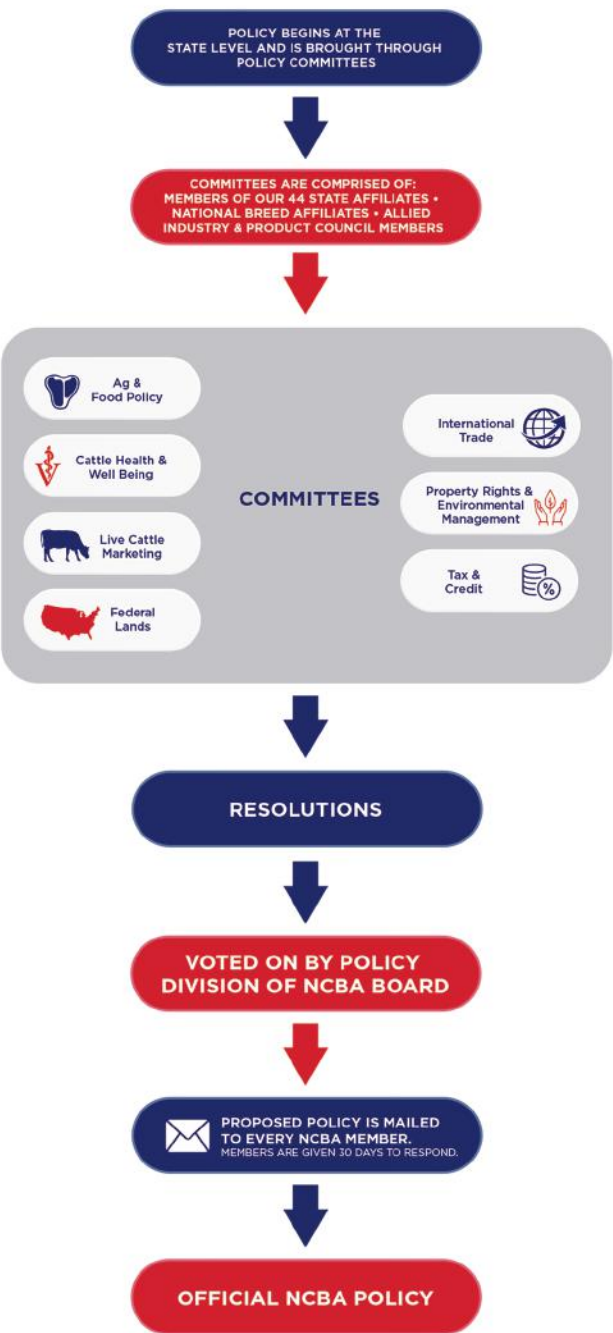
JOIN TODAY
📞 866.233.3872

Join NCBA and stand with fellow cattlemen and women, creating a powerful network that advances the interests of the cattle industry. Together, we strengthen our rural communities and our industry, preserving a heritage that is the backbone of America and your family's legacy.



National Cattlemen's
Beef Association

HOW NCBA DRAFTS POLICY



The National Cattlemen's Beef Association serves your interests through defending your operation and property from government overreach, protecting the legacy of your farm/ranch with tax relief, expanding trade opportunities that add value to your cattle, and protecting the beef industry from attacks by animal rights activists.

NCBA's policy process begins and ends with individual members. As a grassroots driven organization, individual producers set the course for NCBA's advocacy work in Washington, D.C. by submitting policy resolutions on the local and state levels. NCBA's state affiliate associations then present their proposed resolutions at our annual national meetings. From there, passed resolutions are collected on a ballot and mailed to every NCBA member where they have the choice to vote for or against all proposed policies. Once approved, passed resolutions then become official NCBA policy.

Our grassroots policy process ensures that cattle producers of all sizes and in every region are well represented in the halls of Congress, the White House, and federal agencies.

AS AN NCBA MEMBER, WE SERVE YOUR INTERESTS BY:

- Promoting the policy of cattlemen in our Nation's Capital.
- Defending your personal liberties and private property rights against government overreach.
- Protecting the legacy of your farm or ranch by advocating for tax relief.
- Adding value to your cattle by expanding trade opportunities.
- Delivering new and innovative education opportunities to help you improve the management of your farm and ranch.
- Protecting the beef community from attacks by animal rights activists.

JOIN TODAY!



NAME

BUSINESS/RANCH NAME

ADDRESS LINE 1

CITY/STATE/ZIP

CELL PHONE

OFFICE PHONE

EMAIL

RECRUITED BY

NCBA PRODUCER

COW-CALF PRODUCER

- HERD SIZE
- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| ☐ 1-100 | \$160 |
| ☐ 101-250 | \$320 |
| ☐ 251-500 | \$480 |
| ☐ 501-750 | \$693 |
| ☐ 751-1000 | \$960 |
| ☐ 1001-1250 | \$1,227 |
| ☐ 1251-1500 | \$1,493 |
| ☐ 1501-1750 | \$1,760 |
| ☐ 1751-2000 | \$2,027 |
| ☐ 2001+ | |

\$2,027 + \$0.4053/head =

STOCKER/FEEDER

☐ \$160 + \$0.4053/head =

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

NON-CATTLE OWNERS, NON-VOTING

- | | |
|--|-------|
| ☐ Individual | \$160 |
| ☐ Business | \$213 |
| ☐ Student (24 or younger) | \$53 |

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ American Express

Card #

EXP

CVC

Signature



Checks payable to National Cattlemen's Beef Association

NCBA Congratulates Justin Benavidez on USDA Chief Economist Appointment. National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Ethan Lane recently issued a statement on the appointment of Dr. Justin Benavidez to serve as Chief Economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):

"U.S. cattle producers depend on economic analysis from USDA to make business decisions every day on their operations. The USDA Chief Economist is crucial to ensuring that quality data reaches farmers and ranchers around the country. Dr. Benavidez has spent his career analyzing the U.S. agricultural economy from his time at Texas A&M University to being the Chief Economist for the House Agriculture Committee. He is highly qualified for this new role, and NCBA is excited to continue working with him to the benefit of America's cattle producers."

NCBA Accepting Applications for Summer 2026 Internships. NCBA has opened applications for summer 2026 semester internships in the association's Colorado headquarters and Washington, D.C. office. Internships are available for public policy and meetings and events.

"Since 1898, NCBA has been the trusted leader and definitive voice of the U.S. cattle and beef industry," said NCBA President-Elect and Virginia cattleman Gene Copenhaver. "NCBA interns directly support the critical work of this association and make sure that our farming and ranching legacy continues in the future. I strongly encourage you to apply and start your career with NCBA."

Public Policy Internship (Washington, D.C.) – NCBA, in



conjunction with the Public Lands Council, has an opportunity for students interested in government and public policy to serve as public policy interns. This internship supports NCBA's Government Affairs team and will allow students to learn more about lobbying, government relations, and advocacy on behalf of the cattle and sheep industries. This internship is full time and based in NCBA's Center for Public Policy in Washington, D.C.

Responsibilities:

- Participates in NCBA/PLC lobbying efforts
- Produces daily publications to members
- Reviews *Federal Register* notices and House & Senate Committee hearings
- Communicates with agency and Hill staff
- Must be a junior or senior undergraduate student or graduate student with a background or major in agriculture as well as a background in cattle and/or the beef industry.

Help us **build our herd.**

NCBA **defends all cattlemen and women**, but to be effective we need producers to **band together**. Join NCBA and encourage your friends, family and neighbors to **join our herd**. Help secure the **future of our industry** by recruiting your friends, family and neighbors to **join our fight**.



Scan QR code
and join us today!



To learn more, visit NCBA.org or
call us at 866-233-3872

- Must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and be available for the duration of the internship.

- Must have excellent research, writing, and communication skills.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- Must be a junior or senior undergraduate student or graduate student with a background or major in agriculture as well as a background in cattle and/or the beef industry.

- Must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and be available for the duration of the internship.

- Must have excellent research, writing, and communication skills.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

Meetings and Events Internship (Centennial, Colo.) – NCBA is hiring for a meetings and events intern to support the operations of large and small events, including NCBA's 2026 Summer Business Meeting. Interns will learn how to manage large scale conventions and tradeshow, in addition to the logistics behind smaller meetings and conferences. This internship is full time and based in NCBA's headquarters in Centennial, Colorado.

Essential Functions:

An employee in this position may be called upon to do any or all of the following essential functions. These examples do not include all of the functions which the employee may be expected to perform.

- Provides customer assistance to registrants via e-mail and telephone and completes data entry of registration forms into the registration system.

- Assists with monitoring hotel block pick ups
- Assists with reserved seating charts and VIP experiences
- Manages inventory registration supplies and places orders with vendors to ensure sufficient quantities for meetings.

- Use the Function Sheet System to enter details for events taking place during small and large meetings that will be included in the specs book sent to the hotels and convention center (date, time, room set up, catering, and audiovisual needs, etc.)

- Assists with marketing the convention, including convention website updates and email marketing campaigns.

- Acts as support staff during events, including the Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Tradeshow

- Additional duties as assigned

Minimum Qualifications:

- **Education** – Must be currently enrolled in a hospitality, tourism, or event management program; an agriculture, animal science, agriculture communications, or agricultural marketing program; or a comparable degree program with an interest in event production

- **Experience** – Must have intermediate knowledge of computer programs, including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Outlook, and the internet.

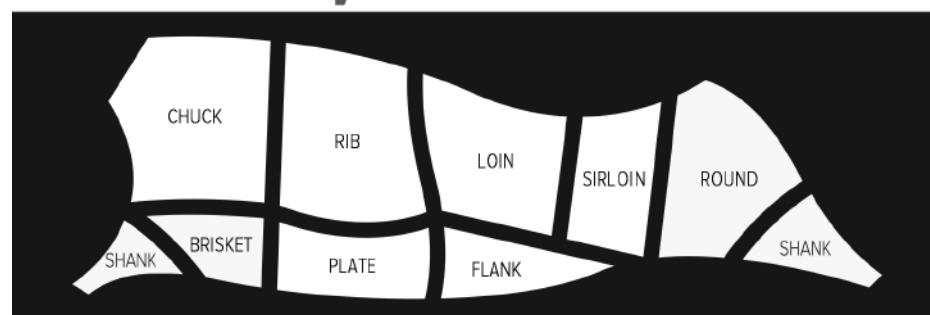
- **Skills** – Must be innovative with event coordination skills, pleasant, outgoing, and at ease meeting new people. Strong customer service skills are required. Must be organized and detail oriented. Must possess excellent communication skills (oral, written) and interpersonal skills. Proficiency with Microsoft Office software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook).

All internships run from May to August 2026 and are paid positions.

For more information and to apply, visit <https://jobs.keldair.com/ncba>.

About the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. NCBA has represented America's cattle producers since 1898, preserving the heritage and strength of the industry through education and public policy. As the largest association of cattle producers, NCBA works to create new markets and increase demand for beef. Efforts are made possible through membership contributions. To join, contact NCBA at 866-BEEF-USA or membership@beef.org.

Want to buy beef from a farmer?



Scan with your phone's camera to open a directory of North Carolina beef farmers.
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Want to Sell More Meat in Bulk?



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Visit the site and click
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Sign up

MEATSUITE is an online directory of farms selling meat in bulk. The site is promoted in counties across NC and receives thousands of page views per month!

For more information about Meat Suite, contact
Lee Menius at lamenius@ncsu.edu



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

BLM Sage Grouse Plans Utilize Latest Science and Stakeholder Input. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently released their updated greater sage grouse management plans, amending 77 separate land use plans across the West. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and Public Lands Council (PLC) originally submitted comments on these plans after each phase of revisions in 2015, 2019, and 2024, advising BLM leadership to leverage livestock grazing as a tool for strengthening sagebrush habitat and preventing wildfires that kill countless birds every year. These amended plans will accomplish these goals and will greatly increase conservation efforts.

"The revised sage grouse management plans recognize the role of cattle producers as the original conservationists and follow the best available science. Without ranchers actively managing millions of acres of western rangeland, there would be less habitat and forage, and grouse populations would be substantially smaller," said NCBA President Buck Wehrbein. "This is the blueprint for how management plans should be revised in the future, with a bottom-up approach focusing on input from land managers and rural communities that live alongside wildlife, including grouse. NCBA thanks the BLM and Trump administration for releasing these plans that greatly utilize stakeholder input."

Due to the diverse habitat for sage grouse that varies from state to state, a single conservation strategy would have been ineffective for this species, and the Biden administration was moving forward with a one-size-fits-all plan at the end of 2024 with little time for stakeholder input. The Trump administration tailored their revisions to meet the local needs to achieve the best results for all grouse populations. This includes their work gathering input from western Governors, federal grazing permittees and other local stakeholders to ensure they are hearing from the experts and boots on the ground that manage this species every day.

"The revised sage grouse management plans will support the work of ranchers across the West, as we work to create optimal habitat for sage grouse. These plans unleash the conservation prowess of federal lands ranchers and allow critical conservation work that supports grouse habitat to continue without burdensome government red tape," said PLC President and Colorado rancher Tim Canterbury. "Previous administrations have wanted to use these management plans to tie up millions of acres of land and let them further degrade. That would not have helped boost sage grouse numbers and it is flat out unscientific. Ranchers throughout the West are thankful for the Trump administration and BLM leadership for releasing these detailed plans to the benefit of sage grouse and ranchers alike."

Legislation to Delist the Mexican Wolf Advances, Offering Long Overdue Relief to Cattle Producers. The House Natural Resources Committee recently advanced the Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025 (H.R. 4255) with bipartisan support. The bill would remove federal ESA protections for the Mexican wolf, restoring commonsense wildlife management authority and providing much needed relief to cattle producers and rural communities across the Southwest.

NCBA and PLC strongly support H.R. 4255, which would reduce regulatory barriers that have prevented effective management to safeguard livestock and rural communities from this abundant apex predator.

"For decades, cattle producers have borne the cost of federal



policies that prioritize paperwork over practical wildlife management. The Mexican wolf population has grown well beyond recovery goals, yet producers are left without the tools needed to protect their livestock, their families, and their livelihoods," said Oregon rancher and NCBA Policy Division Chair Skye Krebs. "This isn't just a producer issue — it's a rural community issue. When predators cannot be responsibly managed, it puts people at risk and undermines the stewardship efforts of those who live and work on the land every day. Delisting the Mexican wolf would allow wildlife professionals to use proven, science based management tools to reduce conflict and restore balance."

Because of its ESA status, Mexican wolf management remains heavily restricted, even in areas where wolf populations have expanded significantly. Producers face ongoing livestock depredation, disrupted grazing operations, and delayed or denied responses to problem animals — often with little to no compensation for losses.

"Whether it is Mexican wolves, grey wolves, or grizzly bears, ranchers across the West face daily challenges with recovered species protected by the Endangered Species Act. This bill is a step toward alleviating the challenges southwestern producers face and would recognize the realities on the ground," said Colorado rancher and PLC President Tim Canterbury. "This legislation is grounded in established science and restores commonsense in the listing determination. The Mexican wolf has recovered; now is the time for Congress to finish the job and pass this legislation."

NCBA and PLC commend the House Natural Resources Committee for advancing this legislation and thank Rep. Paul Gosar for introducing a bill that recognizes conservation success while standing up for the men and women who help feed Americans.

About the Public Lands Council. PLC represents public lands ranchers in Washington, D.C. Since 1968, PLC has worked with Congress and the federal land management agencies to maintain a stable business environment in which livestock producers can conserve the West and feed the nation and world. Visit www.publiclandscouncil.org to learn more.

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FEBRUARY 19-21

SIMPSON EVENT CENTER

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MONROE, NC 28112

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AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION/SALE STARTING AT \$25**

Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Friday, Feb. 20, 2026

8 AM - 4:30 PM

Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026

8 AM - 12 PM



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 769-366-4821

The CEO's Corner



Whole Milk Win Points the Way Forward

By GREGG DOUD, *National Milk Producers Federation*

What a great way to end a year — and begin a new one. It's hard to overstate the importance of the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, which is now law, not only because it represents major progress in improving the nourishment of American schoolkids, but also because of what it says about the moment that dairy is experiencing and the great opportunities this industry has to build on that momentum.

Just as much as \$11 billion in new plant investment the industry is now experiencing, this legislation's passage tells the story of how dairy has reasserted itself as essential to the American diet, after that position was seemingly threatened merely a dozen years ago. When whole milk was restricted from school menus in 2012, it was billed as a health measure — in that telling, milk had too much saturated fat and too many calories to be acceptable in anything other than 1% or skim forms. The types of milk Americans drank most at the time — whole and 2% milkfat — were rendered suspect in the eyes of the federal government, a move with significant implications for federal programs and the next generation of milk drinkers.

The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, an effort led in the House by Representative G.T. Thompson since 2019, frankly, was considered “aspirational” for several years — a nice idea, but not one with much hope of becoming reality. Demonization of dairy was rampant in media, and plant based beverages were the next big thing, with sales and market share rising. It would have been easy at that time to have despaired for the industry, which also was going through a period of low prices and intensified consolidation.

But dairy farmers had a product they believed in. And in retrospect, from “almonds don't lactate” statements at FDA to falling sales in some plant based beverage categories, cracks were showing in the “Death of Dairy” armor.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the inflection point, as consumers increasingly sought tried-and-true nutrition options and became better educated about dairy's value — as a result, they began buying noticeably more of it. Cottage cheese became a Gen Z craze that spread. Whey protein became the go-to energy supplement. Even as schools restricted options, the percentage of milk bought at retail that was whole or 2% increased. Plant based beverage sales peaked in 2021 and have been declining since. Fluid milk sales reversed decades of decline, increasing in 2023.

Just as importantly, science began to more convincingly support what we knew all along — dairy fats don't deserve demonization and, in fact, have nutritional values we didn't fully understand earlier. As fat concerns were shown to be overblown, it wasn't just parents who endorsed dairy — it was leading nutritionists. And with marketplace and scientific consensus in alignment, Congress began to notice. Whole milk legislation moved from dream to no-brainer; in 2023 it became an overwhelmingly bipartisan reality in the House of Representatives, which easily passed G.T. Thompson's bill. It would have passed the Senate too, were it not for concerns that Congress was outrunning the dietary guidelines, which were still looking backward at the science. We went to work on overcoming that concern, both in congressional advocacy and in reinforcing the newer finding on whole milk benefits.

And here we are today.

A successful effort such as this doesn't come without a lot of work from a lot of people. Without consumer demand, political popularity doesn't happen. Without scientists, the reassurance of skeptics that whole milk really should be back in schools doesn't happen. Without the leadership in Congress, beginning with G.T. Thompson and co-sponsor Representative Kim Schrier, as well as Senate sponsors Senators Roger Marshall and Peter Welch, the bill doesn't get the congressional attention needed to move forward. And without the united strength of dairy advocates, including company, state level, and association lobbyists, this issue doesn't get in front of enough lawmaker desks to break through.

But I would like to single out one person for special recognition as this critical legislation is poised for passage. Paul Bleiberg, our Executive Vice President for Government Relations, fought for this legislation every step of the way. From his early conversations with Thompson staff to his efforts to keep the legislation on the agenda, Paul has known how to harness public sentiment for effective advocacy and show leadership across the entire policy community to make the legislation get over the finish line. Paul deserves special recognition for efforts that will meaningfully improve the nutrition of children and the benefits that dairy farmers can provide. That's a unique accomplishment, and Paul deserves all recognition he may receive.

Working for dairy is what we do. But it's not just that. We work for dairy so that dairy can work for everyone. Restoring whole milk in schools helps dairy farmers better nourish a nation. That's no small thing. It takes years.

Yes, there are frustrations — with the government, with prices, with all the challenges and inadequacies of living and working in challenging times, every day. But let's not pass up the moment to celebrate, recognize, and appreciate. Thank you to Paul, to the dairy community, to congressional leaders, and to consumers. We're making a better world, and that doesn't happen without you. Happy New Year.

All that is a tribute to the fact that, even with all the diet diversification since then, dairy remains a bedrock of American diets, accessible to all, affordable, and trusted. It's also a tribute to the industry's vision and how long term producer investment in the dairy checkoff has encouraged innovation in new research, technologies, and products.

Overseas sales remain a bright spot for the industry as well. That may seem surprising, given all the headlines of volatility in global trade as the U.S. tries to reset global commerce. But it's true: In 2025 through May, the value of U.S. dairy exports was \$3.873 billion, 13 percent higher than the same period last year, when they were \$3.422 billion.

That's a powerful testament to the resilience of U.S. dairy producers and exporters who work around the clock, managing and building relationships that are being heavily tested this year. While overall year-to-date sales volumes are slightly down, and Chinese retaliatory tariffs have heavily weighed down sales to that market, higher value products like high protein whey products have grown 8

percent by volume and 30 percent by value year-to-date. Similarly, U.S. cheese exports are up 7 percent by volume and 18 percent by value when compared to 2024 exports through May.

Recent progress in new trade deals with trade partners such as Indonesia also brings encouragement that eventually trade waters will calm, with new opportunities possible for U.S. dairy producers as the turbulence ebbs. Thank you, U.S. Dairy Export Council; thank you, NMPF member cooperatives; thank you, NEXT Program; and most of all, thank you, dairy farmers, for keeping this momentum going.

All this, of course, isn't meant to give short shrift to the significant challenges ahead. At NMPF we are well aware of the workforce challenges facing dairy farms as a nationwide crackdown on illegal immigration disrupts agricultural workforces. Current trade success so far doesn't mean policy upheaval can't damage or reverse progress, nor that export momentum will stay the same if new trade policies don't improve global access opportunities. And consumer confidence faces misinformation threats that only become more sophisticated.

But heading into August, when Congress goes back home and policymaking hits a temporary pause, we at NMPF couldn't be prouder to represent a growing, thriving industry — not one that's free from challenges, but one that meets the challenges at hand. Dairy's momentum becomes our momentum. That momentum is significant. It augurs well for the months and years to come.

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NEWS

U.S. Secures Continued Tariff Free Access to Colombian Market. The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) welcomed the Colombian government's decision to dismiss a Subsidies and Countervailing Measures investigation on milk powder imports from the United States due to lack of merit. The organizations expressed deep appreciation to the U.S. government for its collaboration with NMPF, USDEC and their members in successfully rebutting Colombia's allegations.

NMPF and USDEC coordinated a multi-faceted response to the case, which was launched in 2024 and alleged, without factual basis, that U.S. milk powders were unfairly subsidized and harmed Colombian dairy producers. Working closely with U.S. government officials, member companies and cooperatives, and Colombian industry partners, NMPF and USDEC demonstrated that the Colombian government's methodology was flawed, that assumed benefits to the U.S. dairy industry were miscalculated, and that no evidence of harm to Colombia's domestic dairy sector could be substantiated.

"The U.S. dairy industry secured hard won access to the Colombian market more than a decade ago, and as of this year tariffs have now fully phased out," said Gregg Doud, president and CEO of NMPF. "Attempts to restrict U.S. access through bogus claims and misused trade tools set a dangerous precedent not only for dairy exports but for all U.S. trade. We commend the U.S. government and our members for working with us to coordinate a strong, credible defense and to send a clear message that efforts to evade

trade agreement commitments will not be tolerated."

"U.S. dairy producers and processors expect our trading partners to honor their market access commitments," said Krysta Harden, president and CEO of USDEC. "USDEC thanks the U.S. government in Washington and Bogota, as well as our members, for their support in presenting overwhelming evidence to rebut Colombia's politically driven investigation. We welcome Colombia's decision to abandon the case and maintain zero tariff access for U.S. dairy exports in this important market."

Jaime Castaneda, executive vice president for policy development and strategy for NMPF and USDEC, testified on behalf of the U.S. dairy industry at an October 2024 hearing, clarifying how USDA programs work to refute the unfounded claims by Colombian producers. Colombia initially imposed preliminary countervailing duties of 4.86 percent on U.S. milk powder imports but chose not to extend them when the temporary measures expired in January 2025, following the sustained campaign coordinated by NMPF and USDEC.

The Colombian Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism formally terminated the investigation on December 30, 2025, determining that no additional tariffs were warranted.

U.S. dairy exports to Colombia exceeded \$128 million in 2024. Tariffs on U.S. dairy products were fully eliminated at the beginning of 2026 under the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which NMPF and USDEC worked with the U.S. government to secure in 2012.

Whole Milk in Schools Becoming Law, and Dairy Celebrates. Years of legislative effort ended with victory for schoolchildren, dairy farmers, and their cooperatives as Congress passed, and a presidential signature is imminent for the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, a landmark restoration of choice in school meals.

The legislation gives schools the option of serving whole and 2% milk varieties in federally funded programs, returning fuller fat varieties that had been left out of lunches since federal rules in 2012 pushed them out. Overwhelming congressional support, backed by newer nutrition science and pro-milk public sentiment, made legislation once considered aspirational a reality for dairy.

"It's hard to overstate the significance of congressional passage of the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, not only because it represents major progress in improving the nourishment of American schoolkids, but also because of what it says about how persistent, long term effort can still bring bipartisan success in Congress," Gregg Doud said in a statement.

"Since 2012, when federal nutrition rules took whole and



2% milk out of school meal programs, dairy farmers and their cooperatives have pointed out the flaws in that decision, which wasn't aligned with consumer choice. What was true then became even more true in years to come, as newer research consistently showed the value of milk at all fat levels, and consumers moved even further toward fuller fat varieties in their purchases.

"And now the day has arrived. We thank Chairman Glenn "G.T." Thompson of Pennsylvania and Representative Kim Schrier of Washington for their critical roles in championing the most recent version of this important legislation to the finish line and the many other congressional leaders who preceded them in their efforts to protect access to nutritious milk in schools. Dairy doesn't succeed without tireless advocates on Capitol Hill, and it's been an honor to work with these members and their staff in this effort.

NMPF led the way in congressional lobbying, with Executive Vice President Paul Bleiberg's efforts singled out in Senate and House floor speeches backing the measure. NMPF has approached the issue on multiple fronts. From working with senators and House members to meeting with USDA to filing regulatory comments, NMPF worked to successfully reinstate 1% flavored milk in school meal programs in

2022, setting the stage for further advances in whole milk.

The legislative lift complete, the next step will be USDA implementation, as dairy cooperatives prepare to supply schools with whole milk. NMPF will be monitoring developments closely and keeping members in the loop as whole and 2% milk returns to school meals. Meanwhile, the organization eagerly implements the announcement of new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which also is expected to support dairy at all fat levels.

NMPF Leads Charge to Prioritize Dairy in 2026 USMCA Review.

As preparations continue for the 2026 review of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), NMPF and the U.S. Dairy Export Council are advancing a coordinated strategy to ensure the agreement delivers on its promises to U.S. dairy producers.

NMPF Executive Vice President for Trade Policy and Global Affairs Shawna Morris testified before the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative at a December 3 hearing to highlight the trade pact's importance for U.S. dairy producers and emphasize the need for the

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Dairy Margin Coverage Expansion Announced at Farm Bureau Convention

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced expanded enrollment for 2026 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program at the 107th American Farm Bureau Federation Convention.

"President Trump is making historic investments in the farm safety net, and the announcement is one more action that supports our dairy producers by managing risk and strengthening markets so they can continue to provide wholesome nutrition for Americans," said Secretary Rollins. "The Trump Administration will continue to stand with America's farmers as the farm economy recovers from years of neglect under the last administration. Our mission to Make America Healthy Again continues after the recent release of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025–2030 announcement, with the upcoming purchase of U.S. grown food that will reach those in need, all while benefitting American farmers facing unfair actions from foreign competitors."

OBBBA Improves DMC Coverage and Premium Fees – Secretary Rollins announced the enrollment period for the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program for the 2026 coverage year, an important safety net program that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences. As of January 12, dairy producers can enroll in DMC. The enrollment period ends February 26, 2026. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed by President Donald J. Trump on July 4, 2025, reauthorized DMC for calendar years 2026 through 2031 and provided substantial program improvements, including establishing new production history and increasing Tier 1 coverage.

The OBBBA increased DMC's Tier 1 coverage level from five million pounds to six million pounds. All dairy operations that elect to enroll in DMC for 2026 will establish a new production history. Existing dairy operations that started marketing milk on or before January 1, 2023, will use the higher of milk marketings for the years of 2021, 2022, or 2023. New dairy operations starting after January 1, 2023, will use their first year of monthly milk marketings, even for a partial year. Milk marketing statements or production evidence are required to establish a production history.

Dairy operations also have the option to lock in coverage levels for six years (2026–2031) with premium fees discounted by 25 percent.

DMC offers different levels of coverage, including an option that is free to producers, minus a \$100 administrative fee. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the online dairy decision tool.

For more information, visit <https://tinyurl.com/DairyMarginCoverage> or contact your local USDA Service Center.

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administration to address violations of USMCA dairy commitments. Morris detailed how Canada continues to manipulate dairy tariff rate quotas and offload surplus nonfat milk solids into global markets at artificially low prices. She also pointed to Mexico’s failure to implement USMCA protections for common cheese names like “feta.”

Congress reinforced the message the same day, as a bipartisan group of 74 House members sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer urging the administration to address unresolved dairy issues in the USMCA review. Developed with support from NMPF, USDEC, and dairy stakeholders, the letter calls out Canada’s unfair import restrictions and global dumping practices while pressing for full implementation of Mexico’s commitments on common cheese names.

NMPF and USDEC also took their case directly to Capitol Hill. NMPF Trade Policy Director Tony Rice participated in a pair of briefings for House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee staff on December 9 and 10 as part of the new U.S. Agriculture Coalition for USMCA. Rice emphasized the importance of targeted improvements to the agreement, noting that 44 percent of U.S. dairy exports by value went to Mexico and Canada last year.

The progress builds on sustained engagement by NMPF and USDEC, including joint written comments submitted on October 31, an August 5 appearance before the U.S. International Trade Commission, and multiple filings tied to the commission’s investigation into nonfat milk solids competitiveness that will inform the administration’s approach to addressing Canada’s offloading of dairy proteins.



Whole Milk is Back!

President Donald J. Trump recently signed the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act in the Oval Office alongside U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., USDA National Nutrition Advisor Dr. Ben Carson, dairy farmers, moms, and bipartisan members of Congress to restore access to whole milk in schools and strengthen support for American dairy producers.

This legislation advances the Trump Administration’s agenda and aligns with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030*, released last week, which reintroduced full fat dairy as part of a healthy dietary pattern.

“Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, whole milk is back — and it’s the right move for kids, for parents, and for America’s dairy farmers,” said Secretary Brooke Rollins. “This bipartisan solution to school meals alongside the newly released *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* reinforces what families already know — nutrient dense foods like whole milk are an important part of a healthy diet.”



Secretary Rollins was joined by dairy farmers Thomas French, Kevin Satterwhite, Jamie Pagel, William Thiele, and Tara Vander Dussen, and emphasized that restoring whole milk in schools supports both children’s nutrition and the producers who sustain rural jobs and communities. She also highlighted the Trump Administration’s broader work to rebuild the farm economy through fair trade, lower costs, reliable financing, and strong markets, all while working to make groceries more affordable for families. As a result, between January and December of last year, dairy products became more affordable, including butter — down 3.4 percent — and cheese — down about 2 percent.

The law reflects strong bipartisan leadership, including sponsors Senator Roger Marshall (R – Kansas), Senator Peter Welch (D – Vermont), Chairman of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee Representative G.T. Thompson (R – Pennsylvania) and Representative Kim Schrier (D – Washington), with support from Chairman of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Senator John Boozman (R – Arkansas).

USDA implementation begins immediately. Following the announcement, USDA issued program implementation guidance to school nutrition officials to implement the bill, and a proposed rulemaking will soon commence to ensure schools and nutrition programs can begin offering whole milk as quickly as possible.

USDA will now undergo a rewrite of Child Nutrition Programs to ensure school meals are aligned with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025–2030*.

All together, these efforts reflect NMPF's ongoing push to ensure the USMCA review strengthens the agreement, holds U.S. trading partners accountable, and delivers fair market access for American dairy producers.

NMPF Welcomes Forsyth as Vice President of Government and Regulatory Affairs. Trey Forsyth, a native of Iowa agriculture with wide ranging Washington experience, joins NMPF as its new vice president of government and regulatory affairs.

In this role, Forsyth will oversee the development and execution of comprehensive legislative and regulatory strategies to advance NMPF's goals for the dairy community at the national level.

Forsyth brings extensive experience in government affairs. In July 2025, he was named acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety. In this role, Forsyth led the USDA Office of Food Safety, which oversees FSIS.

Prior to joining USDA, Forsyth served as a professional staff member for the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry for Chairman John Boozman (R – Arkansas). In this role, he handled livestock, poultry, dairy, animal health, food safety, and tax portfolios. Additionally, Forsyth served as senior manager of federal and industry relations for Land O'Lakes, director of government affairs at the Torrey Advisory Group, and policy advisor to the chief agriculture negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Forsyth holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural business, public service, and administration from Iowa State University and grew up on his family's swine and row crop farm in northeast Iowa.

Signup Underway for Improved DMC to Assist Dairy Farmers Facing Low Prices. The National Milk Producers Federation is pleased that Dairy Margin Coverage Program signup is under way, with key improvements aiding farmers as prices have fallen and DMC assistance becomes essential for some farms in 2026.

"An improved DMC program couldn't come a moment too soon," Gregg Doud said. "We appreciate USDA's efforts to quickly update the DMC program, and we urge dairy farmers who will benefit from the program to sign up as part of their risk management plans."

The DMC changes were part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed last year that included multiple benefits for dairy, including making the Section 199A tax deduction and making more funds available for dairy farmers and their cooperatives to use for conservation programs.

DMC revisions published in the *Federal Register* include:

An opportunity to establish new production history based on the highest annual milk production level from any one of the 2021, 2022, or 2023 calendar years. Production history established between 2014–2025 will no longer be applicable for coverage.

USDA clarification on how new operations (i.e., those that began marketing milk after January 1, 2023) will be able to establish production history.

Eligibility for operations to enroll their first 6 million pounds of production at the Tier 1 level, up from 5 million pounds, with all additional production covered under Tier 2. Premium rate fees under Tiers 1 and 2 are unchanged.

An opportunity for operations to make a one time election of

coverage level and coverage percentage, "locking in" those elections for a six year period from January 2026–December 2031. Those who elect this option must participate in DMC at the same coverage levels for the six year period and will receive a 25 percent premium discount for doing so.

Signup for the revised DMC runs through February 26. NMPF will keep its members apprised of key developments, with staff available to answer questions as necessary.

About the National Milk Producers Federation. NMPF was organized in 1916 to provide a forum for dairy producers and the cooperatives they own to participate in public policy discussions. NMPF advocates policies to Congress, U.S. and foreign government agencies, industry organizations, the news media, and the public.

We use our unique resources to harness the ever changing climate in the politics and marketing of milk and dairy products from farm to table to promote the economic well being of dairy producers and their cooperatives through coordinated industry efforts.

NMPF addresses policies concerning milk pricing, domestic and international market development, agriculture credit and taxation, environmental issues, food safety and health, animal welfare, product standards and labeling, and research and biotechnology.

Our mission is to foster an economic and political climate in which dairy producers and the cooperatives they own can thrive and prosper. Achieving such success assures consumers of adequate supplies of wholesome and nutritious dairy products at affordable prices.

This helps improve the bottom line of the associate members who provide services to dairy producers and cooperatives that they represent. For more information, visit www.nmpf.org.



Protect U.S. Farmland and Federal Programs from Foreign Adversaries. As committed to under USDA's National Farm Security Action Plan, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins recently announced a number of coordinated actions to continue to emphasize American agricultural research and innovation by ensuring ideas stay in America or among our allies — not with hostile nations — and that we are putting American farmers and ranchers first in every USDA program, period.

These historic actions strengthen transparency around foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land and ensure federal programs and purchasing preferences do not support supply chains controlled by foreign adversaries. The actions include opening up an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) to allow the public an opportunity to comment as USDA moves to improve the regulation and strengthen the implementation of USDA's BioPreferred Program to ensure federal programs and purchasing preferences prioritize American producers and manufacturers and rid out foreign adversaries.

"Strengthening national security starts with knowing who owns our farmland and where federal dollars are flowing," said Secretary Rollins. "These actions close long standing gaps in oversight and enforcement by improving transparency around foreign land ownership and ensuring USDA programs support American farmers and manufacturers while prioritizing domestic supply chains — not foreign adversaries."

AFIDA Modernization – AFIDA requires foreign investors who acquire, transfer, or hold an interest in U.S. agricultural land to report such holdings and transactions to USDA. USDA's National Farm Security Action Plan calls for aggressive implementation of reforms to the AFIDA process, including improved verification and monitoring of collected AFIDA data.

USDA seeks input on potential regulatory or other changes that may improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its AFIDA reporting and filing requirements, which will result in improved tracking of foreign adversary agricultural land purchases to the public and will further enhance USDA's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Treasury, which memorializes cooperation on Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) cases involving the transfer of agricultural land.

Foreign adversary linked entities currently control at least 277,000 acres of agricultural land in the United States. Each acre represents a threat to our food supply chains, a vector for agroterrorism, and a potential platform for surveillance and sabotage of our military bases and critical infrastructure.

BioPreferred Program Updates – USDA will advance the Administration's efforts to end market distorting subsidies for unreliable, foreign controlled energy sources and strengthen domestic supply chains by updating the BioPreferred and Guaranteed Lending Programs, consistent with USDA's National Farm Security Action Plan, to protect the integrity of federal purchasing and ensure American producers come first.

The BioPreferred Program supports domestic manufacturing, increases the purchase and use of U.S. biobased products to spur economic development, create new jobs, and open new domestic markets for crops grown by American farmers and producers.



Moving forward and effective immediately, entities and products from foreign adversary countries are no longer eligible for the BioPreferred Program or USDA guaranteed lending programs. Current participants must comply with audits or risk removal.

The USDA BioPreferred Program is currently funded through September 30, 2026.

Taken together, these actions reiterate USDA's historic commitment to American agriculture as a key element of our nation's national security, addressing urgent threats from foreign adversaries and strengthening the resilience of our nation's food and agricultural systems.

Secretary Rollins Announces New Priorities for Research and Development in 2026. Secretary Rollins recently signed a Secretary's Memorandum that puts forth a focused effort to establish new priorities for future research and development activities funded by USDA to strengthen U.S. agriculture for farmers and consumers..

Since January of 2025, the Trump Administration has been working non-stop to strengthen the farm safety net, create new export opportunities for American commodities, lower the cost of critical agricultural inputs, and root out DEI from all USDA programs. However, strategic investments in agricultural research and development will help American farmers and ranchers increase profitability while continuing to provide consumers with the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food and fiber supply in the world for decades to come.

"When he created the People's Department and the land-grant university system in 1862, President Lincoln had a vision for American agriculture rooted in agricultural innovation and education. Since that time, research coming from USDA and our colleges of agriculture has successfully helped American farmers and ranchers address countless challenges," said Secretary Rollins. "The priorities we are announcing further reiterate President Trump's commitment to put farmers first and provide our agricultural researchers with a strategic roadmap to help keep our producers at the forefront of productivity."

New Research and Development Priorities – Moving forward, new research and development activities funded by USDA will be focused on projects that address one or more of the following

priorities that put farmers first:

1. *Increasing Profitability of Farmers and Ranchers* – While research to increase productivity has allowed American farmers and ranchers to provide the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food and fiber supply, the volatility in profitability of American agriculture leads to significant uncertainty for producers. Research and development that results in increased profitability – such as reducing inputs or increasing mechanization and automation – will benefit American farmers and ranchers.

2. *Expanding Markets and Creating New Uses of U.S.*

Agricultural Products – With many producers experiencing record yields this growing season, it is more important than ever to ensure USDA is expanding markets and creating new uses for these American grown commodities. Research and development that seeks to open new markets – such as generating science and data to resolve longstanding sanitary and phytosanitary trade barriers – or expand the utilization of these commodities in novel biobased products and

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Cattle Marketing Services, Inc. Provides Insight Into the Beef x Dairy Cattle Market

Almost everyone in the cattle business knows these two things – the feeder cattle market has demonstrated tremendous strength in reaching and sustaining record price levels during the past year, and beef x dairy feeder cattle have become an important source of inventory for feedyard operators, regardless of geography.

Cattle Marketing Services, Inc. (CMS Auction), based in Amarillo, Tex., has been a leading marketer of feeder cattle since 2001 and beef x dairy cattle since 2006. “We got started marketing native beef cattle and Holstein feeders in the early 2000s,” said Delbert Hollis, CMS President. “Then as beef x dairy cattle numbers increased, we got involved in selling those cattle too. Over the past 8–10 years, beef x dairy numbers have exploded. Today, they are important to our customers and to our business as well.”

CMS recently analyzed its 2025 sale results on beef x dairy feeder cattle sold via their internet based auction platform. The analysis provided interesting insight into many of the key drivers influencing this market. “We wanted to better understand the factors affecting beef x dairy feeder prices so we can advise our clients on how to create cattle buyers really want,” Hollis said. “Our clientele is always looking for ways to improve the cattle they are offering for sale.”

The analysis included detailed lot-by-lot information on 469 groups of beef x dairy feeders, representing 94,932 head.

- Average weight was 526 pounds – range 300–850 pounds
- 2/3 of the cattle sold were steers
- 73 percent were out of Holstein dams
- 27 percent were from Jersey and Hojo-bred females

Highlights:

• From January 2025 to January 2026, the beef x dairy calf market increased by \$176 per cwt., which equates to \$1,056 per head on a 600 pound feeder steer or heifer.

• The price slide for added weight was the largest in cattle industry history. Average sale price decreased \$60 for each additional 100 pounds of animal weight. This market feature is the

product of record high prices and must be carefully considered as animals are being grown prior to selling.

• Beef x dairy calves out of Holstein dams averaged \$26.83/cwt higher than those from non-Holstein dairy females. Even on lighter animals, such as those weighing 400 pounds, this “dam” difference often amounts to more than \$100 per head.

• Angus sired calves sold \$15.07/cwt higher than those by other commonly used beef breeds, irrespective of the dairy breed of dam.

• Sale group size proved to be only a minor factor affecting the final price received. An added 100 head increased the average sale price by only \$3/cwt. Most groups sold as single load lots, and this did not significantly reduce their appeal to buyers.

• Non-hormone treated cattle (NHTC) premiums fluctuated throughout the year but averaged \$8.76/cwt for 2025 overall.

• Marketing volumes varied throughout the year. The first quarter accounted for 24 percent of the 12 month supply of beef x dairy cattle sold. The second and third quarters brought the largest portions – 30 percent and 28 percent, respectively – while the fourth quarter was the smallest at 18 percent.

• The average 500 lb beef x dairy steer sold for \$425/cwt through CMS in 2025. A U.S. average native steer of the same weight brought \$420/cwt. This similarity in pricing speaks volumes about how buyers have accepted beef x dairy cross feeder calves. They are truly a mainstream source of cattle for many buyers and feeders.

“The analysis was helpful and provides a unique perspective on dairy crossbreds,” Hollis remarked. “We know buyers want detailed information on every group of cattle they bid on. Thus, we make every effort to provide complete descriptions on every lot. Sellers are understanding this more all the time. Promoting the attributes of their cattle, be it genetics or otherwise, really matters. Let’s face it, this business is difficult. Capital requirements are higher than ever, and margins are narrow a majority of the time. Knowing as much as possible about the feeder cattle they purchase is critical to buyers, and it also helps sellers get paid for what they produce.”

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bioenergy — including biofuels — will result in increased demand.

3. Protecting the Integrity of American Agriculture from Invasive Species – The resurgence of New World Screwworm in Mexico, continued westward expansion of the Spotted Lanternfly, persistence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in poultry flocks, and decimation of our domestic citrus industry due to citrus greening are just a few examples of how invasive pests and diseases threaten American agriculture and natural resources. Research and development focused on new and effective methods for preventing, detecting, controlling, and eradicating these threats is a top priority for USDA and the security of U.S. agriculture.

4. Promoting Soil Health to Regenerate Long Term Productivity of Land – American farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists, as no one stewards their land more than those whose entire livelihood, and that of their successive generations, depend on it. Research and development that promotes soil health practices, increases water use efficiency, and reduces inputs will ensure farms and ranches remain productive for generations to come.

5. Improving Human Health through Precision Nutrition and Food Quality – Substantial and increasingly robust evidence shows that a healthy diet can help people achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases throughout all stages of life. Rigorous research on precision nutrition is needed to better understand how healthy dietary patterns impact people at the individual level with the goal of more targeted nutritional recommendations to encourage healthy choices, healthy outcomes, and healthy families. Additionally, research and development on increasing the nutritional content and quality of foods will lead to increased demand for American agricultural products.

USDA Strengthens National Security and Protects Taxpayers by Standardizing Grant and Cooperative Agreement Requirements.

“Since Day One, the Trump Administration has been working to promote government efficiency, streamline unnecessary regulations, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in all USDA programs. We quickly realized the herculean task of updating over 100 sets of terms and conditions, some of which didn’t even have termination clauses, each time a new policy or priority was announced,” said Secretary Rollins. “The recent action not only reduces government bureaucracy and makes it easier for USDA customers to access our programs, but it also strengthens our ability to take swift action when recipients and cooperators — and even recipients of subawards and subcontracts — are not compliant with federal law and applicable executive orders.”

USDA administers an expansive grant and cooperative agreement portfolio, spanning 21 agencies and staff offices. In FY2025 alone, the Department distributed over \$145 billion through 287 programs, resulting in nearly 38,000 new awards to farmers, ranchers, foresters, families, rural communities, small businesses, universities, and various other entities. Currently, there are 50,979 active awards across the entire USDA enterprise, underscoring the critical need for consistent oversight and accountability.

Until now, every agency and staff office implementing these

programs utilized a different version of terms and conditions when entering into arrangements with recipients and cooperators, resulting in over 2,200 pages of terms and conditions across over 100 different documents. This patchwork approach to award management at USDA has created unchecked paperwork burdens and barriers for producers and small businesses seeking financial assistance from USDA and also made it difficult to swiftly implement new policies and priorities across all programs.

Under this new directive, all USDA grant, cooperative agreement, and mutual interest agreement programs will utilize the same terms and conditions, and award recipients and cooperators will only need to navigate 50 or less pages of requirements.

This action is an important step in the implementation of USDA’s National Farm Security Action Plan and Executive Order 14332 — Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking — as well as various other executive orders and secretary’s memorandums that have been signed this year to establish a return to American principles and align the Department’s focus towards its original objectives.

USDA Announces Dr. Justin Benavidez as Chief Economist. Secretary Rollins recently congratulated Dr. Seth Meyer for his years of service to our country and announced Dr. Justin Benavidez as the USDA Chief Economist.

“Seth Meyer has been a trusted and steady leader at USDA, providing rigorous, objective economic analysis that has helped guide USDA and America’s farmers and ranchers’ insights into complex commodity markets. I am grateful for his years of service and the lasting contributions he has made to American agriculture,” said Secretary Rollins. “As we thank Seth for his leadership, I am pleased to welcome Justin Benavidez to USDA as our new Chief Economist. Justin brings strong policy experience, deep roots in production agriculture, and a clear understanding of the economic realities facing farmers and ranchers. I look forward to working with him as we continue to put farmers first and ensure USDA’s work is guided by sound, data driven analysis.”

Retirement of Seth Meyer from USDA – Seth Meyer has served as USDA Chief Economist since 2021, providing rigorous economic analysis and objective market insight to support USDA leadership, policymakers, producers, and stakeholders across the agricultural economy. During his tenure, Dr. Meyer oversaw USDA’s economic forecasting and analysis, including leadership of the World Agricultural Outlook Board and the widely followed World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report.

Prior to and during his time at USDA, Dr. Meyer brought decades of experience in agricultural economics, global trade analysis, and policy evaluation. His leadership helped guide USDA through periods of market volatility, global supply chain disruption, and evolving policy priorities.

Appointment of Justin Benavidez to USDA – Justin Benavidez has been appointed to serve as USDA Chief Economist. Dr. Benavidez previously served as Chief Economist for the Majority Staff of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, where he provided economic

analysis on farm bill policy, commodity markets, and agricultural legislation. Before his service on Capitol Hill, Dr. Benavidez worked as an agricultural economist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, focusing on farm and ranch management, production economics, and policy analysis. He holds bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University.

As USDA Chief Economist, Dr. Benavidez will lead the Department's economic analysis and forecasting efforts, ensuring USDA's policies and programs continue to be informed by sound, data driven economic research that supports America's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

About the Office of the Chief Economist – The Office of the Chief Economist provides independent economic analysis to inform USDA decision making, including market outlooks, policy evaluation, and global agricultural assessments that support U.S. agriculture and food systems.

Kennedy, Rollins Unveil Historic Reset of U.S. Nutrition Policy, Put Real Food Back at Center of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Secretary Rollins recently released the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030*, marking the most significant reset of federal nutrition policy in decades. The new guidelines deliver a clear, common sense message to the American people — eat real food.

The U.S. faces a national health emergency. Nearly 90 percent of health care spending goes toward treating chronic disease, much of it linked to diet and lifestyle. More than 70 percent of American adults are overweight or obese, and nearly 1 in 3 adolescents has prediabetes. Diet driven chronic disease now disqualifies many young Americans from military service, threatening national readiness and limiting opportunity.

“These guidelines return us to the basics,” Secretary Kennedy said. “American households must prioritize whole, nutrient dense foods — protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and whole grains — and dramatically reduce highly

processed foods. This is how we ‘Make America Healthy Again.’”

“Thanks to the bold leadership of President Trump, this edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans will reset federal nutrition policy, putting our families and children first as we move towards a healthier nation,” Secretary Rollins said. “At long last, we are realigning our food system to support American farmers, ranchers, and companies that grow and produce real food. Farmers and ranchers are at the forefront of the solution, and that means more protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and whole grains on American dinner tables.”

Under President Trump's leadership, the administration is restoring scientific integrity, accountability, and common sense to federal health guidance. The 2025–2030 guidelines reestablish food — not pharmaceuticals — as the foundation of health and reclaim

USDA News continued on page 97

KEEP MOVING FORWARD



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Trending in Food & Media

RESTAURANTS FOCUSED ON CONSUMER CUTBACKS



More than 1,200 news mentions focused on McDonald's latest earnings report which discussed challenges from a K-shaped economy where lower-income customers pull back while higher incomes do better.^{1,2}



The K-shaped economy which has also been referred to a two-tier economy has been mentioned a key factor by many corporations dealing with a recent decrease in customers.³



Cava, Chipotle and Sweetgreen all said younger customers, are pinching pennies and choosing to forgo the \$15-\$20 warm meals referred to by some as slop bowls.⁴

BEEF DEMAND, DISHES AND COMFORT CLASSICS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Bloomberg and others reported on rising demand for beef among American consumers at a time when beef prices are reaching record highs.⁵



The New York Times spotlighted several beef dishes in October and November, including a hamburger soup and a list of 18 Ground Beef dishes.^{1,6}



A recent surge in interest around traditional and classic meals led to more than 1,500 news mentions about Salisbury Steak since September.¹

SURVEYS GIVE INSIGHTS INTO THE USE OF WEIGHT-LOSS DRUGS



News outlets posted survey results from the Kaiser Family Foundation that showed one in eight U.S. adults say they are currently taking a GLP-1 drug for weight loss or another condition.⁷



A new report from Cicana showed new patient prescriptions for GLP-1s rose 16% from September 2024 to September 2025. An increase of nearly three million prescriptions.⁸



The Circana report also showed GLP-1 users 'actively seeking' products higher in protein, fiber and healthy fats.⁸

ARMS #112525-05

1. National Cattlemen's Beef Association. *Traditional and social media listening dashboards*. Retrieved from Meltwater: www.meltwater.com
2. <https://fortune.com/2025/11/05/mcdonalds-cava-earnings-k-shaped-economy-low-income-consumers-not-dining-out/>
3. <https://www.reuters.com/commentary/breakingviews/k-shaped-economy-is-claiming-corporate-victims-2025-10-30/>
4. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/11/food/chipotle-sweetgreen-cava-earnings-problems-slop>
5. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2025-11-14/soaring-beef-prices-can-t-curb-america-s-appetite-for-red-meat>
6. <https://cooking.nytimes.com/article/ground-beef-recipes>
7. Kaiser Family Foundation GLP-1 Survey, Nov. 2025, <https://shorturl.at/Mw66F>
8. Meat + Poultry, Nov. 21, 2025, <https://shorturl.at/Em1XJ>



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the food pyramid as a tool for nourishment and education.

The guidelines emphasize simple, flexible guidance rooted in modern nutrition science:

- Prioritize protein at every meal
- Consume full fat dairy with no added sugars
- Eat vegetables and fruits throughout the day, focusing on whole forms
- Incorporate healthy fats from whole foods such as meats, seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds, olives, and avocados
- Focus on whole grains while sharply reducing refined carbohydrates
- Limit highly processed foods, added sugars, and artificial additives
- Eat the right amount for you, based on age, sex, size, and activity level
- Choose water and unsweetened beverages to support hydration
- Limit alcohol consumption for better overall health

The guidelines also provide tailored recommendations for infants and children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women, older adults, individuals with chronic disease, and vegetarians and vegans, ensuring nutritional adequacy across every stage of life.

USDA Names New Leadership of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. *Agency Remains Committed to Mission Delivery and Continuity of Service to U.S. Agriculture.* USDA recently announced important leadership changes within the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Dr. Michael Watson, APHIS Administrator, will retire at the end of January after decades of distinguished service, and Dr. Rosemary Sifford, Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Services and U.S. Chief Veterinary Officer, has recently retired from federal service after a similarly notable career. Beginning on February 1, Kelly Moore will serve as Acting Administrator, and effective immediately, Dr. Alan Huddleston will serve as the Acting U.S. Chief Veterinary Officer. Additionally, to ensure continuity during this transition, APHIS Veterinary Services Associate Deputy Administrator Dr. Adis Dijab will continue to provide operational oversight of veterinary services. APHIS operations continue uninterrupted, guided by science based policies, strong stakeholder engagement, and experienced acting leaders to ensure program continuity. APHIS remains steadfast in its mission to protect the health, welfare, and value of our nation's plants, animals, and natural resources — continuing to deliver solutions and essential services that safeguard U.S. agriculture and support stakeholders nationwide.

“Dr. Watson and Dr. Sifford are dedicated public servants, and we greatly appreciate their time at USDA, serving American farmers and ranchers, and protecting the national security of the United States. I am so grateful for their extended service to support the Trump Administration during such a critical time for American agriculture,” said Secretary Rollins. “The team at APHIS plays a critical role in protecting our food supply from foreign pests like the New World Screwworm, as well as fighting diseases like bird flu. I have the utmost confidence in Ms. Moore, Dr. Huddleston, and Dr. Dijab in continuing this critical mission and defending American agriculture.”

“Dr. Watson and Dr. Sifford exemplify the best of public service. Their leadership and commitment to collaboration strengthened APHIS and the nation's animal and plant health systems,” said Dudley Hoskins, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. “These are consequential changes at a pivotal moment for the agency, and I am confident that Ms. Moore, Dr. Huddleston, and Dr. Dijab will not only serve as steady hands for program continuity but will lead APHIS into a new era.”

Dr. Watson's notable career reflects his unwavering commitment to safeguarding U.S. agriculture, building strong partnerships with states and stakeholders, and mentoring future leaders. Beginning his USDA career in 1994 as a plant pathologist with the Agricultural Research Service, he later held key leadership roles across multiple APHIS programs. Dr. Watson consistently championed science based policy, ensuring APHIS decisions were grounded in rigorous data and research to protect U.S. agriculture and maintain public trust. His legacy is one of collaboration, integrity, and dedication to public service. Dr. Watson remained with APHIS through January 31 to facilitate a seamless handoff to the incoming Acting Administrator, ensuring continuity and stability during this leadership transition.

Ms. Moore is currently Acting Chief Operating Officer for USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area and Acting Deputy Administrator of Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services. She brings extensive operational leadership experience and results driven management, including a strong foundation of discipline from her prior service in the U.S. Marine Corps. Ms. Moore is highly adept at guiding organizations through periods of change and transition and driving efficiency, compliance, and innovation at scale — critical to APHIS's mission during this pivotal time.

Dr. Sifford began her USDA career in 1997 as a Saul T. Wilson Scholar and held numerous roles across APHIS. Under her leadership and guidance, APHIS advanced major animal health efforts, including combatting highly pathogenic avian influenza — with unprecedented detections in dairy cattle — and strengthening preparedness and response for New World Screwworm. Her direction ensured these efforts were grounded in science based policy, supported by field ready guidance, and delivered with transparent stakeholder engagement. A steadfast champion of practical, proven biosecurity, Dr. Sifford worked closely with states and industry to protect animal health nationwide.

Dr. Alan Huddleston will serve as Acting U.S. Chief Veterinary Officer. With deep expertise in epidemiology and program development, Dr. Huddleston will represent U.S. animal health priorities internationally and maintain strong engagement with states and industry.

USDA Announces New World Screwworm Grand Challenge. *Driving Innovation to Combat NWS and Prevent its Northward Spread.* Secretary Rollins recently announced the launch of the New World



BEEF CUTS

AND RECOMMENDED COOKING METHODS

CHUCK		RIB	LOIN	SIRLOIN	ROUND	INGREDIENT CUTS	
Arm Chuck Roast 	Cross Rib Chuck Roast 	Prime Rib Roast 	Porterhouse Steak 	Top Sirloin Steak LEAN	Top Round* LEAN	Kabobs* 	
Arm Chuck Steak 	Shoulder Roast LEAN	Ribeye Steak, Bone-In 	T-Bone Steak 	Top Sirloin Petite Roast LEAN	Top Round Steak* LEAN	Stew Meat 	
Blade Chuck Roast 	Shoulder Steak* LEAN	Back Ribs 	Strip Steak, Bone-In LEAN	Top Sirloin Filet LEAN	Bottom Round Roast LEAN	Strips 	
Blade Chuck Steak* 	Ranch Steak LEAN	Ribeye Roast, Boneless 	Strip Steak, Boneless LEAN	Coulotte Roast 	Bottom Round Steak* LEAN	Cubed Steak 	
7-Bone Chuck Roast 	Flat Iron Steak 	Ribeye Steak, Boneless 	Strip Petite Roast LEAN	Coulotte Steak LEAN	Bottom Round Rump Roast LEAN	Ground Beef and Ground Beef Patties 	
Chuck Center Roast 	Top Blade Steak 	Ribeye Cap Steak 	Strip Filet LEAN	Tri-Tip Roast LEAN	Eye of Round Roast LEAN	Shank Cross-Cut LEAN	
Denver Steak 	Shoulder Petite Tender LEAN	Ribeye Petite Roast LEAN	Tenderloin Roast LEAN	Tri-Tip Steak LEAN	Eye of Round Steak* LEAN	Tenderloin Tips 	
Chuck Eye Roast LEAN	Shoulder Petite Tender Medallions LEAN	Ribeye Filet LEAN	Tenderloin Steak (Filet Mignon) LEAN	Petite Sirloin Steak 	BRISKET		Inside Skirt* LEAN
Chuck Eye Steak 	Short Ribs, Bone-In 	KEY TO RECOMMENDED COOKING METHODS		Sirloin Bavette Steak 	Brisket Flat LEAN	PLATE & FLANK	
Country-Style Ribs 						Brisket Point 	Flank Steak* LEAN
Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers					These cuts meet the government guidelines for lean, based on cooked servings, visible fat trimmed.		Short Ribs, Bone-In*
© 2021 Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association ARMSF					A cut of cooked fresh meat is considered "lean" when it contains less than 10 grams of total fat, 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat and less than 95 mg of cholesterol per 100 grams (3 1/2 oz) and per RACC (Reference Amount Customarily Consumed), which is 85 grams (3 oz).		
				*Marinate before cooking for best results			

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Screwworm (NWS) Grand Challenge. This funding opportunity marks a pivotal step in USDA's comprehensive strategy to combat NWS and prevent its northward spread..

"This is a strategic investment in America's farmers and ranchers and is an important action to ensure the safety and future success of our food supply, which is essential to our national security," said Secretary Brooke Rollins. "These are the kinds of innovations that will help us stay ahead of this pest and protect our food supply and our economy, protecting the way of life of our ranchers and going towards rebuilding our cattle herd to lower consumer prices on grocery store shelves. We know we have tried-and-true tools and methods to defeat this pest, but we must constantly look for new and better methods and innovate our way to success. Together, through science, innovation, and collaboration, we can ensure we're utilizing the latest tools and technology to combat NWS in Mexico and Central America and keep it out of the United States."

As part of the Grand Challenge, USDA-APHIS will make up to \$100 million available to support innovative projects that enhance sterile NWS fly production, strengthen preparedness and response strategies, and safeguard U.S. agriculture, animal health, and trade.

Priority Areas for Funding – APHIS invites proposals that support one or more of the following objectives:

- Enhance sterile NWS fly production
- Develop novel NWS traps and lures
- Develop and increase understanding of NWS therapeutics/treatments (i.e., products that could treat, prevent, or control NWS) for animals
- Develop other tools to bolster preparedness or response to NWS

The notice of funding opportunity, including application instructions, eligibility, and program requirements, is available on the NWS Grand Challenge webpage at <https://tinyurl.com/NWSGrandChallenge>. Applicants can also find information at the ezFedGrants website at <https://tinyurl.com/ezFedGrants> or www.Grants.gov by searching USDA-APHIS-10025-OA000000-26-0001.

Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals that align with and support these priorities by the deadline on February 23 at 11:59 p.m. EST.

Entities interested in submitting a proposal should ensure they are registered with the U.S. Government System for Award Management (SAM). For more information about NWS, visit www.screwworm.gov.

USDA Launches Lender Lens Dashboard to Promote Data Transparency. *New Resource Makes It Easier for People to Access Data on Rural Development funded Projects in Rural Communities.* USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden recently unveiled the Lender Lens on the Rural Data Gateway. This dashboard will make Rural Development's entire commercial guaranteed loan portfolio available to the public, guaranteed borrowers, and commercial lending stakeholders.

Lender Lens will give communities a clear view into where federal investments are being made by introducing a series of intuitive data visualizations that allow users to monitor performance, spot trends, and proactively manage their Rural

Development loan guarantee portfolio. The dashboard showcases key metrics, including total loan volume, average loan size, loan distribution by sector, geographic spread, and delinquency rates, allowing an at-a-glance look at activity nationwide. Data is refreshed monthly and can easily be downloaded down to the individual loan, giving users timely, flexible access to the information they need.

"The Trump Administration knows that the American public values the importance of government data transparency," said Vaden. "The Lender Lens will highlight where USDA has expanded access to capital for businesses and rural communities that need it most and demonstrate how Rural Development funds are being used across rural America. It will help rural stakeholders see where investments are being made to expand or improve access to health care, save and create jobs, and provide safe drinking water in their communities."

The Rural Data Gateway was developed in 2023 to help USDA better target resources for the people who need them most in rural America. It has enabled USDA to be a stronger partner to rural residents, entrepreneurs, government officials, and other stakeholders. The Rural Data Gateway showcases Rural Development's investments that have helped rural Americans increase access to capital for their business, rehabilitate water and wastewater infrastructure, and construct essential public services.

The Rural Data Gateway includes investment dashboards that show how rural development has supported local and regional economies over the last decade through 80 different programs. The dashboards are easy-to-use tools that highlight critical rural development investments for people in rural America and help them access the resources they need. The data will help users analyze trends across different states, counties, and congressional districts.

Rural Data Gateway supports USDA's mission to expand public access to federal government data as required by the Open, Public, Electronic, and Necessary Government Data Act of 2018.

About USDA Rural Development – USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with loans, grants, and loan guarantee programs to promote rural prosperity. The commitment and resources we bring to rural communities help drive economic security and prosperity. Our programs expand access to high speed internet and electric and transportation infrastructure and support business growth, healthcare, education, housing, and other community essentials. Learn more online at www.rd.usda.gov.

USDA Launches New Online Portal for Reporting Foreign Owned Agricultural Land Transactions. USDA is launching a new online portal to streamline reporting of transactions involving U.S. agricultural land by foreign persons, which can include businesses and governments, under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA). The new online portal is part of a broader effort to strengthen enforcement and protect American farmland as USDA continues its implementation of the National Farm Security Action Plan.

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USDA News continued from the previous page

“President Trump is putting America first, and this includes increasing transparency and scrutiny of one of our most valuable national assets, American farmland. We are working to improve reporting of foreign owned land in the United States. This move to streamline the reporting portal will increase compliance and assist our efforts to effectively enforce accurate reporting of interests held by foreign adversaries in U.S. farmland,” said Secretary Rollins. “The online portal will allow us to obtain verifiable information about foreign interests in American agricultural land and protect the security of our farmers.”

The new online portal is available at afida.landmark.usda.gov. Users can access the portal with www.Login.gov, a sign-in service that provides secure online access to participate in certain government programs and reporting requirements.

The new digital portal will gather the same information found on the current form FSA-153, and those subject to filing may still file using the current FSA-153 hard copy form if desired. However, filers

should not duplicate filings by using both submission options.

About the National Farm Security Action Plan – One of the key tenets of USDA’s National Farm Security Action Plan is strengthening processes around disclosure of foreign persons who have an interest in U.S. farmland. This historic plan, announced in July 2025, calls for aggressive implementation of reforms to the AFIDA process, including improved verification and monitoring of collected AFIDA data. In addition to the new portal, USDA published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for AFIDA in December 2025.

About AFIDA – The new portal is part of USDA’s efforts to streamline its process for electronic submission and retention of AFIDA disclosures, as initially required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. USDA also shared its annual AFIDA report for 2024 with Congress, which is available online. The report lists foreign holdings of U.S. agricultural land as 46 million acres as of December 31, 2024, and includes a section on land held and acquired by China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea in recent years.

AFIDA became law in 1978, and its regulations were created to establish a nationwide system for the collection of information pertaining to foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land. The regulations require foreign investors who acquire, transfer,, or hold an interest in U.S. agricultural land to report such holdings and transactions to the Secretary of Agriculture.

The data obtained from AFIDA disclosures are used in the preparation of an annual report to Congress, which is published online.

The AFIDA regulations define the term “foreign person” and specifies the information that must be included in the report. AFIDA focuses on foreign persons who hold direct or indirect interest in the agricultural land, provided those foreign persons with an indirect interest have “significant interest or substantial control” in the direct interest holder.

About the U.S. Department of Agriculture. *USDA is made up of 29 agencies and offices with nearly 100,000 employees who serve the American people at more than 4,500 locations across the country and abroad. We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management.*

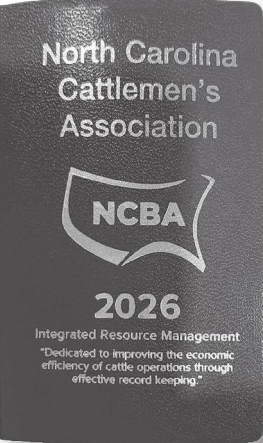
We have a vision to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our Nation’s natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

Our strategic goals serve as a roadmap for the Department to help ensure we achieve our mission and implement our vision.

When President Lincoln established the United States Department of Agriculture, he called it the “People’s Department.” At USDA we are working tirelessly to be a model department that serves all people of our great Nation. For more information, visit www.usda.gov.

IRM Red Books Are Here

We would like to thank
Performance Livestock & Feed Company and
Carolina Stockyards for again sponsoring this book.



The 2026 version is now available to help cattle producers effectively & efficiently record daily production efforts, which can help enhance profitability and reduce stress levels. In addition to Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) best practices and proper injection technique information, it has more than 100 pages to record calving activity, herd health, pasture use, cattle inventory, body condition, cattle treatment, A.I. breeding records, and more. It also contains a calendar and notes section.

Simply return the order form below, along with \$10.00 for each book to:
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Make Every Bite Count with Beef

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes key nutrients found in beef are essential to support growth and cognitive development during the early years – yet less than 10% of infants eat beef in the first twelve months of life.¹⁻³ The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage parents to choose nutrient-dense foods, like beef, to make the most of every bite for their infants and toddlers.⁴

Essential Nutrients in Every Beef Bite

PROTEIN

Essential for physical growth and development

ZINC

Essential for growth, cognitive development, appetite regulation, and immune function

VITAMIN B6

Vital for development of brain and nervous system

VITAMIN B12

Supports brain development and producing healthy red blood cells

CHOLINE

Essential for physical growth and development

HEME IRON

Essential for various metabolic processes for growth, neurologic development and immune function

Beyond its nutrient benefits, every bite of beef delivers new flavors and textures to support a growing infant's.^{1,4}



Oral and motor development



Discovery learning



Acceptance of new and healthy foods

Experts Recommend 1-2 Ounce/Day of Animal-Based Foods Such as Beef.^{1, 5, 6}

Preparation depends on the child's age and development stage.^{1,5}



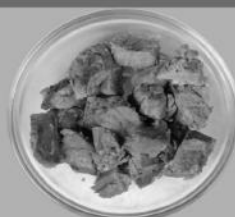
6-8 months

Pureed Cooked Beef



8-10 months

Tender, Moist Shredded Cooked Beef



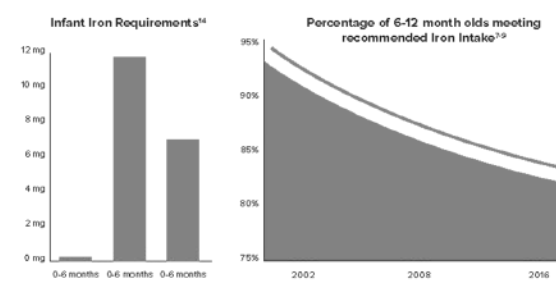
10-12 months

Tender, Moist Chopped Cooked Beef

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to consult a physician or health care provider with questions about starting solid foods

DID YOU KNOW?

Iron intake continues to drop - despite the critical role iron plays in brain development.⁷⁻¹¹ By 6 months of age, a baby's iron stores are depleting while their iron requirements are increasing substantially. Adding beef, a good source of iron, as a first food can help fill the gap.^{12, 13}



Beef. It's What's for Dinner. is proud to partner with MyPlate to help Americans achieve better health by making every bite count. Visit MyPlate.gov to learn more.

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Upcoming Events

ANGUS

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 7 — N.C. Angus Association Annual Meeting, Concord, N.C.
 Feb. 12 — UGA 33rd Edition Focus on Genomic Enhanced EPDs Bull Sale, Athens, Ga.
 Feb. 14 — Smith Creek Angus Farm Dispersal Sale, Oxford, N.C.
 Feb. 21 — 4th Annual Blue Ridge Brutes Bull & Commercial Female Sale, Mt. Airy, N.C.
 Feb. 21 — Locust Hill Cattle Company 5th Annual Bull & Female Sale, Pelham, N.C.
 Feb. 21 — Yon Family Farms Spring Bull & Female Sale, Ridge Spring, S.C.
 Feb. 28 — Saluda County Cattlemen's Association 34th Annual Replacement Heifer Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Mar. 7 — Gibbs Farms "Where Phenotype Meets Performance" Spring Sale, Ranburne, Ala.
 Mar. 14 — March Madness Replacement Female & Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.
 Mar. 20 — 53rd S.C. Angus Association Annual Meeting & Banquet, Clemson, S.C.
 Mar. 21 — 53rd Annual Carolina Angus Futurity, Clemson, S.C.
 Mar. 28 — G&E Virginia Premium Assured Heifer Sale, Gretna, Va.
 Apr. 11 — Knoll Crest Farm Spring Bull & Heifer Sale, Red House, Va.
 Apr. 25 — NCAA 42nd Annual Spring Fever Sale, Union Grove, N.C.
 Sep. 26 — Biltmore Fall Production Sale, Asheville, N.C.
 Oct. 17 — Fred Smith Company Ranch Extra Effort Sale, Clayton, N.C.
 Dec. 5 — 51st Annual Union County Performance Tested Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.

BRANGUS

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 21 — Yon Family Farms Spring Bull & Female Sale, Ridge Spring, S.C.
 Feb. 28 — Hunt's H+ Brangus Bull & Female Sale, Calhoun, Ga.

GELBIEH

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 21 — 4th Annual Blue Ridge Brutes Bull & Commercial Female Sale, Mt. Airy, N.C.
 Feb. 21 — Locust Hill Cattle Company 5th Annual Bull & Female Sale, Pelham, N.C.
 Feb. 28 — Saluda County Cattlemen's Association 34th Annual Replacement Heifer Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Dec. 5 — 51st Annual Union County Performance Tested Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.

HEREFORD

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 28 — Saluda County Cattlemen's Association 34th Annual Replacement Heifer Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Mar. 14 — March Madness Replacement Female & Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.
 Mar. 27 — N.C. Hereford Banquet & Annual Meeting, Statesville, N.C.
 Mar. 28 — N.C. Hereford Classic Sale, Union Grove, N.C.
 Apr. 11 — Knoll Crest Farm Spring Bull & Heifer Sale, Red House, Va.

RED ANGUS

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 21 — 4th Annual Blue Ridge Brutes Bull & Commercial Female Sale, Mt. Airy, N.C.
 Mar. 14 — March Madness Replacement Female & Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.

SANTA GERTRUDIS

Mar. 14 — March Madness Replacement Female & Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.
 May 9 — Santa Gertrudis Breeders of the Carolinas Sale, Zebulon, N.C.

SIMMENTAL

Feb. 7 — 50th Annual Clemson Bull Test Sale, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 21 — 4th Annual Blue Ridge Brutes Bull & Commercial Female Sale, Mt. Airy, N.C.
 Feb. 21 — Yon Family Farms Spring Bull & Female Sale, Ridge Spring, S.C.
 Feb. 28 — Saluda County Cattlemen's Association 34th Annual Replacement Heifer Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Mar. 7 — Gibbs Farms "Where Phenotype Meets Performance" Spring Sale, Ranburne, Ala.
 Mar. 14 — March Madness Replacement Female & Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.
 Oct. 17 — Fred Smith Company Ranch Extra Effort Sale, Clayton, N.C.
 Dec. 5 — 51st Annual Union County Performance Tested Bull Sale, Monroe, N.C.

WAGYU

Nov. 7 — Wilders Wagyu StayWILD'26 Production Sale, Turkey, N.C.

OTHER EVENTS

Feb. 3-4 — N.C. Food Innovation Lab Entrepreneurial Bootcamp, Kannapolis, N.C.
 Feb. 3-5 — NCBA's CattleCon 2026, Nashville, Tenn.
 Feb. 4-6 — 2026 Southern Farm Show, Raleigh, N.C.
 Feb. 6 — 2026 S.C. Cattlemen's Association Annual Meeting, Clemson, S.C.
 Feb. 7 — BQA Training, Rocky Mount, N.C.
 Feb. 10 — NCCA Western Piedmont Region Board of Directors Meeting & Extension Area Beef Conference, Statesville, N.C.
 Feb. 11 — Bermudagrass Hay Workshop, Aiken, S.C.
 Feb. 11 — NCCA North Central Piedmont Region Board of Directors Meeting & Extension Field Day, Butner, N.C.
 Feb. 18 — Cow Camp 103: Back to the Basics, Meeting 1, Louisburg, N.C.
 Feb. 19 — Hay Management Workshop — From Field to Feed, Anderson, S.C.
 Feb. 19 — 2026 N.C. Forage & Grasslands Council Winter Conference, Hickory, N.C.
 Feb. 19-21 — U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program Adoption Event, Monroe, N.C.
 Feb. 20-21 — 2026 NCCA Cattle Conference, Hickory, N.C.
 Feb. 24 — Tri-County Livestock Association Meeting, Trenton, N.C.
 Feb. 26 — Palmetto Hay Summit, Florence, S.C.
 Mar. 11 — Cow Camp 103: Back to the Basics, Meeting 2, Louisburg, N.C.
 Mar. 19-21 — 34th Annual IH Collectors Wnter Worldwide Convention, Clemmons, N.C.
 Apr. 1 — 2026 Edisto REC Forages Field Day, Blackville, S.C.

LIVESTOCK MARKET SALES

Feb. 2 — Harward Brothers Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Turnersburg, N.C.
 Feb. 2 — Saluda Livestock Exchange Weekly Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Feb. 3 — Mid-Atlantic Cattle Sales Video Auction, via macsvideo.com
 Feb. 4 — Stanly County Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Norwood, N.C.
 Feb. 9 — Harward Brothers Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Turnersburg, N.C.
 Feb. 9 — Saluda Livestock Exchange Weekly Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Feb. 11 — Stanly County Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Norwood, N.C.
 Feb. 12 — Elite Livestock Marketing Group Video Auction, via live-ag.com
 Feb. 16 — Harward Brothers Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Turnersburg, N.C.
 Feb. 16 — Saluda Livestock Exchange Weekly Sale, Saluda, S.C.
 Feb. 17 — Mid-Atlantic Cattle Sales Video Auction, via macsvideo.com
 Feb. 23 — Stanly County Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Norwood, N.C.
 Feb. 23 — Harward Brothers Livestock Market Weekly Sale, Turnersburg, N.C.
 Feb. 25 — Saluda Livestock Exchange Weekly Sale, Saluda, S.C.

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