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June 2026

Cattle on the Move

Wyoming ranchers selling off cattle as drought tightens grip across state

By KATE MEADOWS
 Cowboy State Daily

May is normally a slow season at Torrington Livestock Markets, Wyoming's largest livestock marketing company.

This time of year, the eastern Wyoming sale barn typically holds one cattle sale a week, usually moving 400 to 700 head on Fridays.

But on a recent Wednesday, Torrington Livestock Markets held a special drought sale pushing 6,500 head through the barn while showing another 2,500 head through its Cattle Country video auction platform.

By the end of the sale, more than 9,000 head of cattle had sold — cattle that normally would still be on pasture or wouldn't hit the market until late summer.

"We will sell over 9,000 head today that normally we

wouldn't," said Lander Nicodemus, co-owner of Torrington Livestock Markets and Cattle Country Video. "Today's sale is because of drought."

The unusually large sale reflects a growing reality across Wyoming as dry conditions force ranchers to sell cattle early because grass is scarce and feed supplies are tightening.

"Guys are selling because they're droughted out," Nicodemus said. "It is absolutely an uncommon year."

Drought forcing hard decisions

At Williamson Land and Cattle, based in Moorcroft, drought-related selloffs happen every year. But this year feels different, said Jeran Williamson, who handles marketing for the family business.

"Drought forces cattle to have to move," Williamson said.

Williamson estimated about 20 of the company's customers have sold off cattle this year because of drought, with about half of those producers being in Wyoming.

See DROUGHT, page 3



CATTLE CALL: Above, Torrington Livestock Markets, Wyoming's largest livestock marketing company, sold 9,000 head of cattle in a special drought sale recently when it typically sells 400-700 head a week. At right, At Williamson Land and Cattle, based in Moorcroft, Wyoming, drought-related selloffs happen every year. But this year feels different, said Jeran Williamson, who handles marketing for the family business. "Drought forces cattle to have to move," Williamson said. (Photos courtesy of Torrington Livestock Markets and Williamson Land and Cattle)



White House 'fine-tuning' after beef interests blast tariff plans

A widely telegraphed White House announcement of plans to temporarily remove beef tariffs has been delayed amid anger from allied groups in the cattle industry.

Unnamed Trump administration officials had leaked plans Monday, May 11, to suspend annual tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) on beef from all exporters.

By Tuesday, May 12, White House sources said that the administration was still "fine-tuning potential executive actions" to address high consumer beef prices, putting a formal announcement on ice, the Reuters news agency reported.

U.S. beef imports, mostly lean trimmings for ground beef blends, jumped 18% last year and are up more than 60% since 2022, with the herd at 75 year lows and cattle supplies extremely tight.

Last year's beef production was off 3.6%, despite larger carcass weights, and has slipped

After losing a February Supreme Court decision, the administration is in the process of issuing refunds on 2025 "emergency" tariffs, including more than \$1 billion paid by U.S. beef importers, according to a Meatingplace estimate.

more than 8% since 2022.

Bill Bullard, chief executive of rancher group R-CALF USA, described the TRQ plan as an "experiment" and called for incentivizing domestic herd expansion, for which cattle producers need to know that they won't have to compete with "excessive" imports.

"Temporarily increasing the quantity of imported beef, which has already contributed to the contraction of the U.S. cattle herd, will likely delay expansion of the U.S. cattle herd unless the White House commits to reestablishing more meaningful tariff rate quotas

two to three years from now," he said. "Producers need confidence that their expansion-related investment won't be undercut again by cheaper imports."

Ranchers "wish to continue working with the White House" and Congress "to achieve a more favorable balance between domestic beef production and domestic beef consumption."

Texas A&M Professor David Anderson, an extension specialist in meat and livestock, said that even if tariff-rate quotas are suspended, global beef exporters may not have large available supplies to ship to the United States.

"We're already importing a record amount of beef, and everybody we import from also has other customers," he told Meatingplace.

In November, President Donald Trump issued an executive order lifting his additional "global" tariffs on a wide variety of foodstuffs including beef.

After losing a February Supreme Court decision, the administration is in the process of issuing refunds on 2025 "emergency" tariffs, including more than \$1 billion paid by U.S. beef importers, according to a Meatingplace estimate.

Without the emergency tariffs, beef imports are subject to additional levies beyond set annual quotas.

Under a trade arrangement with the United Kingdom, a new TRQ for UK beef was set at 13,000 mt for 2026, while the "other countries" TRQ was lowered from 65,000 mt to

52,000 mt.

Brazilian exporters have typically filled most of the "other country" quota, but this year Paraguay was able to capture a large portion of those imports.

Trump in February ordered an expansion of Argentina's annual TRQ from 20,000 metric tons (mt) to 100,000 mt for 2026.

Australia, which is the top source of U.S. beef imports, has the largest TRQ at 449,482 mt, New Zealand's is 213,000 mt, and Uruguay's is 20,000 mt.

Beef within TRQs faces a duty of 4.4 cents per kilogram except from Australia, which is exempt from the duty.

Any beef that exceeds the country's annual quota is taxed an additional 26.4% by value, except Australia at 21.1%

Beef shipped to and from Canada and Mexico is tariff-free under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

— Meatingplace.com

UPCOMING SALES

Tuesday, June 2 – High Noon Cow Sale
 Saturday, June 6 – Show-Me-Select Sale
 Tuesday, June 9 – Feeder Special
 Tuesday, June 16 – Regular Sale
 Tuesday, June 23 – Feeder Special
 Tuesday, June 30 – Regular Sale
 Tuesday, July 1 – NO CATTLE SALE
 Tuesday, July 7 – High Noon Cow Sale
 Tuesday, July 14 – Feeder Special

Cattle Receiving Hours

Sunday: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
 Monday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
 Tuesday: All Day Sale Day



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High Noon Cow Sale

Tuesday, June 2, 2026 • Noon
 F&T Livestock Auction, Palmyra, MO

The first Tuesday of every month is the High Noon Cow Sale including June 2, but not Fourth of July week. May High Noon Cow Sale was very well attended and the quality and market was high. Good price for sellers good value for the buyers. The June Advocate prints early so this is only the early listings for the June 2nd cow sale, we expect more by sale time.

Early Consignments

June 2

Dustin and Jack Bodine – Five home raised heifer pairs as good as any that will walk through the ring. Picked out of group of 15 in typical Bodine style Dustin is bringing us the five with the biggest best calves. If you know the Bodine cattle, you know this is a wonderful opportunity to buy high-quality North Missouri Angus genetics.

Mike Gray of Monroe County will be dispersing his remaining home raised black cows. These “last calf heifers” are still raising fantastic calves. Opportunity to purchase some proven Missouri Angus genetics.

Jason Hedrick completes his herd dispersal by selling the 4 black heifer pairs this month. The little young heifer pairs are raising beautiful calves. Best attributes are they are hot wire broke and old man gentle.

Angell Livestock will be bringing the four heifer pairs that match the \$6000 pairs sold in May that calved on or near the May 5th sale day. Angell Livestock also will be selling five of their late calving 3 year old Black cows, most with Charolais babies.

Double D Ranch will be selling 30 hd black and bwf young cows that start calving September 1st for 75 days that are bred by Angus/Semi Angus bulls. These were tested, worked, poured and wormed at grass turnout 6 weeks ago.

Special calf and yearling sales are generally the second and fourth Tuesdays. If you have cattle to sell, contact the field representatives listed and go to ftlivestock.com for more schedule information, videos and updates.

For more information go to the website at ftlivestock.com. If you want to do business where both you and your business is appreciated, call Al, Katie or one of the field reps listed above.

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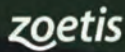
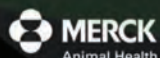


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DROUGHT from page 1

"I think there's a bigger region affected by it than most years," he said.

Recently, Williamson Land and Cattle helped a Riverton-area rancher sell cows because of dry conditions. A social media post advertising the sale reads: "Drought is forcing these girls to move, and that means a real buying opportunity for somebody ready to step in and take advantage of it."

The timing is unusual, Williamson said.

That's because cows are calving now, a season when ranchers are typically focused on building herds rather than selling them off.

"The seller has to get them gone," Williamson said. "For someone looking to buy cattle, it's a pretty good opportunity."

Drought sales often mean discounted prices, not because of poor quality cattle, but because ranchers need to move animals quickly before forage conditions worsen.

"It's a tricky place to be," Williamson said.

It's a rock-or-hard-place-decision for ranchers: sell animals at a discount and lose money, or potentially watch their animals die during drought conditions and be a total loss.

Echoes of 2012

Nicodemus said many ranchers have compared this year's conditions to Wyoming's devastating 2012 drought.

"Many would put it up against one of the worst droughts they remember," he said. "This is historically significant."

Wyoming's dry winter set the stage for growing anxiety this spring, he said.

"We had a less-than-average winter," he said. "We got warm really early. It caused a lot of people to panic a little early."

Now, ranchers continue to

Drought sales often mean discounted prices, not because of poor quality cattle, but because ranchers need to move animals quickly before forage conditions worsen.

watch the weather closely.

"There's a lot more panic now," he said. "I think the next couple of weeks will really tell. We need moisture to get good summer grass."

"We'll hope for a couple more rain showers within that spring moisture window."

A potential bright spot

Wyoming meteorologist Don Day said he understands based on grass conditions why ranchers are selling cattle.

"We're far from a situation where we could say we're going to be fine," he told Cowboy State Daily about Wyoming's drought outlook for the summer.

Day said he is watching a weather system expected to hit the state late this weekend and early next week that could bring some promise to scorched-dry land. He said he expects a lot of the areas that got moisture last week to get moisture again with this latest system.

"It will likely warm up and stay warm into early June," Day said.

Beyond that, "There are indications that we'll have fairly frequent chances for showers and thunderstorms," he said, adding that those showers could be spotty.

Where the cattle are going

Most of the cattle sold Wednesday in Torrington will head to feedlots, Nicodemus said. Others may be shipped south to states with better grazing conditions.

Williamson said his company moved about 500 head south last week to states like Oklahoma

and New Mexico. Buyers in North Dakota have also been buying cattle from drought-driven Wyoming sales.

"There are places for cattle to go," Williamson said.

He added that drought selloffs are even more severe in parts of Nebraska and Colorado.

Still, Wyoming producers are feeling the strain.

A large share of the cattle sold Wednesday likely would have been marketed months from now, perhaps during Labor Day



DROUGHT SALE: Cattle are stacked up in pens awaiting sale during a special auction recently at Torrington Livestock Markets. (Photo courtesy of Torrington Livestock Markets)

consignment sales.

Instead, they're leaving early.

Nicodemus said a selloff like this will postpone any sort of cattle herd rebuild in this region – further complicating a market that is already at a historic 75-

year low.

"You can't rebuild in a drought," he said.

Kate Meadows can be reached at kate@cowboystatedaily.com.

Border opening would be a slow process

Any reopening of the U.S. border to Mexican livestock will not mean a rapid increase of supply to the extremely tight cattle market any time soon, Oklahoma State University Extension's eminent beef economist Derrell Peel said.

In late March, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins suggested that a phased reopening might be on the horizon despite concerns about New World screwworm (NWS), which has been spotted in Mexico within 60 miles of the Texas border. While two livestock ports are located in Texas, others in New Mexico and Arizona are several hundred miles farther from the current area of NWS concerns.

"In reality, I don't think it's that big a deal if the border opens, and certainly not immediately," Peel told Meatingplace. "It's going to take time for things

to recover, especially if we do the phased thing. So you know, it's a matter of weeks to months before it would change things a great deal."

U.S. cattle imports from Mexico have averaged more than 1 million head annually for decades. In 2024, imports reached 1.25 million cattle – and appeared on course for about 1.4 million head, when the border was closed in response to screwworm detections in southern Mexico. After a brief reopening in early 2025, the border has again been closed for nearly a year.

Peel emphasized that cattle previously gathered in Mexican feedlots for export are no longer waiting at the border, with the country's own beef industry finding the additional shackle space.

"If we got [a reopening], there would be an initial reaction to it,

and then in a few days, you know, I think it would settle down, and we would realize that it's not going to change things immediately. It's going to take time just physically to get cattle going," Peel said.

"If we do the phased thing, we're not going to start in the areas where the bulk of the cattle typically cross anyway. Plus we're going into the heat of summer, and we don't move a lot of cattle in the middle of the summer. So for all of those reasons, I think we're talking about the last part of the year before we start to see any significant flows of cattle."

– Meatingplace.com

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From the Publisher... Jon Angell



Despite the abundance of moisture in *The Cattleman's Advocate* trade territory, much of the nation's cattle country is still experiencing drought conditions. The feature story this month describes some of the results of this. With market signals encouraging heifer retention to increase the nations' cowherd, lack of favorable growing conditions in major regions of cow country will most likely limit normal herd expansion and extend this cycle of high prices.

The situation favors producers in our readers' territory; abundant grass growth and high value cattle. The value of the gain has never been worth more. I know from conversations with many customers, some are fearful to participate, while others have expressed guilty admissions that they have never had it so good. Those fearful make statements that start "I wish I had..." while the others comment, "I am glad I..."

I believe it's fine and even good to be cautious, but try not to be fearful.

Over time, life seems to favor those with a bias for action. Yes, sometimes what we choose to do won't work out, but doing nothing hardly ever works. These continue to be interesting times to be living. Enjoy the experience, if you can.

I had a recent conversation with an Illinois cattle producer you may find interesting, that sheds some insight into some current business trends. He had contacted me asking for some input about different sources of Charolais bulls. He had recently leased some additional pasture and was rebuilding a cow herd to utilize his own marginal ground, the additional pasture, and to source some cattle for his confinement feeding barn. I knew him primarily as a fed cattle producer, and like much of our industry, leaned heavily towards black-hided cattle. It, of course, made me curious of his Charolais inquiry, so I reached out and asked.

Yes, he feeds a lot of black, English type cattle, but that is what is so available in his area. A recent trip to his local cattle auction he mentioned buying some good Charolais crossbred steers at basically the same money as the best black hide cattle. When he started feeding cattle, they often "penciled" making their fats weigh 1,300 pounds, then it was 1,400 pounds, then 1,500 pounds. As the feeder cattle price has risen, it has become more important to feed them longer and bigger to make them profitable. He is looking to stretch out his cattle to allow him to make them bigger.

Today, many of his cattle weigh over 1,600 pounds pay weight at the packer as finished steers. The business economics require more pounds to cover high feeder cattle cost, and as an added benefit, this has helped meet a lot of demand for beef products in the

face of short cattle numbers.

The last pen that I closed out was a pen of heifers with a pay weight of 1,515 pounds; I can't remember ever doing that on heifers.

Feeder cattle have only gotten higher it seems, which means that the break-even price on the majority of these cattle will be insisting on higher finished weights, cheaper feed, or both. Feeder cattle are, as we all know, in relatively short supply and hard to procure — yet another reason encouraging cattle feeders to hold on to what they have a little longer making them bigger yet.

My Illinois friend's idea for his cow herd was for black and black whiteface females using Charolais bulls in a terminal cross for growthy cattle to feed and make big. I like his thought pattern. I think in the same situation, I'd be doing a very similar thing, and it wouldn't have to be Charolais, but nearly any other of the Continental breeds; Simmental, Limousin, Gelbvieh, etc. These crosses generally will allow for later-maturing and larger fed cattle that aren't as prone to producing as many yield grade four and fives.

Now, before I start getting hate mail from my Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn friends, I am talking about any English breeds maybe as a base of the maternal side in most cases as they are readily available. Or, if someone wanted, there would be nothing wrong with going the other way, I knew a producer once that favored a commercial Charolais herd and he used a Red Angus bull and produced great calves.

We have all done a great job increasing the quality of cattle as well as the beef they produce. We are producing more beef per animal at higher quality grades. The down side is that in making them so big, we produce a lot of fat. Many of today's fed cattle at these finish weights are making an abundance of yield grade four and five cattle. I've been told across the State of Nebraska 20% of all fed cattle are being harvested as prime grades.

This is fine if processors can find sources of lean beef to blend to make additional hamburger products. So, the packers import foreign lean beef to blend, as well as bid up at auction the cull cows and bulls. The cow and bull market right now is just as impressive as the feeder cattle at auction.

As a further example of what I am thinking; a Nebraska feedlot owner relays an interesting twist in today's cattle and beef market. Over a lifetime of feeding cattle, he has become accustomed to sourcing cattle nearly anywhere. He now has on the show list a pen of three loads of Charolais Brahman cross steers out of the state of Louisiana. The surprise is that he has had more buying interest in one pen. All the major and regional packers are expressing interest in this one

pen.

Why so much interest in one pen of cattle? I normally wouldn't think about a pen of Southern swamp type cattle as premium cattle to be aggressively fought over. Since we are making cattle so big now, with so many yield grade four and five, the packers are drowning in fat. Most pens have a high percentage of straight English type cattle in a pen, because as our Illinois cattle feeder stated earlier, "that's what is available." This full pen of Charolais Brahman cross is expected to be majority high quality yield grade ones and twos. So, excess trim will not be an issue to the winning bidder.

The take away point is: the economics of feeding cattle now is going to increase the demand for continental breeds in the mix.

As always, we have several interesting and useful stories that you are going to want to spend some time with. Plan on taking an issue along with you to work in the truck or tractor. I'd like to think reading *The Cattleman's Advocate* while fueling a tractor, mixing/grinding feed, or filling a water tank, is twice as productive work time as normal.

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FARM & FOOD FILE

There's nothing we won't do for cheaper food

By ALAN GUEBERT
For The Cattleman's Advocate

Two weeks after the U.S. House passed its "skinny" Farm Bill—the law's usual lard had been cut into last July's reconciliation bill—applause is still yet to be heard in either Washington, D. C. or rural America.

One big reason might be exhaustion. After three years of pushing, finger-pointing, and arguing, Republican members of the House Ag Committee found a path to passage: Cut food assistance programs by \$186 billion ("waste, fraud, and abuse"), use \$60 billion of it to fatten federal farm subsidies, and add 30 million more "base" acres to those programs to ensure every cent will be spent.



I know what you're thinking: Isn't there any "waste, fraud, or abuse" in those millions of acres and billions in benefits? Certainly—at least when anyone looks for it.

After the bill passed the House, members of the Senate Ag Committee, the bill's next stop, received it with the mild reception it deserves. It is, after all, a fatter, warmed-over version of the 2018 Farm Bill, itself a fatter, warmed-over version of the 2014 Farm Bill.

That's troublesome because little in the bill addresses the challenges American farmers and ranchers face today. Global export competition? Meh. Changing climate? Fake news. Increasing groundwater shortages? Crickets. Fast-rising input costs? We'll look into it.

That last one is particularly revealing given that the Department of Justice (DOJ) recently announced it will investigate the Big Four beef packers over "whether market concentration has driven higher beef prices."

In announcing the investigation, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche emphasized that

So, sure, investigate the beef packers if you think there are crimes—or, more to the point, voters—to be found. No one, however, should be surprised when the decades-too-late investigation turns into a big nothing burger that no one will claim they cooked up.

"there's a lot of work to do and we are moving as quickly as we can."

The speed at which the DOJ acts against the Big Four—JBS USA, Cargill, Tyson Foods, and National Beef Packing—is immaterial for two reasons.

First, given today's 71-year low in cattle numbers, every packer is losing their hide killing cattle today. Tyson Foods, Reuters reported recently, said "it expects an adjusted operating loss of \$350 million to \$500 million in its beef business in fiscal 2026."

In short, the most obvious connection between packers today is red ink, not red blood and not unwarranted, green profits.

Second, there is a mini-meatpacking boom underway in the U.S. Since 2023, plants with a combined daily kill capacity of nearly 9,000 head have been built in cattle country. Also, the number of small, local federally-inspected plants nationwide has increased from 726 in 2021 to 937 in 2025.

So, sure, investigate the beef packers if you think there are crimes—or, more to the point, voters—to be found. No one, however, should be surprised when the decades-too-late investigation turns into a big nothing burger that no one will claim they cooked up.

The DOJ examination of JBS USA, the massive global meatpacker, is especially juicy given the dual role it plays both in the U.S. and its native Brazil. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins noted one of those roles—but not the other—during the DOJ announcement of its packer investigation.

JBS, Rollins said according to Progressive Farmer, is "affiliated with corruption... cartels and as recently as last week, slave labor." And, she added, "all of that was bad enough on its own, but it's also to the detriment of America's great independent ranchers and consumers..."

I can't tell you what an "independent consumer" is but I can tell you that despite corruption, cartels, and slave labor, Brazilian beef is pouring into the U.S. In the first quarter 2026, Brazil exported \$795 million of beef to the U.S., up 21 percent from 2025.

And every pound of it was to the detriment of America's great independent ranchers.

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The Farm and Food File is published weekly throughout the U.S. and Canada. Past columns, supporting documents, and contact information are posted at farmandfoodfile.com

Overturning point: Trade court strikes down tariffs

The Trump administration is facing another legal setback to its trade policies, though the broader impact of the ruling is not yet clear.

The U.S. Court of International Trade found last week that 10% tariffs under Section 122 of U.S. trade are only authorized in a currency crisis. President Donald Trump had cited the long-standing U.S. goods trade deficit to invoke Section 122, which the court called is not a balance-of-payments crisis as defined in the law.

In finding Trump's Section 122 tariff proclamation "invalid," the court's injunction was narrowly limited to the plaintiffs: two importers and Washington state. Further legal action by other importers is possible to extend the decision.

Under Section 122, the tariffs will expire in July.

The Court of International Trade last year found the Trump administration's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), claimed tariff powers that were not contained in that law. That decision was upheld in February, when the Supreme Court struck down Trump's "global" IEEPA tariffs.

Trump ordered the new tariffs under Section 122 within hours of the high court decision.

In November, the White House lifted tariffs on imports of a long list of foodstuffs including beef, which constitutes about three-quarters of U.S. meat imports.

— Meatingplace.com

Schumer renews call to break up meatpackers' monopoly

Hot on the heels of a DOJ-USDA press conference about meatpacker consolidation, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) is promoting his legislation to "break up the monopoly and lower costs" for meat consumers.

First introduced in March, the "Family Grocery and Farmer Relief Act" would require meat processors to commit to just one protein, and would also direct the FTC to "go after foreign-controlled conglomerates that squeeze American producers and distort U.S. markets."

Additionally, the legislation would "provide financial and

technical assistance to farmers' cooperatives and small businesses that seek to acquire, operate, or expand meatpacking plants or facilities."

In March, the Meat Institute was critical of Schumer's legislation, with CEO Julie Anna Potts calling it "absurd." Recently, Schumer spoke about his proposal in front of the small processor Niagara Sausage Company in Niagara Falls, N.Y., and his office's statement included endorsements of the bill from the processor's owner, Niagara Falls' mayor, and the president of the Niagara County Farm Bureau.

— Meatingplace.com

Here are the scheduled advertising deadlines for The Cattleman's Advocate through January 2027:

- July issue Ad deadline: June 15
- August issue Ad deadline: July 20
- September issue Ad deadline: August 17
- October issue Ad deadline: September 14
- November issue Ad deadline: October 19
- December issue ... Ad deadline: November 12
- January issue Ad deadline: December 10

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Thoughts From Justin's Side of the Fence

By JUSTIN ANGELL

Last month I talked about the Fat Cattle jumping up to \$2.50. I am amazed to say as of last week the new top is \$2.65.

I also discussed my belief that there is a tremendous number of heifers being retained. This month that may be changing because of an expanding drought spreading across large areas of western cattle country.

As I speak, some areas of the west are receiving rain, but at this point, I'm not sure if it's too late. According to Corbitt Wall's Feeder Flash, 40% of the pasture in the United States is in poor condition, with 48% of the nation's cowherd on that pasture.

The hardest hit areas are western Nebraska, where the fires occurred. Heavy wind erosion has been recorded in the Sandhills with many acres of sand being blown out covering fences, water tanks and other infrastructure.

Because of this, there is a possibility that a portion of these retained heifers in the west will be heading to feed lots in the first two weeks of June instead

of being introduced to Ferdinand the bull. The open heifers would be a good option to lighten stocking rates, especially with their price currently.

Of course, the first cattle inventory to be sold to conserve feedstuffs will be the older less thrifty cows. Beginning in earnest, a week ago old pairs are being split with baby calves worth over \$1500 and lean pound cows bringing over \$1.80 easily netting \$3500 to \$4000 per pair.

Platte Livestock Auction in western South Dakota sold 1000 head of \$1500 baby calves this week.

Good young cows and pairs are still difficult to find. The F&T May High Noon Cow sale was very successful with the sale highlight being the many \$6000 plus heifer pairs sold. This was a good price for the sellers, good value for the buyers!

The feeder cattle market has been rolling higher with the higher fed cattle trade. F&T sold 1450 good cattle on May 12th. The sale must've been pretty high because it received a mention from Corbitt Wall on the



feeder flash highlights for selling 71 steers weighing 615 @ \$4.63 per pound or \$2847 head.

One thing I thought about watching all those extremely high-quality calves sell Tuesday was what if they were yearlings? One thing about fall calves is they never hit a bad market.

I understand about a cow man looking at the market and just wanting to ring the register and I'm not really saying that's

wrong. I was just thinking, however, if we sold the heifers in May and kept the steers until at least the second week of July, that extra 60 days and 100 pounds of gain could easily net an extra \$300 per steer. Yes, part of that \$300 is grazing to sell a bigger calf, but part of the

increasing value of that steer is just making them older.

Grass and time are cheap pounds; on a short yearling they are valuable.

Time and space is limited, so I'm shutting her down for this month. Keep in touch and come see me in the Auction.

JBS co-owner reportedly helped arrange Trump-Lula meeting

Brazilian billionaire Joesley Batista, co-owner of meatpacker JBS, reportedly played a role in arranging a meeting between President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva scheduled for Thursday in Washington, according to Reuters.

The news agency reported that the meeting had been in discussion since January after the two leaders spoke by phone, though planning was delayed as the White House shifted focus to the conflict in Iran. U.S. officials reportedly revived plans for the meeting last week. Flight tracking data showed a jet owned by J&F, the holding company that controls JBS, flying Wednesday from Colorado to Washington.

The report comes as Brazilian meatpackers face increased scrutiny in Washington. Earlier this week, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins criticized Brazilian ownership in the meatpacking industry during a DOJ press conference focused on competition in cattle markets.

Rollins said Brazilian packer ownership was "affiliated with corruption, but also cartels and as recently as last week, slave labor." Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche confirmed the Trump administration is investigating the meatpacking industry for potential anti-competitive behavior.

Meanwhile, Brazilian beef exports to the United States continue climbing sharply. USDA trade data showed Brazilian packers shipped \$795 million in beef to the U.S. during the first

quarter, up 21% from a year ago. Total U.S. beef imports reached \$4.5 billion through March, up 28% year-over-year.

Brazil's beef industry is also seeking expanded access to the U.S. market. Brazilian exporters are urging Lula to push for changes to U.S. beef import quotas during discussions with Trump, according to Valor International. Under the current tariff-rate quota system, Brazil shares access to roughly 50,000 metric tons of lower-tariff beef imports before higher duties apply. Brazilian industry officials say the quota was fully utilized during the first month of the year.

At the same time, analysts told Bloomberg that Brazil may soon hit its annual beef export quota to China, potentially redirecting additional Brazilian supplies into the U.S. market amid ongoing tight U.S. cattle supplies and records beef prices.

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It's The Pitts...

My lasting legacy

By LEE PITTS
For The Cattleman's Advocate

It's been 40 years now since I attended the dispersal of an historic ranch where 1,000 Fall calvers were sold. They were the most uniform set of cattle I'd ever seen right down to their attitude; every single one of them was an insane lunatic.

The cattle had made their home in big country where they might see a human twice a year: when their calves were branded and when their offspring were shipped. I had a feeling that a great many of the cows had escaped human contact even on those occasions.

The cows selling that day were large framed black cattle that I assumed had a high percentage of Angus in them, but they were much framier than the Angus cattle of that period. At first I thought they might be Angus Holstein crosses, but there wasn't a speck of white anywhere on the cows nor did the cows show any sign of ear.

I expected the sale to be a barn burner and figured I wouldn't get anything bought, but for some reason the buyers were sitting on their hands. Obviously they knew something I didn't, but I just couldn't stop myself and ended up with two full loads of the de-ranged bovines. I paid an average of \$375 per cow and sold them to all my friends and neighbors for \$550 and it was the worst trade I ever made.

I began to understand why the buyers were reluctant to bid when the crazy cows tore down my loading chute getting

Then I made the biggest mistake in my life, I wrote a column about the Pitts Cows and how every former friend now called any cow that was a little loco a Pitts Cow and at every branding I went to I had to listen to them complain about their Pitts Cows whether they came from me or not.

unloaded. Even my horse Gentleman was scared of the black monsters and with great difficulty we managed to get most of them parked in my used cow lot that bordered a major freeway. I was probably asking for trouble putting them in such close proximity to humanity because these were clearly not "town cows" and my fences were suspect, but it didn't matter because my neighbors started calling right away asking if they were for sale. I told them I planned to keep them, but with a little arm twisting I might be coaxed into selling a few. I was out of inventory within two weeks, all sold to friends and neighbors.

Over the next year I heard that truckers refused to haul what the neighbors were now calling Pitts Cows. Vets wouldn't preg check them, no one in their right mind would get in a sorting alley with them and cowboys sought employment elsewhere if they heard you had any Pitts Cows.

I was forced to keep a few of the Pitts Cows that had alluded capture and I can tell you from experience that their calves were as nutty as their mothers were. One of the local ranchers was even inspired by his Pitts Cows to develop something he called the Waspy-ometer (rhymes with thermometer) and on his scale from one to ten he scored his Pitts Cows an 11.

Then I made the biggest mis-

take in my life, I wrote a column about the Pitts Cows and how every former friend now called any cow that was a little loco a Pitts Cow and at every branding I went to I had to listen to them complain about their Pitts Cows whether they came from me or not. The term Pitts Cows became synonymous with crazy cattle.

Thirty years after I sold the cows, I was in Nebraska when a rancher came up to me to tell me that he had some Pitts Cows halfway across the country from me!

Even though my neighbors complained about them, they refused to cull their Pitts Cows because they lived forever and invariably brought the biggest calves to the branding pen, outweighing the other calves by 50 pounds. The cattle were so good they even retained any heifer calves with a Pitts Cow in their pedigree as replacements.

I was a regular Tom Lasater (Beefmasters) or Robert Kleberg, Jr. (Santa Gertrudis) in that I had created my own breed and this would be my lasting legacy.

That's why I have instructed my wife that when I croak I want my body to be burned up and put in a shoebox because if I had a headstone it would read, "Here lies Lee Pitts inspiration for the Waspy-ometer and originator of the infamous Pitts Cow strain of cattle."

- www.LeePittsbooks.com

Beef exports pressured by China absence; variety meat value hits record

U.S. beef exports declined in March as shipments to China remained largely stalled, though strong variety meat demand helped push export value for those products to a record high, according to data released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

March beef exports totaled 97,731 metric tons, down 11% from a year ago, while export value fell 8% to \$844.7 million. Shipments increased year-over-year to Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Indonesia, while exports to South Korea and Taiwan were steady. However, exports to China remained minimal and shipments also trailed year-ago levels to Japan and the Middle East.

Excluding China, March beef export volume increased 4% from a year ago while value climbed 8%, USMEF said.

Beef variety meat exports provided a bright spot. March shipments totaled 29,062 metric

tons, up 24% from a year ago and the largest monthly volume since 2017. Export value surged 50% to a record \$135.6 million, surpassing the previous high set earlier this year.

March beef exports equated to \$456.56 per head of fed slaughter, reflecting continued strong value despite tighter beef supplies.

For the first quarter, beef and beef variety meat exports totaled 275,355 metric tons, down 11% from the same period last year,

while value declined 7% to \$2.35 billion. Excluding China, first-quarter export volume increased 3% while value rose 9%.

"The supply situation makes it difficult to grow export volumes, but exports are commanding strong prices," USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom said. "Expanding beef variety meat demand is especially critical, as this makes such a key contribution to the value of every animal."

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Midwestern school is latest to offer processing training

A community college in southern Illinois is the latest institution to offer critical training to burgeoning butchers and meat processors.

Southeastern Illinois College (SIC) in Harrisburg, Ill., will offer a three-week "Farm to Table Hands-On Meat Processing" course to provide direct experience in the harvesting and processing of livestock. EmmyLee Williams, owner of WP Meat Company in Enfield, Ill., will teach the course, which is open to 10 students for a cost of \$100.

"This course gives people a chance to learn valuable, practical skills in a short amount of time," said Lori Cox of SIC. "Whether someone is considering a career change or simply wants to better understand the process from harvest to table, this class offers experience they can use right away."

In response to the alarming shortage of meat cutters and butchers in the U.S., institutions in numerous states have created training programs, including a high school in Minnesota, SUNY Cobleskill, Iowa State University, Pennsylvania's state government, and even Hawai'i Community College in Hilo.

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Unions sound alarm over USDA relocation plan

USDA employee unions warned of potential staffing losses and operational disruptions as the department moves forward with plans to relocate several agencies and reorganize food assistance operations.

According to Federal News Network, USDA is preparing to relocate Washington-based employees at the Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture to Kansas City for the second time in seven years.

USDA previously moved hundreds of ERS and NIFA positions to Kansas City in 2019, a move that reportedly led about 85% of affected employees to resign or retire rather than relocate.

The American Federation of Government Employees Local 3403, which represents USDA researchers, said an internal survey found 76% of members do not plan to relocate under the latest move.

The union said the relocations, expected to take effect by the end of the summer, could create a "brain drain" at the agencies.

AFGE Local 3403 warned reduced staffing at NIFA could slow grant processing and delay funding for universities and research institutions, while fewer ERS researchers could increase the risk of research

errors affecting agricultural economic planning.

Separately, Government Executive reported USDA plans to relocate most Food and Nutrition Service employees to hubs in Indiana, Texas, Missouri and North Carolina as part of a broader reorganization that would rename the agency the Food and Nutrition Administration.

The National Treasury Employees Union chapter representing FNS employees said the changes could result in closures of regional offices in Boston, Chicago, Atlanta and San Francisco.

Union officials warned many employees would likely decline relocation offers, potentially disrupting programs including SNAP, WIC and school meal programs.

According to reports, SNAP administration would move to Indianapolis, while child nutrition programs would relocate to Dallas. Other operations would move to Denver, Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York.

The Washington Post also reported employees confronted USDA officials during a recent meeting in Northern Virginia, raising concerns that widespread staff departures could undermine service levels and program operations.

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DOJ proposed settlement would open Agri Stats reports to buyers, sellers

The Department of Justice's proposed settlement with Agri Stats would require the data company to overhaul how it collects, reports and distributes meat industry data as federal officials continue broader antitrust investigations into the protein sector.

The proposed final judgment, filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota on Thursday, would resolve claims brought by the United States and six states alleging Agri Stats' reporting practices facilitated anticompetitive behavior in chicken, turkey and pork markets. The settlement was entered without Agri Stats admitting wrongdoing or liability.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche described the agreement as a "historic settlement" in a series of posts on X, saying the company's business model contributed to higher meat prices.

"The Department of Justice continues to bring affordability to the American people," Blanche wrote. "Today, we announced a historic settlement with Agri Stats, whose business model directly raised the price of chicken, turkey, and pork in local

grocery stores across our nation."

Under the proposed judgment, Agri Stats would be prohibited from offering sales report books and barred from reporting sales data except in limited circumstances, such as providing individual companies with their own data. The company also would be prohibited from revealing contributor identities, reporting company rankings or disclosing plant-level and business-unit-level information except under narrow conditions.

The settlement would require Agri Stats to make reports and manuals available for purchase to any person in the United States, including buyers such as grocery stores and restaurants, under terms no less favorable than those offered to meat processors.

Blanche said the changes would increase transparency throughout the protein supply chain.

"This settlement forces Agri Stats to make its reports available to ALL buyers and sellers to ensure every level of the food supply chain operates on an even playing field," he wrote.

The agreement also imposes

confidentiality and recency requirements on reporting data, including provisions requiring some reports to contain information from at least three meat processors and limiting the use of recent production data.

A court-appointed monitor would oversee compliance for up to seven years, while Agri Stats also would be required to implement an antitrust compliance program that includes employee training, whistleblower protections and mandatory disclosure of potential violations.

Federal officials announced the settlement proposal alongside broader discussions of ongoing antitrust investigations into the meatpacking industry, including concerns over market concentration and information-sharing practices. Blanche praised Assistant Attorney General Omeed Assefi, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, White House adviser Peter Navarro and the six participating states for their involvement in the agreement.

"This is one step forward to stopping anticompetitive behavior in the food supply chain," Blanche wrote.

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JBS not weighing capacity cuts 'right now' despite widening beef losses in first quarter

JBS N.V. reported growing losses from its North American beef segment, which weighed on the protein giant's first-quarter net profits.

Net income attributable to JBS was \$221 million for the three months ended March 31, down 56% from the year-ago quarter, even as net sales surged 11% to \$21.6 billion.

In the North American beef division, the adjusted operating loss worsened from \$158 million in the first quarter of 2025 to \$279 million, with the negative margin widening from -2.5% to -3.9%, based on U.S. accounting standards. Net sales in the segment rose 11.6% to \$7.2 billion, outpaced by cost of sales growth of 13.1%.

JBS-owned poultry firm Pilgrim's Pride, which reported its results for the quarter late last month, saw its performance hurt by disruptions from winter storms and planned interruptions for plant upgrades. Adjusted operating income dropped 56% to \$190 million, weighing on JBS N.V. results.

JBS' U.S. pork segment grew sales by 1.5% to \$2.03 billion compared to the year-ago quarter. The operating margin narrowed by 11.9% to \$156 million, a margin of 7.7%.

"In terms of profitability, two segments were more significantly impacted: Beef North America, pressured by the challenge of the cattle cycle, and Pilgrim's Pride, affected by weather-related challenges and temporary plant stoppages for operational adjustments," JBS global chief executive Gilberto

Tomazoni said.

This spring's recurrence of dry conditions in major U.S. cattle-producing regions risks extending the cycle since 2022 that has the beef herd at historic lows.

"I don't think we further liquidate, but it's probably going to delay the herd rebuild here," JBS USA chief executive Wesley Batista Filho said during a Wednesday earnings call.

Asked by a Wall Street analyst about "rationalization" in JBS' beef segment, following a January beef plant closure by Tyson Foods, Batista said that capacity reductions were not under consideration "right now."

"We're focused just on making our business better with the things that we can control given the footprint we have. So that's not something that we're looking at the moment," he said.

The southern border has been closed to Mexican cattle imports since May 2025 due to the northward advance of New World screwworm infestation, removing the source of what had long averaged about 3% of U.S. slaughter. A potential phased reopening, which Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said in March was being contemplated, "absolutely no question is the most important thing that could ever happen in the short term to get some sort of relief on the supply side," Batista said.

The impact of a three-week strike that started March 16 at JBS' Greeley, Colo., harvest plant was "not significant" on the U.S. business' bottom line, he said. "We were able to redirect volumes in other plants so we didn't lose volume because of this strike," Batista said.

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Texas AG joins DOJ beef packing antitrust probe

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton launched an investigation into the beef industry over potential anticompetitive conduct among the nation's largest meatpackers, his office announced Friday.

Paxton said the investigation would be conducted alongside a separate antitrust probe announced by the U.S. Department of Justice under President Donald Trump's administration.

The investigation is focused on the highly concentrated beef packing sector, where four companies — JBS S.A., Tyson Fresh Meats, Cargill and National Beef Packing Co. — collectively control more than 85% of U.S. beef processing capacity, according to Paxton's office.

The attorney general cited reports alleging the companies may have used their market power to suppress cattle prices paid to ranchers while increasing beef prices for consumers.

"These four firms have reaped enormous profits at the expense of Texas cattle ranchers and consumers nationwide," the attorney general's office said in a statement.

"Texans deserve fairly priced beef and our state's cattle ranchers deserve to be paid fairly for their hard work," Paxton said. "If major meatpackers manipulated the market to underpay ranchers while forcing families to pay higher prices at the grocery store, we will hold them accountable."

Paxton said his office would investigate potential violations of antitrust law "to protect fair competition, ranchers, and Texas consumers."

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USDA opens \$60 million in new grants for beef processors

A new round of USDA grants is now available to specific meat processors.

According to a release from the Flower Hill Institute, \$60 million in funding will be offered through the USDA Rural Development's Meat Processing Expansion Program to "support strengthening the beef processing supply chain in the United States."

The program's specifics include:

- Half of funding will be reserved for small/very small processors with fewer than 500 employees, while the other half will be available to mid-sized processors with 500 to 2,999 workers.

- Grants for expansion projects will range from \$50,000 to \$2 million, and processors must

contribute 50% of the project cost to match federal funding.

- Grants for equipment will range from \$10,000 to \$250,000, with processor match set to 25%.

The grants may support further processing and value-added projects, but Flower Hill stipulated that "eligible applicants must also conduct primary beef slaughter activities and have been operating for at least one year under an FSIS grant of inspection, a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection."

The application deadline through USDA is Aug. 7, and Flower Hill is available to provide assistance.

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Livestock News & Notes.....

Auburn study seeks to fine tune 'sell by' dates, reduce waste

Auburn University researchers have conducted a successful experiment that could lead to better methods for predicting spoilage and provide more accurate "best by" or "sell by" dates, leading to less meat ending up in the garbage, the university said in a press statement.

About 10% of all meat is discarded at the retail or consumer levels, usually because it has reached a "sell by" date, the Auburn study said, citing a United Nations report.

"Food waste is a growing issue that impacts consumers, producers and environmental sustainability," said Isabella Gafanha, a master's student at the Auburn College of Agriculture who led the research project.

"Part of that elevated food waste has to do with conservative 'sell by' dates," per the report.

"Sell by" dates are commonly set for four days after the package date. The dates, per Auburn, are often overly conservative and based on when the beef is expected to lose its pink color, rather than when it becomes unsafe for consumption. As a result, many consumers consider meat that has changed color unsafe to eat.

"Color degradation has more to do with food quality than food safety," Gafanha said. "If a consumer sees that on day three their meat is brown, and it's around the 'sell by' date, they might think it's spoiled, but in fact it's just quality degradation. It's still fine to eat."

The hope is that more accurate sell by dates might help ensure consumers waste less perfectly safe meat. To arrive at more accurate sell-by dates, Gafanha tested to see if it was possible to reliably predict spoilage based on how different microbial communities cause ground beef to spoil over time. All packaged meat contains some bacteria at the outset. Gafanha went about recording changes in the microbial community composition over the shelf life of ground beef and cross-referencing those with key changes in the meat quality and indicators of spoilage.

She did so by tracking microbial communities over 14 days, feeding data into a machine-learning program to both analyze thousands of data points and predict how those thousands of data points would change over time. She analyzed data from three samples of ground beef while testing them against the machine learning program's predications.

They found that the microbial community changed over time. The bacteria observed, "Rhodobacteraceae, Enterobacteriales, Pseudomonadaceae, Carnobacteriaceae and others — spread, retreated, migrated and competed for scarce resources inside the confines of a half-pound package of ground beef."

"That little half pound of ground beef is the whole world to

them," Gafanha said.

Oxygen-loving bacteria multiplied first, sucking up the packaged air. Then, anaerobic bacteria surged in the oxygen-drained environment. "The microscopic give and take between bacteria in the microbial community is what makes predicting food spoilage so difficult."

However, Gafanha was able to determine that spoilage patterns could be predicted, demonstrating the concept can work.

"Trends followed spoilage to a T — exactly what we wanted to see," she said.

The research was funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Alabama Beef Checkoff program.

Nearly all plant-based meat alternatives contain mycotoxins, study finds

A new study of plant-based meat alternatives and beverages has found a high occurrence of mycotoxins, naturally occurring, fungi-produced poisonous compounds, in more than 200 vegetarian and vegan products in the UK.

The study, "Mycotoxin contamination in plant-based beverages and meat alternatives: A survey of the UK market," a joint effort by the University of Parma

in Italy and UK-based Cranfield University, tested a total of 212 plant-based products including burgers, veggie chicken products, vegan sausages as well as oat-, almond- and soy-based milks.

Per the study, "all of them contained at least one of 19 mycotoxins, with multiple products containing more than one."

Mycotoxin incidence in plant-based foods is due primarily to source ingredients — such as grains, legumes and seeds — being vulnerable to mold during cultivation and storage.

The study says that previous research has demonstrated that even at low levels, if consumed often, mycotoxin can build up exposure and lead to potential health concerns.

While occasional consumption should not pose a danger, a "diet solely based on plant-based foods could lead to a cumulative build-up of mycotoxins, potentially resulting in health problems if not managed properly."

In extreme cases, per the study, mycotoxin exposure can lead to liver and kidney damage, immune system suppression, and cancer. The researchers advise that monitoring of raw materials be extended.

"Mycotoxins occur naturally in foods and cannot be complete-

ly avoided. As consumers, we should not be frightened or deterred from enjoying a variety of products," Andrea Patriarca, Senior Lecturer in Mycology at Cranfield University, said.

"However, a significant concern arises when new foods enter the market, as there are currently no established regulations to monitor mycotoxins."

The study did find that mycotoxin levels in the tested UK plant-based foods were lower than recommended EU guideline levels, which it says reflected the high-quality standards of the UK food industry.

Patriarca went on to say the group collaborates with the food industry — from farmers to food companies — to integrate effective mycotoxin management within food safety standards.

Their "aim is to advise policymakers and raise awareness among vulnerable consumers."

JBS looks set for Russell 1000 listing

Brazil-based multinational conglomerate JBS is poised to be included in a major U.S. market index, after the New York Stock Exchange listing of the world's largest meat packer last year.

Thursday was "Rank Day" for potential Russell 1000 Index (R1000) additions, ahead of the

upcoming annual June Reconstitution on June 26, by indexing firm FTSE Russell. JBS N.V. closed the session with a market capitalization of \$17.16 billion, which would rank 506th on the R1000, according to a Friday note from analyst Melissa Roberts of investment firm Stephens Inc.

Roberts previously wrote that disclosures in March by JBS of the geographic breakdown of its assets and revenues were sufficient for FTSE Russell to classify it as a U.S. company, eligible for R1000 inclusion.

Inclusion in the index could lead to passive demand for shares, raising JBS' stock price. Roberts' analysis projected passive demand would be boosted by some 12 million shares.

In JBS's March earnings call with Wall Street analysts, Guilherme Cavalcanti, global chief financial officer, said further changes to its reporting was planned to allow the company to qualify for Standard & Poor's indices "Next year, the plan is, be on the S&P family, first on the S&P MidCap 400, and once we reach it, \$22.7 billion market cap, that's the threshold for the S&P 500," he said.

Many of the preceding items were taken from Meetingplace.com



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Helping build resilient, profitable farms

How MU Extension and the MU Center for Regenerative Agriculture support long-term success for producers

CEDAR HILL, Mo. – In the hills outside St. Louis, creeks swell fast after hard rains, and fields can pay the price. At Big River Grain and Cattle, Daniel Bonacker recalls, repeated flooding was carrying away topsoil. In 1983, Bonacker's grandfather switched to no-till farming, which minimizes disturbance of the soil. This reduces erosion by improving the soil's ability to absorb and hold water.

In 2012, Big River Grain and Cattle faced the opposite problem: drought. Bonacker's father decided the farm would seed a semi-load of cereal rye as a cover crop that fall to sequester the nitrogen that the failed corn crop did not use. By improving soil structure and organic matter, cover crops can also help soil retain moisture longer.

The payoff arrived the next spring: a living, green cover that protected the soil surface and jump-started biological activity. "We never went back to leaving the soil bare," he said. To combat weeds, Bonacker started "planting green" – seeding cash crops into actively growing rye, terminating the cover crop later in the spring. This further protects the soil and gives weeds less of an opportunity to take root. "That gives you the most bang for the buck from your cover crop," he said.

No-till and cover crops are

examples of regenerative agriculture, a farming approach focused on restoring and enhancing the health of soil ecosystems, said Rob Myers, director of the University of Missouri Center for Regenerative Agriculture. These practices aim to improve soil health, make crops more resilient, reduce input costs and protect water quality.

Bonacker notes that Big River Grain and Cattle never made overt decision to adopt regenerative agriculture, a term barely in use in the early 1980s. It was just a series of practical choices sparked by specific challenges on the farm, he says.

Translating research into on-farm decisions

Across Missouri, farmers are navigating increasingly unpredictable weather, tight margins and rising input costs. Solutions that promise long-term gains often come with upfront expenses—for seed, equipment, fencing, labor or new expertise—that can be difficult to justify on their own.

This is where Center for Regenerative Agriculture (CRA) plays a key role. Through field days, workshops, on-farm demonstrations and one-on-one technical support, the center helps producers evaluate what makes sense for their fields, their finances and their goals.

CRA also manages cost-share and incentive programs designed to reduce risk while producers test new practices. Those programs—including the Missouri CRCL Project, supported by a \$25 million USDA grant—provide technical assistance and temporary incentive payments

for practices such as cover crops, multispecies mixes, delayed termination and grazing of cover crops.

A neighbor first pointed Bonacker to CRA resources and to the Missouri CRCL Project. For him, the incentive payments weren't the motivation so much as being able to experiment without carrying all the risk alone.

Beyond one practice, or one farm

While cover crops and reduced tillage are often entry points, CRA supports a broader set of regenerative practices that affect both farm profitability and community well-being, Myers says.

That includes helping producers improve nutrient management—adjusting how and when fertilizer is applied so crops use nutrients more efficiently and less ends up in streams and waterways. CRA also works with farmers interested in diversifying crop rotations, which can break pest cycles, spread economic risk and support healthier soil biology.

Another focus area is management-intensive grazing systems. By matching stocking rates and recovery periods to soil conditions and weather, producers can build healthier pastures while reducing feed and fertilizer costs. CRA staff also assist farmers exploring integrated crop-and-livestock systems, where livestock play a role in cycling nutrients and improving soil structure.

Taken together, those practices have impacts that extend well beyond individual opera-



VIRTUAL FENCING: Virtual fencing collars use GPS to define invisible boundaries and guide animals back when they approach or cross those boundaries, keeping livestock contained without physical fences. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Bonacker)



ROLLER CRIMPING: Roller crimping cover crop at Big River Grain and Cattle. Roller crimping flattens and terminates the cereal rye, creating a mulch that protects the soil and suppresses weeds. (Photos courtesy of Daniel Bonacker)

tions, Myers says. Healthier soils absorb more rainfall, reducing erosion and nutrient losses. More resilient farms help stabilize rural businesses and protect natural resources.

Building resilience on pasture

At Big River Grain and Cattle, management-intensive grazing has become central to

Bonacker's approach. By rotating cattle through smaller paddocks for short periods, forage plants get time to recover and deepen their root systems. That improves water infiltration, distributes manure more evenly and boosts pasture productivity.

Frequent herd moves can

See RESILIENCE, page 19

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Government seizes farmer's land to build airport for corporate jets and business hangars

By CHRIS BENNETT
Reprinted by permission
of Farm Journal/AgWeb

The government is taking Jeff Melin's Georgia farm. His crime? Preserving 450 acres and pouring blood, sweat, and tears into the property.

"We already gave the government land for eminent domain," he says. "Now they're back wanting more. Now they want it all."

Even in the nightmare realm of eminent domain power grabs, Melin's case is particularly shocking. His farmland is being obliterated, with roughly 225 acres ripped from the middle of his operation to house an airport: Cows replaced by corporate jets. Barns replaced by hangars.

"And it's not even for commercial passengers," he says. "It's an airport for billionaires to park their jets and big businesses to have hangars."

"My grandfather, dad, and myself protected this land," Melin continues. "We survived depressions and disasters, and kept this place together for decades. My dad turned down millions of dollars, over and over, from subdivisions."

Melin describes a sickening contradiction of farmland preservation. "We sacrificed to keep this wonderful place whole, and now that's why they want it. How could it be more ironic? If we'd have built on it or trashed it, they'd leave it alone. The better and longer you take care of your land, the more at risk you are to losing it."

Insult to deepest injury, Melin is getting a per acre pittance for his land, he says. "They force me to sell against my will and then pay a fraction of the value. And I'm not allowed to turn them down. My story will make you question what kind of country you're living in."

Heaven No More

Sixty miles south of Atlanta, in Spalding County, Melin stares across gentle hills veined with

creeks, rubbing against a mix of pastures and woods: cattle, water, deer plots, dove field, pecan grove, and much more. Despite the beauty, it also contains a withering family legacy.

Awaiting grinding at the edge of the 70-acre pecan grove, a chain of toppled trees stretches like fallen dominoes, with many of the specimens over a century in age. Concrete poles are already in place as pecans give way to power lines. Soon, grass will give way to a 6,000' asphalt runway, as part of a 730-acre new airport for Spalding County.

"I've got 90 days to get my stuff out of a 40'-by-60' shop so they can get started," Melin describes. "It's an order to vacate. That means 90 days to move 75 years worth of farm equipment. I don't even know where I'll put all the tools, welders, compressors, and all the rest. I don't have another shop built. I've got to get rid of at least 65 cows and 30 calves right off the bat."

"They've killed my farm," he adds. "This will be the end of me. And when I say, 'they,' I mean the county, state, and federal government. All three are involved with this airport."

"All together, they're taking about 225 acres from the middle of my operation. They're leaving me land in the back that's landlocked, that I can't get to, and then leaving me land on the front of one side that's going to be landlocked. I never dreamed this is how it'd end. For sure, my grandfather and dad (John Bennett Melin) never dreamed it, either. This was heaven to us."

In 1951, the Melin clan pulled stakes in Red Wing, Minnesota and moved over 1,200 miles to Griffin, Georgia, hauling cattle the whole way, to start Melin Brothers Polled Herefords.

"I love everything this farm represents—heart and soul," Melin says. "I love it so much that I took a job close to home as a mechanic at Delta Airlines so that I could work the land and help my dad. We grew up with

sacrifice. Didn't matter if it was family vacation or Thanksgiving—somebody had to be here to feed. People in farming know exactly what I'm saying. Our farm was not for sale at any price because our lives were molded around this land."

"At 57 and approaching retirement age, to have your land and life snatched away feels like a terrible dream, but I know it's real. It all started with a newspaper article: They didn't even have the decency to knock on my door."

Blood and Tears

In 2012, Melin opened a morning newspaper to find himself in the bull's-eye of eminent domain's "common good." The existing Spalding County airport's runway was deemed too short, and Melin's farm was listed among four to five potential sites to build a new airport on 730 acres, including 124 hangars for express and corporate jets.

According to the Georgia Department of Transportation, a new airport would generate \$24 million in economic impact per year for Spalding County.

Melin was stunned. His ground is hilly. "I thought it was impossible. A mistake. Why build an airport in hills? I couldn't imagine the amount of dirt moving and earthworks and boxing creeks it'd take to build an airport on my land. I mean, it even requires moving power lines and a gas line."

No matter. Melin's land is open and near town. Case closed, in the county's eyes.

"We're an old mill town. There's plenty of other spots that are flatter, but they don't want to deal with the legalities and paperwork. Better to take prime agriculture ground preserved across my dad's lifetime at a cost of blood and tears. There's a lot of other dilapidated land around here, but it's not open and would require diligence and hassle. Better to steal mine. There was no public vote or opportunity to say no. Nothing."



IN THE WAY OF 'PROGRESS': "They've killed my farm," says Jeff Melin, who is losing roughly 225 acres, roughly half his operation held in the family for almost 80 years. "This will be the end of me." (Photo courtesy of Melin Farms)

Melin's 450-acre farm is split into four parcels. The county is taking a 225-acre strip from the middle. Irony upon irony, Melin already had willfully ceded ground to eminent domain. "Many times in the past, for genuine public good, we got out of

See AIRPORT, page 14

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True livestock stewards

By TRENT LOOS
Special to the Advocate
Courtesy of High Plains Journal



My observation is that the undergraduate culture at OSU is much deeper than simply a very competitive livestock judging team.

If you didn't attend a graduation in the past couple of weekends, it might be because you simply chose not to. It has been graduation central throughout the Great Plains of America, from kindergarten to high school, community college to graduate school.

We attended the ceremony at Oklahoma State University as my nephew Grayson Tedrow graduated with a degree in Animal Science.

In the past 20 years, I have spent quite a bit of time on the OSU campus and have spoken in front of many students and groups in Stillwater. In the world of junior livestock exhibitors, OSU is the dream destination for so many kids.

Today I thought I would dive into that a little more.

As for our chosen profession, the current culture for students interested in livestock agriculture at OSU could not be more right. That jumps out at you as they are home to the most recently crowned National Champion Livestock Judging team. That honor has about the same recruiting momentum as having a national champion football team; all the highly skilled talent wants to be a part of the program. My observation is that the undergraduate culture at OSU is much deeper than simply a very competitive livestock judging team.

The culture of the Stillwater community feels very rural and not like a city that's home to 50,000 plus. I have had good discussions through the years with folks about the size of the towns that are home to the Land Grant colleges and how it matters to the culture of the campus. Size matters but the folks that make up the administration and faculty are primarily responsible for creating and maintaining a culture that attracts or repels kids from their campus. These kids are likely less

concerned about the "quality of education" because they want to be at a place that offers great experiences and builds lifetime industry relationships.

OSU continues to have farms where kids get hands on experience. Livestock produced at this college compete at events around the nation. On the first day in the area, I heard about a "fantastic York boar" that was raised on the farm. Yes, it is important for this segment of college students to get hands on as much as possible. Learning in the classroom is essential but learning by doing is not some outdated concept here.

I learned a couple of things this week that I did not know about OSU. It was founded in 1890 while Oklahoma was still a territory. It did not become a state until 1907. With the introduction of the Morrill Act of 1862, Oklahoma was able to create Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. From the OSU website, I found this very interesting:

OAMC's first students assembled for class on December 14, 1891, even though there were no buildings, no books, and no curriculum. The college's first students attended classes in the Stillwater Congregational Church. The original campus consisted of 200 acres of prairie that were donated by four local homesteaders. The college's first six graduates received their diplomas in 1896.

By the 1950s the college had grown substantially and in 1957 Oklahoma A&M became The Oklahoma State University for Agriculture and Applied Science.

For the record, 1950 was the same year that Colorado switched

from Colorado A&M to Colorado State University. They both cite the same reason which was to add liberal arts programs and get away from being viewed only as an "AGGIE" school. I contend that maybe these schools would be better off today if they specialized in ag and left the liberal arts to other colleges.

I do have one criticism for something I witnessed at OSU last week. We attended the College of Agriculture graduation and only heard the word "agriculture" used once and that was in "Welcome to the College of Agriculture graduation." I heard the word farm mentioned once by the Keynote Speaker who grew up on a farm. I never heard the word livestock or land mentioned once, but I heard innovation, technology and AI (and they were not talking about artificial insemination.)

I mentioned this to several faculty after the ceremony and their response was "Yes, that is the current culture." I contend that is the culture at all institutions of higher learning today and someone needs to address this. For quite some time we have witnessed Land Grant Colleges chasing cash instead of kids. That culture will catch up to all of them at some point but at least those still excited about the concept of "Go Pokes" have been able to rise above it all and maintain a welcoming culture for true livestock stewards.

Editor's note: Trent Loos is a sixth generation United States farmer, host of the daily radio show, Loos Tales, and founder of Faces of Agriculture, a non-profit organization putting the human element back into the production of food. Get more information at www.LoosTales.com, or email Trent at trentloos@gmail.com.

Tyson's multi-million-dollar beef settlement gets approval

A federal judge granted preliminary approval to a proposed \$47 million class action settlement between Tyson Foods and commercial and institutional indirect purchaser plaintiffs in the ongoing cattle and beef antitrust litigation.

In an order filed recently in the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota, Judge John Tunheim approved preliminary certification of a settlement class covering entities in the United States that indirectly purchased certain raw beef products sold by defendants between Jan. 1, 2015, and May 6, 2026, for use in commercial food preparation. The covered products include brisket, chuck, loin, rib and round cuts, excluding ground beef, trim, USDA Prime products and further processed items.

The settlement involves Tyson Foods Inc. and Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. Tyson did not oppose the motion for preliminary approval.

The plaintiffs in the case include restaurants, catering companies and other foodser-

vice operators alleging anticompetitive conduct in the fed cattle and beef markets.

The court approved a notice plan that includes direct mail and email notices, as well as publication notices for potential class members who cannot be identified individually. Settlement class members will have 75 days after notice dissemination to opt out, object or request to appear at the final fairness hearing.

The litigation against Tyson and other released parties will remain stayed pending final approval of the settlement. The order stated the settlement does not constitute an admission of wrongdoing or liability by Tyson.

The approval comes on the heels of the DOJ's doubling down on an ongoing investigation into Tyson, JBS, National Beef and Cargill. In a Monday press conference, the DOJ and USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins accused the "Big Four" of colluding to artificially raise beef prices.

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BARNs OF PIKE COUNTY

Neighboring Pike County barns have long history together

By CAROLYN ALLEN
Special to The Advocate

These two old barns on Hwy M in Hartford Township are neighbors and – if old newspapers are correct – both were built around the same time.

The year was 1939 and judging by all the buildings going up in the community, the Great Depression must've been receding. Google reports that in 1939 rural electrification was increasing, and the New Deal farm programs were contributing a bit to the farm economy.

One of these two big barns, however, was built out of necessity, rather than just the result of a better economy.

The large barn with the missing siding was apparently built by Eulah Lemasters. Eulah was born and raised in Pike County. He married Jewell Morris in 1925, and they moved to this farm right across the road from her parents – Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Morris.

After moving to the farm, he built a barn in 1930, but it was not this barn. The Bowling Green Times that year reported that he had the roof on his new barn and was “getting along nicely with his carpenter’s work.”

Then in 1935 he used his carpentry skills again – this time to build a new house after fire took the old one. The 1935 Vandalia Mail announced that Eulah Lemasters was building a new house on the farm because their home had been destroyed by fire earlier that year. They apparently lost many of their belongings in the fire as well.

The January 1936 Bowling Green Times reported the good news that the Lemasters had moved into their new house in time for Christmas in 1935.

Unfortunately, however, fate wasn't done with Mr. and Mrs. Lemasters. Just 4 years later an August issue of the 1939 Bowling Green Times reported that their 8-year-old barn had been struck by lightning and burned. It went on to say that they had to fight hard to save the new house.

The Vandalia Leader noted that it had been one of the best barns in the community, but as they did in 1935 with the house, they rebuilt the barn that same year.

A November issue of the 1939



NEIGHBORING BARNs: The Lemaster barn, left, and the Rutherford barn, right, were both built in the last 1930s. (Photos by Carolyn Allen)

Bowling Green Times reported that Eulah Lemasters had his new barn ready for the roof.

The barn may have been built for horses and mules because Eulah Lemasters is listed in several old newspapers buying and selling mules and saddle horses as well as draft horses. His father-in-law Oscar Morris was quite a horseman, so he might've steered his son-in-law in that direction.

After building 2 barns and a house on the farm and losing a barn and a house to fire, the Lemasters reconsidered farm life and moved to Vandalia around 1945.

Although this big old barn has seen better days, the current owner said that it is still solid inside and the rafters are good.

Just down the road from the Lemasters barn sits the other barn pictured - a big beautiful weathered barn that still maintains a hint of its previous color. It has fared a bit better than its neighbor over the years.

Pike County real estate records show the house on the farm being built in 1880, but newspapers indicate that this barn – like the Lemasters barn – was built in 1939 by then farm owner Lowell Rutherford.

In 1934, the Bowling Green Times recorded N. J. and Kate Rutherford transferring the farm to son L. E. (Lowell) Rutherford and his wife Lydia Belle. The Bowling Green Times called Rutherford an “industrious young farmer,” and old newspapers have him attending horse sales, buying and selling mules and sowing oats.

In addition to farming, Lowell Rutherford sawed wood and crushed rock for other people in the area. (Perhaps he was involved in sawing wood for the Lemasters barn.)

According to the 1939 Bowling Green Times, Lowell built the barn that year. The newspaper reported that he had

the foundation ready and was about to put up the frame in November of 1939.

The barn appears to have two separate sections, and the back section might've been built at a different time. There is also an addition on the side which may have been built later to accommodate farm machinery as agricultural mechanization increased fairly rapidly after 1939.

Although no longer in the Rutherford family, the barn is still in use in the current owner's cattle operation. Several

Rutherford grandchildren mentioned all the good times and memories they had on the farm. One mentioned climbing the silo to try to catch pigeons, while another reported that you could see Bowling Green from the top of the silo! (I'm guessing their mother and grandmother might have been unaware of this!)

While the 1939 Bowling Green Times answered the question of when the Lemasters and Rutherford barns were built, it also created a mystery. The newspaper mentioned three

barns – not just two.

In addition to the barns mentioned above it reported that Mr. Manion's barn – on the same road (Hwy M) and close to the Lemasters and Rutherford barns was almost completed as well.

James Manion apparently bought the farm across the road from the Rutherfords in 1937. According to census records he was a movie projectionist in St. Louis, so he probably did not live on the farm.

Another old newspaper noted that the barn was actually being built by Floyd Ash (a local carpenter) and his sons.

This is where the mystery comes in because I have been unable to locate the third barn. I'm guessing it has been torn down, but I'm hoping it is farther back in the trees and just not visible from the road.

If anyone has any information on the Manion barn – or any Pike County barn – I'd love to hear it!

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Agriculture shows 'resilience' to war as world meat prices hit record high

Global meat prices jumped for a fourth consecutive month in April, setting new record, according to data from the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Food Price Index.

The FAO Meat Price Index last month rose 1.2%, or 1.5 points on the gauge to 129.4 points. Meat prices are 6.4% higher than a year ago.

After hitting a record 127.9 points in September — following a summer of new record global meat prices — prices eased late last year. Following a recent low of 124.8 points in December, the upward trend resumed in January. March's revised meat prices were at 127.9 on the index, tied with the previous September record.

Higher global meat prices were broad based, with stable sheep meat the only major category that did not increase.

Beef prices set a new record, with stronger exports from boosting prices in Brazil with "limited supplies of slaughter-

ready cattle, reflecting ongoing herd rebuilding," the FAO said in its analysis. Strong demand in China undergirded global beef prices, as exporters race to fill the country's new tariff-rate quotas.

Seasonal demand in Europe fueled an increase in pork prices, though price levels were lower in Brazil amid plentiful supply.

Stronger poultry demand in African markets outweighed a loss of demand in the Middle East, resulting from conflict-related trade disruptions in the region.

The overall Food Price Index rose 1.6% in April for the third straight month. More expensive vegetable oils, meat and cereals outweigh declining prices for dairy products and sugar. Global food prices are 2% above the April 2025 level but 18.4% below the March 2022 record.

"Despite the disruptions linked to the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, global agri-food systems continue to show resilience," FAO Chief Economist

Máximo Torero said.

The most direct impact from the conflict was seen in vegetable oils, with the

Strait of Hormuz closure boosting speculation on biofuels.

— Meatingplace.com

AIRPORT from page 11

the way when roads were widened, because we cared about people's safety. This is not that. This is greed and power."

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"They dragged it out, year after year, and never let you know what was really going on," Melin contends. "They never listened. They never communicated with us face to face. They didn't come to my house. They didn't seek me out. They didn't come find me and say anything. They sent a few letters and made their announcements."

"It was shoddy. No matter what I said, they'd respond, 'We just have to keep on doing studies.' This was a foregone conclusion, but they pretended otherwise. They didn't even know there were five gas lines under me and were going to put hangars on top of them."

Money doesn't replace lifeblood, but Melin assumed he'd receive a "fair price" for his land.

Melin had fair reasoning behind his assumption: According to the county, there was nowhere else to build an airport presented as indispensable and necessary. Arguably, Melin was sitting atop the most vital land in Spalding County.

"Nope. They wouldn't give me an honest dollar."

Like It or Else

Every year, Melin poured in money to improve his land and soils. Fertilizer, lime, weed control, and myriad other management costs—even foot patrol with a backpack sprayer to kill thistle. "None of that goes into their valuations. All I can do about value is look around and make reasonable judgements based on how much got paid recently for land recently around me. There was an old cattle farm right down the road that we did business with for years. It was 100 acres, fenced and cross-fenced, and sold for \$75,000 an acre to Georgia Power for a substation. The owner got \$7.5M."

"About 2 miles from me, the county bought a 29-acre school site and paid \$14,000 per acre about 22 years ago: \$420,000," he adds.

However, according to Melin, Spalding County offered a fraction of what the school property brought per acre. "I'm getting lowballed with a percentage of what the other properties sold for, but I can't refuse the offer. Don't tell me about federal guidelines and fair market value. I have eyes. I can smell corruption and manipulation. Doesn't mean I can prove it, but it's right in front of my face."

"It just doesn't seem like America when

someone shows up and says, 'We're taking your land for a set price, and you'll like it or else.'"

Farmer In the Way

According to schedule, construction of the new Spalding County Airport will begin in 2026 and conclude in 2031. Within proximity of Melin's farm, a groundbreaking ceremony is imminent.

"The lieutenant governor, state officials, politicians, and county commissioners will all be there, backslapping, grinning, and congratulating each other," Melin notes. "Not a one of them can look me in the eye. Can you imagine if eminent domain was used to take their land to park a jet? No, you can't imagine such, because that would never happen to them."

"But I'm just a farmer in their way. They're happy to take my land and call it 'progress and public good.' Force me to sell, take my land, and fly in the billionaires and big companies."

Grass and dirt in a forced exchange for concrete and asphalt. A farm legacy erased by county, state, and federal seizure. "They're taking my farmland so rich men can have hangars for their jets," Melin concludes. "That sound like the 'public good' of eminent domain?"

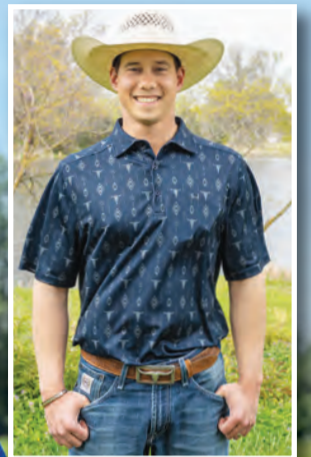
For more from Chris Bennett (@ChrisBennettMS or cbennett@farmjournal.com or 662-592-1106)

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Livestock News & Notes.....

Cargill invests \$5 million in Dodge City childcare

Major beef packer Cargill has announced the groundbreaking of the Full Circle Childcare Center in Dodge City, Kan., "as part of a broader effort to help address workforce challenges tied to childcare access."

Cargill, the second-largest privately held company in the U.S., operates one of the nation's largest beef processing plants in Dodge City, with a capacity of 6,000 head per day.

Cargill provided \$5 million toward the new center's total \$6 million in funding. The new center is expected to provide more than 100 childcare slots and will include extended and 24-hour care to support workers and their families, especially those with nontraditional schedules. The center is expected to open in July 2027.

"At Cargill, we believe strong communities are essential to a strong workforce. Access to childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing families today, and it plays a critical role in supporting working families and strengthening local economies," said Jeremy Burr, general manager of Cargill's Dodge City beef plant.

"We're proud to partner with Dodge City and others to invest in a solution that will support families and benefit the broader community for years to come."

Senate Republicans introduce measure aimed at 'dark money' in lawsuits

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and Sens. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., John Kennedy, R-La., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, have introduced legislation that would require disclosure of third-party litigation funding in mass tort and class action lawsuits, including funding tied to foreign entities.

The proposed Litigation Funding Transparency Act would require parties to disclose when a commercial enterprise, foreign state, foreign person or sovereign wealth fund provides litigation financing or stands to receive compensation tied to the outcome of a case. The bill also would prohibit third-party funders from influencing litigation strategy or settlement negotiations or accessing protected discovery materials.

Grassley said the measure was intended to increase oversight of litigation financing arrangements that lawmakers said can influence

court proceedings without public scrutiny.

The legislation comes amid ongoing disputes in protein antitrust litigation involving litigation funder Burford Capital and meat companies including Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride.

Tyson last year accused Burford and affiliate Carina Ventures of improperly interfering in settlement negotiations tied to broiler chicken antitrust claims brought by Sysco Corp. Tyson alleged Burford influenced Sysco to abandon a proposed settlement in order to secure a larger return on its investment. Burford denied the allegations and moved to dismiss Tyson's counterclaim.

Earlier this year, the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a lower-court ruling that had enforced a proposed \$50 million settlement between Pilgrim's Pride and Sysco in broiler chicken price-fixing litigation. The appeals court found material terms remained unresolved and noted Burford had objected to the settlement before Sysco later assigned claims to Carina Ventures.

The proposed legislation is backed by groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Property Casualty Insurance Association, National Insurance Crime Bureau and High Tech Inventors Alliance.

Does 'tabletop silage' have potential?

University of Missouri Extension agricultural systems technology specialist Rusty Lee calls it "tabletop silage," putting milo residue on the menu for livestock.

Lee and his son, William, are strong supporters of standing milo grazing. They've used milo in their diversified farm operation in east-central Missouri for about 14 years.

The younger Lee is an MU master's student and an employee of the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. His supervisor, Tim Reinbott, is communications and construction services director for the Missouri Agriculture Experiment Station. In the past year, the Lees teamed up with Reinbott on further on-farm research.

One experiment involves making "tabletop silage." The Lees took milo stalks left behind by the combine, fed them through a wood chipper and bagged them in airtight plastic bags to ensile them. After processing, the silage is tested for nutrient value.

The Lees want to find a way to better use crop byproducts that would otherwise go to waste.

Typically, ruminants go for the high-nutrition milo head, which is filled with energy and protein, and leave behind the stalk and valuable nutrients.

If successful, the Lees will have found another way to reduce feed costs by using milo as a winter-feeding strategy. "We're scrapping for an opportunity," says Rusty. "This byproduct has the potential to be of better quality than low-quality fescue hay." And in times like recent Missouri droughts, scrapped milo stalks could keep producers from turning to low-quality, high-priced hay as a last resort to feed herds.

Milo stalks can provide a valuable source of energy when supplemented by protein and other nutrients.

The elder Lee has created YouTube videos and publications for MU Extension. He also is participating in webinars for other midwestern land grant universities on why milo grazing saves money and labor as a winter-feeding option for ruminants.

Related video from MU Extension: "Milo Grazing: Alternative Winter Feeding Strategy," https://youtu.be/cFEeFfj_Dt0

Visit MU Extension's website for more information on milo grazing.

Jack Link's boosts executive team

Jack Link's Protein Snacks has named Jeff Caswell president of the company's North American division.

Caswell brings decades of experience in building and scaling major food brands, having served in leadership roles across companies like General Mills

and Tyson Foods.

He also has served as CEO for Sabrosura Foods and most recently Mid America Pet Food.

"Jeff is a proven leader with deep experience leading food and consumer packaged goods companies across large, complex organizations and highly entrepreneurial environments," Link Snacks CEO Troy Link said in a LinkedIn post. "He brings strong understanding of consumer behavior, brand building, and what it takes to grow business in competitive categories."

The meat snack category is booming, with a 6.6% growth rate in 2025 and forecast to reach \$22 billion in 2026.

CEO: Pricy beef moving McDonald's toward more chicken, 'elevated' burgers

McDonald's efforts to balance prices and value in the face of more expensive inputs and inflation-stressed consumers is leading the chain to upgrade burgers even as chicken takes up more menu space, according to CEO Chris Kempczinski.

He went viral recently in a video promoting McDonald's newly introduced Big Arch, drawing social media ridicule for taking a dainty bite. Bosses from competing chains made videos chowing down on their own sandwiches, but the hoopla ultimately dramatically raised awareness of the new burger.

"There's a group of consumers out there who want a really big burger that's a half pound of beef in the Big Arch," Kempczinski said in a recent video interview with the Wall

Street Journal.

"As you look at, you know, what consumers were buying, and perhaps other places, fast casual restaurants or even fine dining or full dining, there's a desire to have sort of an elevated burger experience. And I think what we've done with the Big Arch, the bun, sauces that we have with it, the crispy onions, all those things. That was for us, a way to offer that more elevated burger experience."

Beef prices are at record highs, with increased supplies potentially years away.

"There's been quite a bit of cost inflation, both on the input side, so food and packaging, those costs are up pretty significantly," Kempczinski said. "Burgers and beef ... has probably been one of the most hard-hit areas, and then you also had quite a bit of labor inflation that's happened."

McDonald's has been steadily adding chicken items to its menu for years, in part to manage input costs. Its expansion this year of value menu items has also been chicken-centric.

"It's typically at a lower price point, so it does work well with the value menu," Kempczinski said. "But I think also, again, for us it's following what the customer wants. Chicken is growing faster globally than beef, and so for us, we're always following what the consumer is wanting. And right now we're getting a really strong demand signal from the consumer, which is they want more chicken products. And we're rising to the occasion."

Many of the preceding items were taken from [Meetingplace.com](https://www.meetingplace.com)



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Meat industry reacts to federal probe of beef processing concentration

The meat industry offered mixed reactions following a federal announcement of expanded scrutiny into competition and concentration in cattle and beef markets, with trade groups and producer advocates diverging on the causes of current market conditions.

The Meat Institute pointed to tight cattle supplies as the primary driver of market dynamics, citing historically low herd levels and strong consumer demand.

"We agree with the Trump Administration that a competitive meat and poultry industry that sustains rural communities is essential," said Julie Anna Potts, president and CEO of the group. "Facts are clear: America's cattle herd is at its lowest level since the 1950's."

Potts said packers have been paying record prices for cattle due to limited supply, adding that "beef packers, large and small, have been losing money nearly every month for the last

18 months." The group declined to comment directly on the Justice Department's investigation.

Federal officials from the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the White House outlined ongoing efforts to examine market concentration during a joint press conference Monday, signaling a heightened focus on antitrust enforcement in the sector.

Producer group R-CALF USA welcomed the announcement, calling it a significant step toward addressing long-standing concerns about consolidation.

"Today's joint press conference was unprecedented. It demonstrated how seriously the administration is taking the ongoing problem of concentration in cattle and beef markets," said Bill Bullard.

R-CALF representatives argued that consolidation has reduced competition and

harmed producers over time.

"Farmers, ranchers, and American consumers have suffered for too long at the hands of consolidated power," said Shad Sullivan, citing a decline of more than 665,000 beef cattle operations since 1980.

Bullard said the group supports the administration's call for whistleblowers to come forward as part of the investigation.

"We are extremely grateful that we have an administration that is committed to reforming our markets, reversing the downward trajectory of our cattle inventories ... and ensuring that consumers are not forced to pay monopoly-controlled prices for their beef," he said.

The contrasting responses highlight a broader divide within the industry, with packers emphasizing supply constraints while independent producers point to consolidation and market power as key drivers of pricing and profitability.

China's stance on US beef blockade clarified

After more than a year of near-zero U.S. beef exports to China, trade access has been restored.

According to a fresh update from the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), China's General Administration of Customs (GACC) granted a five-year registration extension to 425 U.S. beef establishments in China's Food Import Food Establishment (CIFER) system. Last year, China did not renew export licenses amongst a historic trade war with the United States, and U.S. processors lost more than \$1 billion in beef exports.

Additionally, USMEF noted that 77 new U.S. beef establishment registrations have been added to the CIFER system with an effective date of May 15, 2026, and registrations are valid for five years. There are 38 beef establishments which remain suspended, and of the suspended facilities, 25 were also expired and are now renewed, but remain ineligible for export.

Iowa packing plant sustains fire

Agri Star Meat & Poultry LLC in Postville, Iowa, sustained a small fire early Wednesday May 13.

No one was injured in the fire, which occurred about 2 a.m. in the plant's boiler room and was contained to that area, according to local reports.

At least five fire crews

"China's renewal of U.S. beef establishments is excellent news for the U.S. beef industry and for the customers in China who are anxious to resume purchases," USMEF noted. "This major positive development also comes ahead of China's huge SIAL food show, opening this weekend in Shanghai."

Throughout this week, confusion reigned regarding the beef trade amidst President Donald Trump's summit meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, China, with inconsistent rumors and updates occurring between the two countries.

The China Import Food Enterprise Registration (CIFER) system requires registration with the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) for all food manufacturers exporting into the country.

As the second Trump administration's trade war ramped up, China abruptly canceled U.S. beef facilities' registrations in March 2025, exploiting an

unrecognized loophole in the previous Phase One agreement. The action locked American exporters out of the world's largest beef import market, costing \$1.1 billion in U.S. sales compared to 2024.

Before Trump's China trip, the administration insisted trade would be on the agenda, alongside the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz and longstanding tensions over Taiwan.

Beijing imposed tariff-rate quotas this year that are poised to impose a 55% tariff on major exporters Brazil and Australia, likely by August at the latest, which could set the stage for U.S. beef to return to the Chinese market in the second half of 2026.

– Meatingplace.com

A Farm Bill for North Missouri

By REP. SAM GRAVES

Congressman, 6th District of Missouri

Farming isn't just a way to make a living. It's a way of life—one that I've been blessed to share with my family.

Growing up, I never dreamed I'd be a Congressman. All I wanted to do was farm, but when I came back from college at the height of the 1980s farm crisis, I learned pretty quickly just how precariously our lives were held in the hands of a few politicians and bureaucrats in Jefferson City and Washington, DC. I knew I couldn't sit down and shut up. I've never been good at that. I knew I needed to do something, fix things, and help keep this dream alive, not just for my family, but for the millions of family farms all over this country, just like us.

I answered the call to serve in the Missouri House, the Missouri Senate, and eventually the United States Congress because I knew we needed leaders who would stand up for Missouri farmers, and I knew if I couldn't, who would?

A lot has changed since then. I've been proud to be a part of getting four Farm Bills signed into law, which strengthened crop insurance into the bedrock program it is today, built pathways for young Americans to get into farming, and shifted conservation efforts away from locking up productive acres and into programs that actually help farm families better the environment while farming.

We've made a lot of progress, and just today, we passed another Farm Bill through the House that will help speed up disaster relief for farmers, while protecting crop insurance and further strengthening the beginning farmer and voluntary conservation programs we've worked so hard to build. More than that, though, it takes major steps to challenge the Chinese shell companies and solar developers seeking to scoop up our farmland, and it codifies the Rural Hospital Technical Assistance Program Act, which will help keep rural hospitals open and serving everyone in our rural communities, including farmers.

Farming has never been easy, but it's always been worth the blood, sweat, and tears. Since I first got elected to Congress, I haven't taken a dime from any farm programs, but I know just how important these programs and the Farm Bill are for farm families in North Missouri and across our great country. I've been proud to fight to protect this way of life.

As we look to the future, I know that the challenges facing family farms in North Missouri are great, but I also know that the values that I've spent my life working to protect are alive and well. My original goal of standing for Missouri farmers has never wavered and I'll always be proud of what we've been able to get done, just like we did with the Farm Bill this week.

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Ground beef demand has outstripped supply, we need to manage smartly

By STEVE DITTMER
Executive Vice President
Agribusiness Freedom Foundation

It was announced Tuesday (May 12) that President Trump had delayed the pausing of tariffs on beef imports that had been reported as expected Monday, May 11). Was rancher resistance the reason for the delay?

If so, is there no one at USDA with authority that understands how the beef production chain works?

We've spent decades trying to get realism and actual facts into the minds and lexicon of American cattlemen; specifically, how the beef production chain actually works and how everyone can benefit from making the chain work better.

That's not to say the chain works well for everyone all the time. It is rare when all segments of the industry are making money at the same time.

We were on the committee that fashioned the first industry Long Range Plan about 1982, which was the first effort, under the auspices of the Beef Industry Council at the National Live Stock & Meat Board, to examine what all segments of the industry needed to do to serve the consumer better and make the beef industry more profitable.

Then there was the landmark Strategic Alliances study under the auspices of the check off that demonstrated how much money the industry was leaving on the table by not properly managing, coordinating and cooperating in the production chain. We were also around when Chuck Schroeder took over as CEO at NCA and spearheaded the effort to get that group on the road to asking ourselves at every decision point how it would make things better for the consumer's experience with our product.

We have an industry Long Range Plan now that guides everything the Cattlemen's Beef Board, the NCBA and state affiliates and beef councils do now.

We've made a lot of progress in the last 40 years, yet we still have people who don't put the consumer first, don't think about what's good for the long-term industry success, don't under-

We've made a lot of progress in the last 40 years, yet we still have people who don't put the consumer first, don't think about what's good for the long-term industry success, don't understand how the big picture fits together and how the complex beef production chain operates.

stand how the big picture fits together and how the complex beef production chain operates.

Trump was supposed to sign an executive order pausing the tariffs on imported beef on Monday. But that was delayed. Media stories, in covering the story, had said they would expect ranchers to vigorously protest importing more beef.

The stories we read didn't mention names but we would have expected Bill Bullard, like before, to be one of the loudest voices of protest.

Yet Reuters news service quoted Bill as having said something that seems to contradict the position that imports are somehow damaging to the cattle industry.

"We've had record imports for the past three years and at the same time consumers continue to pay record prices for beef," he added.

Wonder if Bill will complain he was misquoted. But the statement is correct.

R-CALF has been a perfect example of a group fixated on only the cow/calf segment of the beef production chain. They have been very proud of explaining that they represent the cow/calf segment only, as opposed to those people who consider themselves part of the beef industry. They pooh-poohed the NCA's name change to National Cattlemen's BEEF Association. The name was purposely chosen to reflect the recognition of the total beef industry, not just the cow/calf segment.

Of course, there's R-CALF's ferocious vision of not cattle but packers as the ones having horns, cloven feet and a forked tail.

So it's the combination of their disregard for other segments of the industry and lack of understanding or regard for how the chain fits together that per-



meates their caterwauling about damage to the industry when that's not really the case. And then, of course, politicians and bureaucrats pick up the wrong cues from them because they lay claim to representing all cattlemen.

R-CALF is not the only group of this type. There are others along the fringe but they are just that -- the fringe that doesn't see or care about the big picture.

We bring this all up as explanation as to why some cattlemen object to importing lean beef so that we can mix it with 50/50 trim to make ground beef. They don't seem to understand that tons and tons of trim would be going into the pet food supply if we had nothing lean to mix it with for ground beef.

That's not to say that we can use imported lean without standards. It has to come from a USDA or USDA equivalent inspection system, from a country with a government that adheres to standards and disease protocols.

But drastically cutting the total supply of ground beef and bumping prices up drastically for our most popular product (and about 38 percent of our carcass) is not a way to keep happy customers. Just because our decades of research and promotion efforts and industry management and genetic improvement have resulted in beef demand that has been truly astonishing doesn't mean the well has no bottom.

Some cattlemen, like those we've mentioned above and others, are expert at cutting their nose off to spite their face. Cutting off imports so that cull cows and bulls bring incredibly

See BIG PICTURE, page 19

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Digging Deeper....

By JUSTIN ANGELL

Thank you for all the kind comments from those of you who enjoyed trip highlights. My biggest vacation takeaway is that anyone interested in history, architecture, Christianity and/or Catholicism should spend at least a week or maybe two in Italy. History, art, architecture, Roman archaeological remains are everywhere.

I will also have to say I'm not a foodie or a wine connoisseur, but I will guarantee you the food and the wines of Italy are wonderfully healthful and delicious. I was on full feed for three weeks and I only gained 2 pounds. Walking 13,000 steps a day probably helped in that weight control effort.

By far the greatest part about Italy is the beautiful Italians. Greece and Portugal were nice stops along the way home, however we never left Lisbon or Athens, so I have no real opinion about the true flair of either country.

The last impression that I have from this vacation is the same I have after every vacation. My favorite turn is when I turn into my driveway and my favorite sight to see is my home and our cows. We live in one of the best places in the world and I am always happy to be home.

I love optimism and I love this country. I watched Maria Bartaromo interview Chris Wright; our secretary of energy. Chris Wright is a superstar and one of the best energy secretaries we've ever had at a time when that is very important. I learned several things while watching this interview. Among those things, most interestingly, the USA is now the largest oil exporter in the world, exporting more oil than Saudi Arabia and Russia combined. For context, the USA produces 24 million barrels of oil per day, while Saudi Arabia produces 10.9, Russia 10.5, Iran 4.6 and Venezuela only 1.1 million barrels per day.

Chris Wright highlighted how this administration is willing to endure temporarily higher energy prices to solve a 47-year-long problem. He assured the audience that "despite many selling pessimism and doomism, dawn is coming to America soon.

Growth, Opportunity and Optimism will return. America's future is bright, soon it's going to be time to build big things again. Highway systems, cities, and whole new industries are coming soon.

Another problem that needs to be solved is the Ukraine Russian conflict. Throughout history, wars have been won when one side develops a technology that tips the scale to victory. Examples of this would be developing iron weapons, the long bow, stirrups and saddles for horses, gunpowder, cartridge ammunition, repeating weapons and machine guns to eventually nuclear weapons. You get the point.

I believe we may be witnessing one such moment in history due to Ukrainian development of land, sea and air drone weapons. Against all odds, the Ukrainian command of drone warfare is tipping that conflict towards victory for the underdog Ukrainians. Russia has a massive population advantage over Ukraine, 145 million vs 38 million. Russian military strategy, like during World War II, is simply overwhelming their adversaries by throwing hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers at them.

Unlike their success against Nazi Germany and Napoleon before that, using this meat grinder tactic against Ukraine has been disastrous and a tragic loss of lives on both sides. Russia thought they had more soldiers than Ukraine had bullets, but strategic calculations never considered small, inexpensive drones that can kill from a distance while keeping the drone operator safe.

Introduction and development of sophisticated drones has proven the Russian meat grinder strategy to be severely flawed. Currently, Ukraine is killing and wounding more soldiers than Russia can recruit with recent casualty's ratios being 17:1. During the entire Vietnam conflict, the United States suffered about 55,000 casualties, the Ukrainians are now killing 60,000 Russians every two months.

Besides the growing possibility of a long range drone attack on his residence, Putin has developed a righteous fear of his own people as more and

more information leaks to the people of Russia about the catastrophe Ukraine has become for them. His "special military action" has also caused a lot of powerful oligarchs in Russia to lose a tremendous amount of money. Putin's days may be numbered.

The biggest problem yet to be solved is how to fix our broken money. This country, along with every other government in the world is printing new money for social program obligations, military expenditures, interest, and other government bills. 40% of the dollars in circulation had been printed since Covid.

Fiat money historically has a 100% failure rate. Central Banks across the world continue to buy gold, inflation is heating up, exasperated by higher energy prices caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Gold and silver will continue to increase in value but most of what we will see and have seen is the dollar's loss of purchasing power.

For those of you too young to remember Paul Volker and Ronald Reagan, you cannot see any similarities between the 1970s and now like the wise old surviving veteran farmers and ranchers remember vividly. For a lot of different reasons but primarily inflation, gold prices rose from \$35 an ounce in August 1971 to \$850 in January 1980 for an approximately 45% annualized return. The 12% inflation was stopped when Paul Volker as Fed chairman, initiated interest rates that eventually reached 20%.

Can you imagine 20% interest on all your operating notes today? I do not want to be one of those people selling doomism, especially at a time where I believe we are on the cusp of an economic revival of this country, but you cannot cure a problem if you don't first correctly diagnose it.

Briefly touching on one other subject from past editions, is my comments about graphene and a small company called Hydroraff Clean Power (HGRAF) as perhaps an investment opportunity. Hydroraff Clean Power has invented a way to produce pure graphene economically and unlimited amounts. I am convinced now more than ever that graphene, discovered in 2004, will finally now be able to change the world.

Exploiting the potential of graphene will enable the potential of AI to be realized. Graphene is 200 times stronger than steel, bulletproof, conducts electricity so efficiently it does so without creating heat, and is carbon based, which makes it completely environmentally safe and carbon-based materials can be added and infused into almost every product we make without any issues. To any product we add or infuse graphene, the product performance is drastically enhanced.

A real-world example happening now with graphene would be at Quikrete. America's largest concrete company has now completed preliminary research on graphene enhanced concrete. Researchers measure concrete strength by using a core sampling machine that presses a core sampler onto a slab until it fractures the concrete and punches through measuring the amount of pressure required for the concrete fracture and allowing a core sample to be obtained. Conducting this test, for the first time, the core sample press could not fracture the graphene-enhanced concrete. Imagine the efficiencies gained if you could use 1/3 less concrete and have the same strength.

Graphene is now or soon will be available as an option when you order Quikrete Concrete. Besides all these industrial benefits, the most important proper-

ty of graphene is its ability to conduct electricity. Graphene is the most conductive substance known to man and can conduct electricity without producing heat. Imagine a product that has the potential to replace silicon in computer chips.

If you would like to have an optimistic day, just google "graphene". Most of the information you'll find about graphene itself is interesting and accurate. You will however also find that many of the articles talk about the promise of graphene, but the roadblock until recently is the lack of our ability to produce graphene on an industrial scale both efficiently and economically. The company Hydrograph Clean Power (HGRAF) has patented a graphene production process that claims to solve this problem.

The Publisher tells me I can't recommend individual stocks for investing, but I can tell you after looking into it for myself, I have invested some money in the Hydrograph Clean Power for myself starting back in February of this year. I'm not recommending that you invest in it, as I don't know your finances and situation... however, I am recommending that you look into it for yourself as an exciting distraction that may lead to something else.

Like the 2000 Internet boom and bust, there will be many winners and many losers. Sometimes being early with a call is beneficial, but other times being very early is the next thing to be wrong. Hydrograph Clean Power is absolutely a very early call that will have a currently unknown outcome. All I know for sure is I am confident that graphene will eventually change the world and the next few years will be very interesting.

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Eastern Missouri Commission Company, Bowling Green
Market Report for Friday, May 15, 2026
Receipts: 717 Week ago: 1238 Year ago: 1688

Friday's auction was a Special Bred Cow /Pair's sale with several heifer pairs the main attraction selling with moderate to good demand, also several young bred cows and heifers in the 2nd stage. Feeder calves were lightly tested selling in small packages and groups. Slaughter steers and heifers sold 2.00-3.00 higher with slaughter cows trading mostly firm to 5.00 higher with several stick out cows selling sharply higher at 200.00-203.50.

Feeder Steers: Medium and Large 1-2 - Few 400-460 lbs 530.00-569.00; few 500-600 lbs 445.00-480.00.

Market Reports

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Feeder Heifers: Medium and Large 1-2 - Pkg 420 lbs 525.00; 450-500 lbs 462.00-472.50; 800-815 lbs 337.50-347.50; pkg 953 lbs 284.00..

Feeder Bulls: Medium and Large 1 - Scarce.

Replacement Cows- Bred Heifers: Medium and Large 1/1-2 - 1050-1150 lbs 2nd stage 4025.00-4450.00; Bred Cows-3-4 yrs 1170-1400 lbs 2nd stage 3750.00-4000.00; 6-7 yrs 1190-1400 lbs 2nd stage 3050.00-3200.00.

Pairs - Heifer Pairs: Medium and Large 1-2 - 950-1050 lbs w/baby calves 5100.00-5700.00; 6-7 yrs 1350-lbs w/150 lb calves 4985.00; Aged Cows 1180-1350 lbs w/150 lb calves 3750.00-4400.00.

Slaughter Cows: Premium White (65-70% lean) Average dressing, 179.00-186.00; high dressing, 190.50-203.50; and low dressing, 172.00-174.00.

Breakers (70-80% lean) Average dressing, 171.00-183.00;

high dressing, 185.00-200.00; and low dressing, 157.00-167.00.

Boners (80-85% lean) Average dressing, 170.00-182.00; high dressing, 183.00-196.00; and low dressing, 153.00-168.00.

Lean (85-90% lean) Average dressing, 154.00-168.00; high dressing, 170.00-180.00; and low dressing, 135.00-155.00. Shelly/Thin 115.00-130.00.

Slaughter Bulls: Yield Grade 1-2 - 1400-2500 lbs, 198.00-215.00; 217.50-241.00.

Slaughter Steers and Heifers: (25 hd) Choice 2-3 - 1200-1450 lbs 256.00-260.00.

Source: MO Dept of Ag-USDA Market News Service, Bowling Green, MO, Greg Harrison, Market Reporter 573-751-5618. 24 hour recorded report 1-573-522-9244

Pesticide poisoning symptoms can mimic flu **BIG PICTURE** from page 17

"Pesticides include chemicals used to control weeds (herbicides), insects (insecticides), rodents (rodenticides) or fungi (fungicides). If the word ends in 'ide,' it is likely a pesticide that can poison you if used incorrectly," says Rusty Lee who teaches pesticide courses for University of Missouri Extension.

Most pesticides pose little risk when used according to label instructions. But farmers and others who handle pesticides this spring should consider that they may be suffering from pesticide poisoning if they become ill after usage, says Lee.

Pesticide poisoning symptoms mimic flu symptoms such as headaches, body aches and diarrhea. But symptoms can last longer and be more severe. Onset can occur immediately or be delayed until weeks after exposure.

Some studies link Parkinson's disease to pesticide poisoning.

Tumors, miscarriages and breathing difficulties are among the long-term side effects. Pesticide exposure can present as an unexplained sulfur smell or a bitter taste.

The farming community is at the most risk for exposure, but home gardeners also face risk, says Lee. Residue left on lawns, plants, soil or spray equipment can present risks.

Many factors play into poisoning including the type of pesticide, strength of pesticide and how the pesticide entered the body.

Immediate pesticide poisoning symptoms include:

Neurological. Headaches, dizziness, weakness, fatigue, muscle twitching, trembling and mental confusion.

Gastrointestinal. Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and diarrhea.

Respiratory. Difficulty breathing, cough, chest discomfort and

excessive secretions from the mouth and nose.

Dermal/ocular. Skin irritation, rashes, excessive sweating and eye irritation.

Long-term problems can result from low levels of pesticide exposure over time. These include cancers, brain and nervous symptom damage, and birth defects, miscarriages and other fertility issues.

If you have immediate injury, take the label on the pesticide jug with you to the emergency room. Do not take the plastic jug, just the label, says Lee. The label will help emergency personnel know how to treat you.

If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the National Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for guidance. This number will direct your call to the nearest poison center, which is staffed on a 24-hour basis. Reach the Missouri Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 or

<https://MissouriPoisonCenter.org>.

higher prices for cow/calf producers is a recipe for a bridge too far. Slaughter cows are running from \$150/cwt. now. We import around 6 billion lbs. a year now. Processors don't import the lean beef just for the fun of it. They need it to meet demand.

How much do some ranchers want to get for their cull cows? \$250/cwt.? \$300? Do they really think there is no limit to what consumers will pay for ground beef? A couple going through the drive-through now has to have a plan to get out of there under \$30. Our total supply of beef is tight now and we're testing the limits of what consumers can pay. Will shoppers not flinch at ground beef at say, maybe, \$10 a pound, \$12, \$15 a pound? What if a trip through the fast food line costs more like \$45-55?

Cattle-Fax noted contributing factors to the lean shortage: non-fed slaughter is running five percent below last year; 90s trim is already at record levels, is now over \$400 and has been higher already; and if processors are short enough lean to be forced to use end meats from the carcass, Select grade cattle numbers are running more than one-third lower this year (down 250,000 so far).

Again, the Select percentage is a function of our success in producing Choice and Prime carcasses.

Imports run about 20 percent of our total beef production, higher than it used to be because

of our shortage of lean beef trim.

It would be fine if we produced all the lean beef and trim we needed. But Americans have a great taste for beef burgers and the demand has far outstripped supply. The great job the industry and the foodservice industry has done in developing a fast food and fast casual demand for beef burgers is a good "problem" for us to have. It has far exceeded what was expected 50 years ago. We should not waste the decades of hard work and the market we have created.

Part of the burgers' popularity is also due to other factors in our modern society: two-working-parent families with less time to cook; a cultural desire for eating and drinking and socializing away from home; a desire to eat out but limited budgets and the need to eat something tasty when traveling or doing business or errands too far away to go home to eat.

Cost and convenience runs through these factors and we need to make sure we don't overplay our hand. Ground beef has always been our hole card, the cut with taste, convenience, versatility and less expensive price point. And it's not like the chicken people are not after our market share. We need to keep our wits about this and manage

Chinese importers 'clamoring' for US beef

China's reentry into the market for U.S. beef exports will have a significant and rapid price feedback to the American industry from other markets, U.S. Meat Export Federation President CEO Dan Halstrom said.

He called it a "hidden benefit" from China's renewal of registrations for U.S. beef facilities as well as hoped-for resolution of suspensions of a significant number of plants. Most of the registrations were abruptly declared expired in March 2025 before being listed as renewed last week following a meeting in Beijing between U.S. President Donald

Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

"Simply having China in the market, because the product mix is pretty common across Asia — Japan, Korea, Taiwan, as well as China — you're going to see a halo effect on pricing for all of these markets," Halstrom said. "Items like short plate, for example, have the potential to have \$1 to \$2 per pound increases in price just from having China back on the world stage."

The renewals are for five years.

"This is great news," Halstrom said. "It's even better news for our customers in China who have

been clamoring to resume access to U.S. beef. These customers are ready, willing and able to go."

He praised the "persistence" of USDA and the U.S. Trade Representative.

"We've been pushing for a long time — a year — to USDA and USTR to prioritize beef access into China, and that's exactly what they have done," Halstrom said. "The beef industry is much better off today because of this announcement."

— Meatingplace.com

RESILIENCE from page 10

demand significant labor, so Bonacker is participating in a CRA project piloting virtual fencing collars that allow him to adjust grazing areas using a phone or computer rather than installing and moving temporary fence.

GPS-linked boundaries guide cattle movement, giving him the flexibility to fine-tune paddock size and recovery periods in response to weather and forage conditions—saving time while improving management.

Bonacker said access to trusted information through MU Extension made it easier to evaluate whether the technology fit

his operation before investing.

Bonacker's journey reflects how many Missouri producers adapt: start with a specific problem, test solutions close to home, measure results and expand what works.

Throughout that process, MU Extension and the Center for Regenerative Agriculture act as partners—bringing research into the field, convening peer networks and braiding together funding and technical support.

The result is practical change: farms better equipped to handle weather extremes, protect soil and water resources and remain economically viable.

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Monthly Sheep & Goat Market Reports

Sponsored by The Bank of Missouri

Montgomery County Livestock Auction, Montgomery City Market Report for Sheep & Goat Auction Thursday, May 14, 2026

Receipts: 1150 Last month: 819 Year ago: 800

Montgomery County Livestock held their monthly Sheep and Goat Sale Thursday, May 14 with a moderate to large offering of mostly lambs weighing 50-70 lbs. Slaughter lambs and feeder lambs sold sharply lower, mostly selling 60.00-90.00 lower than last month. Demand was moderate at best with the best demand on the slaughter lambs weighing 80-90 lbs which were not well tested with last month. Kid goats were not well tested with last month's light offering. Montgomery County holds their sheep and goat sale the 2nd Thursday of each month. Supply included: 7% Feeder Sheep/Lambs

(100% Hair Lambs); 86% Slaughter Sheep/Lambs (88% Hair Breeds, 12% Ewes); 7% Slaughter Goats (100% Kids).

SHEEP (prices per hundredweight)

Slaughter Lambs: Choice-Prime 1-3 – 50-70 lbs 260.00-315.00; 70-80 lbs 260.00-305.00; 80-90 lbs 315.00-340.00; Choice -1-2 – 50-70 lbs 230.00-245.00.

Feeder Lambs: Small and Medium 1 – 30-43 lbs 305.00-330.00.

Slaughter Ewes: Utility and Good 1-2 – 105-175 lbs 135.00-140.00, few Good 80-130 lbs 175.00-180.00; Cull and Utility 1-2 75-130 lbs 105.00-132.00.

Replacement Ewes: Scarce

GOATS: (prices per hundred weight)

Slaughter Goats: Market Kids: Selection 1 – 50-65 lbs 405.00-445.00; Selection 1-2 48-72 lbs 350.00-390.00; Selection 2-3 pkg 42 lbs 309.00.

Feeder Kids: Selection 1-2 – Scarce.

Slaughter Nannies: Scarce.

Replacement Nannies/Does: Scarce

Source: MO Dept of Ag-USDA Market News Service, Montgomery City, MO, Greg Harrison, Market Reporter

Nebraska city negotiating to acquire Tyson assets in wake of beef plant closing

The city of Lexington, Neb., is pursuing a deal to acquire and manage some of Tyson Foods assets after the meat company shuttered its plant there in January, according to Lexington City Council meeting minutes.

The city is negotiating with Tyson to take over the company's

local farmland, wastewater facility and "access to the rail spur that connects to the Union Pacific Railway," according to the council minutes.

Announced in November, Tyson Foods's decision to close the Lexington slaughterhouse, which had been the city's largest

employer with a workforce of 3,200.

As Meatingplace reported in January, an analysis by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln estimated the annual statewide economic impact of the closure at \$3.28 billion. The plant, which opened in 1990 in a converted

tractor factory, had the capacity to slaughter up to 5,000 head of cattle per day, or roughly 4.8% of total daily U.S. beef slaughter, according to the university.

U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) welcomed news of negotiations between Lexington and Tyson Foods.

"I'm encouraged to hear the

City of Lexington will acquire and manage Tyson-owned assets to boost economic and job opportunities in the area. I've been pushing Tyson for this move in the wake of their very sudden plant closure, which was devastating for the community," Fischer said.

- Meatingplace.com

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(15) Two year old Purebred Angus virgin bulls for sale. Good footed, gentle dispositions. Semen tested \$5000-\$5500 JK Ranches Griggsville, IL 217-491-4164

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Laugh Tracks in the Dust.....

Traumatic childhood

By MILO YIELD
Special to The Advocate

I've been at this weekly column writing bizness for more than 50 years. Sadly, that means that many of my early column readers are now reading from above the clouds.

It also means that many of my current readers have no way of knowing that my quirky ways trace back to a traumatic childhood growing up on a poor-soil, diversified farm in southeast Kansas.

So, I'm gonna try to bring those new readers up to date with some early childhood Yield family history.

My trauma started from the moment I wuz born in 1943. When I was born, the Yield family history notes that my ol' pappy, Czar E. Yield, wuz in the maternity waiting room with a couple of other nervous expectant fathers. Eventually, a nurse came into the waiting room and told one of the waiting guys he wuz the new father of a bouncing baby boy who weighed in at 8 pounds. There were calm congratulatory handshakes.

Soon thereafter, the nurse returned to the waiting room and informed the other guy that he wuz a new father of a healthy baby girl weighing 7 pounds. Again, there were calm congratulatory handshakes.

After a long wait, the doctor himself finally came back into the waiting room, wearing a frown and a long face. "Mr. Yield," he said, "Your wife just delivered a baby boy. But, I have to tell you that he weighs just 5 pounds and is yellow jaundiced. He'll survive OK, but it will be a bit of a struggle for him."

At that news, ol' Czar happily leaped out of his chair, yelled "Yee, haw!" and enthusiastically slapped the doctor on the back. He couldn't have looked happier.

The doctor wuz stunned. "Mr. Yield," he said, "How can you be so happy about the birth of such a puny son?"

"Well," Czar replied, "I've been farming these thin, rocky soils in southeast Kansas all my life and, when we farm here, we're happy just to get our seed back!"

A large part of my childhood trauma can be attributed to poverty. The Yields were a large poor family. We were so poor when I was growing up that when the wolf came to our door, we trapped and ate him.

In the summer, we survived largely on our huge garden. In fact, we ate so many tomatoes in the summer that my mama had to tie kerosene rags around my ankles to keep the big ol' tomato worms from eating me.

The most nutritious breakfast I had was on Sunday mornings when my folks let me sneak over to the neighbors and smell the oatmeal cooking vapors

through their kitchen window.

I had low self-esteem as a kid. And, here's why. I wuz at the bottom of the Yield totem pole. I wuz most pecked on in the family pecking order. Part of my trauma wuz becuz my folks paid my brothers and sisters pennies, nickels, and dimes to be good, but they would never pay me. When I asked why, they said, "Milo, it's because we know you'll be good for nothing."

As a family we relied a lot on wild game meat. Ol' Czar hunted ducks and geese whenever he could. When I wuz old enuf to notice, I realized that he never took a dog or a gun with him when he hunted ducks and geese, but he almost always came home with a big bunch of waterfowl to pluck.

When I asked him how he could kill waterfowl without a gun, he told me, "Well, son, we

Yields aren't the most handsome group. But, that's sometimes a good thing. I kill those birds with ugly. I get into my blind and when the ducks fly over I pop us and show 'em my face and they look down and fall right out of the air and I go pick them up.

"That sounds exciting," I told him. "I want to go with you the next time you go hunting."

"I'd like to, son," he replied. "But I can't take you along. You'd tear the meat up too bad!"

It didn't get any better as I was growing up. I was still not particularly handsome, so that always added to my inferiority complex. I think that complex is well justified because of the way my parents raised me.

We had a sheep flock and, when it wuz lambing time, I had one specific job that they required me to do with the

lambs an old ewe refused to claim. Ol' Czar made me get down on my hands and knees in the lambing pens so that the ol' reluctant ewes would take one look at me and eagerly accept the lamb they refused to claim. That early experience did nothing to build my personal esteem and confidence.

I also carried a lot of firewood for the stove. In fact, I wuz 10 before I realized that my middle name wuzn't "Fetchwood."

When I wuz a little kid, I got

lost at the County Fair once and I asked a deputy sheriff to help me find my parents. He looked at me and said, "Don't get your hopes up, kid. There are a lot of places for them to hide on a fairgrounds this big."

I'll continue with more Yield family history in future columns. For now, the words of wisdom for this week are: "Another name for a dating club for seniors is 'carbon dating.'" Have a good 'un.

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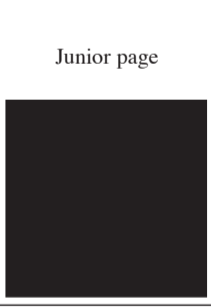


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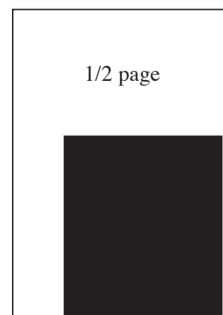
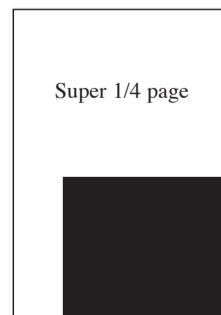
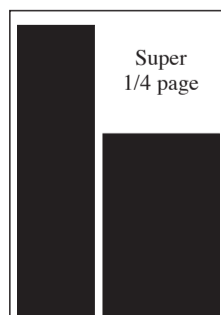
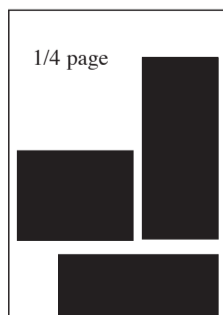
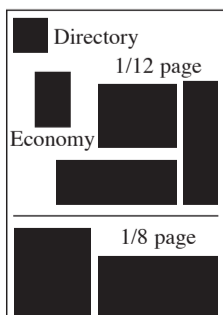
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		1/12 PAGE 1 col. x 6.5" 2 col. x 3.25" 3 col. x 2.25"	JUNIOR PAGE 4 col. x 13" 5 col. x 10.5"
		1/8 PAGE 2 col. x 4.75" 3 col. x 3.25"	FULL PAGE 5 col. x 15.25"
		1/4 PAGE 2 col. x 9.5" 3 col. x 6.25" 4 col. x 4.75"	COLUMN WIDTHS 1 column.....1.92" 4 columns.....8.17" 2 columns.....4" 5 columns.....10.25" 3 columns.....6.09"



Addressing consumer beef prices by analyzing the supply chain

Op-ed by BILL BULLARD
CEO, R-CALF USA

If we're to address retail beef prices, which are the prices consumers pay for beef, then we need to start at the retail beef market and work our way upstream into the beef supply chain.

We know that retail beef prices have been increasing for more than a decade, so let's determine how much of that increased beef price is attributable to higher input costs versus the concentrated retail sector's leverage over beef pricing.

Of course, the main input cost borne by retailers is the cost of the wholesale beef product purchased from the beef packer. This is a readily measurable cost as the U.S. Department of Agriculture publishes monthly wholesale and retail beef prices.

To begin, we need to determine how the retail sector's margins have changed over the past decade. The retail sector's margin is the difference between what the retailer pays for wholesale beef and the price the retailer charges to consumers.

For the first four years of the past decade, from 2016 through

We know that retail beef prices have been increasing for more than a decade, so let's determine how much of that increased beef price is attributable to higher input costs versus the concentrated retail sector's leverage over beef pricing.

2019, the retail sector's margins remained relatively constant and averaged about \$1,345 per head of cattle. Now this calculation is made by using the USDA's rule of thumb that it takes about 2.4 pounds of a standard animal to produce one pound of retail beef. So, a 1,200 lb. live steer would be expected to produce 500 lbs. of retail beef, and the per head calculations I am making are based on 500 lbs. of retail beef equaling one animal.

Keeping this factor constant will ensure that we can make a relatively accurate determination regarding the change in the retail sector's margins over time. So, at the beginning of the decade the retail sector's monthly margin averaged about \$1,345 per head. In 2020, the year of the COVID pandemic, the retail sector's average margin increased to \$1,440 per head, nearly a \$100 increase over the first four years

of the decade.

2020 was a pivotal year as the retail sector's margins increased significantly post 2020. For the next four years of the decade, from 2021 through 2024, the retail sector's margins increased to an average of \$1,703 per head, a \$358 increase from the first four years of the decade.

Then, in 2025, the retail sector's margins exploded to a monthly average of \$1,963 per head, an increase of \$618 per head above the decade's monthly average over the first four years.

And, this year, January 2026 through March, the retail sector's average monthly margin jumped to \$2,035 per head. This represents a \$595 increase since the COVID year and a \$690 per head increase over the first four years of the decade, 2016-2019.

Why did this happen? How is it that the retail sector has substantially increased its margins

during the past decade? Was it because cattle prices started clawing their way upward after 2020? Well, no. That couldn't be because the retail sector does not buy cattle.

What we're measuring is the difference between wholesale beef prices and the prices retailers charge consumers. Therefore, the cost of the retailer's main input cost is not the price of cattle, it's the price of wholesale beef.

What this tells us is that over the past decade, the retail sector has been progressively increasing its markup price above the wholesale beef price, which has significantly increased the retail sector's revenues.

Now, whether this progressive and substantial markup was due to increases in the retail sector's other input costs, such as increased labor, interest, transportation, promotion, and advertising costs, is unknown. But, this progressive markup, which is roughly a 50% markup over the past decade, warrants an investigation to determine if it is justified by inflationary factors, or if all or part of the markup was achieved through the retail sector's improper exercise of

market power.

We know that in today's market structure, cattle producers do not possess market power and do not have the opportunity to move the market, this is because they are widely dispersed and decentralized participants in the beef supply chain and are considered price takers.

But on the other hand, downstream beef packers and retailers are highly concentrated and do possess market power, which gives them the opportunity to move prices. Before policies are implemented to lower cattle prices in the hope that lower cattle prices translate into lower consumer beef prices, regulators and antitrust enforcers should first determine what percentage of increased retail beef prices is attributable to competitive market forces versus what is attributable to anticompetitive buying and selling practices of the concentrated beef packers and retailers.

We know, for example, that if the retailer margin was the same in March 2026 as it was in March 2016, then the average Choice retail beef prices would be \$1.40 per pound less than what they are today!

Changing Missouri weather fuels expanding tick populations in state

By LINDA WHELAN GEIST
University of Missouri Extension

Missouri's changing weather patterns are creating more favorable conditions for ticks, increasing concerns for the agricultural community and anyone who spends time in fields, forests or backyards.

Warmer winters, earlier springs and periods of high humidity allow ticks to survive in greater numbers, become active earlier in the year and remain active later into fall, says University of Missouri Extension state climatologist Zachary Leasor.

Milder winters boost tick survival

Traditionally, Missouri's cold winters helped reduce tick populations. That natural control is weakening as winters become more mild. In Missouri, the state's average wintertime temperature has been warmer than average eight of the last 10 years.

Blacklegged ticks, lone star ticks and American dog ticks—all common in Missouri—can survive winter conditions by sheltering under leaf litter, crop residue and snow cover, says University of Missouri Extension urban entomologist Emily Althoff.

When winter temperatures

rise above freezing, ticks can become active even in midwinter.

"These shifts are contributing to increased tick encounters and a growing risk of tick-borne diseases, including alpha-gal syndrome, across the state," says Althoff.

Earlier springs and longer tick seasons

For Missouri producers and outdoor enthusiasts, the most noticeable change may be that tick season starts earlier and lasts longer.

Ticks typically become active when temperatures reach about 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Missouri has experienced a very warm spring in 2026. Temperatures from Feb. 1 to April 15 have been about 8 F above average across the state, with March ranking as the state's fourth warmest on record.

With milder temperatures, ticks may begin actively seeking hosts, including wildlife, livestock and people, earlier than in the past. Activity can now extend well into late fall during mild years.

Wet conditions create ideal tick habitat

Ticks thrive in warm, humid environments. Periods of above-average rainfall, especially when combined with moderate tem-

peratures, create ideal conditions along field edges, wooded draws and fencerows commonly found on Missouri farms. After a dry winter, most of Missouri has had a rainy March and April as temperatures rose.

Lone star ticks, which are flourishing under warmer conditions, are linked to diseases such as ehrlichiosis and alpha-gal syndrome, a condition causing a red meat allergy.

Impacts on livestock and working animals

Ticks are not only a human health issue, says MU Extension state veterinarian Craig Payne.

Heavy tick infestations can reduce weight gain in cattle, transmit diseases and increase veterinary costs. Dogs that accompany farmers, hunters or hikers are also at risk and can bring ticks into homes and vehicles.

Tips for farmworkers

Manage vegetation by mowing field edges, trimming fencerows and reducing brush near barns and work areas to

help limit tick habitat.

Experts recommend wearing long sleeves, long pants and boots when working outdoors. Tuck pants into socks or boots and choose light-colored clothing to make ticks easier to spot. EPA-approved insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin or permethrin-treated clothing add an important layer of protection.

Perform tick checks at the end of each workday and remove attached ticks promptly.

Livestock and working dogs should remain on veterinarian-recommended tick prevention to reduce exposure and keep ticks from being carried into equipment, vehicles or homes.

Reducing tick exposure

MU Extension recommends several practical steps to reduce tick exposure:

- Wear long sleeves and light-colored clothing when working or recreating outdoors
- Use EPA-approved insect repellents
- Perform tick checks after time in fields, woods or tall grass

• Manage vegetation around homes, barns and campsites

• Keep dogs and working animals on veterinarian-recommended tick prevention

• Early tick removal significantly reduces the likelihood of disease transmission.

Resources

See related MU Extension publications available for free download:

• Ticks. Brief overview of common tick species in Missouri, tick-borne diseases and prevention and treatment of tick bites.

• Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases. A more detailed guide from MU's Integrated Pest Management program.

Related videos:

• Emily Althoff talks about ticks (YouTube short).

• MU researchers study ticks and alpha-gal syndrome (YouTube video).

• MU Extension information and resources on alpha-gal syndrome.

The Cattleman's Advocate is now available online!

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Got an idea for a story you'd like to see in The Advocate?

Drop us a line and let us know at: cattlemans@virtualimages.us

This cider-braised beef Tri-tip roast with carrots is tender and flavorful

Made and reviewed by CHARLOTTE ANGELL, rated by JON ANGELL For The Advocate

Jon's Critique: This was really good, but I haven't seen to many beef roast and carrots I didn't really enjoy. I'm not very familiar with the Tri-tip, but the beef in this one was very tender and flavorful all the way through.

In a former life, before blood sugar issues, I loved me some apple butter. A few bites hinted of apple butter and I thought that was kind of neat. It's easy to get in a rut with your menu, so give this one a try and mix it up.

Cider-braised beef Tri-tip roast From Half Baked Harvest Quick and Cozy

- 4-5 pounds Tip-tip roast
- Fine pink Himalayan salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons salted butter
- 2-3 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups apple cider, plus more as needed
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 3 cups dry white wine
- 1 1/2 pounds baby carrots
- 4-8 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 tablespoons apple butter
- Flaky sea salt, for serving

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Season Tri-tip with salt and pepper, then rub all over with the flour to coat. Heat a large Dutch oven over high heat. Add the butter and the onions and cook, stirring, until they are soft and beginning to color, about 5 minutes. Add 1/2 cup of the apple cider and season with salt and pepper. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the onions are evenly browned and most of the cider has evaporated, 5 to 8 minutes. Add the thyme and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Snuggle the Tri-tip in among the onions. Add the remaining 1 1/2 cups of cider and the wine and bring to a simmer over medium-heat, adding more cider if needed to keep the meat mostly covered. Arrange the carrots and garlic around the meat. Cover and carefully transfer to the oven. Bake until the meat is tender throughout, about 3 hours.

Increase the oven temperature to 425 degrees. Uncover the Tri-tip and coat the top of the meat with the apple butter. Continue to bake, uncovered, until the top is deeply caramelized, 20 to 30 minutes more, adding cider as needed to keep the onions moist but just barely covered with liq-

uid. Remove the Tri-tip from the pot, place on a cutting board, and tent with aluminum foil. Let stand 10 minutes. Using a sharp knife, slice the meat against the grain. Transfer to a platter. Sprinkle the meat with flaky salt and serve the onions, carrots, and pan juices on the side.



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Friday, June 12Special feeder sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, June 19Bred cow sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, June 26Special feeder sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, July 3NO SALE, Happy 250th Birthday to the USA!

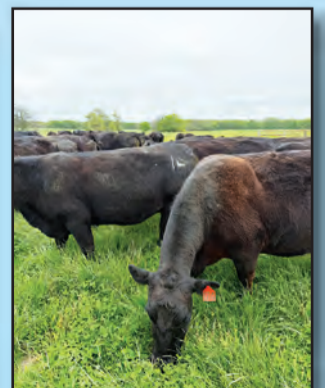


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