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Serving Central & Eastern Missouri & Western Illinois | Vol 22, Issue 7 | July 2026

War on Agriculture

Ranching family targeted by secret state investigation for cleaning cattle ponds

By CHRIS BENNETT
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Prosecution, persecution, and prison for normal agriculture practices? An American ranching family targeted by a secret state investigation and treated like an organized crime ring?

The state of Washington is hellbent on penalizing livestock producers Wade and Teresa King for the sins of cleaning man-made stock ponds and allegedly damaging "cultural resources." Their sentence? Potential incarceration, loss of legacy, termination of land leases, and millions of dollars in fines.

The state's actions are stunning, replete with constitutional violations and denials of due process, according to the Kings.

"They've never set foot on our deeded ground or looked us in the eye," Wade says. "They've withheld evidence. They've threatened witnesses. They've denied us a jury trial. And so much more."

Why are the Kings in the state's crosshairs for normal pond maintenance? "We're in their way," Wade contends. "They call it 'environmental justice.'"

Or secrets and backroom deals?

Cease and Desist

Two days before Christmas, in December 2021, Wade and Teresa King, of King Ranch, in eastern Washington, received a cease-and-desist letter from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The Kings were accused of destroying "wetlands" by disturbing 14 stock ponds across 13,000 acres of ground leased from the state: These ponds are also located within an area where cultural resource are known to exist. Prior written authorization was required prior to any ground disturbing work on your DNR leased ground.

Out of the gate, the Kings were convinced the directive was a mere paperwork error. "The letter

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?
Caught in government crosshairs, the King family, above, from left, Wade, Teresa, Katie, and Jenni. "We're in their way," Wade contends. "They call it 'environmental justice.'" At right, "To this day, we're finding out new facts, but we've never been allowed to see the evidence," Wade emphasizes. (Top photo by King Ranch, photo at right by Duquette Media)

USDA confirms first New World Screwworm case in US

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said larvae were found in the calf's umbilical area in Zavala County, Texas.

USDA confirmed the first detection of New World screwworm in the United States in decades after identifying the pest in a 3-week-old calf in South Texas, prompting an aggressive federal and state response aimed at containing the outbreak of the parasitic insect.

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said larvae were found in the calf's umbilical area in Zavala County, Texas. New World screwworm adult females lay fertilized eggs in wounds of warm-blooded animals, where newly hatched larvae burrow into living flesh, causing severe injury and economic losses. USDA said no additional detections had been identified as of the announcement.

USDA and Texas animal health officials immediately activated response protocols outlined in the agency's New World Screwworm Response Playbook. Actions include establishing a 20-kilometer infested zone around the detection site, implementing quarantines and movement controls, increasing surveillance and deploying additional sterile flies to the area. USDA said ground release chambers would supplement the approximately 4 million sterile flies already being released aerially each week.

"All models showed New World screwworm entering the country in 2025; however, thanks to the hard work across the entire Trump administration and our industry, state and local partners, we were able to buy time for this moment," said Dudley Hoskins, USDA under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association said it would continue supporting eradication efforts. CEO Colin Woodall noted the industry has spent more than a year preparing for the pest's arrival and highlighted investments in sterile fly production, surveillance and treatment options.

USDA said the agency is working with state officials, industry groups and trading partners to minimize economic disruptions and regionalize any livestock trade restrictions to affected areas whenever possible.

The news could become a campaign issue in Texas where U.S. Senate Democratic candidate James Talarico called for more funding for the USDA.

"We must fully staff the USDA so that the federal government can provide clear and predictable guidance for ranchers and work alongside the Texas government and the cattle industry to keep pests like the New World screwworm out of our herd," he said.

– Meatingplace.com

USDA faces 'unprecedented staffing crisis'

A new analysis of staffing at USDA has arrived at some stark conclusions about the agency.

Conducted by Rebecca Schewe of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and Bernier Kluger of Prospect Partners, the analysis utilized FOIA requests to assess staffing declines at USDA.

"The past 16 months have seen an unprecedented staffing crisis unfurl across the [USDA]," Schewe and Kluger wrote. "This paper offers an expanded look at the depth and breadth of that ongoing staffing crisis using … updates on previously reported nationwide cuts to staff across other USDA agencies."

At USDA overall, nearly 20,000 staff were lost between January 2025 and January 2026, with the largest declines by state: a 41% reduction in Maryland; 37% in Virginia; 24% in Illinois; 19% in Texas; 28% in Kansas; 19% in Nebraska; 22% in Wisconsin; and 24% in Florida.

Regarding number of staff, the states with the largest losses were: Maryland (1,411), California (1,080), Texas (925), Virginia (896), Colorado (850),

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WETLANDS from page 1

came right before Christmas and all the state employees had gone home, so there was no one for us to contact," Teresa recalls. "We showed our attorney, and she said, 'This must be a technical issue. I'll get it taken care of and enjoy your holiday.'"

"We thought the letter was a mistake," Wade adds. "It described the maintenance of customary stock ponds we use to water our cattle, something we've done for decades, just like the generations before us. If you don't have water for your cows, and if you don't take care of the ponds, then you don't have a ranch."

In Grant County, headquartered south of Coulee City, the Kings run a cattle outfit. The family have operated for 70-plus years, and their 4th, 5th, and 6th generations live and work on the property. The King Ranch geography is extremely arid with 9-10" of annual rainfall, characterized by scab rock and pockets of shallow soil unfit for tillage. Hardly a "wetlands" environment. As in, wetlands must be wet.

Considering the lean conditions, King Ranch needs beaucoup acres to graze cattle. In addition to their deeded property, the Kings lease 12,383 acres (mostly landlocked by King Ranch and another operation) from the state and run roughly 600 cow-calf pairs. The Kings have held the lease since the 1950s—and cleaned ponds from the get-go. However, per DNR's December 2021 letter, they were outlaws.

(Citing pending litigation, DNR declined Agweb interview requests related to King Ranch.)

"These are tiny ponds, vital to our operation, and sometimes the only source of water for livestock and wildlife," Wade explains. "The very last thing we'd do is damage them. USDA has cost-share programs to do this exact same thing. We either clean the ponds or they fill with sediment and disappear."

"How is it a wetland? If we don't clean it, it'll become an upland," Wade emphasizes. "Stock pond owners and ranchers across the country know what I'm describing. Rural people know it. Anyone with common sense knows it."(Photo by King Ranch)

The Kings' pond cleaning leaves no muddy mess, discharge, or runoff. There are no adjacent streams and no water nexus. The ponds are isolated and man-made.

"We asked DNR what kind of proof and evidence they were using," Wade notes. "They told us, 'File a public records request.' For sure, we suspected there was a whole lot more to the story. Something dark was going on."

Pay and Obey

By February 2023, the Kings' alleged violations had increased to 23 ponds: 18 on state land, 2 on federal land, and three on the Kings' privately owned land.

On Feb. 10, the State of Washington publicly portrayed the Kings as environmental villains in a Department of Ecology (DOE) news release, proclaiming the ranchers guilty of "illegally damaging at least 23 alkali wetlands."

Labeled as outlaws and facing millions in penalties, Wade and Teresa King face a state government hellbent on environmental justice.

DOE told the public that the Kings had "excavated deep pools within the shallow wetlands" resulting in degradation of water quality and ruin of "habitat for migratory birds and unique plant and animal species."

"Even though these are individually small wetlands, they play an important role in the environment of the region," stated Joenne McGerr, DOE Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program manager.

Remarkably "small wetlands," indeed. In total, the "small wetlands" cited by DOE make up roughly 6 acres across the entire 13,000-acre lease. Not 6 acres per pond. Rather, 6 acres of total water when all 18 ponds on state land are added together.

And what was proper punishment for allegedly defiling 6 acres, according to state bureaucrats? A $267,540 fine and an order demanding a full restoration program. Translated: The Kings were put on the DOE hook for almost $4 million.

Additionally, within the release, DNR stuck in the boot, ending the Kings' generational land lease. "We are deeply disappointed with the actions taken by King Ranch, and we have terminated their lease as a result," declared Michael Kearney, DNR's Product Sales and Leasing division manager.

When DNR terminated the lease (February 1), the Kings had 60 days to remove their equipment and land improvements—in wintertime. Fence, corral, and improvements across miles and miles of ground, i.e., an impossibility. "They knew exactly what

See WETLANDS, page 14

WETLAND?: "How is it a wetland? If we don't clean it, it'll become an upland," Wade emphasizes. "Stock pond owners and ranchers across the country know what I'm describing. Rural people know it. Anyone with common sense knows it."(Photo by King Ranch)

From the Publisher... *Jon Angell*

Welcome to Summer! This summer will be particularly special as our nation celebrates 250 years of Independence. The founding and evolution of the U.S.A. is a remarkable story that is certainly worthy of celebrating. I hope that you and yours are able to enjoy the holiday, I know that I will.

Up front, we have another story that involves a ranch family being persecuted by our government. I find it frustrating to see good people up against the government and all the power afforded by the state. The Kings have an interesting and troubling story.

In this issue comes news of another health challenge. We have tick-born alpha-gal syndrome, anaplasmosis and Theileria, a big concern of recent years. Adding to our worries and risks, the New World Screwworm fly has finally crossed the Mexican border. We suspected it would. This will be an ongoing concern for all of us.

I have heard some suggest that it may not be much of a problem for the North and would be more of a problem in the hot humid areas of the southern states. As for us, don't believe it. As a kid I was told armadillos could not live in Missouri because they needed a warmer climate. Have you seen how many armadillos are dead on the side of the highway now? I'll be surprised if we don't see NWS reports in Missouri by this time next year, if not sooner. We have a very mobile society… not just people, but livestock, pets and wildlife.

Also on the front page is a story of USDA staffing issues. I hope that they are able to right size the departments workforce. Maybe we are asking the USDA to do too much? One of the largest contributions the Trump Administrations that I support, is a massive federal employee reduction. The federal workforce dropped from over 2.3 million employees prior to the election to approximately 2.08 million. This historic shrinkage was driven by hiring freezes, strict probationary firings, and a mass departure initiative.

The government has been too big, and generally unhealthy. A bloated workforce is expensive to taxpayers and works against the private economy in many ways. Stop looking to create job programs by making unnecessary government jobs, it is a burden to most all of us.

In other big news in this issue, you will see more reduction in beef packing and processing capacity. The one most likely to impact us will be the closure of the JBS plant in Souderton, Pa. A surprising number of fed cattle in our trade territory made the trip there. It was one of the largest packing plants east of the Mississippi River with 2000 head per day capacity. It was an older plant built in 1974 originally owned by the Moyer family, which began producing meat products in the Philly suburbs in 1877.

You might see more of these older less efficient plants close due to a combination of recently opened modern plants and a 75-year low in domestic cattle numbers. It will be disruptive for sure, but our industry is evolving to fit a changed reality of where and how many cattle are available.

Elsewhere in these pages, I'd highlight the following: Page 10 has an interesting article on Ted Turner's land ownership. Page 11 has an article on the passing of cowboy artist with ties to our local trade territory. Page 12 Trent Loos tells an energy story. I know coal gets a bad rap, but I think we made a mistake ditching coal fired plants for other less dependable and sustainable options. I still like coal, and like nuclear power even more… Go ahead; send the hate mail and tell me how mistaken I am. Page 13 Carolyn tells a grand story of local historical interest.

This is just four pages in order of 24. As always, take a copy along with you and plan to invest some time among our pages.

We have an election coming up August 4. Consider the following information on social media about the Missouri Amendment 4. The source a post from Daniel Seitz who I believe is a conservative politician from South Missouri:

"There are a lot of people out there claiming to be conservative who are either intentionally spreading misinformation, or are themselves misinformed about what Amendment 4 will do, so I want to help clear some of that up. This is fact based, not opinion. Take the information and do with it what you will.

Currently, for the Legislature to pass a constitutional amendment they have 20+ legislative steps they have to go through, and then they have to go to a vote of the people and get 50% plus one.

Currently, for ballot initiatives outside the legislature, signatures have to be gathered for an issue (no requirement about where, all can be obtained from the same area and usually are), submitted to the SOS, and if enough are gathered, the issue then goes on the ballot to obtain a 50% plus one vote. There is no other stipulation or requirement. So what has happened is:

- Leftist money from outside the state funds signature gathering for Leftist cause in only the major cities (Dem areas)
- Leftist money from outside the state funds ad campaign into the same area signatures were gathered (Dem areas) to get support.
- Dems in major cities change constitution.

Amendment 4 adds necessary protections for changing the constitution by IP by requiring 50% plus one statewide and in each congressional district. So those outside groups that have been changing our constitution, almost at will, can't ignore the rural areas of Missouri anymore.

It doesn't change the threshold for getting something on the ballot, it just adds one more step to secure passage.

This has been a Republican priority for decades. Missouri is one of only a few states whose constitution can be changed by IP, and of those states our process is one of the least restrictive.

Maps [posted on on Seitz's Facebook page on June 18 (https://www.facebook.com/dseitzgop)] show how the state voted on Medicaid expansion, removing the abortion ban in 2024 and legalizing marijuana. We have GOT to stop the constant and regular Leftist changes to our constitution. This is how we do that."

It should not be easy to change the constitution. The Missouri Constitution has been abused. I always thought a constitution was a broad framework or guide for government to follow. But we are legislating by ballot initiatives to the Constitution far too often. What is worse, these ballot proposals are set before a generally disengaged and ill-informed citizenry.

This has been a train wreck for Missouri that is getting nothing but worse. I am in support of Missouri Amendment 4.

Thanks for reading and your continued support!

THE Cattleman's Advocate

A monthly livestock magazine serving Eastern Missouri & Western Illinois

is a publication of

Jon & Charlotte Angell

Permission to reprint material from this magazine must be obtained from Publisher Jon Angell at:

The Cattleman's Advocate
P.O. Box C • Centralia, MO 65240
573-682-4656

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The Cattleman's Advocate is currently available free of charge at over 110 locations in Missouri and Illinois. If you would like to receive the publication each month at your home, subscriptions for one year are available by sending $20 and your name and current address to:

A&S Printing
Box 124, Monroe City, MO 63456

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FARM & FOOD FILE

Screwworms eat flesh, screw-ups cost money

By ALAN GUEBERT
For The Cattleman’s Advocate

We should all be embarrassed. Since taking office, Rollins has adopted the White House line that the Biden Administration is somehow responsible for every farm policy failure while the Trump Administration is the source of every policy success.

Poor Joe Biden. Out of office for 17 months and he's still the reason for every Trump Administration failure, large or small.

Take the latest screw-up the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) now finds itself brisket-deep in: the recent discovery of multiple cases of "flesh-eating screwworm parasites" in the Southwest.

Screwworm, explains Reuters, is a very big, very bad deal.

"Screwworms are parasitic flies that deposit eggs in open wounds or mucous membranes of warm-blooded animals," it explained in early June. "After hatching, the larvae penetrate living tissue, feeding on the host and potentially causing fatal damage if not treated. An outbreak in U.S. border states in the 1960s devastated wildlife and inflicted heavy financial losses on ranchers."

How did today's infestation occur? The dumbest way possible: we let it walk right in, reported Forbes June 8. "We" meaning budget-gutting, faceless DOGiEs who, operating without adult supervision, slashed government programs in early 2025 without cause or explanation.

"The return of screwworm comes after the [Elon] Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency, launched by the Trump administration, last year cut funding for a project dedicated to monitoring and containing New World Screwworm in Central America," explained Forbes.

"The funding," it continued, "was axed days before the U.S. ended a temporary suspension of cattle imports from Mexico, meaning livestock was allowed to cross the border without any of the monitoring previously funded by the U.S. Agency of International Development."

So in walked Mexican cattle even as "Agriculture officials and cattle industry leaders raised alarm about the cuts at the time and, for the last several months, pleaded with the government to step in as they monitored screwworm infections moving north through Mexico–but they were ignored, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller told NBC News."

If you know anything about Texas politics, you know that Sid Miller, the three-times-elected state ag commissioner, is no lily-livered lefty liberal. He's more MAGA red than the color red itself.

Miller's anger aside, USDA's "New World Screwworm Rapid Response" social media account had a different explanation of the now-widening disaster. "The ghost haunting us ISN'T funding," the screw-up clean-up team posted, "it's the Biden Border Crisis."

How did they come to the remarkable conclusion that "sleepy Joe" was the culprit? Well, USDA continued, screwworms "broke past Panama into MX"–presumably Mexico–"bc [because] Biden let millions illegally pour into our country."

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins repeated that line of hogwash later in thanking Texan John Bellinger for joining her screwworm "team." USDA is ready to "transition to the next phase of fighting and eradicating this pest from our borders," she noted, "as we did nearly sixty years ago, yet it came back due to Biden's failed open border policies."

Even publications with no direct link to farming and ranching found that swill too vile to swallow. "This is pretty shameless," noted The New Republic (TNR), "given Trump has been in office for over 500 days and specifically cut the program that handled this very problem."

Ohio Representative Shontel Brown, TNR reported, took to social media to file her reply to Rollins: "I'm embarrassed for the Secretary that her only answer is to blame an administration that left office a year and a half ago."

We should all be embarrassed. Since taking office, Rollins has adopted the White House line that the Biden Administration is somehow responsible for every farm policy failure while the Trump Administration is the source of every policy success.

Now, however, their actions–inexplicable program cuts by teenagers, "resumption of cattle and bison imports from Mexico" last Feb.1–are to blame and they're too chicken to admit this very serious, very predictable outcome.

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

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

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*

JBS to close beef plant, value-added facility

Production from the two facilities will be absorbed by other operations within the company’s network, and JBS said customers should not experience supply disruptions.

JBS USA plans to close a beef production facility in Souderton, Pa. and a value-added processing facility in Memphis, Tenn. as part of an effort to strengthen operations and focus on long-term growth.

The company said the closures are part of a broader strategy centered on modernization, efficiency and expanding value-added production capabilities.

“These decisions are never easy because they directly affect our team members and the communities where we operate,” CEO Wesley Batista Filho said in a statement. “We are deeply grateful to the team members at these facilities for their efforts and contributions over many years.”

JBS said affected employees will have opportunities to apply for open positions at other company facilities across the United States and will receive on-site support and transition resources. The company also said it will continue working with local workforce partners and community stakeholders during the transition.

Production from the two facilities will be absorbed by other operations within the company’s network, and JBS said customers should not experience supply disruptions.

The announcement follows a series of investments by JBS USA in facilities across Texas, Georgia and Iowa. The company said those projects are aimed at expanding prepared foods and value-added production, modernizing operations and improving efficiency.

Earlier this year, JBS combined its beef and case-ready businesses into a more integrated operating platform designed to improve productivity and expand value-added capabilities.

“JBS USA is investing heavily in the United States and in the future of food production,” Batista Filho said. “At the same time, we must ensure our operations are efficient, modern and positioned to compete.”

The company said demand for protein products remains strong and that the operational changes will help position JBS for future growth.

– Meatingplace.com

Got an idea that would make a good story for The Cattleman’s Advocate?
Email us at:
cattlemans@virtualimages.us

Thoughts From Justin's Side of the Fence

By JUSTIN ANGELL

Here we are heading into summer, fortunately for our local cattle people, the ground is wet and the grass is growing profusely. The unseasonably abundant moisture has not been conducive to planting, but the rain sure has made everything green at my house.

The only thing hotter than the July sun is gonna be the cattle business for the rest of the year. The cattle shortage is real and extensive. This week JBS closed two facilities, trying to right size their company to match the supply of beef cattle available to process. Even with huge carcasses mitigating the beef shortage, oddly, it's not quite as severe for consumers as one might think.

On the plane in October President Trump said (to the temporary detriment of our business) that "beef was too high and that they were going to work on getting the beef prices under control". As I remember, President Trump never said cattle were too high.

For many months, Packers have been buying cattle, giving more "in the meat" than they priced the retail product coming out the backside of their facilities. My conspiracy brain wonders if the four major Packers were somehow contacted by the Trump administration and they have been directed not to sell box beef above $4 lb. Complete speculation on my part, but I wonder also if part of such a deal would (for some reason?) keep the border closed, (even though those damn flies are here in this country now) and lean beef import quotas were increased?

I sold fed cattle in Nebraska at $2.55 Friday afternoon, but if I would've held out eventually, the tough bargainers got $2.58. Greed has fortunately never been an issue for me, I'm very content with $3 under the extreme top.

We know cattle are short because all of the June forward contracted cattle that I know of originally scheduled to be picked up the end of June have been picked up already. That would foreshadow a jump in the fed cattle market in the last half of June.

Although we are easing into the "summer catalogue," feeder cattle and calf markets have been unseasonably high.

Brother Jon and I have probably been offered more acres of grass recently than anytime in our life. These acres are to rent or to be partners on cows or feeder cattle or something that will prevent an urge to bale hay.

Either banks are not comfortable loaning extra money, especially to cattlemen tangled up in the grain industry or cattle people can't stomach the amount of money it takes to stock a pasture. I don't blame you at all.

If I had any youthful courage and maybe a steady job, I might be stocking all these acres. Kelly (bless her heart) has told me she's not signing any more papers. Even a city girl notices after a while that when every 6 months I say, "oh, it's not that big of a deal I'm just refinancing my line of credit, sign here… ". But if each time the number gets bigger and bigger. then really a lot bigger... I just need a new story. If you have something working for you, let me know. I'm sure a lot of you have been or are at the same place.

The reality is, I've got about all the money borrowed that I want to borrow, especially on our beloved, but fickle, cattle industry. After climbing a wall of worry for decades, it sure has been fun to be able to be profitable and on top of the world for so long this time. I think it's a good policy not to let anyone steal the joy of this moment.

If you're interested in buying cows or grazers, please give me a call. Take note of the Angell Livestock ad on page 17.

I think that's all I've got for this month. Come see me at the Auction!

Rollins keeps heat on Brazilian packers to 'reshore processing'

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins in a television interview recently compared foreign ownership of U.S. meat packing facilities with reliance on fertilizer imports.

In an appearance on Fox Business, she discussed imports of fertilizer, which have become scarce on global markets due to the halt in traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Rollins was also asked about consumer beef prices and the Trump administration's attempts to encourage rebuilding of the beef herd.

"The Department of Justice now looking into our four processors, two of which are owned in Brazil … talk about reshoring fertilizer — we've gotta reshore processing, too," she said. "All of this will allow us to build out an even bigger beef herd. But that's really important as we continue our national security quest to ensure we're able to feed ourselves and not rely on other countries."

Both JBS, which was listed on the New York Stock Exchange last year, and National Beef, owned by Brazil-based MBRF, run major U.S. beefpacking facilities.

Rollins described a "perfect storm" for beef prices "after years of war on our cattle ranchers." She accused "the last administration" of taking away grazing allotments as well as causing the halt in Mexican cattle imports through an "immigration disaster, which brought up the screwworm from South America."

"There is no doubt that we are facing very high beef prices, specifically in ground beef," Rollins said.

She said that consumer prices for ground beef were "about a dollar above where it has historically been, and we don't take that for granted — a dollar is too much."

"People are eating more beef than ever before," Rollins said. "This is an amazing testament to our incredible ranchers who produce the best beef in America."

– Meatingplace.com

Got an idea for a story you'd like to see in The Cattleman's Advocate? Drop us a line and let us know at: cattlemans@virtualimages.us

It's The Pitts...

The computer cowboy

By LEE PITTS
For The Cattleman's Advocate

The computer cowboy excitedly told me that in the future he was also going to be incorporating facial recognition on his cows, electronic ear tags, virtual fencing with each cow having to wear a collar around its neck, and cameras everywhere so he could check on his cattle at all times using his smart phone.

In our area we've been invaded by Silicone Valley tycoons with too much money who are buying up ranches at astronomical prices even though they don't know the first thing about the cattle business. These geeks look at real cattlemen like we are neanderthals because of the way we dress and talk and our failure to incorporate AI into our operations. I tried it once years ago before these pimply-faced computer cowboys had made their first million and it was a wreck of epic proportions. Some ranches are just not compatible with artificial insemination.

Oh, wait a minute, the computer cowboys are not talking about our reluctance to use artificial insemination, they are referring of course to artificial intelligence. I gotta tell you, if all these robo-calls I get are an example of the use of artificial intelligence then I don't want to live in a world that is artificially intelligent.

Another example often given about the wonders of AI is something called Chat GPT which allows its users to plagiarize from writers like me without giving any credit or any royalties. Since AI is going to put a lot of people out of work I just don't understand all the excitement about it.

Here's just one example of how AI and algorithms are costing these computer cowboys lots of money.

I enjoy shipping cattle and I did it occasionally for a couple order buyers and one very astute auction yard owner. Usually these folks called me when they were overbooked for shipping cattle that had sold on the video. Invariably they only sent me to the one or two-load deals that were close to my home. My instructions were very simple: sort off the bad eyes the gimps and any cattle that were outliers that just didn't fit. My instructions also depended a lot on the market. If the cattle were bought too high on the video I was instructed to be a lot more picky and if the cattle were bought real cheap I was told to put every animal that could limp up the chute on the truck, even if it was already overloaded.

The last time I shipped cattle it was to a new computer cowboy who refused to send his cattle to the auction market where his cattle would be subjected to true price discovery. So the owner of the auction yard just bought the cattle real cheap and resold them at his weekly auction sale.

When I arrived at the ranch to ship the calves I noticed they had been deprived of feed and water overnight as per the deal and they looked like they must have been worked real hard the day before by wifey, the drones and dogs used to round them up. (The reason people are so excited about AI is that it will reduce the human involvement in many tasks, in this case cowboys.)

The computer cowboy excitedly told me that in the future he was also going to be incorporating facial recognition on his cows, electronic ear tags, virtual fencing with each cow having to wear a collar around its neck, and cameras everywhere so he could check on his cattle at all times using his smart phone.

With only one load to ship I thought I'd be in and out of the shipping in an hour but I was still at it FIVE HOURS later! That's because the computer cowboy insisted on individually weighing and recording other data on every single calf so he could, "Build data sets to use in his algorithms." Whatever that means.

I swear, each calf was weighed on a scale that looked more like a clipping chute than it did a scale but these weren't show calves! It was a hot day and as the owner was busy building his data sets the calves waiting to be weighed were shriveling up like raisins.

After the auction owner sold the cattle at his weekly sale he sent me a nice check as a thank-you because the calves had the biggest shrink he'd ever heard of. He also asked, "I don't know what you did when you shipped those calves but do you want a full time job?"

From this and other experiences I've come to the conclusion that the more artificial intelligence is employed the less intelligent people become.

– www.LeePittsbooks.com

Cargill, Teamsters fail to reach Fort Morgan deal

Cargill and the Teamsters union failed recently to reach an agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement covering 1,700 workers at the company's beef plant in Fort Morgan, Colo.

The latest meeting came a week after Cargill imposed a lock-out of the facility, and after months of negotiations that have yielded no breakthrough.

The primary sticking point is the extent to which pay would increase, with the union so far balking at the company's offer of year-one wage increases ranging from $24.20 to $32.10 per hour.

"We met with the union and reviewed its counterproposal," a Cargill spokesperson told Meatingplace in an emailed statement. "While the meeting did not result in an agreement, we remain open to discussing with the union how the contract package might be structured in different ways to address employee priorities and support a stable future for the Fort Morgan facility."

The spokesperson added that Cargill remains open to having a joint meeting with a mediator.

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Beef prices to continue climbing as USDA raises 2026 forecast

USDA forecast food prices will continue rising in 2026, with beef expected to see some of the sharpest increases due to tight cattle supplies and strong consumer demand, according to the agency's latest Food Price Outlook.

The USDA's Economic Research Service said overall food prices are projected to rise 3.4% this year, while grocery store prices are forecast to increase 3.2% and restaurant prices 3.5%. Food-at-home prices in April were already 2.9% higher than a year ago, while food-away-from-home prices increased 3.6%.

Among meat categories, beef and veal prices posted some of the largest gains. Retail beef and veal prices rose 3.1% from March to April and were 14.8% higher than a year earlier. USDA forecast beef and veal prices will increase 12.1% in 2026, citing continued herd contraction and resilient consumer demand despite tighter supplies.

Farm-level cattle prices also continued climbing, increasing 4.8% from March to April and 17.7% year over year. USDA projected cattle prices will rise 11.2% for the year. Wholesale beef prices, while down 0.8% month over month, remained 14.2% above April 2025 levels.

Pork prices rose 0.4% from March to April and were 2.3% higher year over year. USDA forecast pork prices to rise 1.5% in 2026. Poultry prices were flat month over month and up 0.5% from a year ago, with poultry prices forecast to increase 0.5% this year.

Egg prices continued retreating from recent highs. Retail egg prices fell 1.7% from March to April and were 39.2% lower than a year earlier as egg production recovered from highly pathogenic avian influenza-related disruptions. USDA forecast egg prices will decline 29.8% in 2026.

Fresh vegetable prices were another major driver of grocery inflation, rising 3.1% from March to April and 11.5% year over year.

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$15M from Feds to improve food bank cold chains for animal protein

The U.S. departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture are planning combined allocations of $15 million to help get surplus animal protein products to needy Americans.

HHS announced $7.5 million as part of an agreement with HATCH for Hunger, a charity that redirects surplus protein, delivering eggs, chicken, beef, pork and other meats to more than 120 food banks in 43 states.

"This investment will expand access to high-quality protein, reduce food waste, and help food banks deliver the nutrition families need to prevent chronic disease and live healthier lives," HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said.

Elanco Animal Health CEO Jeff Simmons, who serves as chairman of HATCH for Hunger, logistics and infrastructure issues contribute to an estimated 800-million-pound protein gap every year for U.S. food charities.

Meanwhile, USDA said it will launch a $7.5 million competitive grant program to help emergency food assistance programs improve their cold-chain infrastructure. The departments has yet to issue more details.

"With this investment, USDA is strengthening the infrastructure that ensures our fresh, high-quality food reaches Americans in need," Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said. "By expanding cold storage and distribution capacity, we are supporting our producers, reducing food waste, and delivering nutritious food consistent with the Make America Healthy Again agenda."

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Rollins signals USDA reviewing impacts of prolonged Mexican cattle closure

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins suggested USDA is evaluating the implications of the New World screwworm's arrival in the United States on the agency's ban on live cattle imports from Mexico.

Asked during a press conference in Kerrville, Texas, whether the border could reopen to Mexican cattle imports now that New World screwworm (NWS) has been detected in the U.S., Rollins said, "It is not lost on me. We will continue to watch the data very, very, very closely."

The comments came after USDA confirmed multiple NWS cases in Texas, including detections in cattle and a dog. The agency has maintained that aggressive surveillance, quarantines, treatment protocols and sterile fly releases are underway to contain and eradicate the pest.

USDA suspended imports of live cattle, horses and bison from Mexico on May 11, 2025, citing the northward spread of NWS through Mexico. The closure removed a significant source of feeder cattle from the U.S. supply chain at a time when domestic cattle inventories were already near historic lows.

Before the ban, the United States imported roughly 1.25 million head of cattle annually from Mexico, primarily feeder cattle destined for U.S. feedlots.

Industry groups have increasingly questioned the effectiveness of the import ban, noting that NWS can spread through wildlife, pets and other hosts in addition to livestock. Some cattle producers and feedlot operators have argued that the closure has tightened feeder cattle supplies and increased costs throughout the supply chain.

Rollins did not indicate whether USDA was considering a timetable for reopening the border but acknowledged the issue as the agency continues responding to the Texas detections.

USDA has said eradication efforts include expanded trapping, movement controls and the release of sterile flies from facilities in Texas, Mexico and Panama.

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Teamsters Union files unfair-labor-practice charges against Cargill

Teamsters Local 455 filed unfair labor practice charges against Cargill over the company's ongoing lockout of 1,700 workers at its beef plant in Fort Morgan, Colo.

Teamsters rejected Cargill's last offer on pay and benefits on May 19, and the company imposed a lockout the following day. Additional talks about a week later yielded no breakthrough.

The Fort Morgan contract expired Feb. 22.

"Cargill is hurting working families in Fort Morgan by illegally cutting benefits and refusing to pay its own workforce after now locking them out for multiple weeks," Dean Modecker, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 455, said in a news release. "These charges make clear that Cargill cannot ignore the law. It's time for the company to stop stalling and return to the bargaining table."

Cargill officials told Meatingplace they have not received a filing with allegations from the National Labor Review Board.

"A lockout was not the outcome Cargill wanted, but after months of bargaining and continued uncertainty around the union's threatened work stoppage, we made the difficult decision to lockout to ensure facility, employee and food safety," they said in an emailed statement to Meatingplace, adding, "Cargill remains active in and willing to negotiate in good faith and we remain committed to reaching a sustainable agreement with the union."

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Processor accuses former export executive of diverting customers to rival

A Colorado meat processor accused a former executive and a competing beef company of stealing trade secrets and diverting customers in a lawsuit filed Thursday in federal court.

Frontière Natural Meats, doing business as Platte Valley Food Group (PVFG), alleged former contractor and export sales executive Bernard Rigal coordinated with California-based One World Beef to misappropriate confidential company information tied to its international beef business.

According to the complaint, Rigal copied sensitive data including customer contacts, pricing information, product specifications and business strategies before leaving the company in February 2026. Frontière alleged the information was sent to Rigal's personal email accounts and later used to solicit PVFG customers on behalf of One World Beef.

The Denver-based company claimed the alleged conduct resulted in more than $1.2 million in diverted customer revenue and ongoing harm to its business and competitive position.

Frontière processes beef, bison, pork and chicken products and supplies retailers and foodservice customers in the U.S. and overseas markets, including China and Spain.

The lawsuit said Rigal helped negotiate a co-packaging agreement between Frontière and One World Beef in 2025 under which One World Beef packaged PVFG-branded products for European customers. The complaint alleged the agreement included confidentiality provisions covering trade secrets and customer information.

Court filings alleged Rigal accepted a position with One World Beef while still working for Frontière and exchanged emails with company personnel regarding transferring PVFG business "effective immediately" under new labeling.

The lawsuit also alleged Rigal emailed himself confidential export pricing information, customer data and product specification sheets labeled "Confidential" in the days before leaving the company.

Frontière asserted claims including violations of the federal Defend Trade Secrets Act and Colorado Uniform Trade Secrets Act, breach of fiduciary duty, tortious interference, civil conspiracy and civil theft. The company sought compensatory damages, injunctive relief and attorneys' fees.

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See page 6 for details.

Livestock News & Notes..............

Study offers 'clear, robust' proof that NAFTA/USMCA made US food cheaper

Tariff reductions under the three-country North American trade zone led to food prices for U.S. shoppers that were 22% lower over the course of the first 20 years of the treaty, according to a newly released study from two researchers in Purdue University's Department of Agricultural Economics.

The study by Joseph V. Balagtas and Bernhard Dalheimer found that each percentage point of reduction in tariffs under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which took effect in 1994, had a cumulative effect of 2.8% lower food costs over the subsequent decade.

Trade liberalization under NAFTA, which mostly affected U.S.-Mexico trade because Washington had already reached a free-trade deal with Canada in 1988, produced savings "equivalent to roughly $500 per year in food savings for the average household," the authors concluded in their USMCA Affordability Study: The Effect of North American Trade on U.S. Food Prices.

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump called NAFTA "the single worst trade deal ever" for the United States. In his first term, he pushed through a 2020 successor trade agreement with modest revision, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). That deal is now up for review and adjustment as early as next month, with the Trump administration signaling that it wants new tariffs as long as a goods trade deficit persists with North American partners.

"A symmetric reversal of USMCA preferences would restore those price increases within a decade," the Purdue researchers wrote.

They described NAFTA's implementation as a "natural experiment" to estimate impact of tariff reductions on consumer food prices, using government price data on 85 food items and tariff schedules under the treaty. "We find clear and robust evidence that NAFTA tariff cuts reduced U.S. food prices," the paper said.

The report was jointly commissioned by the Agricultural Coalition for USMCA and the Corn Refiners Association.

Beef industry sage: 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."

Role reversal: Mexico suspends US livestock imports following screwworm cases

Mexico has suspended most imports of live animals from the United States after New World screwworm (NWS) cases were confirmed in Texas and New Mexico, adding another layer of uncertainty to cattle markets already grappling with tight supplies and negative beef processing margins.

Mexico's agriculture ministry announced Tuesday that imports of cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine and several other livestock species would be halted in coordination with USDA. Mexican officials said the action was intended to protect cattle herds in the northern states where no screwworm cases have been detected.

The move comes as USDA has confirmed five NWS cases in the United States since June 3. The agency has emphasized that NWS is not a food safety concern and that meat and poultry products remain safe for consumption under existing inspection protocols.

Market analysts said the latest restriction could further tighten cattle supplies. Mexican feeder cattle imports into the United States were already largely restricted because of earlier NWS-related controls, and any additional disruptions to livestock movement could continue supporting cattle prices while pressuring beef packer margins.

Canada recently imposed its own restrictions on livestock imports from Texas, including animals that originated in or had been present in the state within 21 days before entering Canada. Texas officials criticized the measure as overly broad and noted that inspected beef products are unaffected. USDA continues to respond to the outbreak through quarantines, surveillance efforts and sterile fly releases. The department also plans to build a sterile fly production facility in Texas, though it is not expected to be operational until at least 2027.

Meanwhile, U.S. beef packer margins averaged a loss of $76.91 per head in June, compared with a loss of $44.97 per head a year ago. While improved from losses of $125.24 per head a week earlier, margins remained negative as rising cattle costs continued to outweigh gains in beef values.

Beef cutout values were up 7.5% from a year earlier, while hide and offal values increased 31%. Live cattle prices rose 8.3%, while cattle slaughter declined 8.3% and beef production fell 4.3%.

Analysts also noted potential changes in global beef trade after China's Ministry of Commerce reported Australian beef imports had reached 90% of the country's 2026 import quota. Imports exceeding the quota could face a 55% tariff, potentially altering trade flows among major exporters, although the impact on U.S. beef shipments remains uncertain.

Many of the preceding items were taken from Meatingplace.com

How Ted Turner's 2 million acres redefined land ownership

By MARGY ECKELKAMP
Reprinted by permission
of Farm | Journal Ag Web

Ted Turner's rise to the top of the Land Report 100 marked a transformative era of American land ownership. Once the largest private landowner in the U.S., Ted Turner had many titles, business accomplishments and accolades as well.

With his death on May 6, 2026, the discussion of his legacy began. And undoubtedly his impressive 2 million acres is the driving force with a "save everything" philosophy toward land stewardship.

"If you visit any of Ted Turner's properties, there's a bumper sticker available that reads, "Save Everything," says Eric O'Keefe editor of The Land Report. "That was his approach, as far as being a landowner. He was a conservationist, first and foremost."

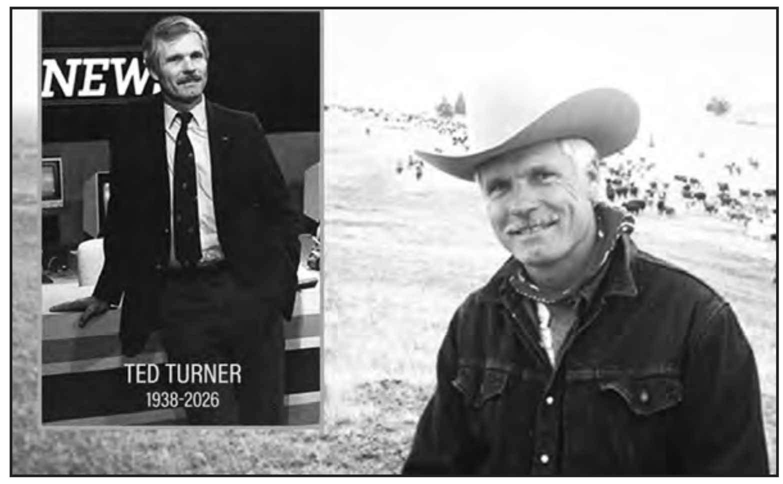
Turner built a revolutionary business empire—taking father's billboard company to building a global media powerhouse, pioneering 24-hour news with CNN and acquiring the MGM film library. His business success fueled his land purchases as he reinvested those profits into large tracts of land across the country, and notably in the western states.

"He was one of the original, in this generation, of corporate magnates who plowed their profits into land, O'Keefe says. He adds Turner was friends with the current No. 1 largest landowner John Malone, who he "gave the land bug to." And it was Turner's investments that inspired others including Bill Gates.

Turner's acquisitions gained momentum in the 1990s, making his the first No. 1 largest landowner when The Land Report started its first ranked list in 2007. In the 2025 Land Report list, Turner was the fourth largest with 2 million acres located in Montana, South Dakota, New Mexico, Kansas, Nebraska, Georgia and more.

"He looked around corners in ways that few of us can really comprehend. He was buying the greatest ranches in the American West, and these phenomenal quail plantations decades before anyone else," he says.

O'Keefe says a hallmark of Turner's land buying was not only in its accumulation but how he enhanced it with conservation efforts.



"I love that Gone with the Wind quote, and of course, Ted acquired the MGM Library and, owned Gone with the Wind. And the quote is, 'land, it's the only thing that lasts.' And at the end of the day, that was, to him, in my opinion the most powerful element of his legacy."

Beef checkoff state hike defeated by 3-vote margin in Minnesota

Minnesota beef producers narrowly voted against a proposed increase to the state beef checkoff following a statewide referendum conducted by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

The proposal would have added a refundable 50-cent increase to the existing $1-per-head beef checkoff assessment collected at the time of sale. Under the current structure, the $1 assessment is split evenly between the Minnesota Beef Council and the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

According to the department, 3,477 ballots were mailed to eligible producers. Of the valid ballots submitted, 380 voted against the increase while 377 supported it. As a result, the checkoff rate will remain unchanged.

The referendum process included public hearings held during the winter of 2025-26 and was administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in coordination with ballot contractor No Coast Workshop.

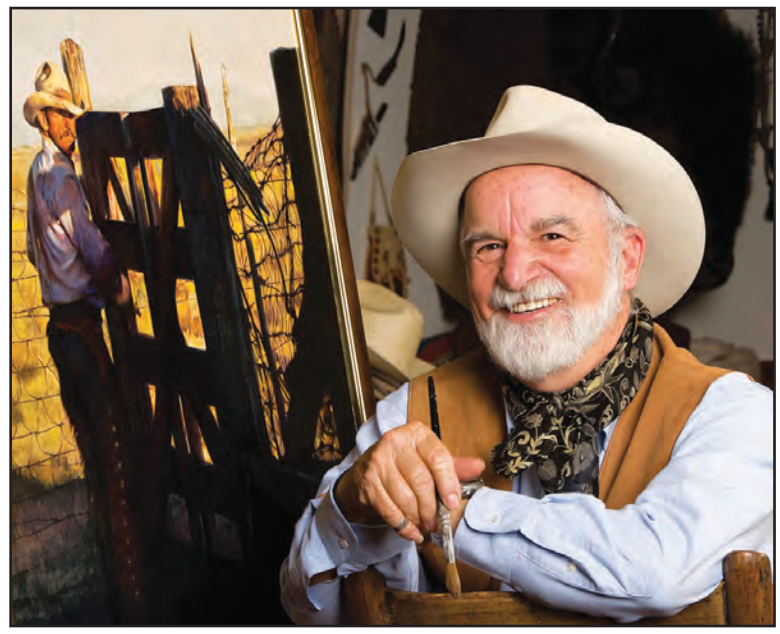
The department oversees Minnesota's agricultural research and promotion councils, commonly referred to as commodity councils, which collect checkoff fees to fund research, market development, promotion and producer education programs for the state's agricultural commodities.

– Meatingplace.com

Renowned cowboy artist Gordon Snidow passes away in New Mexico

Snidow was born in Paris, Mo. in 1936

Snidow was born in Paris, Missouri, in 1936. His family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he grew up hearing stories about Western cowboys. His talent for drawing and sketching was obvious at a young age.



Gordon Snidow photo provided by Dave Shultz

RUIDOSO, N.M. — Gordon Snidow, considered one of the most popular Western-themed artists of his generation, died Sunday, April 12, at his home in Ruidoso. He was 89.

"He was an incredible human being with so much natural talent and ability," said Snidow's former wife Grace Griffin Snidow, who was married to the artist for 19 years and maintains a website chronicling his work.

"His paintings are so easy to market because they can tell an entire story of a subject without words," she said. "There are so very few artists that captured the true contemporary Western way of life better than Gordon Snidow."

Snidow was born in Paris, Missouri, in 1936. His family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he grew up hearing stories about Western cowboys. His talent for drawing and sketching was obvious at a young age.

He attended the ArtCenter College of Design in California, where family members say he developed the technical discipline that would define his work, graduating in 1959 and going on to become a charter member of the Cowboy Artists of America.

After graduation, Snidow moved to Albuquerque and worked for Sandia National Laboratories. But his life soon revolved around Western art, leading him to relocate in Ruidoso to take up his passion full time.

Snidow's work has been shown around the world, including Russia, France, England, China and Germany, and his paintings hang in the permanent collections of numerous museums, according to Griffin Snidow's website.

A retrospective featuring the artist's sketches and paintings had a 45-day showing in 2003 at the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building in Washington D.C.

Also in 2003, the New Mexico Legislature named him "Artist of the American West." He received the 1998 New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Some of Snidow's most famous subjects were shown holding a beer can. "Colorado Coolade," a portrait of a ranch hand sitting on a fence enjoying a brew, is one of a series of paintings commissioned by Coors Brewing Company in the 1970s. Prints from that series remain valuable collector's items today.

According to ArtzLine, an online Western art gallery website, Snidow's artwork recorded "every aspect of his time. Those include his American woman series, the homeless, wildlife, and one specific work recognizable anywhere in the country today – an adobe wall covered with graffiti. All parts of his view of the "whole fabric" of the modern West. He paints it not as he would like it to be, but the way it is – warts and all."

Snidow's son, Steven Snidow, offered a personal perspective on his father's life and work.

"Not long ago when asked about his career my dad stated that each next piece, like each next day, he wanted to 'be better,'" Steven said. "I think we see this in his body of work and in his unwavering commitment to not only his craft, his art, but the lived truth of the American West.

"As he stated, he started his career with the white-faced Hereford and ended it with the black angus on the range. He did not like the ranches being populated with wind turbines and other more modern technology. I believe he painted what he saw – people meeting the challenge of the day, every day, as he himself did."

In addition to son Steven, 60, of Ruidoso, Gordon Snidow is survived by two other children – Chris Snidow, 67, of Ruidoso and Laurie Snidow, 63, of Dallas, Texas.

The coal and cowboy state fights wind

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

Loos Tales

At the end of day, these strategies bode the question: Who stands to gain from this plan to leave a mass of resources untouched while Americans struggle to get by with increasing costs?

I recently returned from a Wyoming wind rally at the state capital in Cheyenne.

The rally was to prevent the wall of wind turbines that are planned or permitted for the Cowboy State. It appears to me that developers have plans to cover Wyoming, from Cheyenne to Montana, with intermittent, completely dependent on subsidies to exist, wind energy, in my opinion.

I made one telling observation while on this trip in Wyoming. Teton County, due to "conservation and planning restrictions," does not plan to allow any wind development in its county. Yep, Teton County, the home of Jackson Hole with billionaires flying in on their jets, would not stand for wind turbines, but the ranchers throughout the rest of state are fair game to lose their land.

To me the plan here is optics. Wyoming, the great coal state, has transferred over to thinking wind is the real solution. For anyone who lives close to Highway 2 through Nebraska, you have a good idea about the impact of coal coming out of Wyoming. We need to mine a few facts about what a treasure of resources Wyoming really has. It is estimated that there are nearly 600 years' worth of coal left in the ground if use continues at rates comparable to the past.

According to the state government website of Wyoming:

Wyoming, the nation's leading coal producer since 1986, provides about 40% of America's coal through the top 10 producing mines, located in the Powder River Basin (PRB). Most Wyoming coal is sub-bituminous, which makes it an attractive choice for power plants because it has less sulfur and burns at around 8,400 to 8,800 BTUs per pound. Wyoming coal is considered clean burning, which means it is better for the environment. Wyoming coal has steadily gained a growing share of the nation's total electricity over the past few decades for a variety of reasons.

Coal supplies more than half of the electricity in the nation. Consider the following statistics: Each person in the U.S. uses 20 pounds of coal every day and 8 out of 10 tons of coal are used to produce electricity. A pound of coal supplies enough electricity to light ten, 100-watt light bulbs for one hour. Coal is also widely used in U.S. industries and manufacturing plants to make chemicals, paper, ceramics, and a variety of metal products. It is an important source of coke for the steel industry, and coal by-products are used to make linoleum, medication, detergents, perfumes, food flavorings, fungicides, insecticides, solvents, and wood preservatives.

Coal is mined in the PRB at a rate of 12 tons per second, filling between 50 to 70 coal trains per day. Seven of the nation's 10 largest coal mines operate in the Wyoming part of the PRB. The largest coal mine is Peabody Energy's North Antelope Rochelle Complex, which produced more than 62 million tons in 2021.

What does your electricity cost per kilowatt hour today? What is the trend? Today, less than 700 million kw hours or 15% of the total electricity for the nation is generated from coal. Compare that to 2007 when 2.018 billion kw hours of electricity (51% of the total) was generated by coal.

Oh, wait the argument was coal is dirty.

As a basic cycle of life reminder, every single emission that is released into the atmosphere as coal burns to generate electricity is plant food. Nitrous oxide, sulfur oxide, methane and carbon dioxide are essential for plant growth and human life.

The United States is blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Fortunately, we have the desire to tap into our oil deposits and be the world's leading oil exporter, but when it comes to timber, coal and even farmland, it has become glaringly obvious that we prefer to take the path of highest resistance instead of embracing the resources God has granted us.

At the end of day, these strategies bode the question: Who stands to gain from this plan to leave a mass of resources untouched while Americans struggle to get by with increasing costs? Is it clear yet that "we the people" have got to fight for what is right before we are extinct.

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.

Get a full year of home delivery of The Cattleman's Advocate for just $20. See page 6 for details.

Schumer targets meatpackers with new grocery price bill

Sen. Chuck Schumer recently introduced legislation aimed at lowering grocery prices by increasing competition in the meatpacking industry, arguing that consolidation among the nation's largest meat companies has contributed to higher beef prices ahead of Memorial Day weekend.

Standing at Avon Meat Market in New York's Capital Region, Schumer announced the proposed "Family Grocery and Farmer Relief Act," which would seek to break up large meatpacking companies and provide support for smaller processors and producer cooperatives.

"Families here in the Capital Region are facing one of the most expensive Memorial Day weekends ever," Schumer said. "Corporate giants that dominate the meat market and set prices sky-high for families, all while squeezing profits from farmers by eliminating competition, and it needs to end."

Schumer cited rising grocery and fuel costs, noting that beef prices had climbed sharply over the last year. He pointed to industry concentration among Tyson Foods, JBS, Cargill and National Beef, which he said collectively control 85% of the U.S. beef market, 67% of pork processing and 60% of chicken processing.

The proposal would require major meatpackers to choose between operating in beef, pork or chicken rather than maintaining dominant positions across multiple protein segments. The legislation also would provide financial and technical assistance for smaller processors, farmer cooperatives and local supply chains.

Schumer said the measure was intended to increase competition, create more marketing options for livestock producers and provide retailers with additional local sourcing opportunities.

Jim Ostrowski, owner of Avon Meat Market, said rising wholesale prices have made it increasingly difficult for independent meat retailers to keep prices affordable for customers.

The announcement came as consumers faced elevated food costs entering the summer grilling season. Schumer's office said ground beef and sirloin steak prices were nearly 20% higher than a year ago and more than 50% above pre-pandemic levels.

The Department of Justice and the State of Texas recently announced investigations into the consolidation of the beef industry.

– Meatingplace.com

BARNS OF PIKE COUNTY

A look back at Col. Jack Emerson's Pike County Jack Farm

By CAROLYN ALLEN
Special to The Advocate

All the huge mule barns are gone now, but they once sat – along with other outbuildings - on what is currently Hwy 161 south of Bowling Green near Ashley. The barns and buildings were all part of the Pike County Jack Farm. The farm was owned by a larger-than-life character named Col. Luke M. Emerson.

The Bowling Green Times told the story of how Emerson got into the mule and jack business. He started the farm around 1878 as a draft horse farm, and in 1889 he went to England to buy some draft horses. After a night of drinking in London, he was apparently attacked and robbed by a group of thieves and ended up shooting and killing one of them. He was arrested and spent quite a few months in jail there trying to prove his innocence. (Throughout his life, Emerson was no stranger to trouble and the courts.)

He was acquitted, but the newspaper noted that by the time he got out of jail, the market had changed from draft horses to jacks and mules. Instead of buying the draft horses he had intended, Emerson went to Spain and bought jacks that he took home to his Pike County farm. He was hugely successful, and at the time of the article he was the biggest importer of jacks in the country and worth over $100,000.

An article in the 1907 Bowling Green Times credited Col. Emerson with putting Bowling Green on the map when it came to mules and jacks. It added that in addition to the farm he had built up a village called Jack Town 4 miles south of Bowling Green just before the farm. Jack Town allowed farm residents and visitors to get what they needed without going "all the way back" into Bowling Green. There was also a boarding house for farm visitors where everything was free including cigars and bus fare to Bowling Green.

Just south of Jack Town there were ten to twelve large barns and a comfortable house that made up the Pike Co. Jack Farm – home of the mammoth jack. The paper went on to say that Luke Emerson traveled all over the world and had sold mules to people in every state and quite a few countries. The 1897 Ralls County Record called the Emerson Jack Farm one of the marvels of Pike County, while the 1910 Washington Post called it "the greatest donkey farm in all the West and perhaps all the world!"


PIKE COUNTY JACK FARM,
LUKE M. EMERSON, Prop'r.
Four Miles South of Bowling Green, Mo.
JACKS!
LUKE M. EMERSON, Bowling Green, Mo.

JACK FARM: Above left, an advertisement from the 1890 Mexico Ledger. Above right, a picture of the zebra the farm was using to cross with mules to make zebrulas. (Zebra photo from Diggin Up Bones Facebook page)

The 1893 Bowling Green Times reported that Rural World had recently visited the farm, and the new stables were nearly completed. The article noted that the stables were from 100 to 200 feet in length with a large driveway in the center flanked by rows of large box stalls. The 1895 Bowling Green Times called the farm the largest of its kind in the world with 10 or 12 large barns and room for 1,000 jacks. A 1907 article reported that there were over 400 box stalls on the farm at that time.

At least one of the barns was built by Seigle Parsons and S. R. Branstetter in 1893. Newspapers reported that the measurements of that barn were 160' X 140', and it took 61,000 shingles to cover it! An interesting note in the same newspaper said that the barn was built where B. F. McPike had built an old log barn the morning after the Civil War battle at Ashley.

Emerson jacks and mules were apparently the gold standard at the time. The 1905 Bowling Green Times reprinted a story from the Yakima Review reporting that the Emerson mules had come into town fresh from winning every prize at the Lewis and Clark Exposition. The story went on to say that a special feature of the Emerson exhibit was Missouri Queen - the largest mule in the world. She weighed 2,160 lbs. and was as perfect as anyone could ask. The article reported that one Portland farmer had said, "she is as pretty as a Studebaker wagon or a Portland schoolmarm." I'm not sure just how complimentary that is, but the paper seemed to believe it was high praise.

There are several amusing stories about Mr. Emerson and his mules. People Places and Pikers reported that Luke Emerson's mules once stopped traffic in New York City. He had imported 229 jacks from Spain, and they had to be led through the city to a stable for boarding. Apparently, the "parade" – accompanied by boys throwing snowballs and women screaming - stalled New York traffic for a while!

The Mexico Intelligencer reported that the Pike County Jack King had been in Mexico in 1907 on his way home from Boone County. He was most excited about his purchase of a zebra which he was going to cross to produce a zebrula which was supposed to be even better than a mule. Old newspapers revealed that the mule was named "Carl Hagenback" (after its former owner), and Col. Emerson supposedly bred it to 65 mares. The zebra stood at stud at least in the 1907 season. Carl's stud fee was $25.00 compared to $2.00 for most of the jacks. That might have contributed to the end of the zebra experiment because I didn't see the zebra mentioned in the 1908 ad.

There are many different versions of this story, but old newspapers reported that Luke Emerson said that if Champ Clark ever became Speaker of the House, Luke (although a Republican) would send him the finest span of Missouri mules ever seen. Champ Clark had supposedly bragged that he would drive those mules from one end of Pennsylvania Ave. to the other if elected. An article in the Louisiana Press Journal noted, however, that since being elected Speaker, Clark and his friends were trying to kill the mule story – as that would not be in keeping with the dignity of the office. Some accounts indicate Col. Emerson sent the mules while others indicate that he did not. I don't know which is true, but I have found no accounts of Champ Clark actually driving them up Pennsylvania Avenue.

Luke Emerson died in 1912, and the land was sold in 1913. Newspapers mentioned that the farm included some 500 acres with 4 residences and numerous large barns. To my knowledge none of the barns remain. If anyone has any pictures or knows anything more about the farm, barns or Jack Town I would love more information!

WETLANDS from page 3

they were doing," Wade recalls. "They were going to claim ownership of our improvements because they knew we'd never get everything off the lease. We appealed immediately, and are still fighting that."

The state had spoken. The Kings were supposed to pay and obey.

"Nothing made sense," Teresa recalls. "We asked for their evidence of our supposed infractions, and they wouldn't tell us anything. Instead, they told us to file a public records request. We didn't even know how this all began or how the ponds came on their radar. Did someone file a complaint? They wouldn't tell us and they never looked us in the eye or sat down with explanations or met with us in person. No personal exchange. These are not rural people or anyone with an understanding of agriculture. When they refer to farming, they have no idea. No clue."

"They fined us for customary pond cleaning on our own land, but they'd never been on our deeded property—ever," Wade details. "We knew something else was going on behind the scenes, but at that point, we were completely in the dark."

However, the DOE news release contained a hint within a single, incongruent sentence: "In addition to their habitat value, alkali wetlands are a source of plants and resources of significant cultural importance to local Tribes, who have depended on these systems for millennia."

Kiss the Ring

Find the farm, find the crime? At the same time the Kings were fighting civil actions by DOE and DNR, a secret criminal state investigation of their ranching operation was unfolding. Attorney General Bob Ferguson's Environmental Protection Division (EPD), using Washington's racketeering statute (designed to combat organized crime), was investigating King Ranch.

Via "Special Inquiry Judge" proceedings, EPD ran a sealed, closed-door inquiry. "State prosecutors barred defense attorneys from hearings, refused to release evidence, and even threatened potential witnesses with jail if they disclosed the existence of subpoenas," stated a Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF) filing.

The Kings were clueless. "We had no idea," Teresa explains. "Our town is small, about 550 people. State investigators showed up and spent several days trying to find dirt on us. They walked into coffee shops to talk with our friends and neighbors. For example, 'I'm Matthew Stratton and I'm from the attorney general's office in the EPD, and I'd like to ask you questions about the Kings.' That was to divide us from our own community by looking for something, anything, to make us seem like criminals. They were hoping for a disgruntled person to throw dirt on us. Didn't work."

ARID CLIMATE: Katie King on her family ranch—extremely arid with 9-10" of annual rainfall, characterized by scab rock and pockets of shallow soil unfit for tillage. (Photo by Duquette Media)

In May 2023, by chance, the Kings learned about the state's criminal investigation.

"We found out by accident when the EPD subpoenaed our one employee, but served his wife instead of him," Teresa continues. "They threatened him with jail time and fines if he didn't talk. They dragged him into court four times to compel him. He pled the fifth. It was all done in secret and the file is still sealed to this day."

"Keep in mind, they were investigating us for felony charges, but they wouldn't tell us anything. We had to brief everything and hire a criminal attorney in addition to our civil attorneys. Just imagine the stress and cost, and all while all of us were trying to run a ranch. It's hard to describe the pressure. The state was relentless, hitting us with everything they could think of to do maximum damage to us. It was coordinated by three state agencies, DOE, DNR and EPD against the two of us: Let that sink in. Three state agencies with unlimited taxpayer funds, unlimited attorneys, and unlimited resources."

Kiss the ring, or else.

Enviro Justice

How did the Kings and their stock-watering ponds come to DNR's attention? Initially, a complaint was made to Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife regarding pond excavation activity on the King Ranch lease.

"After several years, we finally found out that Fish & Wildlife sat on the complaint for a year," Teresa says. "Then, somehow, it went to DOE, who looked at satellite imagery, and immediately, on the second day they had the complaint, DOE turned it over for a criminal investigation at the EPD without ever setting foot on the land to confirm or to question if our stock-watering ponds were permit-exempt under RCW 90.44.050. The escalation was incredible."

Who lodged the original complaint? "The public records request states it was a member of the Colville Tribes," Wade notes. "We don't know the individual's name."

In December 2025, DNR split the King's leased acreage into three parcels and started a process to give the land to the Colville Tribes. Significantly, Glenda Breiler, DNR's director of tribal relations, is a member of the Colville Tribes.

"People kept asking us, 'Why you, why now?' When we found all that out, it was an 'aha moment.' Finally, things started making more sense," Wade explains. "To this day, we're finding out new facts, but we've never been allowed to see the evidence. It looks like the state wants to cancel our lease, and they're using our historical stock pond cleaning as a reason, as a justification for environmental justice. Once canceled, that makes the land eligible for the trust land transfer (TLT) program to the Tribes."

War on Agriculture

DOE and DNR have made a mockery of due process, contend the Kings, who are fighting on multiple legal fronts.

The Kings want a jury of their peers to hear the case. DOE refuses. Represented by Pacific Legal Foundation, the Kings have filed a summary judgement in Superior Court of Washington/Grant County before Judge Melissa Chlarson, requesting a jury trial. They await a decision.

Their appeal of the DNR lease termination is pending. Additionally, they have an appeal before the Pollution Control Hearings Board, another administrative layer. The Kings are locked in a legal vise, Wade explains.

"DOE wants on our land," he notes. "We told them to get a judicial warrant to comply with our due process rights as Americans—the same thing any government agency should abide by. They told us, 'No.' And they told us, 'If you don't let us on your land without a warrant, we'll limit any evidence you can bring into the administrative hearing.' We can't count the ways DOE has abused our constitutional rights."

NRCS reportedly found no wetland evidence on the King's lease. Independent experts, hired by the Kings, also found no wetland evidence.

"How is it a wetland? If we don't clean it, it'll become an upland," Wade emphasizes. "It's not complicated; it's not secret; it's not criminal. It's completely normal. Stock pond owners and ranchers across the country know what I'm describing. Rural people know it. Anyone with common sense knows it."

On December 9, 2025, USDA Secretary Brook Rollins penned a letter to DOE Director Casey Sixkiller and DNR Commissioner Dave Upthegrove:

"I am writing on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture concerning actions the State of Washington has taken at the behest of the Department of Ecology and the Department of Natural Resources inappropriately targeting Wade and Teresa King with excessive penalties for normal ranching activities. The State of Washington imposed more than $250,000 dollars in civil penalties, it has also revoked leases on state land that have been ranched by the Kings for decades, and pursued a secretive criminal action behind closed doors without any ability for the Kings to defend. Combined with the massive legal fees needed to protect this family's way of life, this amounts to the state of Washington threatening the existence of their legacy ranch. This war on agriculture must stop."

However, despite Rollins' request, DOE and DNR kept a foot on the gas. The Kings have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorney fees, and endured the deaths of both their fathers under state scrutiny, all while fighting state bureaucrats intent on prosecution, persecution, regulatory enforcement, and transfer of long-standing lease acreage for the crimes of traditional stock pond maintenance.

"It's a nightmare," Wade says. "From the time we wake up till we go to bed, we have to deal with what the state is doing to us. How do you fight against radicals that claim cattle can damage cultural resources? How do you reason with people that say cleaning a pond so your cows can drink is an environmental crime?"

"We're standing up for every rancher and farmer in the country, and we're standing for water rights, property rights, and constitutional rights," Teresa adds. "God hasn't put any load on us that He doesn't help us carry."

"We've been through a whole lot in our lifetimes. We've dealt with fires, droughts, storms, weather conditions, volatile markets, disease, birthing problems, and breakdowns. It's all part of what we do," she concludes. "But I never, never thought our own government would be the biggest fight of our lives."

STAFFING from page 1

Oregon (682), New Mexico (640), Kansas (559), Georgia (546), and Missouri (514).

At the agency level, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was among the least-affected within USDA with a 10% reduction in staff. In comparison, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) — now under scrutiny as it responds to the New World screwworm infestation of Texas — lost 23% of its staff.

The Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) is down 24%, the Economic Research Service (ERS) is down 32%, and Rural Development is down 36%.

Such numbers are consistent with a Meatingplace analysis of the Trump administration's 2026 budget, which detailed staffing declines at various USDA agencies.

The department this summer is in the midst of a major relocation of staff from the capital area to four new regional USDA hubs.

– Meatingplace.com

Livestock News & Notes..............

New Tyson CEO Schomburger was 'unexpected' on Wall Street

Jeff Schomburger, newly named Tyson Foods chief executive, has spent a decade on the company's board with a much longer career in the consumer packaged goods sector, but his elevation was a surprise to stock market analysts.

In a note to investors Thursday within hours of the announcement, JP Morgan Research protein industry analysts Thomas Palmer and Elsa Evans described Schomburger as an "unexpected" choice with "limited operational experience in the protein industry" to lead a large food manufacturer with 139,000 employees at more than 150 facilities around the world.

"It sounds like his board experience gives him a deep understanding of Tyson, and his past sales experience gives him an understanding of Tyson's key customers," they wrote.

Schomburger's initial Tyson contract, according to JP Morgan, is for three years with an annual base pay of $1.6 million with much larger incentives and a grant of restricted stock, vesting over the life of the contract.

A native of Tallahassee, Fla., he graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1984. Prior to his initial retirement in 2019, Schomburger, 64, spent 35 years with The Procter & Gamble Company, starting in 1984 as a sales rep and rising into a number of leadership roles in P&G's paper products division.

Through the years he took on positions of greater responsibility, eventually landing as P&G's vice president of sales for Western Europe from 2000-03, then as president of P&G's Global Walmart Team from 2003-14. Schomburger concluded his career at Proctor & Gamble as Global Sales Officer starting in 2015 until his retirement in 2019.

In October, he will succeed outgoing Tyson CEO Donnie King, who has led the company since 2021. King joined the company's poultry business in 1982 and was chief operating officer and head of Tyson's international business before becoming CEO. He will assist in the transition and remain on the board, Tyson said in a regulatory filing.

'Choppy experiences'

BMO Capital Markets agribusiness and protein analyst Andrew Strelzik said in an investor note that Thursday's news was "not the direction or timing we expected for eventual CEO transition" but reiterated an "Outperform" rating for Tyson shares. Schomburger's age "also raises the question about his potential tenure" as CEO, Strelzik wrote.

The company has had "choppy experiences" under previous CEOs lacking commodity business experience, according to Strelzik.

"That said, Mr. Schomburger is likely well-suited to execute against the material Prepared Foods opportunity TSN has discussed, and his appointment likely signals comfort with where Chicken is in terms of operations and execution," Strelzik wrote.

Strelzik continued, "Given the significant turnaround in Chicken performance under Donnie King, Prepared Foods likely represents the most meaningful internal improvement/execution opportunity for TSN over the next several years.

"TSN already is driving volume growth and outperforming peers in challenging environment after reorienting go-to-market strategy and innovation/data insights capabilities, and TSN likely sees an opportunity to further enhance growth potential in the segment, leveraging Mr. Schomburger's prior experience and marketing/sales acumen."

In the company's latest quarterly report in early May, Tyson reported a $505 million profit in its chicken segment, enough to overcome widening losses in the protein giant's beef business. Meanwhile, the prepared foods segment continued to churn out strong results, with earnings growing 6% to $348 million. The company's consumer brands include Tyson, Jimmy Dean, Hillshire Farm, Sara Lee, Ball Park, Wright, Aidells and State Fair.

Schomburger has served on Tyson Foods' board of directors since 2016 and became lead independent director last year. During his tenure on the board, Schomburger served on several committees, including compensation, audit and strategy and acquisition, becoming chair of strategy and acquisition in 2021.

Outside of business, Schomburger serves as the chairman of the Cincinnati City Center Development Corporation. He was previously chair of the United Way Campaign and on the executive board of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

Wendy's names former Potbelly CEO as chief executive

Wright most recently served as president and CEO of Potbelly Corp., where the sandwich chain said he led a period of "meaningful growth" that included strengthening digital platforms and restaurant industry positioning. Before Potbelly, he held leadership roles at Wendy's, including chief operations officer and senior vice president of operations for the U.S. business. He previously held executive positions at Leeann Chin, Checkers Drive-In Restaurants and Domino's Pizza.

"Following a thorough and comprehensive search, the Board is confident that Bob is the right leader to guide Wendy's into its next chapter, and we are excited to welcome him back to the Wendy's team," Wendy's Chairman Art Winkleblack said. "He is a proven operator and brand builder with deep industry expertise and a results-driven approach that aligns with our strategic priorities."

Wright succeeds Kirk Tanner, who departed Wendy's last year.

"Since Dave Thomas founded this company, a commitment to quality has been at the heart of how we win customers and operate our restaurants," Wright said. "Wendy's is an iconic brand with a strong foundation and significant opportunity ahead."

The company said Ken Cook, who served as interim CEO, will continue in his role as chief financial officer.

Wendy's credited interim Cook with helping lead the company through the leadership transition, noting he previously led development of the company's "Fresh, Never Frozen" positioning strategy and expanded its breakfast and beverage platforms.

USDA sets new action plan, funding to support small meat processors

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins on Wednesday launched a new set of actions and announced the availability of $60 million in funding to support small meat and poultry processing plants.

The Small Processors Action Plan, effective immediately, aims to make it easier for small processors to interact with USDA, to clarify regulations and more quickly resolve issues.

Together with funding requirements that favor plants that primarily process cattle, it builds on the agency's efforts to help rebuild the nation's domestic beef industry.

Specifically, the plan outlines:

Improving customer service and responsiveness

- Creating clearer, easier ways for small plants to submit and track appeals and requests.
- Establishing dedicated support to help small businesses navigate processes and get timely responses.
- Expanding access to assistance for plants with limited technology or connectivity.

Making requirements clearer and easier to navigate

- Updating and expanding plain-language guidance by FSIS, tailored to small and very small plants.
- Improving visibility of available support, escalation paths, and points of contact.
- Launching simpler tools to help plants engage with USDA systems.

Reducing unnecessary burden while maintaining food safety

- Streamlining processes related to FSIS inspection staffing concerns and appeals.
- Improving consistency and clarity across the field through targeted training and guidance.
- Strengthening coordination with the Small Business Administration to ensure small plants are aware of available resources.

USDA also availed $60 million to fund a fourth phase of the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP). Available money will be divided equally into two separate competitions: one for small and very small processors, and one for intermediate processors.

Eligible applications include for-profit organizations, nonprofit organizations, producer-owned cooperatives, tribes, and tribal entities. Privately owned entities must be independently owned and operated, and all entities must be domestically owned. The applicant's processing facility also must be physically located and operating in the United States or its territories.

The applicant's facility must primarily process cattle in order for the project to be eligible for the program; however, funds or equipment may be used for processing meat and poultry at the facility.

Many of the preceding items were taken from Meatingplace.com

Maximize your profit margin by minimizing fixed machinery costs

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Major equipment purchases involve more ongoing costs than many realize. Whether you're making a cash purchase or opting for financing, the ownership costs of machinery continue after the check is cashed or the final payment is made.

Fuel, maintenance and labor too often they are used as a proxy for total machinery cost when planning for the breakeven price of the crop being grown. While these costs are easily measurable, they may represent less 60% or less of total expenses over the useful life of a machine. The "DIRTI 5" – depreciation, interest, repair, taxes and insurance – are harder to identify and allocate to each machine on a per-acre or per-year basis.

MU Extension senior agribusiness research analyst Drew Kientzy led the development of a new publication, "Managing Farm Equipment Ownership Costs," which is available for free download at https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g435. The publication highlights how to calculate the DIRTI 5 components, how they interact with one another and strategies for minimizing these costs.

"The two universal factors in the per-acre, per-bale, per-bushel or any other unit cost of machinery are the value of your equipment and how much it is used," Kientzy said. He notes that there are two surefire ways to bring fixed machinery costs down: "Minimizing the total value of machinery without having a significant impact on productivity, and sizing your equipment to fully utilize its capabilities throughout the working season."

Another consideration is whether to own, lease or hire out machine work. There is usually no single correct answer for all machines on the farm. For instance, a farm may want to own trucks, tillage tools, planting equipment and harvest equipment. Trucks and tillage equipment don't get regular technological advancements, and major repairs can be made either on the farm or in an independent shop.

From a technology or repair mitigation standpoint, planters and harvest equipment may need to be updated more often, but owning these assets gives farms the flexibility to modify the machines to their preferences and conditions and ensures that the machine will be dedicated to a timely planting and harvest on their farm.

Tractors and sprayers are more frequently leased since they get used for a large portion of the year, and leasing offers a cost-effective way to stay up to date on the latest technology. Some of the most common custom hire jobs include fertilizer application and spraying. Both require significant investment in support equipment, and the products applied can be harsh on machinery. Because of this, farms tend to take one of two approaches: Some choose to own the equipment and make the most of it by offering custom services to nearby farms, helping spread out the cost by utilizing their machinery to its full capacity. Others prefer to hire these services instead, paying a set fee per acre to avoid the expense of owning underutilized equipment.

Rates for custom farm services are an easy way to find estimates to benchmark the machine costs on your operation. MU Extension's "Custom Rates for Farm Services in Missouri" is available for free download at https://muext.us/CustomRates.

American shoppers still prefer grocery store

American grocery shoppers still prefer visiting brick and mortar stores for a greater sense of control, confidence, and efficiency, especially when selecting perishable items like produce and meat, a recent study has found.

In-person grocery shopping also "plays a social role," according to the Food Industry Association's (FMI) U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2026 report, "helping consumers care for their households and stay connected to food, culture, and shared experiences."

The overall in-person experience leads to customer loyalty as well as return customers, the report suggests.

The majority of respondents (54%) said they always shop at their primary store.

On average, Americans will visit 5.4 separate banners in one month for grocery items. Gen Z and millennial Americans are more likely to shop around, visiting 6.7 and 6.1 separate banners respectively per week, the study found.

Though the number varies based upon gender and family size, in total, American households make 2.8 grocery shopping trips per week, spending on average $169 per week on groceries.

The report goes on to say that 77% of Americans obtain groceries from a supermarket, 67% from a Mass store, 45% from a Club store, 36% from a Limited Assortment store, 32% from a Dollar store, and 28% primarily from an online-only retailer.

Technology is still very much in the mix, as 77% of grocery shoppers said they use digital technology before shopping and 71% use it while shopping.

"In an effort to fulfill their unique definitions of value, consumers visit more than five separate grocery store banners on average per month despite growing omnichannel grocery shopping trends," Leslie G. Sarasin, president and CEO of FMI said upon releasing the report.

"Shoppers tell us they seek stores with certain personality traits that meet their household needs. One store may offer an entertainment-based shopping experience, while another offers stock-up options or bargain hunting. It's important for food retailers to ask themselves, 'What personality does my store have?' and ensure that personality grows customer loyalty."

– Meatingplace.com

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.

– Meatingplace.com

Looking at the road ahead for the beef industry

By STEVE DITTMER
Executive Vice President
Agribusiness Freedom Foundation

We intend to continue -- with your help -- pushing for more improvements to the economy through tax policy and deregulation, to enable an improved standard of living for Americans -- so they can continue to prioritize beef buying in the budget at home or away from home.

We said last fall that at least in our new political situation, we had some people in the new Administration that would listen to us.

That has turned out like we hoped. Whether they respond like we want them to is another question.

On taxes, deregulation -- especially at the EPA; fostering energy development, etc. we have gotten some welcoming actions, not just words or studies or promises.

Some things have been two-edged swords. Trade has hurt us in China but there has been some thawing and new deals appearing pending with the UK. The USMCA is still in force but a war of words with Canadian officials has not been something we wanted. Trade with Mexico because of the NWS has wrecked the feeder cattle trade from that country and damaged feedyards that have thrived on that supply source for years.

A strong economy overall coupled with great demand we have worked at for decades, has supported cattle and beef prices to levels we could not have expected a couple years ago.

War is usually not advantageous to but a small minority of people in a country. For most of us, the major effect has been on fuel prices. That should be temporary, especially viewed in the historical context endured since 1979. The most lasting effect will be in fertilizer and chemical costs built into this year's crops.

Politically, the Republicans have finally gotten their act together to at least fund DHS through the reconciliation process. They have yet to get some version of the SAVE Act through to boost confidence in this fall's midterm elections; to pass any further tax relief, like some capital gains reduction or indexing and further reducing federal spending. Making some of the tax improvements permanent will be key to long-term economic growth.

Getting last year's reconciliation bill through -- the One Big Beautiful bill -- in the first half of the year instead of the last of the calendar year has performed as promised, boosting a strong economic response in 2026. The GDP, job growth, construction of new factories to "re-shore" our production of important basic industries, further production and export of energy and reduction of the federal workforce are some of the important developments.

A new Federal Reserve chairman with an attitude of reform and focus on the right response to the right data should make the economy hum for some time, once some of the dead wood and misguided economists are rooted out of the bureaucracy there.

Speaking of data, it is encouraging that the strong economy is being supported not only by strong current earnings -- not just promises -- but also by good forward guidance. Economic growth is good for premium priced things like our product.

We intend to continue -- with your help -- pushing for more improvements to the economy through tax policy and deregulation, to enable an improved standard of living for Americans -- so they can continue to prioritize beef buying in the budget at home or away from home.

We will continue for fight for policy that protects our industry's ability to produce not only the best quality beef but do so at a cost level people around the world can afford. Consumer satisfaction must include quality and the satisfying experience that feels like money well spent.

We prioritize a message for support twice a year.

We cast a wide net for information people tell us they don't see anywhere else.

We hope you will see fit to help us continue the work of informing, persuasion and support for first principles critical to the future of the beef industry.

Agribusiness Freedom Foundation
Promoting Free Market Principles

See page 6 for details.

The Cattleman's Advocate is available free at the following area locations:

Area livestock markets

- **Callaway Livestock Center**
  Fulton, MO
- **Eastern Missouri Commission Co.**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **F&T Livestock Market**
  Palmyra, MO
- **Scotland County Livestock**
  Memphis, MO
- **Carthage Livestock**
  Carrthage, MO
- **Edina Livestock Sales**
  Edina, MO
- **Fairview Sale Barn**
  Fairview, MO
- **Greenville Livestock Auction**
  Centralia, IL
- **Jones Brothers Livestock Auction**
  Marshall, MO
- **Kingsville Livestock Auction**
  Kingsville, MO
- **Kirksville Livestock Market**
  Kirksville, MO
- **Lolli Brothers Livestock Auction**
  Macon, MO
- **Mid-Missouri Stockyards**
  Lebanon, MO
- **New Cambria Livestock Auction**
  New Cambria, MO
- **North Missouri Livestock Auction**
  Milan, MO
- **Olean Livestock Market**
  Eldon, MO
- **South Central Regional Stockyard**
  Vienna, MO
- **Unionville Livestock Market**
  Unionville, MO
- **Wheeler Livestock Auction**
  Osceola, MO
- **Windsor Livestock Auction**
  Windsor, MO

Other locations

- **A&S Printing**
  Monroe City, MO
- **Abel's/McDonald's**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **Agriservices of Brunswick**
  Brunswick, MO
- **American Bank of Missouri**
  Wellsville, MO
  Middletown, MO
  Montgomery City, MO
- **Angell's Western Wear**
  Centralia, MO
- **Bank of Montgomery County**
  Montgomery City, MO
- **Bowling Green Tractor**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **Bowling Green Veterinary Clinic**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **Central Elevator**
  Silex, MO
- **C & S Grocery**
  Harrisburg, MO
- **Dawson's Store**
  Thompson, MO
- **Dearwester Grain Services**
  Mt. Sterling, IL
  Golden, IL
  Carthage, IL
- **Eastern Missouri Commission Co.**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **Farmers Cooperative**
  Ewing, MO
- **Farmers Cooperative Services**
  New London, MO
- **Farmers Cooperative Services**
  Palmyra, MO
- **Farmer's Elevator & Exchange**
  Monroe City, MO
- **FCS Financial**
  Columbia, MO
  Hannibal, MO
- **Feeders Grain, Inc.**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **Fish Hook Market**
  Baylis, IL
- **Grotjan Conoco Station**
  New Franklin
- **FarmersCo-op**
  St.Peters, MO
- **Hannibal Tractor**
  Hannibal, MO
- **Hatton Vermeer Sales**
  Auxvasse, MO
- **Hilty's Meats**
  Bowling Green, MO
- **HNB Bank**
  Bowling Green, MO
  Hannibal, MO
  Monroe City, MO
  Perry, MO
- **Jones Brothers AgriServices**
  La Monte, MO
- **Jonesburg Grain Co.**
  Jonesburg, MO
- **Josephville Meat Processing**
  Wentzville, MO
- **Kingdom Feed**
  Fulton, MO
- **Kyle Hendricks**
  Buffalo, MO
- **L & S Equipment**
  Hermann, MO
- **Lehenbauer Farm Repair**
  Auxvasse, MO
- **Liberty Feed Mill**
  Liberty, IL
- **Littrell Feed & Seed**
  Thompson, MO
- **Martinsburg Farmers Elevator**
  Martinsburg, MO
- **Mellor Trailers**
  Boonville, MO
- **Meyer Implement**
  Bowling Green, MO
  Monroe City, MO
- **MFA Home Office**
  Columbia, MO
- **MFA Agri Services**
  Boonville, MO
  Canton, MO
  Centralia, MO
  Columbia, MO
  Elsberry, MO
  Fayette, MO
  Fulton, MO
  Glascow, MO
  Kahoka, MO
  Hannibal, MO
  Jackson, MO
  Jefferson City, MO
  Kirksville, MO
  La Belle, MO
  Laddonia, MO
  Macon, MO
  Mexico, MO
  Moberly, MO
  Montgomery City, MO
  Owensville, MO
  Perryville, MO
  Shelbina, MO
  Vandalia, MO
  Warrenton, MO
  Washington, MO
  Wentzville, MO
- **Missouri Cattleman's Association**
  Columbia, MO
- **Missouri Valley MFA**
  Alma, MO
  Higginsville, MO
- **Monroe County Abstract & Title**
  Paris, MO
- **Monroe County Co-op**
  Paris, MO
- **Montgomery City Grain**
  Montgomery City, MO
- **Moscow Feed and Grain**
  Moscow Mills, MO
- **New Haven Farm & Feed**
  New Haven, MO
- **People's Savings Bank**
  Hermann, MO
  Montgomery City, MO
  New Florence, MO
  New Haven, MO
  New Melle, MO
  Rhineland, MO
- **Pike Feeds**
  Pittsfield, IL
- **Prairie Home Coop**
  Prairie Home, MO
- **Quinn Farm Supply**
  Monroe City, MO
- **Rickett's Farm Service of Cairo**
  Cairo, MO
- **Ricketts Farm Service**
  Salisbury, MO
  Shelbina, MO
- **Rural King**
  Wentzville, MO
- **Ruyle's Angus**
  Roodhouse, IL
- **Scheidt Bros. LLC**
  California, MO
- **Shelton Seed**
  Centralia, MO
- **Shetler Feed**
  Clark, MO
- **State Farm Insurance**
  Centralia, MO
  Vandalia, MO
- **Straatmann Feed**
  New Melle, MO
- **Strattmann Feed and Transfer**
  Labadie, MO
- **Twillman Feed**
  Fulton, MO
  Mexico, MO
- **USA Market News Office**
  Country Club, MO
- **Windmill Ridge**
  Shelbyville, MO

Digging Deeper....

By JUSTIN ANGELL

I guess most recently the big buzz is about the initial public offering (IPO) for Elon Musk company SpaceX. Currently we have achieved our first individual net worth of $1 trillion for Elon and a $2 trillion valuation for this company which includes Twitter, Starlink, SpaceX, and eventually I believe Tesla.

I won't get into the weeds, trying to explain just how high the stock price is compared to what investors are buying — suffice to say, $2 trillion is enough to feed a third of the people on earth for a year.

There's no price to earnings ratio because to have one of those you have to have sustained earnings... Space X doesn't, … yet.

Let's be clear, this company's stock valuation has less to do with profitability than it does with a huge base of people who rightly believe Elon Musk is the genius of our generations and will accomplish great things. Elon has successfully monetized the dream of traveling to the moon and to Mars.

Granted, this company makes a lot of things, but for now a profit is not one of them. There is a very good possibility that SpaceX has become a company whose services like Starlink are considered essential by the government, especially the military.

Just like the mega banks that allow Bond markets to continuously fund US debt, they have become "too big to fail". Even if SpaceX is too big to fail, it is probably not too big to have its stock price 50% lower in a year. I will concede there are a lot of people smarter than me that are big promoters and big investors. The entire costs for the build-out of the artificial intelligence industry is staggering.

A question was posed to me, that I found very interesting. If SpaceX is valued at $2 trillion today what would the stock value be if Elon Musk tragically died suddenly? I shudder to think of the financial cascade lower that would result from that catalyst.

Most people reading this will say it doesn't matter because I don't invest in the stock market. You might not be directly investing in the stock market, but if you or your family have any kind of retirement plan, 401(k) pension etc., I bet you're an investor without knowing it.

Another big story will be an end to hostilities in the Persian Gulf. If the peace deal hammered out over weeks holds, it could signal the beginning of a global economic recovery — the likes of which we may have never seen.

One big question is how low can the price of crude oil go? For whatever reason, Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli military have been doing their best to disrupt the agreement.

Lower oil and energy prices can spur the global economy better than cheap interest. Globally, interest cost affects only those that borrow money, while fuel and energy costs touch everyone's lives and directly affect the quality of that life.

With peace in the Middle East, the next major project that the Trump administration will have to fix is obviously the Russian - Ukraine conflict. Every month that passes, the Russian military becomes a victim of the drone program of the Ukrainians. I cannot overstate the significance of this war. Drone technology has advanced to the point where soldiers in Kentucky can fly bombing missions in the Middle East, Africa, or anywhere else in the world, the U.S. military projects power.

The capabilities of jet fighters has now exceeded the G force endurance of human pilots. I believe it possible that within just a few years, fighter type of aircraft will not have pilots and much of our air program will be replaced with drones.

One disturbing trend in our military is the removal of the human aspect in the chain of command to determine life and death of combatants. An AI company (Anthropic) used by our military was recently banned from government contracts by the U.S. military because they refused to program drones, robots and other weapons systems to kill people without the direction of a human chaperone. Allowing machines to decide targets unsupervised sounds very surreal and dangerous to me. Does anyone remember the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, Terminator?

Occasionally, I look back through my notes at past articles I've written. July 2025 predictions, and explanations a year later is interesting reading for history buffs. FYI

I think that's all I've got for this month. Come see me at the sale.

USDA funds 40 NWS research projects for $105 million

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing funding for 40 breakthrough projects to bolster the nation's defenses against New World screwworm (NWS). These innovative proposals, which will receive a combined total of about $105 million, promise to sharpen detection, accelerate control and eradication tools, and strengthen rapid-response capabilities.

USDA launched the NWS Grand Challenge on January 21, 2026, marking the next milestone for Secretary Rollins' five-pronged plan to support producers' success, protect the nation's food supply, and build long-term resilience against NWS. The Grand Challenge called on innovators from federal and non-federal entities to help in the efforts to prevent the spread of NWS by developing high-impact projects to enhance detection, control, and eradication readiness.

"We launched the Grand Challenge expecting bold, innovative, and science-backed ideas to fight New World screwworm, and the proposals delivered just that," said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins. "These projects represent the creativity, scientific rigor, and determination we need to reinforce our existing efforts, empower our producers, and safeguard American agriculture and our food supply. We have beaten this pest before, and by leveraging innovative solutions and advancements in technology we will beat it again in record time."

USDA reviewed 226 applications, requesting about $664 million in total funding. Projects were selected based on their innovative approaches, scientific gold standards, and their potential to make a signifi cant impact on the prevention and response to NWS.

In addition to the 40 projects announced today, work has already started on two additional USDA-funded projects that are a part of the Grand Challenge. Texas A&M AgriLife Research is assessing the feasibility, effi cacy, and operational readiness of electron beam (eBeam) technology as a non-radioactive alternative to cobalt-60 gamma irradiation for sterilizing NWS pupae in sterile insect technique programs, and the University of Florida is evaluating two U.S.-made X-ray irradiators for sterilizing NWS pupae using secondary screwworm as a surrogate.

The Grand Challenge focuses on four core priorities:

— Enhance sterile NWS fly production to improve program effi ciency and capacity.

— Develop novel NWS traps and lures to modernize detection and early warning systems.

— Advance NWS therapeutics and treatments to reduce animal health impacts and strengthen response capability.

— Develop tools that bolster preparedness and response, including repellents, ecological modeling, wildlife surveillance, or other innovative approaches.

Using a rigorous, competitive review process, a team of USDA, state, and industry experts evaluated the merits of the proposals and how well they supported the core priorities. USDA will work closely with these awardees to develop work and financial plans that ensure these projects meet these important priorities and protect critical taxpayer resources.

NWS is a serious pest that affects livestock, pets, wildlife, and, less commonly, people and birds. USDA's ongoing efforts to fi ght NWS include sterile fly production, surveillance, and cross-border collaboration. The Grand Challenge complements these efforts by fast-tracking next-generation technologies and research that strengthen U.S. preparedness and response capabilities.

More information about NWS is available at screwworm.gov.

– Livestock Weekly

Swift Beef ordered to pay penalty in pollution case

Swift Beef Company, a JBS-owned processor, has agreed to pay a $1.25 million civil penalty for a wastewater breach at its Grand Island, Neb., facility.

According to a consent decree the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (NDEE) released, the breach occurred on Jan. 6 , 2024, and resulted in approximately 2 million gallons of wastewater from the plant's lagoon leaking into the nearby Wood River. The decree also alleged "violations of operation and maintenance requirements, surface water quality standards, and permit conditions."

"The parties agree settlement of this matter is in the public interest," the decree stated, adding "the parties desire to conclude this matter without trial or adjudication of any issues of fact or law."

The decree does not constitute "an admission by Defendant with respect to such issues."

The Jan. 6 lagoon breach occurred 5 a.m. that morning, and Swift halted operations at the plant at 6:45 a.m. A statement from JBS described "immediate action to reduce any impacts," and that plant operations promptly resumed.

In the weeks that followed, NDEE participated in a town hall about the leak, and local commissioners formalized letters of complaint that were sent to JBS.

– Meatingplace.com

Market Reports

Sponsored by Prairie Queen Transportation, LLC

Eastern Missouri Commission Company, Bowling Green
Market Report for Friday, June 12, 2026
Receipts: 1,320 Week ago: 418 Year ago: 1,321

Compared to the last special two weeks ago, steer calves weighing 500-600 lbs sold steady, with 600-800 lbs on a light test trading with a firm to higher undertone. Heifer calves weighing 400-450 lbs sold with a sharply higher undertone, with 450-700 lbs all selling steady to firm on comparable weights, there were 6 pot loads of yearling heifers weighing 780-988 lbs were not tested with the largest consignment being 115 hd of heifers weighing 935 lbs at 311.00 and 104 hd heifers weighing 988 lbs at 303.50. Slaughter cows traded steady with last week.

Feeder Steers: Medium and Large 1 – Pkg 285 lbs 700.00; few 350-400 lbs 622.00-642.50; pkg 450 lbs 545.00; 500-550 lbs 500.00-512.00, 585-600 lbs 467.50-475.00; 600-650 lbs 436.00-457.50, 650-700 lbs 409.00-417.00, thin 656-663 lbs 448.00-450.00; few 700 lbs 410.00, pkg 782 lbs 372.00.
Medium and Large 1-2 – 400-450 lbs 530.00-567.50, 450-500 lbs 475.00-502.00; 500-550 lbs 490.00-492.00, 550-600 lbs 437.50-450.00; pkg 600 lbs 424.00, pkg 688 lbs 394.00; pkg 700 lbs 387.50; lot 836 lbs 349.00.
Large 1 Pkg 797 lbs 359.00; lot 1011 lbs 308.00.
Feeder Heifers: Medium and Large 1 – 400-450 lbs 515.00-550.00; 450-500 lbs 470.00-480.00; 500-550 lbs 430.00-440.00, 550-600 lbs 410.00-437.50; 600-650 lbs 401.00-417.50, 650-700 lbs 358.00-378.00; pot load 841 lbs 319.00; 115 hd 935 lbs 311.00; 104 hd 988 lbs 303.50.
Medium and Large 1-2 – 350-400 lbs 525.00-545.00; 500-600 lbs few 407.50-415.00; 600-680 lbs 350.00-387.00; pot load 782 lbs 327.00..
Feeder Bulls: Medium and Large 1 – Pkg 345 lbs 600.00; pkg 460 lbs 522.50; pkg 624 lbs 420.00.
Slaughter Cows: Premium White (65-70% lean) Average dressing, 175.00-183.00; and high dressing, 185.00-189.00.
Breakers (70-80% lean) Average dressing, 175.00-184.00; high dressing, 86.00-192.50; and low dressing, 161.00-171.00.
Boners (80-85% lean) Average dressing, 174.00-184.00; high dressing, 1186.00-194.00; and low dressing, 163.00-170.00.
Lean (85-90% lean) Average dressing, 160.00-169.00; high dressing, 175.00-185.00; and low dressing, 139.00-153.00.
Shelly/Thin 107.00-115.00.
Slaughter Bulls: Yield Grade 1-2 – 1400-2500 lbs, 203.00-215.00 220.00-236.00.
Slaughter Steers and Heifers: (45 hd) Choice 2-3 – 1230-1450 lbs 258.00-259.00; pkg 3-4 1657 lbs 251.75.

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

Trump questions USMCA renewal as meat sector defends 'Gold Standard' deal

President Donald Trump threw the future of his own North American trade deal into doubt recently.

In comments in the Oval Office in response to a question about the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which is currently up for joint review by the three parties, he said: "I'm not looking to renew it."

The successor deal to 1994's North American Free Trade Agreement was negotiated during Trump's first term, taking effect in 2020.

"NAFTA had no termination," he said. "USMCA did one thing that I loved. After six years it comes up for renewal. I don't know that I'm gonna renew it."

USMCA is a 16-year agreement that can be extended for 16 years after review. Separate from the review process, countries can formally withdraw with six months' notice.

"We don't need anything that Canada has. We don't need anything that Mexico has, but they need everything that we have," Trump said. "They have to treat us better. With Mexico and Canada we have trade deficits. We should have surpluses with them. We don't need their cars, we don't need their lumber, we don't need their energy, we don't need anything that they have."

In testimony Wednesday to the House Committee on Agriculture, Michael Schumpp, Meat Institute senior director for international affairs, called for Congress and the Trump administration "to preserve the agreement's benefits for American agriculture." He called USMCA "the world's gold-standard trade agreement."

"In addition to bolstering U.S. meat, poultry, and livestock trade, USMCA has led to increased market integration in North America, and must be preserved without significant changes that would disrupt the U.S. meat and poultry industry's substantial access to the Canadian and Mexican markets," Schumpp said.

He described the North American industry as "among the most integrated supply chains globally," and estimated the entire trade in livestock and red meat and poultry products between the three countries at more than $16 billion a year.

"This integration supports American businesses, rural and agricultural communities, and American workers, boosts U.S. economic growth, stabilizes food prices, and strengthens American supply chains against shocks from less predictable, more adversarial trading partners," Schumpp said. "American farmers, ranchers, food and agricultural producers, and meat and poultry companies have built resilient supply chains to serve reliable consumers and customers across North America."

Mexico is easily the largest market for U.S. pork and poultry exports and the No. 3 destination for beef. Canada is the No. 2 buyer of U.S. poultry and ranks fourth for both pork and beef. Combined, the two neighbors bought $8 billion of U.S. meat exports last year, more than a third of the $23.3 billion total sold into foreign markets.

Amid chronically tight U.S. beef supplies, Canada was also the No. 2 source of beef imports, trailing only Australia, and followed by Mexico as the third largest source of beef. Combined, the USMCA partners sold $5.3 billion worth of beef in the U.S. last year out of $14.3 billion in total imports.

A significant portion of beef trade with Canada is regionally complementary within the well-integrated meat industry, with beef from the U.S. Midwest sold into the eastern Canadian population centers. Meanwhile, the beef-producing Western provinces supply beef into the Northwestern U.S. Beef imports from Mexico, unlike the processing beef sourced from Australia and Brazil, tend to be cuts aimed at Latino culinary preferences.

– Meatingplace.com

Cattle fly and tick control more important than ever now

STOCKTON, Mo. – "Fly and tick control is important to reduce the spread of diseases that negatively impact cattle operation's productivity," says Patrick Davis, University of Missouri Extension livestock field specialist.

Health problems in cattle such as pinkeye, Theileria orientalis (Ikeda) and anaplasmosis are spread through flies and ticks. Davis discusses management strategies to reduce these problems in your cattle operation.

The main culprit that causes pinkeye is the bacterium Moraxella bovis, he says. Face flies irritate the eye and transmit the bacteria. Pinkeye that can affect an animal's performance until the eyes heal. Davis encourages face fly control to reduce pinkeye.

"Anaplasmosis is caused by red blood cells being infected by the blood parasite Anaplasma marginale," says Davis. The infection causes an immune response, destroys red blood cells and causes anemia in cattle. Anaplasmosis can lead to abortions, decreased weight gain, bull infertility and animal death. To reduce herd anaplasmosis, Davis encourages cattle producers to reduce modes of transmission, which include ticks, flies and mechanical vectors.

"Theileria orientalis (Ikeda) is a protozoal organism that is negatively impacting cattle production in Missouri," says Davis. This organism infects the animal's red bloods cells, and the immune system attacks the infected cells, causing anemia. The symptoms can be mild, with an elevated temperature, depression and pale mucous membranes. More serious cases cause severe depression and jaundice of mucous membranes and vulva. Other symptoms include abortion and loss of body condition, both of which can hurt cattle operation productivity and profitability. Even though most cattle never show symptoms and typical death loss rate is less than 5%, some farms may see much higher rates of illness and death loss than typically reported. The main vector of this of this illness is the Asian longhorn tick, but it can also be spread by other tick species as well as flies and mechanical vectors.

"Consult a veterinarian to have a prevention and treatment plan to help reduce these health issues and minimize effects to your operation" says Davis.

Some things to consider when developing this plan with your veterinarian:

Preventative vaccinations and injectable/pour-on treatments. Vaccines are available or can be developed with veterinarian help to reduce pinkeye issues. There are also injectable products that can help reduce external parasites that cause these problems, so consult a veterinarian and use based on approval.

Feed additives. Many feed products can help in control of external parasites and dealing with the symptoms of some of these health problems. Consult your veterinarian and use additives as prescribed.

Fly and tick control. Methods include backrubbers, dust bags, insecticide tags and strips, sprays and insecticides. Pick the best one that fits your operation.

Reducing mechanical vector transmission. Since anaplasmosis and Theileria orientalis (Ikeda) affect red blood cells, they can be transmitted through needles and other equipment while cattle are being vaccinated and processed. Consult your veterinarian and implement a plan to reduce transmission through this equipment.

"These health issues can be detrimental to a cattle operation's bottom line, especially if you lose animals," says Davis. Consult your veterinarian to implement a plan that will successfully reduce the incidence of these health concerns.

If you have questions, consult your local MU Extension livestock field specialist.

White Castle drops Impossible Slider

White Castle, the nation's longest running fast-food burger franchise, this week announced its new Southwest Veggie Slider, which also serves as the debut of its partnership with Dr. Praeger non-meat brands.

The new Southwest Veggie Slider uses Dr. Praeger's veggie patty as its base. The new arrival comes after White Castle ended its seven-year relationship with Impossible Foods, which had previously provided the chain's veggie burger selection.

According to White Castle, the new slider is comprised of crispy brown rice crust and a blend of six vegetables — sweet potatoes, black beans, corn, red bell peppers, onions and carrots — seasoned with smoky chipotle and sweet BBQ flavors and served on a slider bun with a slice of jalapeño cheese. (Cheese substitutions allowed.)

Founded in 1921 and based in Columbus, Ohio, White Castle operates 336 locations while also maintaining a brisk freezer food segment. In a statement, it emphasized that beef, chicken and fish sliders remain popular menu options.

– Meatingplace.com

Monthly Sheep & Goat Market Reports

Sponsored by The Bank of Missouri

Montgomery County Livestock Auction, Montgomery City
Market Report for Sheep & Goat Auction
Thursday, June 11, 2026
Receipts: 675 Last month: 1150

Montgomery County Livestock held their monthly Sheep and Goat Sale Thursday, June 11 with a moderate offering of mostly lambs weighing 60-80 lbs. Slaughter lambs mostly steady with last month. Feeder lambs on a light test sold with a firm to higher undertone. Demand was moderate to good on a moderate supply. Kid goats were not well tested but sold mostly steady on a light offering. Montgomery County holds their sheep and goat sale the 2nd Thursday of each month. All prices are per cwt unless otherwise noted.

SHEEP (prices per hundredweight)

Slaughter Lambs: Choice-Prime 1-3 – 60-80 lbs 280.00-297.50; few 90-95 lbs 285.00-290.00; 105-119 lbs 275.00.

Feeder Lambs: Small and Medium 1-2 – 90-180 lbs 140.00-155.00; Cull and Utility 1-2 78-250 lbs 120.00-135.00.

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: 3-6 yrs 113-133 lbs exposed 190.00-200.00 per hd.

GOATS: (prices per hundred weight)

Slaughter Goats: Market Kids: Selection 1 – 35-44 lbs 160.00-190.00 per hd, Selection 1-2 few 30-36 lbs 325.00-345.00 per lb.

Feeder Kids: Selection 1 – Scarce.

Market Kids: Slaughter: Selection 1 55-60 lbs few 400.00-410.00; Selection 1-2 50-78 lbs 360.00-390.00.

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

NWS closure forcing Mexican industry to export beef instead of cattle

Thwarted by U.S. import bans on livestock imports due to the northward advance of the New World screwworm (NWS), cattle from Mexican producers are increasingly crossing the border as boxed beef.

The Mexican Meat Chamber said that in the first four months of 2026, there was a 23% jump in exports of Mexican beef to the United States, the Reuters news agency reported.

"If it can be doubled, that would be excellent," Macarena Hernandez, general director of the chamber, told Reuters.

The chamber told Reuters that the current U.S. ban on Mexican livestock imports is costing Mexican farmers about $1.8 billion a year. USDA data showed 2024 cattle imports, which reached about 1.25 million head despite the first NWS border closure in the closing weeks of that year, were worth about 1.3 billion dollars, with cattle only gaining in value during the 18 months since then.

With live imports reopened for only a few months in early 2025, beef exports from Mexico to the United States last year jumped 12% to 279,000 metric tons (mt), with value growing 18% to $2.3 billion amid record U.S. beef prices, according to USDA data. Much of the Mexican beef exports are sold by retailers serving Latino communities.

The screwworm pest has in recent years been moving from Central America through Mexico and ever closer to the border with the U.S. As reported by Meatingplace, an incidence of Screwworm was detected last month in an animal less than 100 miles from the Texas border.

Authorities in both the U.S. and Mexico are working to stem the parasite's northward expansion via the release of millions of sterile male flies in the affected areas of Northern Mexico as well as prophylactically in Texas.

– Meatingplace.com

FREE CLASSIFIED AD!

As a service to our readers, The Cattleman's Advocate is offering a FREE one-month classified ad. To place an ad of up to 20 words for the next issue, simply email your ad to: cattlemans@virtualimages.us; or fill out the form below, clip it out and mail to:

Cattleman's Advocate, P.O. Box 26, Paris, MO 65275

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- ☐ To Lease
- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Hauling
- ☐ Wanted to Buy
- ☐ Acreage
- ☐ Livestock
- ☐ ____________

Email your ad to: **cattlemans@virtualimages.us;** fax to: **660.327.1109;**
Or clip & mail to: **Cattleman's Advocate, P.O. Box 26, Paris, MO 65275**

Classified ads must be received by the 25th of the month for the next month's issue.

The publishers reserve the right, at their discretion to decline advertisements deemed in conflict with the publication's goals or those of our other interest – commercial cattle marketing.

CLASSIFIEDS

Livestock For Sale

Standardbred Bay stud weanling, ready to go in July, $900. Donnie S. Hostetler, 1331 Topsy Road, Randolph, Mississippi 38864.

For Sale

For Sale free standing panels, continuous panels, weld-on gates, corral panels and pipe post. "You will like the products and the competitive prices!" J&L Farm 2665 Audrain Rd. 154 Clark, MO. Call and leave message at 660-670-0673.

Slam latch gate latches, Single $10. Double $20. Jeffrey Hostetler, Shelbyville, MO 660-988-8422

Bull for Rent

Registered Angus Bull for rent. 18 months old. Service guaranteed. Very reasonably priced. Call 660-341-8218.

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Livestock hauling available from Boonville, MO, serving most of Central Missouri big jobs and little jobs with various size gooseneck trailers by Schmidt's Custom Livestock Hauling, contact David 660-672-9914.

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Laugh Tracks in the Dust....................................

Rocky start to marriage

By MILO YIELD
Special to The Advocate

For ages rural men have been marrying urban women. That sets up those marriages for various cultural shocks. The hubby knows little about city life and the wife knows even less about rural life. This is a story about such a marriage:

The farm boy, G. Reese Munkay, met the love of his life while they were in college. After a long courtship, the two marry in an elaborate ceremony in the heart of the big city where the new wife grew up.

They took a long honeymoon to Hawaii and then returned to the farm where Reese wuz getting a toe-hold in crop farming for a living. Within a few weeks, the new bride requested a weekend trip to the city as a "break from boredom."

But, Reese had other ideas about how to spend the weekend. He choose to work on his restoration project of an old tractor.

So, about mid-afternoon the new bride makes a trip to the farm shop and find's her hubby elbow-deep in grease tearing into the engine of the antique tractor. After watching Reese work his wrenches for a few minutes, she pipes up and sez, "Honey, I've just been thinking, now that we are married maybe it's time you quit spending all your spare time out here in the with that old worthless tractor. I think you ought to sell it and buy us a new dish washer."

Reese gets an absolutely horrified look on his face, and his bride says, "Darling, what's wrong?"

Reese replies, "I'm sorry. For a second there, you sounded exactly like my ex-wife."

"Ex-wife!" his new bride screams. "You never told me you were married before!"

And Reese concludes the conversation with, "I wasn't."

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It's pretty amazing the changes in the world that we old rural folks have witnessed in our lifetimes. My first recollection of rural life wuz riding on the back, holding on to the harness, of one of dad's team of matched grey Belgian workhorse mares.

So, I've experienced everything from work horses, one-room schools with chalk boards and coal-burning stoves, to rockets, space travel, the internet, self-driving tractors, agri-drones, and artificial intelligence. And, all that in the space of 80+ years. But, the change is more profound if you go back another generation or two.

My old friend Willie Jay from Mt. Vernon, Mo., is in his 90s. We email back and forth all the time. He tells stories from his childhood, with his grandparents and parents, that truly take me back in history. Here's one of his recent emails:

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"Milo, my grandmother never bought any hand soap or laundry soap. She made her own lye soap. For laundry, she shaved the lye soap into a big cast iron kettle filled with boiling water and dirty clothes. She rubbed the clothes on a washboard and I had to turn the wringer for her. After the clothes were washed and wrung out, she put them on a wire line tied to a tree and the corner of the chicken house. I held the line down to where she could lift the laundry up on it. Then together we'd push a 10-foot wooden pole under it so the clothes could dry in the sun and wind.

Grandma also cooked on a wood stove. All she used were cast iron skillets. She seldom used a hot pad on the hot handles. She baked biscuits from scratch. She'd choke off them big ol' biscuits into a big tin pan and serve them to grandpas and I with a skillet full of gravy. Granddad would sop up all the gravy as he ate them. Usually we had a couple of left over biscuits and maybe a slice or two of bacon or a big chunk of ham. That was grandpa's dinner. He'd eat under a big shade tree and then lay on a old spring cot. I still have that cot on my back porch. When he get up, he'd take a walking stick and knock a ball across the yard a time or to for his dog to fetch.

After his rest, he'd get ole Kate and Jack, his two old mules, and go back plowing the corn or whatever. He never had a car. He'd hook the mules to the wagon and go 3 miles to the old country store. He'd buy oil for the lamp, a sack of feed for the old milk cows and the mules, and a 50-pound block of ice wrapped in a burlap sack and old blanket so it wouldn't melt going home for the ice box.

On some weekends, he'd catch a neighbor going by on Saturday and have him bring back 1 or 2 blocks of ice so we could make a gallon of ice cream. If he managed the ice well, the ice cream would keep for eating Sunday after church and the water off blocks of ice also cooled down a watermelon to eat, too. That's the way I grew up back in the day."

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This week I've been busy being my best imitation of old Tennessee Ernie Ford. He billed himself an an "Old Pea Picker," and that what I've done, too.

I've been picking prolific peas from my garden every other day. I've shelled enuf peas for ol' Nevah to freeze for winter seven nice packages of peas. There'll be more. They'll be mighty tasty when the winter winds are blowing. Plus, we've had two batches of fresh creamed peas and new red potatoes from the garden, too. Yum. Yum?

I also want to tip my hat to the vegetable breeders at Burpee's seed company. They bred and released the First 13 pea variety. And, that's a good name because the pods are huge and a few will have 13 peas, but most pods will have 9-11. It's the best pea variety I've ever planted.

We've also had a couple of fresh zucchini from the garden too, and I've about finished off the 2nd planting of leaf lettuce and spinach. The green beans are blooming so it won't be long until it's green bean canning time.

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Until then, here's the words of wisdom for the week: "Gardening might grow better characters than vegetables." Have a good 'un.

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2026 Farm Bill: Is it progress or just more of the same?

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

The 2026 Farm Bill marks a new opportunity for Congress to take a bold step to upset the status quo by rebalancing the grazing livestock sectors legal and regulatory framework in a way that levels the playing field between independent livestock producers and the dominant multinational meatpackers, processors, and their allied lobbying groups. This won't be easy.

We typically measure the current state of our livestock industries by comparing them to conditions that existed a bit over a generation ago – in 1980, and we evaluate the industry trends that have materialized since then. Several events occurred in the 80s that profoundly influenced the trajectories of our livestock industries. In the early 80s our nation faced an agricultural recession marked by a severe economic cost/price squeeze that forced many livestock producers out of business.

The 80s also marked the beginning of the deregulation era that signaled an end to aggressive antitrust enforcement and allowed meatpackers to begin owning, controlling, and feeding livestock long before slaughter. And the 80s triggered what USDA called merger mania, a condition marked by meatpacker mergers and acquisitions that resulted in only a handful of multinational meatpackers dominating the marketplace.

Every five years Congress goes about the task of writing a farm bill to address America's food security needs by implementing reforms that supposedly ensure America's farmers and ranchers can continue producing an abundant and affordable supply of wholesome food. Since the 1981 Farm Bill, Congress has progressively amended each successive farm bill, thereby creating and recreating a legal framework within which each of our agricultural sectors operates from crop farmers to livestock farmers and ranchers, to dairy farmers.

Of course, after each successive farm bill is enacted, the administration begins its rulemaking processes to write regulations for which to implement the farm bill's statutory requirements. Therefore, each successive farm bill redefines both the legal and regulatory framework within which each of our agricultural sectors function.

Our focus today is on the grazing livestock sector, our nation's cattle and sheep industries. So, since the 1981 Farm Bill, Congress has watched as our U.S. cattle and sheep industries shrank. We've lost 52% of our nation's beef cattle operations and over 60% of our nation's commercial sheep operations. If Congress knew that our cattle and sheep industries were shrinking more and more each time they sat down to write a new farm bill, why didn't they reform the livestock sector's legal and regulatory framework to reverse its downward trajectory?

The answer is unsurprising. The 80s deregulation era marked a hands-off approach to the marketing practices of meatpackers and processors, which was a monumental shift from past public policies. That shift allowed the largest of corporations to maximize control over their respective supply chains. It resulted in a legal and regulatory framework that minimized what the multinational corporations viewed as government infringement on their right to conduct business as they saw fit in their quest to maximize profits.

In other words, they got what they wanted in the 80s, and since then they've fought to maintain the status quo. They have since transformed their economic power – gained from their consolidation and concentration of the markets, into political power – gained from infiltrating producer groups, such as the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and National Pork Producers Council, and, of course, through their financial contributions to the political process.

Since the 80s, the multinational meatpackers and processors augmented the marketplace deregulation achieved in the 80s with trade deregulation achieved in the 90s, which afforded them with increased access to cheaper inputs from around the world. For going on 50 years, the multinational meatpackers and processors, and now including their allied producer groups, have been hugely successful in maintaining a legal and regulatory framework for the grazing livestock sector that has solidified their control over the sector. This has allowed them to maximize their profits, all the while that hundreds of thousands of independent livestock producers, their livestock, and their markets were shrinking.

The 2026 Farm Bill marks a new opportunity for Congress to take a bold step to upset the status quo by rebalancing the grazing livestock sectors legal and regulatory framework in a way that levels the playing field between independent livestock producers and the dominant multinational meatpackers, processors, and their allied lobbying groups. This won't be easy.

Those influential forces will fight vehemently to prevent needed market transparency, as would occur if the new Farm Bill reinstates mandatory country of origin labeling. They'll fight against livestock procurement reforms that would reinstate competition as the determinant of livestock prices. They'll fight against reform of the beef checkoff program that has helped them maintain the status quo. And they'll fight against trade reforms that can help incentivize the rebuilding of our diminished grazing livestock herds.

Congress can upset the status quo in the 2026 Farm Bill, but we must help them. Now is the time to call your U.S. Senators. Tell them to be bold.

Got an idea for a story you'd like to see in The Advocate?
Drop us a line and let us know at:
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Cook picked a good one with beef enchilada casserole

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

Jon's critique: The cook picked a good one. We had this for a work lunch and just a few of us cleaned the dish, so I cannot report on how it heats up as leftovers. I imagine it would still be pretty great. This was easy to eat with a fork and ate like a Mexican lasagna. I highly recommend this one and hope the cook makes this one again!

Beef Enchilada Casserole
Beth Pierce of SmallTownWoman.com

Ingredients:
1 ½ pound ground beef
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups red enchilada sauce
1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
7 ounce can green chiles, drained
12-14 flour or corn tortillas
1 ¼ cups each cheddar cheese and Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
Optional toppings: avocado, cilantro, sour cream, diced tomatoes

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 9x13 inch baking dish. Cook beef until no longer pink, add onion, cook until onion is soft then stir in the garlic. Drain off excess liquid. Add 1 ¼ cup enchilada sauce, black beans, and green chiles; cook for 1-2 minutes while stirring to combine.

Prepare the tortillas: Warm the tortillas in a microwave (30-40 seconds, wrapped in a damp paper towel) or warm in a skillet, just so the tortillas are pliable.

Layering: Spread 2 tablespoons of enchilada sauce on the bottom of the casserole dish. Layer ¼ of the tortillas on the bottom, then spread 1/3 of the beef mixture, and ¼ of each cheese. Repeat these layers two more times. Top with the last layer of tortillas, then the remaining enchilada sauce, and the remaining cheese.

Cover the pan with foil and bake for 30-35 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the casserole is heated through. Cook uncovered for 5 minutes.

Toss the avocado with lemon juice. Top the casserole with avocado, tomato, cilantro and jalapenos if desired.

Meat snack sales see 45% growth in last 4 years

Meat snack sales have increased by an impressive 45% in the last four years, reaching $4.4 billion, and the sector's future is bright, according to a report by CoBank.

CoBank's forecast calls for even more growth in the meat snack segment, pointing to the $1 billion in meat snack processing investment since 2020 — notable given that in the same time period a total of $8 billion has been devoted toward animal processing facilities overall.

In 2025 a number of new facilities across the nation were either opened or announced "including investments from popular brands like Chomps, Jack Link's, and Archers," the report says.

"Jack Link's, for example, announced a $450 million investment for a new plant in Perry, Ga., aimed at expanding its processing capabilities," CoBank reports. "Chomps is building two manufacturing facilities in Missouri and Nebraska to double its meat snack production this year."

In 2022 meat snacks brought in $3.3 billion — $1.6 billion from beef jerky and $1.4 billion from other dried meats; in 2026, that number is $4.4 billion in sales — again $1.6 billion from beef jerky, and $2.8 billion from other dried meat snacks.

Beef remains the primary player in meat snack production, but pork and poultry are also gaining ground in the meat snack realm. The report suggests that given the current low supply of beef, the other forms of protein could take a larger market share.

The uptick in sales can be attributed to a number of factors, such as consumers being increasingly attracted to minimally process foods that are also high in protein. The explosion of GLP-1 use plays a large role in the latter, as consumers who use GLP-1s are encouraged to pursue high protein intake to maintain muscle mass while losing weight.

– Meatingplace.com

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at Eastern Missouri Commission Company in Bowling Green

June

Friday, June 26.................Special feeder sale with regular Friday sale

July

Friday, July 3 ....NO SALE, Happy 250th Birthday to the USA!
Friday, July 10 ....Special feeder sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, July 17.........................Bred cow sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, July 24 ....Special feeder sale with regular Friday sale
Friday, July 31 ....Regular Friday sale

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www.emcclivestock.com

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9:00 a.m. start time for fed cattle & pound cows, followed by bred cows
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