

# Working with Federal Agencies

*Federal agency employees and cattle producers find common ground on tough western issues.*

*by Paige Nelson, field editor*

As a young boy growing up on his family's Wyoming cattle ranch, Neils Hansen regularly watched his father "butt heads" with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees.

"I grew into it, and I picked up the sword and tried to do the same thing," he told his audience at the Cattle Industry Convention during Cattlemen's College hosted in Phoenix, Ariz., Jan. 31. Darcy Helmick, Tim Griffiths and Ray Suazo joined Hansen for the "Innovative Strategies for Engaging with Federal Agencies" class.

Helmick, land manager for J.R. Simplot Co. and former BLM employee, opened the session with her story of working with Idaho ranchers and BLM firefighters to create 501(c)(3) Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs).

The following day after Idaho RFPA's first fire, Helmick made an apprehensive visit to the site. The BLM firefighters she spoke with told her, "Gosh this is totally different Darcy, [the head of the RFPA] was out here, and we could actually talk to him. ... It worked out perfect. Best thing we've ever done."

Likewise the cowboys on the RFPA reported:

"Darcy, those guys are like different people. They want to work with us. They were glad to see us. They gave us free Gatorade. It was awesome. We all worked together, and we got the fire out."

She suggested four ways



*Darcy Helmick, land manager for J.R. Simplot Co. and former BLM employee, opened the session with her story of working with Idaho ranchers and BLM fire fighters to create 501(c)(3) Rangeland Fire Protection Associations.*

ranchers could work with federal agency employees:

- First, identify what the issue is.
- Second, identify the challenges in that.
- Third, identify key players.
- Fourth, make it happen.

"If we can work together to have trust and communication to suppress wildland fire together, in my mind we can do most anything," she concluded.



*Tim Griffiths, western lead for Working Lands for Wildlife, a division of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, reported his group's efforts to work with ranchers in protecting sage grouse habitat.*

## Sage grouse protection

Griffiths, western lead for Working Lands for Wildlife, a division of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, reported his group's efforts to work with ranchers in protecting sage grouse habitat.

A powerful motivation for Griffiths is his vivid memory of the impact the spotted owl and koho salmon had on his community in Klamath Valley, Ore.

"I'm here to share an example of an alternative path forward, and something I think was born out of those ashes is this

incredible win-win solution that really is yielding results for both people and wildlife," he shared.

The largest threat to sage grouse survival, according to Griffiths, is habitat loss. In the West, habitat loss stems from land being converted into farm ground, natural resource exploration, drilling and subdivision.

"The number one thing that we know is these birds need large open landscapes for survival. That's where ranching comes in. Ranching isn't part of the problem. It is the solution, and what we need to do is maintain the vibrant ranching communities and their ability to hold these large intact landscapes together," said Griffiths.

He and his team focused on identifying core threats to the productivity and profitability of ranches.

They sat down with ranchers and worked to improve those issues, thus protecting vast acreages of sage grouse habitat.

In Hansen's case, after fighting with the BLM, he started to realize something.

"After a little while, I figured out I was winning a battle once in a while, but we were losing the war," he admitted.

So he took a different approach and began communicating with his BLM field office staff.

"I went in and had some conversation and addressed the issues that we'd had in the past," said Hansen. "We recognized that they were there. We agreed to go forward. We agreed to disagree. We agreed to never lie to each other."

Through this approach, Hansen was able to have a controlled burn on his BLM allotment. The burn opened up an area once choked with sagebrush.

Hansen also touted data collection on the range. He has more than 25 years of range monitoring data on his allotment. He said this is a powerful tool for the BLM to use and a great way to protect the ranch from any opposition.

When developing a relationship with agencies and in moving forward, Hansen recommended making sure everyone is on the same page.

"Communication is key. You've got to really work at it. Get to know each other, and take the time to understand what people are

concerned about and what they're thinking about," he suggested.

## Outcome-based

Suazo, BLM Arizona state director, approached the topic by offering the olive branch of flexibility.

Outcome-based grazing, said Suazo, is this idea of flexibility.

Because of the rigidity of current agency policy, Suazo believes decisions that are best for the

landscape and best for the rancher are not always made.

For instance, a permittee gets a prescription from an agency to turn out on this month. That might not be the best month to be out there, said Suazo.

However, the agency says this is the permittee's month, and they need to be out there. So they go out. There is an impact on the range. The agency concludes the permittee is not a good producer, maybe they need to cut numbers.

"That's not the way to deal with this," countered Suazo. The best interest is to sit down as partners and figure out what's the outcome that we want on the landscape, what's the best time to be out there.

"Ultimately, I'm responsible for being a steward of the landscape, but I'm also responsible to you to make sure that I'm helping you to have a viable operation," stated Suazo. AJ



*Neils Hansen discussed his family's interaction with Bureau of Land Management employees.*

*Editor's Note: This article was written as part of Angus Media's coverage of the 2018 Cattle Industry Convention.*

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# Corporate View

*Former farm kid shares corporate beef industry experiences. Organization elects new officers; continues beef promotion.*

*by Kindra Gordon, field editor*

Sharing perspectives of a woman working within the beef industry, Nicole Johnson Hoffman, senior vice president and chief sustainability officer with OSI Group, addressed American National CattleWomen (ANCW) members attending the organization's annual conference Jan. 30, 2018, in Phoenix, Ariz.

Johnson Hoffman shared with the audience that while they may have never heard of OSI Group, they've likely eaten some of its product, as the company is the largest supplier of protein to McDonald's restaurants around the world. Johnson Hoffman, who grew up on a Minnesota farm, formerly worked with Cargill for 14 years.

From her rural upbringing, Johnson Hoffman expressed, "I believe that ag is everything and forms the foundation of this country. It is the core of our country's culture."

Johnson Hoffman highlighted some of the challenging choices she faced in her career, and said the lesson she has learned is to take a big-picture view and "make your choices simple — boil them down and go forward."

She also underscored to those who are in a leadership role not to focus on yourself and what you might gain, but instead recognize the needs of the people you lead. From her own experiences, Johnson Hoffman said she's learned to "think about the value proposition for the people you want to lead,"

Additionally, she expressed that change — for yourself or an industry — is hard. However, she added, "Sometimes to get the next good



*Nicole Johnson Hoffman shared some of the challenging choices she has faced in her career.*

thing you have to let go of something you love and take the step forward."

In addition to her work with OSI Group, in January 2018 Johnson Hoffman was named president of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB). The multi-stakeholder initiative is being developed to advance continuous improvement in sustainability of the global beef value chain through leadership, science and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration.


Of her role with GRSB, Johnson Hoffman expressed that, given her farm roots, she is committed to ensuring the interests of farmers are taken care of in this process. Of the sustainability issue, she expressed, "When critics are interested in talking, even if they are hostile, you have to show up and listen, and then speak your truth. You don't force it; you just offer it. ... But we (the beef industry) have got to show up."

## New leadership

During the business meeting portion of the ANCW conference, a new slate of officers was elected. Serving for the upcoming year are incoming president Gwen Geis from Wyoming; president-elect Wanda Braun Pinnow from Montana; and vice president Evelyn Greene of Alabama.

Colorado cattiewoman Nancy Carlson was recognized with the ANCW Outstanding Educator of the Year award for her local, state and national beef education and promotion efforts and reaching thousands of students and adult consumers. Carlson has been involved with the Colorado ag literacy program, has aided in developing a beef tailgating toolkit, and has made beef presentations to an array of audiences.

ANCW members are continuing their efforts to promote beef to consumers through the Collegiate Beef Advocacy Program (CBAP). Three CBAP college students assisted with beef outreach efforts in 2017, and new collegiate students will be selected for 2018. Additionally, the organization has initiated a leadership certificate program for ANCW officers and interested members at the state level to help bring efficiency and effective leadership to ANCW's future programming. Over the inaugural year of the program, 111 women from 20 states have participated.

Learn more about ANCW's efforts at <https://ancw.org/>. 

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# Three to Watch

*Herd Security/BVD Working Group addresses bovine health concerns.*

*by Troy Smith, field editor*

It's no secret that for the U.S. cattle industry bovine viral diarrhea (BVD) is a major disease problem. Lesser known bovine leukemia virus (BLV) might be a more significant problem than we think. There is little doubt that foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) could be disastrous for multiple livestock industries if it were reintroduced to the United States.

Research projects designed to provide better understanding of these three infectious diseases were the topics addressed by scientists making presentations to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Herd Security/BVD Working Group, which met during the 2018 Cattle Industry Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2, in Phoenix, Ariz.

## BVD

Shollie Falkenberg, a research microbiologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) National Animal Disease Center, described an ongoing study of pestivirus — the class or genus that includes the viral strains responsible for BVD.

According to Falkenberg, one in 10 animals reach breeding age with no protection against BVD. Her team's research seeks to learn more about BVD transmission, through acute infection and fetal infection (transmitted from dam to fetus during gestation and resulting in a persistently infected calf). The scientists are studying vaccines,

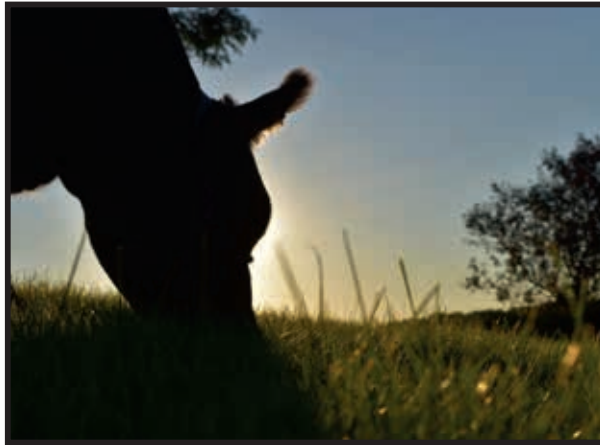


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vaccination practices and variations in cattle immunity to BVD, looking for paths to improved response and protection against BVD.

## Leukosis

In his presentation on BLV, Michigan State University veterinarian Dan Grooms, said the virus affects the lymphatic system causing dysfunctional lymphocytes — white blood cells involved in immune response. Thus, BLV infection can lead to reduced response to vaccination and increased susceptibility to disease. Grooms said BLV can lead to leukemia and cancers of various organs.

“Bovine leukosis is chronic. Once infected, always infected,” stated Grooms. “There is no vaccine for prevention.”

Infection is spread through colostrum and through infected blood, via blood on common-use injection needles, palpation sleeves and instruments. Infection may also be transmitted by biting insects and from dam to fetus, *in utero*.

He explained that BLV causes

production losses in dairy cows and significantly decreased longevity. Eighty-three percent of U.S. dairy herds are thought to be infected. However, less is known about BLV's impact on beef cattle production.

Grooms described a two-year study involving infected beef breeding herds, with infected animals. Results suggest lymphomas caused by BLV may be

a major contributor to carcass condemnations among cull cows.

## FMD

Kansas State University veterinarian Mike Sanderson discussed a feedyard FMD modeling project designed to simulate an FMD outbreak in some large cattle-feeding operation.

“A fair amount of modeling has been done to determine how FMD might spread through the breeding animal population, but not about how FMD might look in a feedyard,” Sanderson explained.

He noted how such operations involve large cattle populations with frequent transport of animals in and out, and with numerous avenues for transmission, including across fence lines, exposure to contaminated bunks and waterers, spread by pen riders and hospital pen exposure. Sanderson said the project should help the industry prepare for detection and response, should an FMD outbreak occur. **AJ**

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