



Beef Business

► A look at current events affecting the cattle industry

Colorado *E. coli* outbreak possibly linked to NWSS

Colorado health officials were investigating an *E. coli* outbreak early February that had infected 20 people as of press time, 16 of whom attended the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) last month, according to the *Denver Post*.

At press time, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment was investigating the possible link to the NWSS, which saw more than 643,100 visitors, including children who attended through school- or care center-organized trips to the show, Denver's ABC affiliate Channel 7 News reports.

Chris Urbina, director of Denver Public Health, told the *Denver Post* that reported victims included 19 children with a median age of 4 years old. The youngest is 17 months old, and the oldest is an infected 66-year-old adult. Urbina said as investigators tried to determine the source of the contamination, more reported *E. coli* cases were likely given the strain's eight-day incubation period and the ease in which the bacteria can be spread, especially among young children.

Urbina told the *Denver Post* the NWSS is

fully cooperating with the investigation, although an official there said there is not yet conclusive evidence that the outbreak is linked to the show.

Census of Ag shows growing diversity

The number of farms in the United States has grown 4%, and the operators of those farms have become more diverse in the past five years, according to results of the 2007 Census of Agriculture released Feb. 5 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

The 2007 Census counted 2,204,792 farms in the United States, a net increase of 75,810 farms. Nearly 300,000 new farms have begun operation since the last census in 2002. Compared to all farms nationwide, these new farms tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower sales and younger operators who also work off-farm.

In the past five years, U.S. farm operators have become more demographically diverse. The 2007 Census counted nearly 30% more women as principal farm operators. The count of Hispanic operators grew by 10%, and the counts of American Indian, Asian

and Black farm operators increased as well.

The latest census figures show a continuation in the trend toward more small and very large farms and fewer mid-sized operations. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms with sales of less than \$2,500 increased by 74,000. The number of farms with sales of more than \$500,000 grew by 46,000 during the same period.

Census results show that the majority of U.S. farms are smaller operations. More than 36% are classified as residential/lifestyle farms, with sales of less than \$250,000 and operators with a primary occupation other than farming. Another 21% are retirement farms, which have sales of less than \$250,000 and operators who reported they are retired.

Census results are available online at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

19 employees on leave at Iowa labs

Nineteen employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Ames, Iowa, laboratories were on administrative leave beginning Feb. 4 due to alleged actions involving the use of veterinary credentials to purchase medications for human use so that other employees might be provided with low-cost prescription drugs.

The employees were placed on leave until a complete review of the evidence provided by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) could be conducted.

The reviews will be made public upon completion, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack noted, and there is no evidence that any test results or other official laboratory activities were compromised in any way by this alleged activity.

U.S. cattle on feed down 7%

Cattle and calves on feed for harvest in the United States for feedlots with capacities of 1,000 or more head totaled 11.2 million head Jan. 1, 2009. The inventory was 7% below Jan. 1, 2008, figures and 6% below Jan. 1, 2007, figures.

Placements in feedlots during December totaled 1.65 million head, 3% below 2007 figures and 4% below 2006 figures. Net placements were 1.57 million head.

Marketings of fed cattle during December totaled 1.68 million head, 2% above 2007 figures and 4% above 2006 figures.

Other disappearance totaled 76,000 head during December, 31% above 2007 figures but 14% below 2006 figures.

Table 1: No. of cattle on feed, placements, marketings and other disappearance, 1,000+-head-capacity U.S. feedlots, Jan. 1, 2007-2009

	No. of head (1,000 head)			2009 as % of	
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008
On feed Dec. 1 ^{ab}	11,973	12,099	11,346*	95	94
Placed on feed during Dec. ^b	1,714	1,701	1,647	96	97
Fed cattle marketed during Dec. ^b	1,625	1,645	1,683	104	102
Other disappearance during Dec. ^{bc}	88	58	76	86	131
On feed Jan. 1	11,974	12,097	11,234	94	93

^aCattle and calves on feed are animals for harvest being fed a ration of grain or other concentrates and are expected to produce a carcass that will grade USDA Select or better.

^bDecember of the preceding year.

^cIncludes death loss, movement from feedlots to pasture and shipments to other feedlots for further feeding.

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service.

USDA announces vegetable pilot project

Secretary Vilsack announced early February a new pilot project to permit producers in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin to plant such vegetables as cucumbers, green peas, lima beans, pumpkins, snap beans, sweet corn or tomatoes for processing on base acres under the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP).

"This program offers producers in these seven states opportunities to diversify their crop production and better use their base acres. It's an important step in implementing the 2008 Farm Bill, providing farmers with additional sources of revenue and supporting the production of healthy fruits and vegetables," Vilsack said.

Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, the Planting Transferability Pilot Project (PTPP) allows producers to plant approved fruits or vegetables for processing on a farm's base acres. Without the PTPP, planting these

crops on base acres would be prohibited.

For more information on PTPP or other farm programs, visit your local USDA Service Center or the Farm Service Agency (FSA) web site at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Pork producers sue EPA

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) said mid-January that it has sued the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for requiring that livestock farms inform communities about estimated emissions, according to *The Associated Press (AP)*.

The rule mandates that livestock producers inform emergency response authorities of estimated air emissions, then file written reports of those estimates. Failure to comply can result in penalties of up to \$25,000 per day, the article notes.

According to AP, pork producers are challenging EPA's decision to exclude livestock operations from an agriculture exemption under the Emergency Planning and Community Right To Know Act. The NPPC also alleges that the rule violates farmers' due process rights because the EPA failed to develop an adequate system to accept the reports, "making compliance with the law impossible." It asks the federal court to enjoin the agency from enforcing the rule until it develops a proper compliance system.

Niman Ranch completes merger

Niman Ranch and its network of U.S. family farms and ranches producing naturally raised meats announced it will merge with an affiliate of its largest shareholder, Natural Food Holdings LLC. Following the merger, Natural Food Holdings will own 100% of both Niman Ranch and affiliated specialty pork processor Sioux-Preme Packing, which currently processes all of Niman Ranch's pork.

Washington Watch

NFU president testifies on market speculation

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Tom Buis appeared before the House Agriculture Committee Feb. 3 in support of increased oversight and transparency of the commodities markets. Buis, citing last year's record-high commodity prices, followed by a historic collapse in grain, livestock and dairy prices, said unabated speculative commodity futures trading is increasing market volatility.

"Speculators created a market bubble and false sense that higher prices were here to

stay and, as a result, producers locked in higher-priced input and feed costs. The economic collapse and bursting bubble have jeopardized the economic livelihoods of many Americans and is rippling throughout our rural communities," Buis said.

Buis commended the committee's commitment to addressing market speculation and increasing transparency and called for passage of the Derivatives Markets Transparency and Accountability Act (DMTAA) of 2009.

Industry Events

Farm transitions workshops **March 27-28, April 24-25; Alva, Okla.**

Farm families looking to promote long-term success should register now to attend Farm Transitions workshops scheduled for March and April in Alva, Okla.

Sponsored by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service in cooperation with the

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Southern Regional Risk Management Education Center, the workshop series is designed to enable farm families to gain an objective view of their situation and develop positive, meaningful plans for the future, even across generations.

Workshops are scheduled to take place at the Northwestern Oklahoma State University campus in Alva. The registration deadline is March 13. A registration fee of \$200 per family of four participants is required and

will cover the cost of two workshop notebooks, meals and refreshment breaks. Additional participants are \$100 each. The registration is nonrefundable.

To register, send a check with your name, address, phone, e-mail and the names of family members who will attend to the Woods County Extension Center, 407 Government St., Room 11, Alva, OK 73717-2260. Make checks payable to Woods County Extension.

 **NIAA Annual Meeting**
March 31-April 1, Louisville, Ky.

The dates, location and theme for the 2009

National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) annual meeting have been set, and individuals involved in animal agriculture — the beef, dairy, swine, sheep, goat, equine and poultry industries — are encouraged to attend and participate in the two-day event at the Galt House Hotel and Suites in Louisville, Ky.


Themed, “The Changing Face of Animal Agriculture,” the NIAA annual meeting is meant to bring together all of animal agriculture and those involved in animal agriculture, Michele Vise-Brown, NIAA chief executive officer (CEO), said.

Robert Fourdraine, NIAA annual meeting planning group chair, says this year’s annual meeting theme was selected because animal agriculture is changing, and all of animal agriculture should understand those changes.

“Cognizant of this objective, NIAA will tackle three key needs at its 2009 annual meeting,” Fourdraine said. “We’ll look at the need for us to understand today’s changing environment and the ‘why’ behind the changing environment, the need to develop relevant messages for our diverse audiences and the need to unite and take a proactive approach to foster consumer trust.”

Committee sessions will follow the opening general session.

Registration for the two-day event is \$450. Discounts are available to NIAA full members and affiliate members along with a new member incentive. To learn more or to register, visit www.animalagriculture.org or call 270-782-9798.

 **2009 BIF symposium**
April 30-May 3, Sacramento, Calif.

Sacramento, Calif., will provide the backdrop for the 2009 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Research Symposium and Annual Meeting April 30-May 3. The California Cattlemen’s Association and the California Beef Cattle Improvement Association will host the event.

For a complete schedule or to register, visit www.bifconference.com. General meeting registration is \$295 if received by April 28 and includes all sessions, breakfasts, noon meals/receptions, the railroad dinner and proceedings. Spouse registration is \$250, and student registration is \$90 if received by April 28. Tours are an additional fee of \$70 each. Single-day and single-event registrations are also available.

The Sheraton Grand Hotel at 1230 J St. in Sacramento will serve as the headquarters hotel. Book your reservation before April 3 to receive the group rate of \$139.99 per night. The hotel phone number is 916-447-1700. Visit www.bifconference.com for more information.

