



# Beef Business

► A look at current issues affecting the cattle industry. Compiled by *Paige Nelson*, field editor

## TVMDL offering virus serotyping by RT-qPCR

The Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) now offers quantitative reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction assays (RT-qPCR) for serotyping bluetongue virus (BTV), as well as epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV).

Bluetongue is a viral disease that affects both domestic and wild ruminants; there are at least 24 serotypes known worldwide. Previously, clients requesting serotyping for positive bluetongue specimens had their samples sent to the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa. Now, TVMDL is able to provide this service in-house for the six most common serotypes in the United States — 2, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 17. The test is offered for \$40 for in-state and \$46 for out-of-state clients.

EHDV is one of the most widespread diseases in white-tailed deer in the United States, and can also infect most other wild and domestic ruminants. Rare outbreaks have been reported in cattle. There are at least 10 EHDV serotypes known worldwide. Previously, TVMDL completed EHDV serotyping tests by end point PCR; the new RT-qPCR enables rapid detection of the three most common serotypes in the United States — 1, 2 and 6. The test is \$36 for in-state clients and \$42 for out-of-state clients.

If you have any questions, please contact

the College Station laboratory at 979-845-3414 or toll free at 1-888-646-5624. We continue to work to provide quality, affordable and timely diagnostic results to all clients.

Visit [www.tvmdl.tamu.edu](http://www.tvmdl.tamu.edu) for more information on diagnostic testing.

Source: *Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.*

## USFRA launches how-to video series about farming and ranching

1,200 cows milked, 50,000 eggs gathered, clean barns for 7,000 pigs — one day's work for America's farmers. People can now learn how they do it through the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance® (USFRA®) new online "How To Farm" video series that launched Dec. 29 on USFRA's website, [www.FoodDialogues.com](http://www.FoodDialogues.com).

Hosted by blogger Kelly Snyder ([www.ReDefinedMom.com](http://www.ReDefinedMom.com)), USFRA's online video series illustrates different farming practices. The educational videos, which range between two to four minutes, highlight the daily activities of farmers and ranchers across the nation who grow and raise our food. The first four videos give viewers an up-close look at just how farmers grow and raise food, including:

- How To Milk 1,200 Cows (filmed with Brian Rexing at New Generation Dairy in Indiana)
- How To Care for 7,000 Pigs (filmed with

Art Braundmeier at The Maschhoffs in Illinois)

- How To Use Trash to Help Crops Grow (filmed on Len Corzine's farm in Illinois)
- How To Gather 50,000 Eggs A Day (filmed with Ron Campbell at Opal Foods in Missouri)

Snyder, a blogger mom of two based in Kansas City, visited four Midwest farms to learn just how farmers and ranchers do what they do every day — and why. The videos also highlight new technology used on farms and ranches today and address common misconceptions about food production.

USFRA's online video series is available on YouTube and in the "Videos" section of USFRA's [www.FoodDialogues.com](http://www.FoodDialogues.com) website in the "How To Farm" section.

Learn more by visiting the Dec. 29, 2014, *Angus Journal Daily*, which is archived at [www.api-virtuallibrary.com/eList-archive/](http://www.api-virtuallibrary.com/eList-archive/).

Source: *U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance.*

## Missouri Cattlemen's Association sets 2015 policy priorities

During the 47th Missouri Cattle Industry Convention & Trade Show Jan. 2-4 at Osage Beach, Mo., several hundred cattlemen gathered to discuss priorities for the 2015 legislative session. Members of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association (MCA) participated in the grassroots policy process by discussing new policy, reviewing existing policy and prioritizing policy issues.

MCA members made clear the top priority is passing legislation that was included in Senate Bill 506, but was vetoed by Governor Jay Nixon. Those issues include increasing the livestock hauling limits, enabling beef producers to vote whether or not they want a state-specific beef checkoff program, and protecting the beef cattle industry from frivolous liability litigation. MCA President Janet Akers said she is hopeful these bills will move through the legislature quickly.

"The governor just hosted a beef summit to discuss ways to advance this industry. One easy way to move the industry forward is to sign legislation that will do just that. We want to work with Governor Jay Nixon to do good things for the cattle industry, but that's impossible if good bills are vetoed," said Akers.



MCA will also lead an innovative effort to empower and enable beginning farmers and ranchers in Missouri.

"We absolutely must do everything within our power to sustain this industry, and we cannot do that without affording beginning farmers and ranchers the opportunity to have a fighting chance in production agriculture," said MCA Executive Vice President Mike Deering.

MCA members also believe "good government" needs to be a priority this legislative session. 2014 MCA Policy and Legislative Affairs Chairman Jimmie Long said the association would pursue eliminating the use of taxpayer dollars by state agencies and commissioners for lobbying the legislature. The association will support efforts to bring accountability to the Department of Conservation by putting a sunset on the conservation sales tax. He also said protecting producer privacy will be a priority.

"The ½¢ sales tax collected for the Department of Conservation is currently an endless pool of money with limited oversight. This tax hasn't been voted on since 1976, and it is just good government for the citizens of Missouri to have the opportunity to vote on the tax every 10 years, which will bring a greater level of accountability to the Department of Conservation," said Long.

Source: *Missouri Cattlemen's Association.*

### **AFBF president Bob Stallman comments on Regulatory Accountability Act of 2015**

"The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) strongly supports the *Regulatory Accountability Act* of 2015. We applaud the leadership of Reps. Robert Goodlatte and Collin Peterson in reintroducing this measure, which has traditionally received bipartisan support, and we will work actively for swift approval by Congress.

"The *Regulatory Accountability Act* takes an important step toward updating and reinvigorating the *Administrative Procedures Act* (APA). That law is now nearly seven decades old and must be amended to ensure that the public and the regulated community, in particular, are afforded a transparent, fair and open regulatory process. This legislation would require agencies to be more open and transparent on data justifying a rule. The

most costly rules would be subject to on-the-record hearings. Agencies would be required to consider such rules' impact on jobs and the economy. Moreover, agencies' ability to use guidance and interim final rules would be constrained.

"Goodlatte-Peterson updates to the APA will give all stakeholders a greater voice in a process that is too often one-sided and, frankly, unfair.

"Everything from the environment to trade, product safety and health, the fertility of farmland, even the security of our retirements, suffers when rule makers fail to take into account the harm they may cause.

"We need something better than attack, counterattack and litigation. We strongly urge all members of Congress to support this bill."

Source: *American Farm Bureau Federation.*

### **November meat export volumes lower, but value remains on record pace**

U.S. beef and pork export volumes trended lower in November, according to data released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). However, the cumulative 2014 volume totals were still higher year-over-year, with January-November beef exports up 2% to 1.1 million metric tons (mt). Pork exports were also 2% higher at just less than 2 million mt.

With December totals still to be recorded, beef exports already set a new full-year value record of \$6.49 billion (up 16% year-over-year). Pork export value through November (\$6.13 billion, up 11%) is on pace to break the 2012 record and already exceeds the 2013 year-end total.

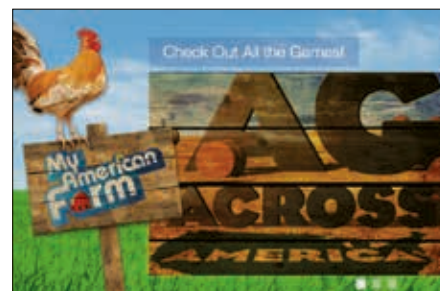
November results were mixed for beef exports, with volume down 5% from a year ago to 96,348 mt, while value was 19% higher at \$626.7 million. November pork exports were down 13% in volume (168,062 mt) and 6% in value (\$519.9 million).

Key Asian markets drive beef export value to record heights.

November beef exports equated to 15% of total production and 12% of muscle cut production, compared to 14% and 11%, respectively, a year ago. For January through November, exports equated to 14% of total

production and 11% for muscle cuts (up from 13% and 10%). Export value per head of fed slaughter was \$359.77 in November (up 35% from a year ago) and \$293.96 for January-November (up 16%).

Source: *U.S. Meat Export Federation.*



### **'My American Farm' reaches 1.5 million youth in four years**

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture has announced that it has reached more than 1.5 million school-age youths through its educational "My American Farm" program. In 2015, the web-based resource will have a new look to improve the user experience thanks to continued support from DuPont Pioneer.

"Over the past four years, we have reached more than a million school-aged youth through the My American Farm platform — from kiosks at agriculture conferences to desktops in the classroom," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "With support from DuPont Pioneer, we are increasing youth engagement in agriculture in classrooms coast-to-coast to improve overall literacy of production agriculture and inspire future food leaders."

My American Farm is an educational game platform launched in 2011 to engage pre-K through fifth-grade learners in agriculture. Today the free site offers 19 agriculturally themed games and more than 100 free educator resources such as lesson plans, activity sheets and comics.

Lauren Hartzler Arbogast (see story on page 278), an elementary school teacher in Harrisonburg, Va., said, "Since most of my students are generations away from actual production agriculture, I'm thankful for a resource like My American Farm that makes agriculture exciting and relevant for the students."

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This year, My American Farm will launch two new STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related games, pilot food science day camps and increase outreach to elementary school teachers. Users also can now search educational resources and sort games by grade level and subject area.

To take advantage of the free My American Farm resources, games and activities, visit [www.myamericanfarm.org](http://www.myamericanfarm.org).

### 2014 Four States Cattle Conference videos available online

Videos of presentations at the 2014 Four States Cattle Conference are now available at <http://vimeo.com/channels/858896>.

Conference topics include:

- ▶ How to reduce stress on cattle during handling
- ▶ Making sense of the cattle market
- ▶ Heifer selection and development
- ▶ Managing winter annual pastures for stocker cattle
- ▶ Weed management in southern pastures

Source: *University of Arkansas Animal Science.*

### Aging farmer population threatens U.S. food supply

As the farmer population continues to age, young farmers face land availability and start-up costs as obstacles in becoming the next generation of farmers. However, First Generation Farmers, a nonprofit organization is teaching young people to farm.

“According to a government census of American agriculture released earlier this

year, the number of U.S. farms is showing a long-term trend of declining, even as the value of their crops and livestock increase,” says Phil Lempert, CEO and editor of *The Lempert Report*. “In addition, farmers are getting older, so First Generation Farmers can really help to secure the industry and our food supply.”

First Generation Farmers facilitates food access from and for the local community while conserving natural resources; providing public education and access to open space; and promoting beginning farmers, ranchers and agripreneurs.

The organization recently launched a kick-starter campaign focused on propelling their “Incubator Program” that will provide each potential future farmer with one acre of land, seeds, supplies, tractors, irrigation and whatever is needed to start their farm.

Source: *The Lempert Report.*

### Farmland market remains active, despite lower commodity prices

Schrader Real Estate and Auction Co. continued to see large crowds of active bidders during 2014, according to company President R.D. Schrader.

While noting that “prices have fallen off a bit” in some areas due to lower commodity prices, he said the company found active markets in 2014 well beyond the Midwest. In a weeklong series of major auctions in six states, the company sold 13,450 acres for a total of \$46.3 million. “We had good participation and successful auctions in the Delta, Southwest and Mountain regions, as well as the Midwest,” he said.

“For the year, we averaged more than two

farmland auctions a week, successfully selling farms of every conceivable size and quality,” he said. “Buyers are more selective, and if interest rates rise in combination with lower commodity prices, that will impact demand, but the market is still there. The agriculture industry remains very strong. It’s important in this environment to make sure you’re marketing the property effectively, which is always a priority for us.”

Schrader said he remains optimistic. “Long-term, farmland remains very attractive, especially when you consider the alternatives. We’ve seen wild one-day swings in stocks, and interest rates continue at all-time lows. Meanwhile, over the last decade, Midwestern farmland has been appreciating at an average rate of more than 10% per year,” he said.

Schrader says he expects another active year.

“There’s still a great deal of demand. The marketplace is rewarding quality, and productive land with good soils will continue to do the best,” he said.

Source: *Schrader Real Estate and Auction Co.*

### USDA observes kickoff of the international year of soils

On Jan. 6, the USDA began to celebrate 2015 as the International Year of Soils, highlighting the importance of healthy soils for food security, ecosystem functions and resilient farms and ranches.

“Healthy soil is the foundation that ensures working farms and ranches become more productive, resilient to climate change and better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said during an event Jan. 6 at USDA headquarters.

With an increasing global population, a shrinking agricultural land base, climate change and extreme weather events, the nations of the world are focusing their collective attention to the primary resource essential to food production — the soil. The United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), working within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, spearheaded the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly designating 2015 as the International Year of Soils.

“Most people don’t realize that just beneath our feet lies a diverse, complex, life-giving ecosystem that sustains our entire existence,” said Jason Weller, chief of USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). “We are helping producers

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unlock the power of soil health as part of an important and very successful national campaign. Our campaign demonstrates our renewed commitment to soil conservation and soil health.”

NRCS is coordinating activities to mark USDA's involvement in the International Year of Soils.

*Source: USDA Office of Communications.*

### **Lilly finalizes Novartis Animal Health acquisition**

Eli Lilly and Co. (NYSE: LLY) announced Jan. 1 it has completed the acquisition of Novartis Animal Health, which will further position Lilly's Elanco as a global leader in the animal health industry. The transaction, first announced on April 22, has received clearance under the *Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act*. As part of the approval, certain animal health assets in the United States relating to the Sentinel® canine parasiticide franchise will be divested to Virbac, as has been previously announced. All other closing conditions have also been met.

The combined organization will increase Elanco's product portfolio, expand its global commercial presence and deliver more innovation to customers. The acquisition also augments Elanco's manufacturing and research (R&D) capabilities with a total of 17 manufacturing sites and 14 R&D locations in the newly combined organization. Further, Elanco will have a more balanced and diversified business with revenues more evenly split between food animal and companion animal, as well as stronger geographic representation.

“As a top-tier animal health company, we are better positioned to help our customers respond to the changing external environment and meet increasing demands for animal protein, as well as growing desires for pet ownership,” said Jeff Simmons, senior vice president of Eli Lilly and Co., and president of Elanco Animal Health.

Under the terms of the agreement, Lilly acquired the Novartis Animal Health business in an all-cash transaction of approximately \$5.4 billion, including anticipated tax benefits.

*Source: Eli Lilly and Co.*

### **Dietary Guidelines Committee verbalizes move to limit lean meats**

When the meetings of the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines* Committee began, they started with the premise from prior years that “common characteristics of dietary patterns

associated with positive health outcomes include higher intake of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy, fish/seafood, legumes, lean meat and nuts.”

However, at the last and final meeting of the *Dietary Guidelines* Advisory Committee in December, the committee made the unprecedented move of striking “lean meat” from the pattern associated with a healthy diet, implying a plant-based diet (see “Consumer Focus,” page 282). This is a major departure, not only from the past guidelines, but also from more than 30 years of nutritionally accepted science and peer-reviewed studies.

Despite recent media coverage, it is important to remember that the committee's final report has not yet been publically released.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) expects the committee to release their report to the secretaries of Health and Human Services and Agriculture in late January or early February. At that time, the secretaries will have the opportunity to review the recommendations and request input and comments. Following that, the recommendations will be published in the *Federal Register*, with a comment period.

*Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association.*

### **NCBA voices concern over USDA's proposal to import fresh beef from northern Argentina**

As 2014 wrapped up, NCBA submitted comments to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regarding their proposed rule that would allow the importation of fresh (chilled or frozen) beef, under certain conditions, from northern Argentina, a region located north of Patagonia South and Patagonia North B.

NCBA stands strongly opposed to the proposed rule on the basis of concerns regarding animal health. Currently, the United States does not consider the region of northern Argentina to be free of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Opening this market for fresh beef presents significant risks for the possible introduction of FMD into the United States. An outbreak of FMD could ultimately threaten the entire U.S. economy, as well as jeopardize our national food security.

In the region of northern Argentina, FMD vaccination is currently practiced. USDA APHIS does not recognize countries or regions that continue to vaccinate against FMD as free of the disease and, as such, APHIS cannot recognize the northern

Argentina region as free of FMD. APHIS, however, can evaluate the risk presented by fresh/frozen beef products imported under specific conditions. The proposal is based upon these assessments.

APHIS conducted their risk analysis based on a series of site visits to Argentina to determine the FMD risk status of these regions. NCBA's repeated requests for written reports and standard methodology for these APHIS site visits to northern Argentina have gone unanswered. The lack of any documentation and an obvious lack of management controls for the site-review process calls into question the integrity and quality assurance for the entire risk analysis process used to determine the risk estimation for FMD.

*Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association.*

### **Munzlinger, Hoskins host news conference on MCA priority**

Missouri Sen. Brian Munzlinger (R-18) and Missouri Speaker Pro Tem Denny Hoskins (R-54) hosted a press conference Monday, Jan. 12, to talk about legislation relating to beginning farmers.

“The life-blood of agriculture is the family farm,” said Sen. Munzlinger, who is chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “At 57, I am the age of the average Missouri farmer. There is a need for legislation that will help support the needs and interests of the ability for our next generation to farm.”

Studies have shown that the average age of farmers is creeping up and that retiring farmers are not being replaced by a new generation, raising questions about the future of the industry.

“Thanks to the recent passage of the *Farming Rights Amendment* by Missouri voters, we can ensure agriculture remains a mainstay for our economy,” said Hoskins. “Missouri is feeding the world and we need to secure that role for generations to come. One of the biggest concerns in agriculture right now is the growing age of the average farmer and rancher, as well as the shrinking number of beginning farmers.”

Elected leaders discussed Senate Bill 177, which was brought to the forefront by MCA. Other industry groups joined MCA in support of this legislation led by Sen. Munzlinger and Speaker Pro Tem Hoskins.

*Source: Missouri Cattlemen's Association.*

