



# Beef Business

► A look at current issues affecting the cattle industry. Compiled by **Shelby Mettlen**, assistant editor

## Wildfires ravage Plains states

Racing across the prairie, recent wildfires left a painful mark on hundreds of thousands of acres of grassland in four states.

High-level winds and dry conditions on Monday, March 6, fueled the flames that quickly spread across Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado — scorching pastures and offering little time for cattle ranchers to attempt to rescue their stock.

Six people lost their lives to the flames, and reports say many of those were rushing to protect their livestock from the intense and unforgiving flames.

Texas reports the highest death toll at four people, and early estimates show Kansas with the highest acreage affected. More than 650,000 acres burned in the southwest and central regions of the state. Evacuations were ordered in small towns and communities across the Plains, and emergency responders worked alongside farmers and ranchers to try and combat the fire's forward momentum.

Determining the total impact on the cattle herd will take months of reporting; however, Gardiner Angus Ranch near Ashland, Kan., estimates they lost 500 head to the flames, as reported in an article by the *Wichita Eagle*. In an interview with the publication, Garth Gardiner called the fire the worst natural disaster to hit their family's fifth-generation ranch.

Mark and Eva Gardiner, Garth's brother and sister-in-law, reportedly lost their home, but were able to save a few possessions. Thankfully, no injuries were sustained and most facilities were untouched.

In the weeks and months that follow, recovery efforts will be ongoing for the many producers affected, and immediate needs include hay and feed donations, and monetary support, as communities begin to discover the true extent of the wildfires' destruction.

*Source: Adapted from a release by Jena McRell, Angus Media.*

## Fire relief resources

To help with the fire relief efforts, please see the following listing offered by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

### KANSAS

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) is organizing hay and fencing material donations for delivery to affected areas in Kansas. To make in-kind donations, call KLA at 785-273-5115. Cash donations can be made through the Kansas Livestock Foundation (KLF), KLA's charitable arm, by going to [www.kla.org/donationform.aspx](http://www.kla.org/donationform.aspx) or by mailing checks to KLF, 6031 SW 37th St., Topeka, KS 66614.

Sisters of the Kansas State University chapter of Sigma Alpha have started a fundraiser to further support those affected by the fires in Kansas. They are selling "Pray for the Plains" t-shirts, and all proceeds will be donated to KLA to help ranchers affected by the fires.

To purchase a t-shirt, visit <http://bit.ly/2lKXf9D>.

### COLORADO

There is an immediate need for hay, feed, fencing supplies, individuals willing to provide trucking, etc., for the farmers and ranchers devastated by recent fires. Donations should be taken to CHS Grainland in Haxtun. A loader and scale are both available, if needed. Contact Rick Unrein at 970-520-3565 for more information about dropping off donations. Donations can also be dropped off at Justin Price's farm at 11222 CR 7, Sedgwick, Colo. For more information, please contact Kent Kokes at 970-580-8108, John Michal at 970-522-2330 or Justin Price at 970-580-6315.

For more information on how to donate and aid these producers, please visit <http://coloradofarmbureau.com/disasterfund/>.

Checks payable to Colorado Farm Bureau Foundation, cash and credit card payments are being accepted at this time. Please note "Disaster Fund-CO Wildfire" in the memo line on the check. Cash and checks can be sent to: Colorado Farm Bureau Foundation, Attn: Disaster Fund, 9177 E. Mineral Circle, Centennial, CO 80112.

### OKLAHOMA

If you would like to donate to this relief effort, you can do so by mail or online. Make checks payable to Oklahoma Cattlemen's Foundation, write "Fire Relief" in the memo line and send to PO Box 82395, Oklahoma City, OK 73148. To donate online, visit [www.okcattlemen.org](http://www.okcattlemen.org).

If you would like to donate hay or trucking services for hay, you can do so by contacting either the Harper County Extension Office at

## 2017 ARSBC symposium set for Aug. 29-30 in Manhattan, Kan.

Make plans now to attend the 2017 Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle (ARSBC) symposium Aug. 29-30. Hosted by the Kansas State University (K-State) Animal Sciences and Industry Department and K-State Research and Extension, the event will be headquartered at the Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center in Manhattan, Kan.

Considered the premier national event in beef cattle reproductive management, the meeting has a long history of providing the latest information on the application of reproductive technologies and includes a range of topics related to cow herd reproduction, such as nutritional interactions, management and male fertility.

The meeting is open to anyone with an interest in beef cattle reproduction, including producers, technicians, veterinarians and professionals in related industries.

Program details have not been released for this year's program, but check back to [www.appliedreprostrategies.com](http://www.appliedreprostrategies.com) and watch for

future announcements. Extensive online coverage of past meetings can be found at the Newsroom Archive of the site. The meeting is organized by the Beef Reproduction Task Force, a multi-state Extension group made up of specialists from K-State, the University of Missouri, Iowa State University, the University of Nebraska, South Dakota State University, the University of Florida, the University of California-Davis, the University of Idaho and Oregon State University.

The Beef Reproduction Task Force hosted the first ARSBC symposium in 2002 at Manhattan, Kan. Since that time, symposia have been conducted at 16 locations across the United States.

"We are looking forward to bringing this meeting back to Kansas," says Sandy Johnson, K-State Department of Animal Sciences and Industry associate professor and extension beef specialist.

For questions about the event, contact Johnson at [sandyj@ksu.edu](mailto:sandyj@ksu.edu) or 785-462-6281.

*Source: Beef Reproduction Task Force.*

580-735-2252 or Buffalo Feeders at 580-727-5530 to make arrangements or provide trucking services.

Additional contacts for assisting those in need in Oklahoma include:

- ▶ Tyree Ag, US-283, Laverne, Okla.; Contact: Jay Dee Nielsen, 580-334-6819
- ▶ Dale Long, Gate, Okla.; Contact: Dale Long, 580-571-1249
- ▶ May Coop Elevator, May, Okla.; Contact: Tom Fanning, 580-727-5530
- ▶ Buffalo Coop, Buffalo, Okla.; Contact: Beverly Mings, 580-735-2533
- ▶ Western Equipment, Woodward, Okla.; Contact: Caleb Zook, 580-254-0080.

## TEXAS

Three supply points have been established to collect donated hay. Each has been listed below. If you have hay that you can donate and transport to either supply point, please contact the location directly prior to transportation.

- ▶ Supply Point 1 — Lipscomb County Show Facility, Lipscomb, Texas; Contact: J.R. Sprague, 806-862-4601 or 806-202-5288
- ▶ Supply Point 2 — Clyde Carruth Pavilion, Pampa, Texas; Contact: Mike Jeffcoat, 806-669-8033 or 580-467-0753
- ▶ Supply Point 3 — Hemphill County Livestock, Canadian, Texas; Contact: Andy Holloway, 806-823-9114

Also, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers (TSCRA) Special Rangers are in the impacted area assessing the damage and assisting TSCRA members. If you need assistance, please contact their offices at 817-332-7064 or fill out the online form at <http://bit.ly/2mntnS1v>.

Source: NCBA.

## MCA offers support to wildfire victims

The Missouri Cattlemen's Association (MCA) is assisting many MCA members with getting hay trucked to areas of need. Getting the hay is not a problem. The problem is getting it there. If you can assist with the hauling of hay to impacted areas, please contact MCA Executive Vice President Mike Deering at [mike@mocattle.com](mailto:mike@mocattle.com) or call 573-499-9162.

Source: MCA.

## Governor signs order allowing larger loads for wildfire relief

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback signed an executive order March 9 to facilitate the immediate delivery of large quantities of hay, feed, fencing materials and other relief supplies to areas affected by wildfire. The executive order waives certain motor carrier regulations on trucks hauling livestock feed and fencing.

The declaration applies to motor carriers directly participating in relief efforts. It eliminates some weight restrictions on trucks and allows loads of hay up to 12 feet (ft.) wide and 14 ft. 6 inches (in.) tall.

“Even as we continue the fight to contain and defeat these fires, this executive order assists and expedites the arrival of recovery supplies as our communities begin to rebuild in the wake of these wildfires,” said Brownback.

Source: Kansas Livestock Association.

## Kansas wildfire relief

In an effort to help recovery from the wildfires, Kansas Farm Bureau is offering to connect those who need help with those who can provide it. For a comprehensive list of resources, including where to donate, how to request assistance, animal disposal and others, go to [www.kfb.org/Article/Kansas-wildfire-relief](http://www.kfb.org/Article/Kansas-wildfire-relief).

Kansas Farm Bureau is working with KLA as they organize hay and fencing material donations for delivery to affected areas in Kansas.

Source: Kansas Farm Bureau.

## House Agriculture Committee approves budget letter

On March 1 the House Committee on Agriculture sent its Budget Views and Estimates Letter for Fiscal Year 2018 to the House Budget Committee.

In the letter, committee members urged Budget Committee Chairman Diane Black to consider the estimated \$104 billion in savings from the current farm bill, more than four times what had previously been pledged, and the fact that these savings are being achieved amidst a bleak, and worsening, economic outlook in farm country.

At the business meeting, House Agriculture Committee Chairman K. Michael Conaway stated, “We do not yet know what resources we will need to write an effective new farm bill. But, what we do know is that our committee has more than demonstrated our fiscal bona fides, and we have earned the budget flexibility that may be necessary to craft and enact into law the *2018 Farm Bill*.”

For more information, visit [www.agriculture.house.gov](http://www.agriculture.house.gov).

Source: House Committee on Agriculture.

## New tool maps the economic impact of immigration

The New American Economy (NAE) recently launched an interactive tool, illustrating the boost immigrants provide to their local economies. Using “Map the Impact,” visitors can click on their state or enter a ZIP code to quickly see the stats on tax dollars, spending power and new

businesses that immigrants are bringing to their city or region. Go to [www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/](http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/) to use the tool.

NAE also provides social media tools so you can easily share stats and graphics or tweet your local representative about the importance of immigration in your district. If you're looking for economic impact stats specific to ag, check out the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) 2014 study at [www.fb.org/files/AFBF\\_LaborStudy\\_Feb2014.pdf](http://www.fb.org/files/AFBF_LaborStudy_Feb2014.pdf).

Source: AFBF.

## Congress sends resolution to halt BLM Planning Rule to president

Recently the Senate joined the House in approving a Farm Bureau-supported resolution (*H.J. Res. 44*) to stop an Obama administration rule that would weaken the influence of local and regional input on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decisions. The resolution now goes to President Donald Trump for his signature.

Known as “Planning 2.0,” the far-reaching rule incorporated numerous Obama-era presidential and secretarial orders, along with internal agency guidance and policy documents. By reducing the opportunity for public comment, minimizing federal requirements to coordinate with state and local governments and imposing new mitigation requirements, Planning 2.0 would have caused significant problems in the federal land use planning processes.

In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, the AFBF and 12 western state Farm Bureaus stated, “The rule demonstrated a clear overreach by the BLM, in spite of the agency's claim that the ‘primary goal of the proposed rulemaking process is to improve the agency's ability to respond to environmental, economic and social changes in a timely manner.’”

In addition to AFBF, the groups that signed the letter are Alaska Farm Bureau, Arizona Farm Bureau, California Farm Bureau, Colorado Farm Bureau, Idaho Farm Bureau, Montana Farm Bureau, Nevada Farm Bureau, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, Oregon Farm Bureau, Washington Farm Bureau, Wyoming Farm Bureau and Utah Farm Bureau.

Source: AFBF.

## Cattle prices on the rise with beef demand

Cattle market prices have been on the rise as feedlots and meat packers try to keep up with demand, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

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Recent rises in cattle prices have been due to various market conditions from the pasture to the grill, said David Anderson, AgriLife Extension economist in College Station.

“Fed-cattle prices are up some due to good foreign and domestic demand,” he said. “The demand for live fed cattle has increased from feedlots and meat packers that are seeing good profits as supermarkets feature beef products and consumers respond to those lower prices at stores.”

Anderson said fed-cattle prices at feedlots have likely affected calf prices at sale barns around the state. Fed-cattle prices increased \$4-\$5 per hundredweight (cwt.) since last week.

“We’re seeing a spring rally in fed-cattle prices,” he said.

The supply and demand chain that likely caused the price increases starts with consumers, Anderson said. Consumers are finding reasonable prices from grocers who are featuring sales on beef products.

Even the weather, including above-average temperatures and below-average rain, may be factoring into better sale prices for producers as consumers kick off grilling season earlier than usual, he said.

*Source: Texas AgriLife Communications.*

### **2017 Grass-fed Beef Conference**

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is pleased to announce the seventh annual conference focused on grass-fed beef production.

Consumer interest in natural, grass-fed and organic beef continues to rise. If you’d like to learn more about grass-fed beef production and how it’s different, mark your calendar for May 2-3, 2017, to be in College Station for this year’s Grass-fed Beef Conference. Breakfast and lunch will be served both days of the conference and a special grass-fed prime rib dinner will follow Tuesday afternoon’s session.

For more information please view the *Angus Journal* Virtual Library calendar of upcoming events.

*Source: Texas AgriLife Extension.*

### **USDA announces Commodity Credit Corporation lending rates for March 2017**

The USDA’s Commodity Credit Corp. (CCC) March 1 announced interest rates for March 2017. The CCC borrowing rate-based charge for March is 0.875%, unchanged from 0.875% in February.

The interest rate for crop year commodity loans less than one year disbursed during

March is 1.875%, unchanged from 1.875% in February.

Interest rates for Farm Storage Facility Loans approved for March are as follows: 1.500% with three-year loan terms, unchanged from February; 1.875% with five-year loan terms, down from 2.000% in February; 2.250% with seven-year loan terms, unchanged from February; 2.500% with 10-year loan terms, unchanged from February; and 2.500% with 12-year loan terms, unchanged from February. The interest rate for 15-year Sugar Storage Facility Loans for March is 2.625%, unchanged from February.

Further program information is available from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Financial Management Division at 202-772-6041.

*Source: USDA Farm Service Agency.*

### **USDA announces \$1.35 million to support data-driven farm management practices**

The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced March 6 \$1.35 million in available funding to provide agricultural producers with training and data to strengthen their business management skills. Funding is made through NIFA’s Farm Business Management and Benchmarking (FBMB) Competitive Grants Program, authorized by the *2014 Farm Bill*.

“Farm managers need knowledge and skills to solve agricultural and educational challenges,” said NIFA Director Sonny Ramaswamy. “The FBMB program engages producers through extension activities and by offering big data to help them make smart financial decisions.”

The FBMB program supports projects to improve the farm management knowledge and skills of agricultural producers, and maintain the national, publicly available farm financial management database (<https://finbin.umn.edu/>) that has detailed financial and production benchmark information with data on farms by type, size and location.

Eligible applicants include state agricultural experiment stations, colleges and universities, university research foundations, other research institutions and organizations, federal agencies, national laboratories, private organizations or corporations, and individuals.

The deadline for applications is April 17, 2017.

Go to <https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/farm-business-management-and-benchmarking-fbmb-competitive-grants-program> for details.

*Source: USDA NIFA.*

### **Montana DOL investigating ties to tuberculosis in South Dakota herd**

The Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) is investigating ties to Montana cattle from a tuberculosis (TB)-infected herd in South Dakota.

Montana is focusing on three distinct groups of animals:

- ▶ Contact herds — herds that have shared pasture or fenceline contact with the affected herd;
- ▶ Herds that have supplied animals to the affected herd; and
- ▶ Herds that have received animals from the affected herd.

At this time, two Montana cattle herds that had contact with the South Dakota positive animals must undergo a tuberculosis test to confirm that the disease has not spread. Additional herds may be identified as the investigation progresses. The likelihood that Montana herds are infected is extremely low; however, the department is conducting a thorough investigation.

“Following up on interstate movements after a detection of TB or other animal disease is a routine part of disease investigations,” said Tahnee Szymanski, assistant state veterinarian. “Our strong working relationship with South Dakota is critical in promptly identifying animal movements and protecting the state of Montana.”

Bovine TB is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium bovis*. The disease causes granulomatous lesions inside the lymph nodes, lungs, liver, spleen and skin of affected animals. The primary route of spread is aerosol transmission to other animals in close contact. The bacteria is also capable of infecting wildlife, such as deer, and people. The disease has an incubation period that can range from months to years and infected animals may show no clinical signs until later stages of infection, meaning healthy-appearing cattle may be infected with the bacteria. Although TB is a zoonotic disease capable of infecting people, it is not a food-safety threat, thanks to a robust meat inspection program and the pasteurization of milk for retail sale.

The mission of the DOL is to control and eradicate animal diseases, prevent the transmission of animal diseases to humans, and to protect the livestock industry from theft and predatory animals. For more information on the department, visit [www.liv.mt.gov](http://www.liv.mt.gov).

*Source: Montana Department of Livestock.*

