

NEWS & NOTES

Interesting tidbits from around the country

by Shauna Hermel, editor

▶▶▶ Senate passage of USMCA

“We’ve long waited for this day, and now USMCA will finally head to the president’s desk,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said Jan. 16, following Senate passage of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) by a bipartisan vote of 89-10. “The passage of USMCA is great news for America’s farmers and ranchers. With Congressional consideration now complete, our farmers and ranchers are eager to see the president sign this legislation and begin reaping the benefits of this critical agreement.”

Canada and Mexico are the first- and second-largest export markets for U.S. food and agricultural products, totaling more than \$39.7 billion in food and agricultural exports in 2018. These exports support more than 325,000 American jobs.

All food and ag products that have zero tariffs under the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will remain at zero tariffs. Since the original NAFTA did not eliminate all tariffs on ag trade

between the United States and Canada, the USMCA will create new market access opportunities for U.S. exports to Canada of dairy, poultry and eggs. In exchange, the United States will provide new access to Canada for some dairy, peanut and a limited amount of sugar and sugar-containing products.

▶▶▶ Trade deal with China

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) Jan. 15 applauded the signing of a Phase One trade agreement with China, saying this agreement will lay the groundwork for American-produced beef to be highly competitive in the world’s most populous market.

“The Phase One Agreement with China will be a game-changer for the U.S. beef industry,” said NCBA President Jennifer Houston, who joined President Trump at the White House for the event. “For many years, Chinese consumers have been denied access to high-quality U.S. beef — the same U.S. beef we feed to our families. The removal of these massive trade barriers gives Chinese consumers access to the U.S. beef they desire. It also gives

▶▶▶ BLM action to improve grazing regulations

A Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Notice of Intent (NOI) appeared in the Jan. 17 Public Inspection and was to publish in the *Federal Register* Jan. 21, announcing that the agency is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on new grazing regulations. The NOI opened a public comment period and announced that in-person scoping meetings will be hosted across the West.

“This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for BLM permittees to set the record straight,” said J.J. Goicoechea, who chairs the NCBA Federal Lands Committee and PLC’s Grazing Regulations Working Group. “We have endured Bruce Babbitt’s ‘Range Reform’ for over

25 years — and the land, native grasses and local ranching families have suffered as a result.

“This NOI is the first step toward righting that wrong. I cannot understate how important it is for ranchers to submit comments and participate in these scoping meetings,” he emphasized.

The public comment period closes 15 days after the conclusion of the final public scoping meeting. The dates and locations of scoping meetings will be announced at least seven days in advance through local media, newspapers and on the BLM website (http://bit.ly/BLM_scoping). Ranchers are encouraged to participate in these meetings and submit comments.

America’s cattlemen and cattlemen the opportunity to provide U.S. beef to a growing consumer base that represents one-fifth of the global population and a middle class that is greater than the entire U.S. population.

When American-produced beef

was banned from China for 14 years, NCBA worked with the U.S. government for more than a decade to reopen access to the market of nearly 1.4 billion consumers. American producers scored an initial victory in June 2017, when the Chinese market was reopened for the first time since 2003. However, many non-science-based, non-tariff trade barriers remained in place.

NCBA says that this Phase One Agreement will begin knocking down those trade barriers and significantly improve access to what is potentially a top export market for U.S. beef producers.

▶▶▶ Canadian auctioneer wins WLAC qualifier

Dean Edge, Rimbey, Alta., Canada, was named Champion at the 2020 World Livestock Auctioneer Championship (WLAC) Midwestern Regional Qualifying Event. Stockmen’s Livestock Inc., Yankton,

▶▶▶ Angus Foundation hires executive director

Thomas Marten joined the Angus Foundation as executive director Jan. 2. He will be responsible for leadership and oversight to the growth and development of the Angus Foundation. Marten joins the Foundation from the FarmHouse Foundation, where he served as the director of the FH Excellence Fund.



Thomas Marten

Prior to his role at FarmHouse, Marten was the FarmHouse director of advancement after serving as the executive director of the Stark County Farm Bureau in Toulon, Ill. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in ag sciences from Southern Illinois

University and grew up on a diversified farm in Illinois.

“I am honored and excited to join Team Angus and work with our many loyal donors to continue to increase the incredible impact the Angus Foundation is making in growing leadership, investing in research and providing opportunities for the next generation of cattlemen and cattlemen in the Angus breed,” Marten said. “It is evident farmers and ranchers across the United States are passionate to support the continued success of the Angus breed. I look forward to bringing my experiences in non-profit development and leadership to the Angus Foundation.”

For more information about the Angus Foundation, please visit AngusFoundation.org.

S.D., hosted the final of three WLAC qualifying events Jan. 8. A total of 31 contestants competed for a Top 10 placing, granting them a spot in the 2020 WLAC Semi-Finals at Dickson Regional Livestock Center Inc. in Dickson, Tenn.

Edge, who has competed off and on since 2002, was reserve champion at the 2019 WLAC Championship and made the Top 10 in 2018. He says the win gives him a boost of confidence going into the 2020 WLAC contest.

Edge was introduced to livestock auctioneering through a high school instructor who would auctioneer during class time. Interested in the profession, he attended auctioneering school at Western College of Auctioneering in 1999 and began working as an auctioneer at the Vold, Jones & Vold Auction in Rimbey, Alta., who sponsored him for the contest, upon graduation.

Leon Caselman, Long Lane, Mo., was reserve champion and Curtis Wetovick, Fullerton, Neb., was

runner-up. Also earning a Top 10 finish were Troy Bradshaw, Lipan, Texas; Dakota Davis, Waukomis, Okla.; Brandon Hamel, Damar, Kan.; Justin Mebane, Bakersfield, Calif.; Daniel Mitchell, Cumberland, Ohio; Chris Pinard, Swainsboro, Ga.; and Zack Zumstein, Marsing, Idaho. The Top Rookie Award went to Mike Witten, Trenton, Mo.

▶▶▶ Wildorado documentary released

A forgotten town found hope in a young cowboy and his class of high school ag students. Defying the odds, they became one of the first student-led cattle companies in the nation and the focus of an American Angus Association documentary. *Wildorado*, an *I Am Angus* documentary, premiered on RFD-TV and the Angus TV YouTube Channel Dec. 26, 2019. Watch it online at <http://www.angus.org/Wildorado>.

Started in fall 2017, Wildorado Cattle Co., Wildorado, Texas, was born to an innovative high school ag

▶▶▶ Regional manager named

WILL HARSH has been selected as the regional manager for Region 13, which consists of Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. He joins the American Angus Association from Oklahoma State University (OSU), where he was the purebred beef range manager.



Will Harsh

Prior to his role at OSU, Harsh was a ranch hand at J&J Cattle Co. He also was herdsman with his family's Angus operation, with the responsibility for the well-being of the cow herd. He graduated from OSU with an animal science degree in May of 2018.

Harsh was active in the Ohio Junior Angus Association, where he served as reporter and vice president, and participated in several National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) conferences and events.

For more information about the regional managers, visit angus.org.

teacher and his ambitious students. This high school student-run cattle company is one of the first in the nation and happens to be a registered Angus operation. The film shows their first bull sale in March of 2019 and the enormous effect this band of high school students and their relentless spirit

have on their small Texas town.

For more information and to watch the film, visit Angus.org/Wildorado, or contact the Association communications team at 816-383-5100. Subscribe to the YouTube channel — Angus TV — for updates on new content.

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▶▶▶ Association names communications director

The American Angus Association named Holly Martin director of communications.

“Holly brings a wealth of leadership, communications and cattle industry experience and will be a huge asset to the Angus team,”



Holly Martin

says Mark McCully, Association CEO.

Martin has been an editor, president and publisher in her tenure at the

High Plains Journal, which she joined in 1994 after graduating from Kansas State University with a bachelor’s degree in ag communications and animal science and industry.

Martin has served in many industry leadership positions, including on the boards of the Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation and AAEE — Ag

Communicators Network, including as president in 2009. She was selected to attend the NCBA Young Cattlemen’s Conference in 2012.

An experienced communicator, Martin has moderated more than 50 farmer and rancher events and has presented on ag communications and general agriculture topics to a variety of audiences. In addition, she has won several industry awards, including Fellow of AAEE in 2015, AAEE Master Writer in 2015 and numerous writing awards for both AAEE and the Livestock Publications Council.

▶▶▶ Disease programs, vaccine bank move forward

On Jan. 16 USDA announced the award of \$10.2 million in funding for animal pest and disease prevention and management efforts and the request for vaccine bank foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) proposals.

“In the last Farm Bill, we fought hard to establish and fund the

National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) and the new National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, as well as reauthorize the National Animal Health Laboratory Network,” said House Ag Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) and House Ag Livestock and Foreign Ag Subcommittee Chairman Jim Costa (D-CA) in a prepared statement. Both Peterson and Costa led bipartisan efforts to include of mandatory, long-term funding for these programs to ensure the United States has tools to address disease risks, including African Swine Fever (ASF), avian influenza, virulent Newcastle disease, and FMD.

“As our committee oversees Farm Bill implementation, we are pleased to see USDA moving forward on all three of these programs,” they continued. “These important tools will help prevent

and respond to animal pests and diseases, help keep animals healthy and ensure markets stay open. We look forward to seeing these programs address an even wider range of prevention and mitigation activities in future years.”

▶▶▶ AFBF convention meets in Texas

The American Farm Bureau Federation’s 101st Annual Convention and Trade Show got underway in Austin Jan. 18. In keeping with the theme of this year’s convention, “Sustaining America’s Agriculture,” workshops focused on steps farmers and ranchers can take to enhance soil health and improve water quality. Many other workshops featured technology’s role in helping with labor shortages, increasing competition, mitigating risk and protecting food safety.

The agenda also focused on how today’s farm economy affects

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farmers' well-being. Participants in a Jan. 18 workshop heard about the perfect storm of farm challenges during the past year and learned how to identify warning signs of unhealthy stress, depression and anxiety.

Krista Swanson, an Illinois family farmer and research specialist with the Gardner Agriculture Policy team at the University of Illinois, gave an overview of the many challenges farmers faced in 2019, from trade issues and tariffs to low commodity prices.

"When you're farming it's easy to think you're alone or that all these stressful factors only affect you," Swanson said, "but we need to realize that we are all in it together."

Adrienne DeSutter, an Illinois family farmer and behavioral health consultant, spoke about how farmers have been affected by these and many other factors that cause stress.

"Farmers have so many unique stressors: long hours, isolation,

uncontrollable stressful conditions," DeSutter said. "We also have personality traits that make us good farmers, like self-reliance, perseverance and being risk-takers. But these traits can be a liability when we're facing extreme stress."

Listen to all of Krista and Adrienne's workshop at http://bit.ly/AFBF_stress. Other sessions from the first day of AFBF 2020 (the audio for which is available at <https://convention.libsyn.com/>) included:

- ▶ Agriculture: Part of the Solution for Carbon Emissions;
- ▶ Climate Change: The Argument for Agriculture;
- ▶ Research Shows Farmer of the Future is Focused on Growth;
- ▶ Blockchain Breaking Through; and
- ▶ Solving the Agricultural Labor Crisis |

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