

News & Notes

News from across the country.

Compiled by Shauna Hermel, editor

Senate introduces legislation to protect producers from black vultures

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) hailed Sen. Markwayne Mullin's (R-OK) introduction of the Senate version of the *Black Vulture Relief Act*, a companion bill to legislation introduced in the House of Representatives earlier this year that protects cattle producers from the ramifications of black vulture depredation.

"Black vultures are particularly nasty predators, and their attacks can be financially devastating to small, family-owned cattle operations," said NCBA Policy Division Chair Gene Copenhaver, a Virginia cattle producer. "The current system prevents cattle producers from effectively protecting their herd. Not only that, but black vultures are also an abundant species — millions strong — that [does] not need federal protection."

The *Black Vulture Relief Act* is bipartisan legislation that would allow cattle producers to take vultures without a permit when there is an immediate need to protect their livestock from injury or death. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) currently issues black vulture depredation permits to states, which issue subpermits to producers allowing the taking of only three birds per year.

Black vultures often attack in flocks as large as 50. The attacks are particularly vicious, with the birds usually targeting calves hours or even minutes after birth.

Producer-friendly change to notice-of-loss requirements

The USDA has waived certain notice-of-loss requirements for 2023 for the Emergency

Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP).

In an effort to streamline assistance to support access to critical 2023 natural disaster recovery assistance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is waiving the requirement to submit ELAP or LIP notices of loss within a predetermined number of days for 2023. Instead, producers have the flexibility to submit 2023 notices of loss as soon as possible, once losses are realized, following a natural disaster event or no later than the established annual program application for payment deadlines for each program.

FSA county committees are being asked to reevaluate 2023 ELAP and LIP late-filed notices of loss to determine if the waiver applies.

USDA seeks to further competition, level playing field

Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack announced progress on USDA's approach to address competition

issues in ag markets and create a fairer playing field for small- and midsize farmers. In support of these efforts, USDA has finalized the first in a series of rules under the *Packers & Stockyards Act*, which is aimed at helping contract poultry growers compete more effectively and

better understand the terms of their agreements with major processing companies.

USDA also announced updates on several other efforts the department has undertaken as part of President Biden's *Executive Order on Promoting Competition in America's Economy*. These include:

- ▶ a notice to seed companies clarifying expectations that they share clear and meaningful information to farmers about the seed varieties they are purchasing;
- ▶ clarifying the domestic origin requirements a farmer must fulfill to sell meat products to meet USDA's food purchases for nutrition assistance programs; and
- ▶ creating a new, senior-level career position to formalize and enhance implementation of key competition policy priorities across the Department.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is clarifying that meat products must be from animals that are born, raised and slaughtered in the United States to meet the domestic-origin requirements for purposes of USDA purchasing.

AMS procures food products

of domestic origin for use in nutrition assistance programs and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its food purchase programs. Upon review, the guidelines for procuring beef, pork, lamb and bison products were not as clear as other commodities.

Last year, AMS purchased \$800 million worth of meat products. According to USDA, this clarification to the domestic origin requirement will ensure U.S. producers reap the full benefit of USDA purchase programs and recipients of nutrition assistance programs benefit from domestically produced meat products.

Interagency agreement addresses wildfire risk, smoke

Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan, Secretary of the Interior (DOI) Deb Haaland, and Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mandy Cohen in early November announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to further their joint work to protect communities from the effects of wildfire smoke while promoting land management practices that reduce the risk of large, severe fires. The four agencies released a joint plan outlining wildland fire-related priorities they will focus on during the next two years.

The MOU outlines how the agencies are working together to advance public health



preparedness, minimize smoke effects to the public and ensure regulatory pathways under the *Clean Air Act* to accommodate greater use of prescribed fire.

Under the MOU, the four agencies commit to coordinating the implementation of policies, communications and programs that relate to the use of prescribed fire to benefit restoration of forests and other wildlands, and protect communities. The agencies will work together to reduce the negative health effects of smoke on human health and community well-being.

The joint work plan outlines areas of focus for the agencies' partnership for fiscal years 2024 and 2025:

- ▶ community preparedness;
- ▶ ensuring that land management and public

health goals are addressed together;

- ▶ data collection and sharing; and
- ▶ interagency communication and messaging.

The MOU and work plan follow the recent Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Report to Congress, which urged an “all of the above” approach — at all levels of society — to address the effects of wildfires on communities across the country.

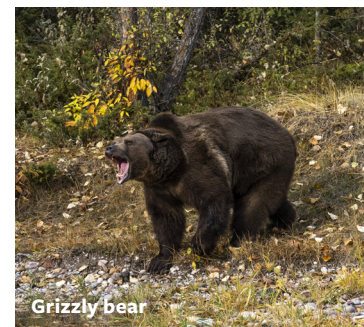
This work complements the investments from President Biden’s Investing in America agenda to increase the resilience of lands facing the threat of wildland fires and to better support federal wildland firefighters. The *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* includes \$3 billion for the USDA and \$1.5

billion for the DOI to invest in preparedness, fuels management, post-fire restoration, and fire science — all of which will help strengthen long-term fire preparedness, reduce fire risk across states, and invest in the wildland firefighter workforce.

Cattlemen object to plan to introduce grizzlies in Pacific Northwest

The NCBA, Public Lands Council (PLC), and Washington Cattlemen’s Association (WCA), alongside other national organizations, filed comments opposing the Biden administration’s plan to introduce grizzly bears to the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE) in Washington state. This latest proposed rule from the FWS follows years of opposition from rural Washington communities, cattle ranchers and sheep producers.

This is a misguided effort by federal bureaucrats that will not make a meaningful difference to the success of the species, but



Grizzly bear

will impose a severe burden on rural communities and livestock producers, NCBA stated in a release.

“Introducing an apex predator like the grizzly bear to a new area of Washington state is a mistake, and poses a huge threat to our rural communities and hardworking farmers and ranchers,” said NCBA President-elect Mark Eisele, a Wyoming rancher. “This plan is being pushed by bureaucrats thousands of miles away from the West who do not fully understand the harm this species will cause to producers. The Biden administration should listen to rural residents and rethink this plan.”

Residents of rural Washington



Daniel Mitchell

Ten auctioneers punch ticket to World Livestock Auctioneer Championship

After a day of competitive bid-calling in Paris, Ky., 10 more auctioneers advanced to the World Livestock Auctioneer Championship. The qualifiers, led by Daniel Mitchell, Cumberland, Ohio, will next compete in the semifinals to be hosted at the Oklahoma National Stockyards in June.

Preston Smith, Imperial, Neb., was named reserve champion. Neil Bouray, Webber, Kan., was named runner-up. Completing the top 10 semi-finalist qualifiers for June are: Andy Baumeister, Goldthwaite, Texas; Justin Dodson, Welch, Okla.; Jeremy Miller, Fairland, Okla.; Ben Morgan, Union, W.Va.; Ross Parks, New Concord, Ohio; Ethan Schuette, Washington, Kan.; and Jeff Showalter, Broadway, Va.

Kyle Nisly, Montezuma, Ga., was named high-score rookie.

For additional details, see the full article available from the “Marketing Page” of the December *Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA*, available at www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra.

state have long opposed previous attempts to introduce the grizzly bear to the NCE due to safety concerns. There are currently no bears in the NCE; the species is already thriving and multiplying in other recovery zones like the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

“Grizzly bears are 20 times more dangerous than black bears and are well-known for their aggressive, fatal maulings. Their broad diet means they can harm anyone — corn producers, orchards, cattle ranchers, sheep ranchers, the list goes on and on. Air-dropping these bears into a new community in Washington state is not something the federal government should take lightly,” said PLC President Mark Roeber, a Colorado rancher. “I have faced livestock depredation from gray wolves around my ranch, and introducing an even larger

predator will only cause more harm to our fellow livestock producers in Washington state.”

NCBA and PLC have worked closely with Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA), chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, to oppose this rule and recently penned an op-ed raising the numerous concerns with this proposal. Rep. Newhouse has been a critical ally in opposing previous attempts to introduce grizzly bears to the North Cascades and continues to be a strong supporter of efforts to reject this latest plan.

FFA, 4-H members receive free admission to trade show at CattleCon24

The next generation of ag leaders is invited to attend the NCBA Trade Show at CattleCon24

for free on Friday, Feb. 2. FFA and 4-H members can receive free trade show admission on “Next Gen Ag FFA & 4-H Day,” which will include a variety of events and activities for youth and families.

Courtesy of Culver’s, the first 250 FFA members to register will receive complimentary Friday NCBA Trade Show admission. FFA members and alumni are also invited to the Culver’s Blue Jacket Custard Social.

Nationwide is providing complimentary Friday NCBA Trade Show admission to the first 250 4-H members who register. Nationwide is also sponsoring a special Learning Lounge session about careers in agriculture featuring Mary-Thomas Hart, chief counsel at NCBA.

“Youth engagement is critical to the future of America’s rural



communities, and industry events like the NCBA Trade Show are great places to learn about career opportunities while building a national network of producers and industry experts,” said Hart. “As a 4-H alumnus, I look forward to meeting 4-H members from across the country who are excited about civic engagement and a future in cattle production.”

NCBA Trade Show attendees can explore more than eight acres of displays and exhibitors offering the latest advancements, from equipment and technology to pharmaceuticals and feed

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supplements. In addition to finding the right product or service to solve any problem, there are a variety of educational opportunities within the show.

Attendees can stop in the Learning Lounge to enjoy informal, face-to-face talks in an intimate setting on the trade show floor. The Stockmanship & Stewardship Demonstration Arena returns with experts providing low-stress cattle-handling demonstrations, Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) educational sessions, industry updates and facility design sessions.

Cattle Chats will feature beef industry educational sessions, and the Chutes and Scales Showdown will offer a side-by-side comparison of equipment where producers can watch cattle move through chutes, then get hands-on experience.

Other activities include an appearance by the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile, the “Pups & Popsicles” reception featuring furry friends and refreshing treats, and entertainment throughout the trade show.

To receive free Friday NCBA Trade Show registration, FFA members must use the code FFACULVERS, and 4-H members, 4HNW. A variety of other registration options are also available. For more information and to register and reserve housing, visit <https://convention.ncba.org>.

Cattlemen praise Farm Bill extension, urge swift passage

NCBA praised Congress for passing a government funding package that includes a one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill through Sept. 30, 2024, and extends the Livestock Mandatory Reporting program until Jan. 19, 2024.

“NCBA is thankful for Congress passing legislation extending critical programs that farmers and ranchers across the country depend on. These extensions give much-needed certainty to cattle producers, and NCBA will continue engaging with Congress and the Biden Administration as they work to deliver a long-term Farm Bill, as well as a clean reauthorization of Livestock Mandatory Reporting,” said NCBA President Todd Wilkinson, a South Dakota cattle producer. “With so much work still left to do, I urge President Biden to swiftly sign this continuing resolution.”

USDA announces 2022 Census of Agriculture data release details

The USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will release the 2022 *Census of Agriculture* data on Feb. 13, 2024. NASS concluded the data collection this summer with a preliminary national return rate of 61%.

The ag census, conducted once every five years, was mailed to more than 3 million producers across the United States and Puerto Rico late last year.

“On behalf of everyone at USDA, I would like to thank the millions of producers who gave their time and effort to complete the 2022 *Census of Agriculture*,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “Ag census data will inform decisions about policy, farm and conservation programs, rural development, research, technology development, ag education, and more over the next several years. These data will have a very real impact on producers, their farming operations, and communities.”

The ag census data will be

available online at www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus and in NASS’s searchable database, Quick Stats.

Publication dates for the various ag census data products can be found on NASS’s online 2024 Agricultural Statistics Board Calendar.

Like all NASS data, ag census data will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified, as required by federal law.

“NASS staff are currently doing extensive analyses of each response,” said NASS’s Census and Survey Division Director Barbara Rater. “We use trusted statistical methods to account for nonresponse, under-coverage, and misclassification to continue to produce accurate

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data down to the county level. Per usual, these methodologies will be published in the final report.”

In addition to the U.S. territory ag census data collection, two ag census special studies that will provide more in-depth information on certain industries will be conducted this fall and winter: the 2023 Census of Aquaculture and the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey. These questionnaires will be mailed to the producers who reported these activities in the 2022 Census of Agriculture. For more information about these upcoming special studies, visit www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus. **ABB**