

Industry Link

Secretary of Agriculture sworn in

Ed Schafer was sworn in as the 29th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Jan. 28. Secretary Schafer brings a record as a two-term governor of North Dakota to USDA along with extensive private sector experience as both an entrepreneur and a business executive (see page 113).

Tyson cuts 1,500 jobs at Emporia location

Tyson Foods Inc. announced Jan. 25 that it will cease all beef harvest operations at its Emporia, Kan., facility, cutting approximately 1,500 of the company's 2,400 jobs.

Dick Bond, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Tyson Foods, cited a sluggish U.S. fed-cattle supply, and the rising price of grain and its subsequent increasing land and feed costs as reasons for the decision to halt harvest operations.

"There continues to be far more beef slaughter capacity than available cattle, and we believe this problem will continue to afflict the industry for the foreseeable future," Bond said. "We estimate the current slaughter overcapacity in the industry to be between 10,000 and 14,000 head of cattle per day."

Emporia's location, according to Tyson, also played a significant role in the decision.

"Cattle production has moved from eastern to western Kansas over the past 20 to 30 years, and the Emporia plant is no longer centrally located in relationship to where most of the cattle it slaughters are raised," Bond stated.

With little relief in sight, Tyson officials believe the move will divert more cattle to its other facilities and improve their capacity utilization, said Jim Lochner, senior group vice president of Tyson Fresh Meats.

Although more than half of workers at the Emporia location will be searching for new jobs, the facility will continue to be used as a cold storage and distribution warehouse and will process ground beef.

Minnesota herd tests positive for TB

The Minnesota Board of Animal Health announced Jan. 22 that a Roseau County beef cattle herd tested positive for bovine tuberculosis (TB).

The newly detected Roseau herd tested negative in 2005 and 2006, but during a third, follow-up round of testing in November, one animal tested suspect for bovine TB. Tissue samples were collected and submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, where a diagnosis of bovine TB was confirmed mid-January. This is Minnesota's ninth beef herd to be detected with bovine TB.

At press time, Minnesota's Modified

Accredited Advanced TB status was to remain unchanged. Minnesota Board of Animal Health Executive Director and State Veterinarian Bill Hartmann said that work will continue unabated to return

the state to TB-Free status. However, the discovery of any additional herds could result in the downgrading of Minnesota's status.

More information on bovine TB in Minnesota and the testing campaign can be found at www.bah.state.mn.us or by calling the Minnesota TB Hotline at 1-877-MN TB FREE (668-2373).

Canada reports another case of BSE

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed Dec. 18 the diagnosis of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a 13-year-old beef cow from Alberta, noting that the agency has the animal's carcass under its control and no part of it

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entered the human food or animal feed systems.

The latest discovery marks the 11th case of BSE to befall Canada since its first in a native-born animal in May 2003, which prompted many export markets to ban Canadian beef.

USDA promotes animal ID progress

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has recorded 429,600 premises registered nationwide as part of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), with substantial increases in the number of premises registered, Meatingplace.com reports.

As of December 2007, Nebraska became the 10th state to register at least 50% of its total estimated production agriculture premises under NAIS. Nebraska officials attribute the increased registrations in part to visits to its NAIS "Locate in 48" web site (www.locatein48.com), which publicizes the main goal of the system: to

retrieve traceback data within 48 hours to contain the spread of animal disease.

Other states that have topped the 50% mark include Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wisconsin.

To contact a state partner or find out more about NAIS, visit <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>.

Indonesia, Barbados allow full market access

Indonesia and Barbados officials have announced the countries will allow complete market access for U.S. beef and beef products of all ages, then-Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner announced Jan. 23.

Under this new agreement, USDA estimates that U.S. beef exports to Indonesia could potentially double in 2008 and 2009. Exports of U.S. beef and beef products to Barbados were roughly \$2.7 million in 2007 (January-November) with partial market access.

Southeast producers face record drought

Without adequate rain to maintain pastures and grow hay and forage, the worst drought on record in the Southeast continued to hammer the area's cattle producers mid-January, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) reported. Some producers were reporting that feed costs have more than doubled.

According to NCBA, many producers were being forced to liquidate their herds due to rising input costs at press time. Drinking water for cattle was also in short supply, forcing producers to purchase water for cattle, along with feed. In addition, producers are reporting that in many instances cattle are as much as 100 pounds (lb.) lighter than normal.

Angus Productions Inc. (API) offers an information-based web site to assist producers dealing with drought at www.angusjournal.com/drought.

Washington Watch **Economic stimulus package passes**

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$146-billion aid package Jan. 29 with hopes of healing a listless U.S. economy.

According to *The Associated Press* (AP), the package would speed rebates of \$600-\$1,200 to most taxpayers. The plan would also include rebates for anyone with at least \$3,000 in income, "with more going to families with children and less going to wealthier taxpayers," AP reported.

At press time, the Senate had yet to finalize its version of the bill, which, AP noted, could take some time.

Both the House and Senate versions include tax breaks to businesses to spur equipment and other purchases.

Fed slashes interest rate

The Federal Reserve slashed a key interest rate Jan. 22 by three-quarters of a percentage point, *The Washington Post* reported, bringing rates to 3.5%. The largest rate cut in at least 18 years, the move was meant to stymie a weakening U.S. economy and is expected to affect everything from certain loans and credit card payments to auto loan rates and lines of credit.

According to *The Washington Post*, the Fed said it had cut rates due to a worsening U.S. housing market, growing unemployment rate and an overall weakening of the economy.

In a statement released last week, NCBA Chief Economist Gregg Doud said the economic downturn, coupled with more affordable competing proteins in the meatcase could spell trouble for beef demand in the coming months.

Legislation aims at increasing veterinarians

A growing shortage of veterinarians threatens U.S. food safety and public health, Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), told a House subcommittee on health in late January.

According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Baldwin introduced the Veterinary Public Health Workforce Expansion Act last year, with a goal of increasing veterinary school resources and enabling more students to enroll.

At press time, the bill, which had 90 co-sponsors, was expected to move through the committee to a vote on the House floor, according to the article.

"There is a projected shortage of 15,000 veterinarians over the next 20 years, particularly those working in food supply and public health," the *Journal Sentinel* stated.

The focus of this year's conference will be on drought management. Four major topics of discussion will be presented at the conference, including pasture management during long-term drought, drought economics, drought feeding with limited hay and toxicity.

The conference also features a trade show. For more information call Doug

Mayo at 850-482-9620 or visit <http://jackson.ifas.ufl.edu>.

 **2008 Women Managing the Farm Conference**

Feb. 8-9, Hutchinson, Kan.

The 2008 Women Managing the Farm Conference is scheduled for Feb. 8-9 at the Grand Prairie Hotel and Conference Center in Hutchinson, Kan.

Titled "Celebrating Ag Women," the conference is designed for women who are sharing agribusiness decisions with their farmer or rancher husband and for women who have either inherited — or are purchasing — a farm or acreage or choosing agriculture as a career.

Registration and more information

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Industry Events  **2008 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show**

Feb. 6-9, Reno, Nev.

The meeting will feature joint and individual meetings by five industry organizations, including NCBA, the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board (CBB), the American National CattleWomen Inc. (ANCW), Cattle-Fax and the National Cattlemen's Foundation (NCF).

API will provide online coverage of the event at www.4cattlemen.com. Salt Creek Angus, Memphis, Texas, is sponsoring the site (see page 106).

 **Northwest Florida Beef Conference**

Feb. 7, Marianna, Fla.

The Northwest Florida Beef Conference & Trade Show will take place Thursday, Feb. 7, at the Agriculture Conference Center located behind the Jackson County Extension Office just north of Interstate 10 at Exit 136 in Marianna, Fla. Registration and the trade show will open at 8 a.m., Central time, and the program will get started at 9 a.m. The program will conclude with a steak lunch at 12:30 p.m.

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on the conference and a limited number of scholarships are available on the conference web site, www.womenmanagingthefarm.info, and by calling 866-327-6578.

Animal Care and Handling Conference **Feb. 14-15, Kansas City, Mo.**

The 2008 Animal Care and Handling Conference, Feb. 14-15, will be at the Westin Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo.

The American Meat Institute (AMI) Foundation Animal Care and Handling

Conference for the food industry is the leading animal welfare education opportunity for meat companies, their customers and those involved in the production and management of livestock and meat products.

A special preconference workshop on livestock transportation will be

Feb. 13. Discussion topics will include international perspectives, developing a national emergency program, driver fatigue management, ventilation, loading density, managing losses and more.

For complete conference agendas or to register, go to www.animalhandling.org. For more information visit www.meatami.com.

MSU workshops **Feb. 14, Ronan; Feb. 15, Browning; Feb. 16, Dillon, Mont.**

Montana State University (MSU) Extension economists will offer free workshops in Ronan, Browning and Dillon on cost control and risk planning for livestock producers.

The meeting is meant to help livestock and forage producers develop personalized cost control plans, with a special emphasis on surviving in an environment with increasing energy and feed costs. Topics include energy-related issues affecting production costs, feed resources, risk management tools and financial management strategies. Meeting dates and locations will be:

- Feb. 14 at the Lake County Community Center in Ronan. Contact Extension agent Jack Stivers at 406-676-4272 for more information.
- Feb. 15 at the Blackfeet Housing Conference Room in Browning. For more information on that program, contact Extension agent Verna Billedaux at 406-338-2650.
- Feb. 16 at the 4-H building on the fairgrounds in Dillon. For more information, contact Extension agent J.P. Tanner at 406-683-3785.

Registration for each program will begin at 9 a.m., and the workshop will be from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lunch will be provided, and there is no registration fee.

The program is sponsored by MSU, North Dakota State University (NDSU), the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the National Crop Insurance Services.

Certified Livestock Manager Training (CLMT) program **Feb. 19, 20; March 7, Illinois**

The Certified Livestock Manager Training (CLMT) program at the University of Illinois (U of I) at Urbana-Champaign will offer a series of workshops through March 2008 to help producers comply with the Livestock Management Facilities Act and other environmental regulations.

U of I Extension also has an Internet quiz option that, if successfully passed, substitutes for the requirement of attending a workshop.

Workshop topics include concrete construction, odor issues, manure management planning, mortality composting and updates on rules and regulations.

The workshops, open for all producers, are scheduled for:

- Feb. 19 in Effingham (dairy/beef emphasis)
- Feb. 20 in Breese (dairy/beef emphasis)
- March 7 in Springfield

Producers should call 1-800-345-6087 at least two weeks before the workshop so that the manual or CD can be mailed to them ahead of time. If you have questions, contact Fonner at 217-333-2611 or clmt@uiuc.edu.

Additional details are available by visiting www.livestocktraining.com.

High Plains BioFuels Coproducts Nutrition Conference

Feb. 20, Garden City, Kan.

The High Plains BioFuels Coproducts Nutrition Conference has been re-scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 20, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The conference will be at the Plaza Inn (Clarion) in Garden City, Kan.

All existing registrations are still valid. Contact Chris Reinhardt, K-State Extension feedlot specialist at 785-532-1672 (office) or 785-410-2717 (cell) for further information.

R-CALF USA Annual Convention

Feb. 20-23, Omaha, Neb.

The Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) will conduct its 9th annual convention Feb. 20-23 in Omaha, Neb. The theme for this year's event is "Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer's Prosperity — Together." The location is the newly remodeled Holiday Inn Omaha Convention Center, located at 3321 S. 72nd St., just off Interstate 80 at Exit 449.

For the second year in a row, the R-CALF USA Private Property Rights Committee will hold a seminar on Wednesday, Feb. 20.

Panel discussions throughout the convention cover topics including animal health issues, animal identification (ID), market competition, international trade and the Farm Bill. Also planned are updates on the National Beef Checkoff Program and country-of-origin labeling (also known as COL or COOL).

For more information about the convention or trade show, call R-CALF USA headquarters at 406-252-2516.

Academy for Ranch Management

Feb. 21-23, March 6-8, Sonora, Texas

The Academy for Ranch Management has scheduled two workshops in early 2008 for prescribed rangeland burning, a technique that renews vegetation by using fire to burn off unwanted brush.

A prescribed burning rangeland workshop is scheduled for Feb. 21-23, while an advanced workshop on the

method is scheduled March 6-8.

Both workshops will be at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station near Sonora.

Cost for each workshop is \$395 and includes meals and lodging at the Sonora station.

The first workshop provides basic information on prescribed burning, weather, fuels, equipment and planning.

It is designed to be a prerequisite to the advanced workshop. A prescribed burn will be conducted, weather permitting.

The advanced workshop provides additional information on weather and fuels with emphasis on planning and conducting a prescribed burn. A comprehensive exam is administered for those interested in completing the

educational requirement for certified prescribed burn manager.

For more information about the workshops and to register, call 979-820-1778 or visit www.ranchmanagement.org.

