

## Why We Stand Apart

I want to take a minute to be clear about who the U.S. Cattlemen's Association is — and why we stand apart.

There are a lot of organizations tied to this industry, and a lot of different ways to approach the work. For us, it's pretty simple.

We start and end with the producer.

The folks raising the cattle, feeling

and managing the risk, and figuring out how to make it work year after year. That's who we represent, and that's whose voice we carry forward.

When we sit down with a Senator, an agency, or anyone in Washington, we're not prioritizing those who profit from the supply chain, rather we carry the voices of those who provide for it. "Markets that don't feel fair or even competitive." "Labels that don't reflect what I work hard for."

"Regulation makes it harder, not easier, to stay in business." "I want this ranch to make it for my kids and grandkids to work on but I'm just not sure that's an option anymore."

At the end of the day, this isn't about headlines—it's about your bottom line. It's about whether the numbers pencil out, whether the market is fair, and whether the next generation has a shot at carrying this forward.

And our organization's voice sounds familiar—because it sounds like yours.

Our committees, our state affiliates, and our members own this process. The issues we advocate are grounded in your day-in and day-out experience, from producers across the country who know exactly what's at stake. That's what gives our work credibility—and it's what makes it count.

From there, our focus is on policy in action.

You won't see us spending our time on litigation—you'll see us focused on the federal grind and the long-term playbook. Around here, it's policy, not politics. We stay focused on what actually moves the needle for producers, not what makes noise in the moment.

That means being in the room early, staying engaged through the details, and working late to make sure it's implemented the right way. It's not always bright lights and news media, and you don't always see it, but it's where real battles are fought and won.

... PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE cont. on pg. 3



**PRESIDENT'S**  
*Message*

by JUSTIN TUPPER  
President, United States Cattlemen's Association

# USCA

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(605) 380-0259; stonge@rushmore.com

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w.klasna@gmail.com

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### ARE YOU A MEMBER FROM MISSOURI, MINNESOTA, OR IOWA?

Region 6 has an open seat on the BOD and we would encourage members who wish to be more engaged to reach out about filling this position.

## FROM THE EVP

Starting off 2026, coming from the Annual Meeting in Manhattan, Kansas, in January, USCA has set to work on policies and priorities for our members. On an administrative note, revisions to the USCA bylaws were passed last year and this year saw those changes come to fruition. Of note is the redistricting of the USCA Board of Director (BOD) Regions - which sought to better group together states and added in two At-Large positions. Today, there is only one Region that remains vacant - *are you a USCA member from Missouri, Minnesota or Iowa?* **Reach out to the USCA Office to voice your interest in serving in the Region 6 seat.** The BOD is an integral part of USCA, representing your voices as policy is acted on and considered, and the direction of the Association is discussed during monthly meetings. We are always seeking USCA members who wish to be involved on the BOD, Committees, or in any capacity - reach out and we'll get you connected!

Following the recent Annual Meeting, the BOD determined that rather than host an in-person annual meeting this year, USCA would instead look to host regional meetings throughout the country, with the goal of interacting with members on a more direct level. The first regional outreach effort will be in Texas, with USCA staff traveling to the Annual Independent Cattle-men's Association of Texas (ICA) Convention. We will be looking to the East Coast later this Summer to host an event and welcome the opportunity to come to your region - *interested in hosting a USCA regional meeting?* **Contact the USCA Office and we'll take care of the leg work and come your way.**

Here's to a great second half of the year and connecting with many of you out in the countryside.

## PRESIDENT'S MSG.

cont. from pg. 1

That's what we do, day in and day out:

- We make sure producers have a seat—at every table, in every room—getting real-world perspectives in front of the decision-makers, the rule-writers. It's not flashy, but it's the kind of work that survives and thrives in the long haul.
- We write the comments that end up in the final rules and regulations.
- We propose the language that finds its way into statutes and appropriations bills.
- We track the details that decide whether a "win" in theory actually shows up at your sale barn and in your pockets.

And when we need to push back, we don't back down. We do it through strategy—oversight hearings, accountability letters, real-world data, and the kind of steady pressure that might operate away from the camera but definitely moves the needle.

While we approach our 20th anniversary in 2027, we aren't bound by "the way things have always been done." We have the experience and the political acumen to hang with the best of them—and we aren't afraid to think creatively to beat them.

We play the long game when it comes to relationships.

It's easy to believe advocacy isn't important when prices are high and the stress of the last 20 years feels like it's finally lifting. I hear you. But we are the market experts, and we know what goes up will eventually come down. There is no better time to stay active in an association working to keep those sale day numbers high and government overreach low.

We don't have the luxury of writing off half of Congress, none of us do. The reality is, the political environment shifts—and what's possible today might be impossible tomorrow. If we want this industry to stay strong for the next generation, we have to be thinking beyond the moment we're in right now.

So we build relationships in every aisle, both sides of it and inside of it too. We lead with logic and grit, not just noisemaking. We come back to the table after the cameras are gone. And when we sign our name to a bill or a rulemaking comment, it's because we believe it moves independent producers upward and onward—not because it makes for a good press release or it's what folks want to hear.

You are more than just a cattleman or cattewoman—you are a consumer, a citizen, and a contributor to society with a voice that needs to be heard. So that table we talked about earlier? Sit down, and bring your neighbor or the next generation individual you're training. Call our leadership and share your stories; I guarantee the return on investment will be unlike any purchase you've ever made for your operation.

At the end of the day, what sets USCA apart isn't complicated and it's not cloudy:

- We're grounded in the producer.
- We focus on policy that stands the test of time and evolution.
- And we stay focused on what improves the long-term viability—and profitability—of your operation.

That's who we are. That's who we'll keep being.

And we're proud to carry your voice forward.



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# THE VIEW FROM THE TABLE...

## *from your Director of Policy & Public Affairs*

There’s an age-old saying that goes, “if you’re not at the table, then you’re on the menu.” While the product you raise should always be on the menu, I have good news for you: as a USCA member, you have a solid chair at the table in Washington, D.C..

We are currently operating in the “Make America Healthy Again” era, and we have every reason to believe this movement is here to stay. We see this reflected in the updated Dietary Guidelines, which have finally placed animal protein at the top of the food pyramid. Economists and nutrition experts are saying that “meat is having a moment,” but I’d take it a step further: in protein, **beef is owning the moment**. Despite the pressures of inflation, beef demand is jumping, and consumption hit a decades-high level in 2025, where meat hit record sales of \$112 billion. Americans want what

you raise: the most healthful, safe beef supply on the planet.

My job is to make sure those consumers know exactly what they are buying at the meat case. We took a massive leap toward that goal on January 1, when the new “Product of USA” label went into effect. This change ensures that the only beef carrying an American flag is beef that was born, raised, harvested, and processed right here in the United States. I was proud to spend National Ag Week at the USDA celebrating this game-changing standard, but we aren’t finished. Mandatory country-of-origin labeling (MCOOL) remains the ultimate goal, and we are in the strongest position we’ve ever been to secure it in a Farm Bill by the end of 2026.

While it’s great to ride the highs of a strong market, it is as important as ever to stay informed. My monthly DC



**GET IN TOUCH**  
**Jenna Stanton**  
*Director of Policy and Public Affairs*  
[jenna@wssdc.com](mailto:jenna@wssdc.com)  
**(202) 870-0156**

Update is designed to weed through the media noise so you don’t have to, ensuring you know exactly which headlines affect your bottom line. If you have a neighbor who isn’t receiving it yet, let me know—we’ll get their first month covered.

My mission in Washington D.C. is that when legislators and regulators hear my voice, it comes out sounding like yours. I have a goal for 2026, and I need your help to meet it: I want my voice in Washington to sound exactly like yours. Between now and the end of the year, I want to have a “coffee” with at least two of you every month—even if it’s virtually. Better yet, call me when you’re on the road or in the field. Tell me your stories—about your ranch, your family, or even that one old cow you couldn’t part with. From sale barn closeouts to Forest Service and BLM movements in your backyard, I want to hear it all. Your stories are what give my advocacy its teeth. They carry your legacy and hold the key to ensuring the next generation can keep this livelihood operating profitably.

Your membership is working hard for you, and so are we.

**UNITED STATES CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

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# Investing in American Producers... *by Zach Ducheneaux, USCA Secretary*

Discretion without resources is not a solution to anything. Discretion without compassion and empathy is even worse.

As droughts worsen and wildfires intensify, ranches across the country are under severe strain. The good news is that effective, proven tools already exist. When the federal government makes timely, well-targeted investments in agricultural producers, the payoff—both economically and socially—can be enormous.

This is a story about one such investment, and what it meant for North Dakota's cowherd and rural economy.

## SAVING NORTH DAKOTA COWHERDS IN 2021

In the summer of 2021, western North Dakota was in the grip of an extended, extreme drought. Senator

John Hoeven's team invited a group from USDA to tour the state, listen to producers, and see the impacts firsthand—especially on the state's beef cow herd.

At listening sessions across North Dakota, producers shared fears of losing up to 30% of the breeding cow herd. Generations of genetic selection and stewardship were at risk. Many felt they had no choice but to sell pairs and calves into a depressed drought market, months before those calves would normally be ready for sale. Selling into a drought is, for many, a "going out of business sale."

Crop producers, whose markets and crop insurance looked stronger, often stepped up in those meetings and said: "Help the livestock guys. We'll be ok. They need it more."

Behind all of this was a simple reality: it wasn't that feed didn't exist. It was that the drought was so widespread that the cost of freight to haul hay from where it was available had become the real barrier.

## USING THE RIGHT TOOLS AT THE RIGHT TIME

USDA had a flexible tool available: the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). ELAP and its companion programs were designed by Congress not just to authorize and fund assistance, but also to give experts in the Executive Branch enough flexibility to respond quickly and sensibly to real-world conditions.

... *INVEST IN PRODUCERS* cont. on pg. 7



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# INVEST IN PRODUCERS

cont. from pg. 6

Working with Senator Hoeven’s team, USDA determined that freight assistance would be the most effective way to keep cowherds together. The national trucking rate at the time was about \$5–\$6 per loaded mile. The solution: a costshare program to help cover abovenormal freight costs for abovenormal feed purchases transported from abovenormal distances.

Program rules were developed and moved through USDA and the Office of Management and Budget. With consistent engagement from Senator Hoeven and his team, USDA was able to announce freight assistance in time to help keep those cows fed through the fall and get those calves to market.

That was only the beginning of the story.

## “RANCHER MATH”: FOLLOWING ONE LOAD OF HAY

To illustrate the impact, let’s track a single truckload of hay under some conservative assumptions:

- Freight cost: \$5,900 for a 1,000mile loaded trip
- Load size: 20 tons (40,000 pounds) of hay
- Feeding period: 120 days (roughly June to October)
- Ration: 50 pounds of hay per cow/calf pair per day
- Weight gain: 2 pounds per day per calf (240 pounds over 120 days)
- Calf value during that period: \$1.72 per pound

At 50 pounds per day for 120 days, each pair needs 6,000 pounds of hay

to get to market. One 40,000pound load feeds about six cow/calf pairs for that period.

Six calves gaining 240 pounds each at \$1.72 per pound equals about \$2,476 in calf sales preserved in 2021 alone—just from that one load of hay.

But the real return shows up over time. Keeping those six mother cows together meant those calves kept coming. Using actual average sale values for the years that followed, those six calves per year generated roughly:

- 2021: \$2,476
- 2022: \$6,268
- 2023: \$9,156
- 2024: \$9,666
- 2025: \$15,276

Year	Average/Head	6 Calves
2021	\$412	\$2,476
2022	\$1,047	\$6,268
2023	\$1,526	\$9,156
2024	\$1,611	\$9,666
2025	\$2,546	\$15,276
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$42,842</b>

Total: **\$42,842** in income opportunity preserved from an initial \$5,900 freight investment.

That’s a return of more than 600%—and that’s before we consider the broader economic effects: the hay purchased from a surplus region, the trucking work created, and the dollars circulating in rural communities.

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## INVEST IN PRODUCERS

cont. from pg. 7

### LISTENING, ADJUSTING, AND IMPROVING

After the ELAP freight assistance was announced, members of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) did their own "rancher math." For some operations, it made more sense to haul cows to feed rather than feed to cows.

Instead of forcing producers to fit the initial program design, USDA listened and adjusted the program so it could also help with moving livestock

to feed. When people with practical experience and the right information speak up, and when policymakers are willing to listen and adapt, better solutions emerge.

### WHAT THIS EXPERIENCE TEACHES US

There are several important lessons in this story:

- **Targeted federal investments work.** When drought and disaster strike, strategic support can prevent longterm damage to production capacity and rural economies.
- **Flexibility matters.** Programs like ELAP work best when they allow ontheground experts to tailor assistance to realworld conditions.
- **Listening builds trust.** Producers saw a federal government that listened to their concerns

and then acted, which helps rebuild confidence in public institutions.

- **Rural economies need cow-herds.** Keeping the "factory" together—those mother cows—preserves not only one year's calf crop but years of future production and the local businesses that depend on it.

Most importantly, this experience shows what happens when elected and appointed leaders believe in constructive government, and when they empower knowledgeable, dedicated public servants to use the tools Congress has given them.

Real, lasting change happens. Producers see results instead of neglect. Rural communities get a chance not just to survive, but to grow.

### WE CAN DO THIS AGAIN

The authorizing language for ELAP is still in place. The funding remains available. Thousands of dedicated federal employees still show up each day wanting to help producers weather challenges and stay in business.

What they need is the continued support, direction, and engagement of elected officials—and clear feedback from producers themselves.

So keep speaking up. Let your representatives know what's happening on the ground, what you need, and what tools—like ELAP—are available and effective. When we invest wisely in American producers, the returns show up for years in families, communities, and the food security of our entire nation.



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# Next Gen Building Knowledge Beyond the Fence Line

From cattle markets and financing to herd management, consumer trends, and practical ranch management, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association's Beyond the Fenceline: Next Generation Ranchers Call continues to connect producers with the information, resources, and relationships needed to navigate today's cattle industry.

Designed as a casual, conversation-based forum, the monthly call brings together ranchers from across the country to learn from industry experts, share experiences, and discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the next generation of cattle producers.

Recent calls have covered a wide range of topics relevant to producers

at every stage of their operation.

In February, Farm Credit Services of America's Erin Yost discussed financial planning, business growth, and lending considerations for producers looking to expand or transition into ownership. The conversation focused on goal setting, cash flow management, risk management tools, and strategies for building long-term financial resilience.

March's call featured Logan Vandermark of South Dakota State University Extension, who provided an overview of the many resources available through Extension systems. Participants learned how local agents and specialists can help producers address production challenges, access educational opportunities, and make more

informed management decisions.

In April, Micah Bristow of Circle 5 Cow School shared practical insights on reproductive management, including pregnancy checking, artificial insemination, and producer education. Drawing from years of hands-on instruction across the country, Bristow highlighted how developing these skills can improve efficiency and strengthen herd management decisions.

Most recently, Kansas State University livestock economist Dr. Glynn Tonsor joined the call to discuss findings from the Meat Demand Monitor.

... NEXT GEN cont. on pg. 11



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## NEXT GEN

*cont. from pg. 10*

His presentation explored consumer preferences, beef demand trends, and market outlooks, providing valuable perspective on how changing consumer behavior continues to influence opportunities throughout the beef industry.

Each call also features a spotlight on USCA producer leaders, allowing participants to hear firsthand lessons learned from ranchers across the

country. Conversations have touched on leadership development, community involvement, technology adoption, business management, and the importance of building a strong foundation for future success.

Beyond the Fenceline was created to provide a welcoming space for those building the future of the cattle industry—whether they are returning to a family ranch, growing an existing operation, entering the business for the first time, or preparing to take on greater leadership responsibilities.

The calls offer a unique opportunity to connect with fellow producers, ask questions, gain new perspectives, and strengthen professional networks.

The Beyond the Fenceline: Next Generation Ranchers Call is held monthly and remains open to all interested producers. As the series continues to grow, it remains focused on one goal: helping producers build the knowledge, connections, and confidence needed to lead the next chapter of the cattle industry.

# Join the calls!

# BEYOND THE FENCELINE

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## MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION FORM

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*The purpose of the United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) is to present an effective voice for the United States cattle industry. USCA is dedicated to, and focused on, efforts in Washington, D.C. to further the interests of cattle producers on mandatory country of origin labeling, international trade, market competition, reform of the mandatory beef checkoff, animal health, welfare and identification, private property rights and other issues that affect the United States cattle industry.*

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*Only members owning cattle have voting rights. One member - one vote.*

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- \$25: NextGen (under 35 years old)

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"The greatest homage we can pay to truth is to use it."  
- JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Volume 62 • No. 8

## We're NOT All In This Together

BY LEE PITTS

I hear one more company advertise that we're all in this Covid thing together. I'm going to throw a rock at the TV. I don't see government employees losing their jobs. I don't see Congress going out of business like neighborhood stores and last time I checked, Congressmen were still getting their paychecks. The bureaucracy is still in business, and 20 percent of the restaurants in this country that are expected to go broke due to the soon-and-start shutdown. I don't see dollar stores, packing their inventory, and stacking them up like the side and burning it up like the meat processors are doing. And I don't see the market for the Big 4 (mineral, meatpackers, 2 Americans and 2 Brazilian) de-stroved like the one they demolished for feeders and ranchers. If you believe that we're all in this Covid thing together you probably also believe in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny.



If it don't seem like it's worth the effort, it probably ain't.

Let's look at some statistics about the market meltdown that was nobody's fault shall we? According to analysis by IRI, a data analysis firm, from March 15 through July 12 dollar sales at grocery stores were up 35.3 percent while the volume of sales at grocery stores increased 23.5 percent. The

**No Bottom**  
The investigation into why the market for live cattle soared to have no bottom was prompted by extremely mad packers getting even richer while some of the extra money for beef ended up in the pockets of those who produced it. And all the USDA could come up with was "The Ag Market Service has limited ability to publicly report the full scope and status of the investigation."  
This made already mad packers even madder. "Pretzels in the meat industry is not a new phenomenon," said National Farmer's Union President Rob Lamm. "A century ago, Farmers Union members were contending with similar high levels of concentration and anticompetitive practices that recognized the immense danger of unchecked corporate consolidation. Congress and the White House worked together to restore competition and shield farmers and ranchers from abusive treatment."  
Don't expect today's spinners in Congress to do anything similar. Of course the packers have a competitive market in which to sell their cattle and this has been the situation for years.

**Rising Herd**  
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by LEE PITTS  
**Moniker Madness**

I write this the Washington headlines are going through various public accounting agencies trying to get down to offend anyone. One of the suggestions was The Washington Navajo Code Talkers, this despite the fact that Washington DC is 2,000 miles off the coast. If Washington DC really wanted an appropriate name they'd call themselves the Washington Crooks. By the time you finish this the Redskins will read that the Redskins will have a new politically correct name and it's the Washington BLM Mustang Societies. After the Redskins the Atlanta Braves (Gold State Warriors, Kansas City Chiefs and Cleveland Indians) are far behind!

## Big Green: How Environmental Groups Got Rich

ERIE News analysis of financial records filed with the Federal Election Commission Super PACs supporting progressive climate change and environmental policies are now an important part of the Democratic election campaign.

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