

With A "Steak" In Montana's Future

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# MCA RAFFLE



**LAST FALL, "AN OLD MONTANA GAL" SENT A MESSAGE TO MCA:** She had a Heiser saddle (see photo) that was collecting dust and felt the saddle should come back to Montana, so she donated it to MCA!!

Hermann H. Heiser Saddlery Company produced saddles and tack in the mid 1800's until 1955. The famous HHH saddles were known for their high quality and craftsmanship and were highly sought after worldwide. By 1917 the Hermann H. Heiser Company was the largest manufacturer of saddlery goods in the West. The company remained a family business for 87 years. The logo embossed on this saddle dates the saddle between 1920-1950.

MCA's board elected to raffle the saddle at our 2020 Cattlemen's Day in December. The raffle tickets are available now and can be purchased from any MCA board member, or direct through the MCA office. Tickets are \$20.00 each or 6 for \$100.00.

**AS A BONUS**, a complimentary ticket will be mailed to all those who have paid their \$50.00 membership dues for 2020 as well as those who pay their 2021 dues by December 1.

Contact information for our board members are on our website [montanacattlemen.org](http://montanacattlemen.org) or mail a request along with your check to PO Box 536, Vaughn, MT 59487 and Jan will send the tickets by return mail.

**RAFFLE TICKETS—\$20.00 each or 6 for \$100.00**

*Good luck!*

August 24, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Drive S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

**JOINT LETTER TO  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers its third round of Farmers to Families Food Box Program purchases, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that preference be given to applicants that demonstrate a commitment to procuring truly American-raised and grown products.

With U.S. Senators and members of the U.S. House of Representatives calling into question USDA's \$28 billion Market Facilitation Program expenditures in response to the trade war with China, it is imperative the funds expended through the Farmers to Families Food Box Program are beyond reproach.\*

Though the terms "*Agricultural Commodity/Product*" or "*USDA Food*" are explicitly defined in the solicitation provided by USDA as "*products grown, processed, and otherwise prepared for sale or distribution exclusively in the United States*", due to the repeal of mandatory country-of-origin labeling requirements for U.S. beef and pork products in 2015, it is nearly impossible for an applicant to certify that their products match the USDA definition unless those products are procured directly from an independent meat processor.

Further, the solicitation provides for an exemption to the "U.S. Origin Product" contract requirements that appears to target ground meat products:

"For commodities that the Department has determined to be generally commingled, a commingled product shall be considered to be a product of the United States if the offeror can establish that the offeror has in inventory at the time...a sufficient quantity of the commodity or product that was produced in the United States to fulfill the contract being awarded..."

Due to the current regulatory loophole which USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service acknowledged\*\* allows for imported beef to be labeled "Product of the U.S.A.", the undersigned organizations are concerned that the current regulations governing beef and pork products could allow for the mispending of federal aid dollars to be spent on imported, foreign goods.

Therefore, we ask that USDA prioritize applicants who have demonstrated established relationships with independent regional meat processors to fill their order.

Applicants are already required to complete a written narrative describing their role in support of American agriculture and how they intend to engage small farmers (e.g those farms and processors servicing local and region interests and farmers markets). This would be an excellent opportunity for USDA to identify and rank applications based on their ability to source beef and pork products that were born, raised, and harvested in the U.S.

The third round of Farmers to Families Food Box program purchases will spend the balance of the \$3 billion authorized for the program. We encourage USDA to make certain that this federal funding will support American agricultural producers and distributors.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

American Agri-Women  
American Grassfed Association  
Family Farm Action Alliance  
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska/ICON  
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota  
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas  
Kansas Cattlemen's Association  
Montana Cattlemen's Association  
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
U.S. Cattlemen's Association  
Women Involved in Farm Economics

\*The New York Times, "*U.S. Watchdog to Investigate Trump's Farm Bailout Program*", (February 14, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/politics/trump-farm-bailout-investigation.html>

\*\*USDA Food Safety Inspection Service, "*FSIS Final Response to Petition*", (March 26, 2020), <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/dba58453-e931-4c1d-9b4e-fb36417049ce/19-05-fsis-final-response-032620.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

## **NEARLY \$12 MILLION IN CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUNDS AWARDED THROUGH MONTANA MEAT PROCESSING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM**

In a state famous for having more cows than people, Montana has now invested more than any other state to adapt and advance its meat processing infrastructure and capacity in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. Nearly \$12 million has been awarded to over 100 small and medium-sized meat processors spreading across 42 different counties through the Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure Grant (MMPIG) program administered by the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The coronavirus health crisis abruptly interrupted meat supply systems and significantly stressed processing capacity across the nation. As major meat packing plants suffered outbreaks and bottlenecks in production, producers bore the burden of oversupply and low prices. As American consumers moved away from eating out and started cooking at home, a largescale shift in demand was coupled with rising retail meat prices. These major impacts quickly drew attention to the challenges posed by our current food systems and heightened awareness for food security in general.

The MMPIG program was created to address food supply chain challenges at the state level by aiding small and medium-sized meat processors responding to COVID-19 through increasing in-state meat processing infrastructure and capacity. Funding for the program was derived from the state's allocation of federal relief dollars made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, with a maximum award of \$150,000.

As MDA Director Ben Thomas said, "Bolstering Montana's food security in response to COVID-19 is crucial, and I expect these investments in meat processing will protect Montana's producers and consumers from food supply interruptions well into the future as well."

The MMPIG program was launched in early June with applications due July 2, 2020. The application process was highly competitive, with nearly 150 applications requesting nearly \$18 million in funding, which further demonstrated the need for increased processing capacity in Montana. The Montana Department of Agriculture and Department of Livestock worked together to ensure projects adhered to meat processing rules and regulations. Recognizing the importance for giving producers access to reliable alternative markets to sell their meat, Governor Steve Bullock announced \$7.5 million in grants had been awarded to 62 businesses in early August.

With so many facilities already operating at full capacity, the meat processing grants made it possible for processors to purchase the equipment necessary to increase their storage and processing capacity. Some businesses were awarded funds to install slaughter floors and many set their sights on achieving state and federal inspection statuses. Others pursued adaptations that enabled them to modify and scale up their operations to meet increased demand for local meat. In some cases, new facilities will be constructed where no processing facility existed before.

"Increasing storage and processing capacity in meat processing facilities across the state means more direct sales, and better, value-added markets for Montana's hardworking producers," said Director Thomas. "These grants strengthen our local and regional food systems by giving consumers the opportunity to support their local economies by buying quality meat directly from the producers raising it right here in Montana."

Seeing an incredible amount of interest for the program, Governor Bullock recently announced that additional funds would be directed to the MMPIG program. According to federal government requirements, all Coronavirus Relief Funds must be utilized by the end of the year. Due to this confined timeframe, the department reviewed applications from businesses that had already applied to the MMPIG program to determine additional awards, rather than reopening the application process. On September 23, Governor Bullock announced 40 more businesses had been awarded a total of \$4.2 million in additional funds through the MMPIG program.

The first of its kind, the MMPIG program has now been used as a model for other states to develop similar programs to address a lack of local and regional meat processing infrastructure and capacity. With nearly \$12 million in funding through this program, Montana will be in a position to reduce risks of food supply chain disruptions in the future while offering consumers more opportunities to directly support their local producers, creating food secure communities across the state. The full list of recipients can be viewed on the MDA website at [agr.mt.gov](http://agr.mt.gov)

## **Governor Bullock Announces \$4.2 Million of Additional Coronavirus Relief Funds Awarded through Meat Processing Infrastructure Grants**

***40 additional meat processing businesses to receive support to boost in-state processing and increase storage capacity***

Governor Steve Bullock today announced \$4.2 million in additional funds have been awarded through the Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure Grant (MMPIG) program to aid small and medium-sized meat processors in responding to the COVID-19 crisis through the adaptation and advancement of meat processing infrastructure and capacity in Montana.

"The meat processing infrastructure grant program received an incredible amount of interest, which goes to show just how crucial these investments are for Montana," Governor Bullock said. "Our hardworking producers need to have viable markets for selling their livestock. These grants allow meat processors to expand their capacity to meet increased demand for local meat and protect consumers from future supply chain disruptions."

The grant program previously awarded \$7.5 million to 62 different processors across the state in early August, making the total awards for meat processing nearly \$12 million.

Meat supply chains across the nation were stressed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MMPIG program builds community resilience and bolsters food security statewide. Businesses are using the grants to purchase equipment to immediately increase their storage and processing capacity. Many are modifying their facilities to include slaughter floors and other business adaptations that give producers the option to sell their meat locally rather than shipping them out of state.

Funding for the MMPIG program is derived from the state's allocation of federal relief dollars made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, with a maximum award of \$150,000. The 40 businesses awarded had already submitted applications to the MMPIG program. As with all coronavirus relief programs, funds must be utilized before December 31, 2020. Due to this confined timeframe, the application process for meat processing will not be reopened.

The Montana Department of Agriculture and Department of Livestock worked together to ensure projects adhered to meat processing rules and regulations. A list of additional recipients is included with this release and a full list of MMPIG program recipients is available on the Montana Department of Agriculture's website.

# Reasons to Join MCA . . .

The Montana Cattlemen's Association would like to invite you to join our Association and be part of informing fellow Montanans on the following issues. The Montana Cattlemen's Association is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots organization working for Montana cattle producers and consumers on issues that affect the viability of the cattle industry including:

1. Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling
  - a. Mandatory COOL gives consumers the right to know where their beef and pork come from.
  - b. MCA is recommending that the label 'Product of U.S.A.' be changed to: Real Beef, Born, Raised, Fed and Processed entirely in the United States.
2. Mandatory Livestock Reporting on Fat Cattle
  - a. This would require United States meat processing facilities that slaughter over 125,000 head of cattle each year to purchase 50% of their weekly volume of beef on the open market during a 14-day delivery period.
  - b. This would improve competition in marketing cattle.
3. CSKT Water Compact
  - a. Clarification of compact through public meetings
  - b. Classification of buffalo
  - c. State land transfers
  - d. Water rights in Sanders and Lake counties
  - e. Ancient fishing rights
  - f. How will municipal and county tax revenue be affected?
4. Beef Check Off
  - a. MCA is in favor of the petition for referendum for reviewing the beef check off.
  - b. We favor a completed audit by the inspector general on how funds are spent.
5. Meat Packing Plants
  - a. We support an investigation of the meat packing cartel in the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice for price fixing and monopolization of the meat packing industry.
6. Animal Identification
  - a. MCA does not support mandatory animal identification with electronic tags.
  - b. MCA believes the use of hot iron brands and/or brucellosis type metal tags for identification of Montana cattle is sufficient for proper trace back in the event of animal disease..
  - c. Animal identification would create more federal government control.
7. Beef on Every Plate
  - a. A program to enable cattle producers to donate beef to help feed our neighbors.
  - b. MCA has provided 270,000 meals to those in need.
  - c. MCA will pay local processors for each head of cattle donated to the program.
8. Youth in Agriculture
  - a. MCA encourages Montana youth to continue family legacies in agriculture production.
  - b. MCA awards an education scholarship each year to a Montana youth who is pursuing agricultural interests.
9. Montana Certified Natural Beef
  - a. MCA was a leader in creating the Montana Certified Natural Beef program.
10. Government Relations
  - a. MCA has been active in Helena making sure the Montana cattle producer is well represented on legislative issues.
11. Animal Health and Welfare
  - a. MCA is committed to do everything possible to protect Montana from infestation of any disease detrimental to our markets.
12. Wildlife Management
  - a. MCA works with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks regarding predator control.
  - b. MCA supports producer reimbursement of predator losses.
13. MCA co-sponsored candidate debates focusing on agricultural issues.

## 2020 Cattlemen's Day Preparation

At the last MCA board meeting, the general consensus was to have a combination live and virtual meeting in December. Those arrangements will be finalized soon and members will be notified by mail. According to MCA's by-laws, we must have an annual meeting to nominate positions on our board of directors which consists of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer; along with two directors from each of the three districts (western, central, and eastern); four at large directors; one business director and one tribal director. Below are the officers and directors up for election.

**Secretary:** Nominations needed. Please contact MCA by email or call 406-467-2251. *(The secretary's responsibilities are: Take board meeting minutes and timely distribute; help produce newsletters; prepare press releases; correspondence; mail membership renewal notices; mail membership cards.)*

**Treasurer:** Jan McDonald (incumbent) *(The treasurer's responsibilities are: maintain all financial records and membership records; prepare and send annual reports, tax returns and reports to Montana Beef Council.)*

### **Western District Director:**

Ken Morris (incumbent)

**Central District Director:** Nominations needed. Please contact MCA by email or call 406-467-2251

### **Eastern District Directors:**

Wally Harbaugh (incumbent)

**Business Director:** Nominations needed. All districts are eligible.

**Tribal Director:** Nominations needed. All tribal districts are eligible

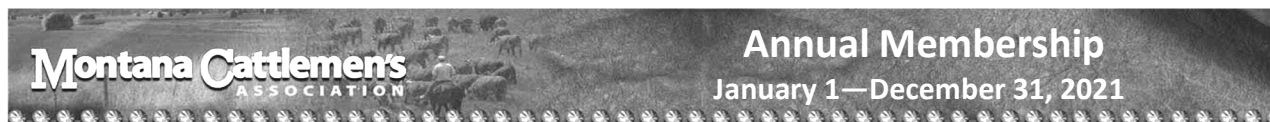
Montana Cattlemen's Association has a board meeting approximately once a month by teleconference. All officers and directors are required to participate in these calls. We discuss issues important to Montana cattle producers and how MCA can help resolve problems.

MCA cannot survive without the support of its members. It is very important for MCA members to keep the board apprised of any issues relative to the cattle industry. MCA's dues are still only \$50.00 per year, with the option of premier membership levels for those who wish to contribute more. MCA is an all volunteer organization; we do not have a formal office or paid employees.

Please feel welcome to volunteer for any position on the board or let us know of any issues you would like MCA to pursue.

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE JANUARY 1, 2021. IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR DUES, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW OR RENEW ONLINE AT: [mca@montanacattlemen.org](mailto:mca@montanacattlemen.org)/Membership**

**IF YOU JOIN MCA OR RENEW YOUR 2021 DUES BY DECEMBER 1st YOU WILL RECEIVE A COMPLIMENTARY RAFFLE TICKET FOR THE "HHH" ANTIQUE SADDLE (See page 1 of this newsletter)**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name (if joining): \_\_\_\_\_

Ranch Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Dues:**

Cattle Producer ~ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Member ~ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

College Student ~ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Junior Member ~ \$25  
(Age 18 & younger) \_\_\_\_\_

**OR ~ Optional Premier Memberships:**

Gene Autry level ~ \$100 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Roy Rogers level ~ \$150 per year \_\_\_\_\_

John Wayne level ~ \$200 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Optional Contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Own cattle: \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Tribal member: \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

**TOTAL AMOUNT SUBMITTED:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Only members owning cattle have voting rights ~ One member—one vote*

**MONTANA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION**  
P.O. Box 536 ~ Vaughn, MT 59487

Please make copies of this membership form for multiple memberships or to share with your friends and neighbors.

***Your continued support of Montana Cattlemen's Association is very much appreciated!***

## Comments Concerning Transition to RFID Official Identification Tags

The Montana Board of Livestock are a group of producers appointed by the Governor of Montana to serve as the director of Montana's Department of Livestock. The Department of Livestock is the agency in Montana vested with the responsibility for animal health, animal movement and traceability within the state. The Department works cooperatively with USDA APHIS on these issues and is thankful for the collaboration and funding offered through this relationship.

The Montana Board of Livestock further appreciates the opportunity offered by USDA APHIS to provide comments regarding a proposal where APHIS would only approve Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) as the official eartag for use in interstate movement of cattle that are required to be identified by the traceability regulations. We also are appreciative of the opportunity to comment on the proposed timeline for implementation if this transition occurs. We recognize that quickly and efficiently tracing instances of foreign animal disease to their source is critical to our nation's livestock industry by maintaining the ability to move products to market, maintain consumer safety from zoonotic disease and participate in international commerce. We appreciate the leadership of USDA in constantly working toward solutions that support and expand the livestock industry.

The Montana Board of Livestock, after reviewing the request, would like to offer the following points and areas of concern regarding the current proposal:

1. While supportive of the need for better animal disease traceability we feel it is premature to move forward with these requirements without making decisions on a standardized national system and the underlying technology in place. Those that are currently using RFID within their operations use a variety of vendors, base technologies and frequencies in their tagging systems. Some uniformity needs to be discussed to avoid unnecessary delays or issues in movement of animals to Interstate markets.

2. Given the issues that Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Area continues to experience with Brucellosis we feel it is short sighted to encourage a move away from metal tags for identification of animals that have been vaccinated and increased reliance upon tattoos. While we recognize that most of the country do not share this concern this is an important tool for Montana ranchers to quickly identify animals that have been vaccinated from those that have not using a visual look over the group.

3. The timing of implementation is directly affected by the ability of USDA APHIS to educate the producer community. The Board of Livestock feels that before moving further down the path to RFID as the only system of traceability, USDA APHIS needs to answer more questions for the producer community:

a. While USDA APHIS has a primary role and focus on disease traceability how will or could the information be used for marketing purposes?

b. How will USDA APHIS ensure the security of the data it collects? Who will have access to the master data on movements? Can we ensure that private entities or other government agencies will not be able to access and use the data for manipulative purposes?

c. Many producers in Montana that use RFID tagging for various reasons have pointed to significant issues with tag retention based on the nature of grazing in challenging geography and wide-ranging stocking rates on the landscape. Once in place how will replacement tags be handled? What reporting systems will be developed to handle tracking and matching up lost tags as they are moved across state lines to various segments of the industry before slaughter?

d. Currently USDA APHIS has found and provided financial support in the initial stages of moving toward a growth in the use of an RFID tagging system for traceability. Will this type of support continue? How will costs of such programs be dealt with into the future? Depending upon where you are in the supply chain tagging could mean an increase of input cost and in the current markets even an increase as small as a few dollars per head can have significant impact on an operation's bottom line.

4. The burden to track data by state agencies such as the Montana Department of Livestock could potentially increase as a result of this action. Will any increases in costs or staffing that are incurred by state agencies be reflected in future cooperative agreements with USDA APHIS?

5. The Montana Board of Livestock has been pleased with the ability to use our livestock branding system as a major component of animal disease traceability. We do not feel the current proposal will do much to change the need for that system to serve as a key part of traceability. Since RFID tagging will be required for interstate movement, we will still have a need within Montana to track movement within the state to be able to source and complete investigations. While the national efficiencies are clearer it is debatable how much this will help at the state level concerning both the quality and resources needed to complete traces effectively. Given the integral nature of the use of Brands as ownership verification in Montana state law it is our desire that increased reliance upon RFID tagging systems not undermine the need for and use of livestock brands.

Again, we thank USDA APHIS for the opportunity to provide comment on these critical issues. We share a desire to be able to keep our herds free of disease, protect the consumers of our products and keep the doors of the marketplace open.

Respectfully submitted,

Montana Board of Livestock

## Comments by MCA on Rulemaking

Ref: FTC-2020-0056-0001. **Made in USA Labeling Rule**

Dear Sirs;

The Montana Cattlemen's Association represents cattle producers in Montana. Our membership strongly supports changing the regulation that allows imported beef to be labeled as "Product of the USA." The current regulation as interpreted by USDA is blatantly fraudulent, misleading consumers and harming domestic cattle producers. Only real beef that was born, raised, slaughtered, and processed in the United States should be allowed to carry a label designating it as a product of the USA.

Gilles Stockton, President  
Montana Cattlemen's Association

\* \* \* \* \*

Ref: APHIS-2020-0022. **Use of Radio Frequency Identification Tags as Official Identification in Cattle and Bison**

Dear Sirs;

The Montana Cattlemen's Association represents cattle producers in Montana and we strenuously oppose the proposition by USDA to mandate RFID identification on cattle in interstate commerce as of January of 2022. If we are in fact forced to adopt this standard, the entire cost should be met by USDA. Afterall, this is supposedly being mandated as a public good.

It is disturbing that USDA fails again to make a coherent case that requiring adult cattle in interstate commerce be identified with RFID tags will materially improve the control of diseases. Metal tags, especially when backed up with a hot iron brand, have proven effective in eliminating brucellosis and tuberculosis. Reports from producers who have used the proposed RFID tags is that the retention rate is very poor. The likely result will be to make the tracing to the herd of origin of an infected cow less effective than the current system.

Furthermore, USDA fails once again to provide guidelines as to how the data from the electronic tags will be administered: what computer format should be used; where should the data be stored; how should private veterinarians securely store the data in their possession; and who should be allowed access to the data? USDA does not even determine if the industry should use high or low frequency tags. Should the RFID mandate be adopted, there is no confidence that the necessary infrastructure will be in place to properly use the information.

Montana already has the most effective animal identification system in the nation. We use hot iron brands, backed up with a robust brand inspection system. Furthermore, because of the threat of brucellosis from the bison and elk in Yellowstone Park, a high percentage of Montana producers vaccinate replacement heifers. Because of the high brucellosis vaccination rate, the mandate from USDA will affect Montana producers even more than producers in other states. Collectively, this will add more than a half a million dollars to the annual costs, not even accounting for the high loss rate of the RFID tags. Will Montana producers be getting better service for this added cost and labor? Clearly No.

Sincerely yours,  
Gilles Stockton, President  
Montana Cattlemen's Association.

### ***Fantasy Land or Things of Intrinsic Worth***

*By: Gilles Stockton, Grass Range*

Just who is it that is living in "fantasy land," the Democrats in the House Climate Crisis Committee or Representative Kelly Armstrong of North Dakota? Let us put aside the politically charged term "climate change" and instead talk about "climate instability." If you have not noticed that the weather is increasingly unpredictable than you are not in production agriculture. What to do about it - that is the tough question?

As suggested in the article [Correcting the Climate Crisis – Part II: Taking out a Mortgage in Fantasy Land](#) (WAR July 16, 2020), I read the offending House Committee report and found a lot of good intentions, some of which are naïve. What should be preferred, the opportunity to discuss what needs fixing or just more top down control by Big Meat, Big Grain, Big Ag, and Too Big to Fail Banks? We know that things are not as they should be in agriculture. Will denial change anything?

Congressman Armstrong is quoted as saying: "We have some of the best and most successful ag producers all across the country running on razor thin margins." Are we supposed to take pride in this? If we are laying all of our cards on the table and are truthful with ourselves, we should acknowledge that this so called "success" depends upon government handouts and subsidies. "Successful" is a deceptive term - "survivor" is more accurate. If you have survived in production agriculture then by definition you are successful.

"Razor thin margin" is the important clause in Rep Armstrong's statement. Are we to be proud to have survived on razor thin margins, given that our communities are blowing away like tumbleweeds and our children are scattered all over the nation? That does not look like the definition of success to me. This past spring, we have certainly experienced how much the beef packing cartel values the people who calve out the cows and cut up the meat. So, what kind of allegiance

should we owe JBS, Tyson, and Cargill?

The most exciting thing that is happening in agriculture today is the "local foods" movement and the discussion that has been created between producers and consumers. Granted, this is currently a niche with room for just a few. The bulk of production agriculture remains tied to the industrial controlled market. But, to steal a line from Poet Lariat Wally McCrae, this is a discussion about "things of intrinsic worth." If this country's farms, ranches, and bountiful food is to survive in an era of climatic uncertainty, it is an important discussion to have.

We can just all retreat into our political biases, as Rep Armstrong would like, and blame environmentalist and for some inexplicable reason Representative Alexandra Occasio-Cortez of New York for inflicting costly regulations on our heads. However, as vexing as regulations and environmentalist can be, they have never cost me as much money as has the beef packing cartel. Then too, I must admit, that burdensome regulations are nearly non-existent if you don't sign up for the government checks.

But how many of us have survived because of CRP payments? Pipelines to water tanks in remote pastures have been welcome. Cost-sharing on irrigation infrastructure hasn't hurt either. Is Rep Armstrong saying that feedlots and confinement hog facilities should be allowed to let their manure run into the rivers? Do we really want to see thousands of dead hogs floating down stream following the next hurricane? Should fields in flood plains be planted right up to the water's edge because requiring a buffer zone is too burdensome?

There are "things of intrinsic worth" and we should take inventory of just where we are. If we, as farmers and ranchers choose to stay tied to the market dictates of industrialized Big Ag, then survival will continue to be the measure of success. Our communities, our land, and the consumers of food, will they also succeed or just merely survive?

## ***SUPPORT FOR COOL GROWS***

We are encouraged with the announcement by Fred Wacker, President of the Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA), that they now support Country of Origin Labeling (COOL). During the 2019 Montana Legislature the MSGA initially supported the COOL placarding bill introduced by Senator Al Olszewski. However, they reversed their position and refused to propose an amendment to remedy their objection.

Opposition by MSGA was instrumental in defeating the COOL bill which divided legislators and put the MSGA on the side of packers, retailers, and lobbyists. COOL was supported by the Montana Cattlemen's Association (MCA), Montana Farmers Union (MFU), and Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC) along with Montana's consumers of beef.

The Montana Cattlemen's Association realizes that cattle producers and consumers need to publicly support COOL in order to get new COOL legislation passed in the upcoming 2021 Legislature. We welcome the support of MSGA for COOL. Distinguishing USA beef from cheap, foreign imports is important. Consumers have the right to know the origin of their beef purchases and producers have the right to a fair and transparent market.

Newell Roche and Ken Morris  
on behalf of the Montana Cattlemen's Association

## ***How to Not Protect Montanan's Water Rights . . .***

"Keep Public Lands in Public Hands" is a well-used slogan during this election season. Given that all candidates claim to support this notion, it should be concerning that Senator Steve Daines has just given away the 18,500-acre National Bison Range and 36,800 acres of state lands to the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT).

This public land gift along with 1.9 billion dollars (yes that is BILLION) is a payment to settle a long simmering water rights dispute with the CSKT. The tribal water rights claim, which covers the western two thirds of Montana, is based on an original treaty provision that guarantees the tribes fishing access to all of these waters in common with Montana citizens. Inexplicably, the Daines' bill, titled Montana Water Rights Protection Act (S 3019), requires that the CSKT renounce their water rights claims yet allows them to retain "... activities affecting the quality of water..."

In other words, in return for 55,300 acres of public lands and \$1.9 billion, the CSKT gives up nothing, because they still retain the right to intervene as to water quality. This would include flow, temperature, contamination, and sediment levels on all of the streams on which they have supposedly relinquished their water rights. The CSKT report to their members that they are, in fact, only giving up less than 10% of their overall water rights claims.

Even more concerning is that this bill has been pushed through the Senate Indian Affairs Committee with no public notice or field hearings. The people who will be affected have not been given the democratic right to express their views. Those potentially harmed by the Daines' Bill include: the citizens of Lake and Flathead Counties; the owners of the irrigated farms on the reservation; the lessees of the state lands to be transferred; the people who enjoy access to the National Bison Range; public lands hunters and fishermen; and water rights holders across most of the state.

One further issue that should worry cattle ranchers is that the bison that will be transferred along with the National Bison Range, will be classified as wildlife. This means that when this herd of bison is infected with brucellosis by the elk migrating north out of the Brucellosis Surveillance Area, the Montana Department of Livestock will have no authority to require control of the infection.

Both of our Senators are implicated in this issue. Senator Jon Tester is proposing very similar legislation to settle water rights issues with the tribes on the Fort Belknap Reservation. His proposed bill (S.3113) will transfer 58,571 acres of state and federal lands to the tribes along with 700 million dollars. Just as in the Daines' Bill, the tribes retain rights over water quality. Tester's Bill has not yet been passed by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

The press coverage that has circulated over the Montana Water Protection Act claims that this Act will prevent costly litigation and create 6000 jobs. Pure nonsense! Daines' Bill guarantees that court challenges will go on from now until forever. Just about every interest group in the state will be harmed by a process that has systematically cut them out of the deliberations.

Equitably resolving the water rights claims of our Native American citizens is important. Senate Bill 3019 is not the way to get it done.

Jim Baker, Past MCA President  
Hot Springs, MT



# Defining "Made in the USA"

*by Lilly Platts*

Published in the Western Ag Reporter, September 24, 2020

"Made in the USA" is a label adorning many products sold in America — but it may not be as straightforward as it seems when read at face value. A recent push, particularly by beef producers, hopes to clarify that.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently announced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking related to the definitions of the labels "Made in the USA," "Product of the USA," and other unqualified U.S.-origin claims on product labels. USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) definition conflicts FTC's definition, meaning if a change is made, products ranging from pharmaceuticals to beef could be affected.

FTC defines "Made in the USA" as a product for which "all significant processing that goes into the product occurs in the United States, and all or virtually all ingredients of the product are made and sourced in the United States." The FSIS definition, on the other hand, states the designation defines where a product is processed, not its physical origin. What exactly constitutes 'processing' is a potential loophole in the definition and currently, repackaging could be considering processing.

The United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) sent a petition to FSIS earlier this year challenging the discrepancy, and in their response, FSIS said, "Product of the USA... has never been construed by FSIS to mean that the product is derived only from animals that were born, raised, slaughtered, and prepared in the United States. The only requirement for products bearing this labeling statement is that the product has been prepared (i.e., slaughtered, canned, salted, rendered, boned, etc.)."

Under this definition, the current beef labeling structure does not meet the FTC's requirements, which in theory could require a revision to be made. The FTC opened a public comment period, which closed on September 14, and ranchers and livestock groups were encouraged to submit their comments.

R-CALF USA was a vocal advocate for submitting comments and offered thoughts of their own, adding that FSIS' rule also conflicts the mandatory country of origin labeling (mCOOL) standards that still apply to some food commodities including lamb and chicken.

"The comments state that while USDA's policy allows foreign lamb to bear a USA label when it too is subjected to only minimal processing, the mCOOL law expressly states that lamb cannot bear a United States designation unless it is from an animal that is exclusively born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States," an R-CALF USA press release explained.

Ken Morris, a Montana rancher and member of the Montana Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors, was disappointed that more producers were not made aware of the public comment period. However, Morris remains hopeful the comments submitted will be enough to incite change.

"Foreign beef can be repackaged, which is not right," Morris said. "I am hoping the FTC can carry a lot of weight."

Morris said the definition of a product 'Made in the USA' is especially important for beef producers due to the international nature of the U.S. beef industry.

"There are a lot of Mexican cattle coming across the border both live and slaughtered here," he said. "Still, from our perspective, that is not a 'Product of the USA.' They [other countries] have entirely different health standards than we do."

Protecting the value and future of U.S. beef is at the heart of many of the comments submitted to the FTC by ranchers, a number of which are from Montana. Maggie Nutter, President of the Marias Livestock Association (which represents producers from Glacier, Liberty, Pondera and Toole counties) submitted comments. Nutter pointed to cases of contamination, consumer illness, lack of transparency, and safety in other countries as critical reasons to clarify what can be labeled as a "Product of the USA."

"Consumers deserve the right to have clear and transparent labeling when it comes to their food," Nutter said. "United States beef cattle producers should have the exclusive right to the 'Made in the USA' or 'Product of the USA' label for their cattle born, raised, and harvested here in the USA."

Nutter also underscored the idea that the corporate packers benefit from what could be deceptive labels.

"The removal of Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling Requirements for Beef and Pork Muscle Cuts, Ground Beef, and Ground Pork via the amendments in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, should not have become an avenue by which large meat packing corporations could then fraudulently label foreign meat as 'Product of the USA,'" Nutter wrote.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) countered those sentiments. NCBA Senior Director of International Trade and Market Access Kent Bacus told WAR attempting to "repackage" mCOOL criteria as an FTC guideline for 'Made in the USA' claims "is not the solution that consumers or the cattle industry needs."

"Instead of focusing on unsuccessful ideas of the past, we must enable producers to capitalize on consumer demand by strengthening voluntary labels that educate consumers and truly differentiate our products in the marketplace," Bacus said. "Consumers want to buy local and they want to know more about how their food was raised. We believe America's cattle producers are better equipped than the U.S. government to market our beef and tell our story to global consumers."

Bacus reiterated that NCBA "firmly believes in transparent, voluntary, and verified labeling that educates consumers on the quality of our products while rewarding producers for effectively marketing our cattle based on consumer demand." NCBA, without question, wants "America's cattle industry to be strong and successful, just as we want consumers to be adequately informed," Bacus assured. However, this approach is not the way to do that, according to Bacus.

The FTC will now compile and review the comments and make their case to clarify what will be considered "Made in the USA" or "Product of the USA" with the FSIS and USDA.

# MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK UPDATES . . .

## **Johne's Testing:**

It has been one year since the Department of Livestock (DOL) introduced the Montana Johne's Control Program. Since then, there has been a 47% increase in Johne's testing at the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (MVDL). There were 1,700 more samples tested between August 2019 to July 2020, compared to the same period for the previous year.

DOL has conducted outreach activities to bring awareness to the program. Outreach has included submission of newsletter articles to producer organizations, breed specific cattle groups, and interviews have been published in several ag publications. The Animal Health Bureau has also sent information about the program directly to producers who have had a positive Johne's test within the past 4-5 years at MVDL.

Outreach activities are structured to emphasize the goals of the program: (1) minimize the spread of Johne's disease through animal sales and movement, (2) identify positive animals/herds and implement management practices to eliminate the disease, (3) support non-infected herds by identifying biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of the disease into their herds, and (4) create a market opportunity for participating herds to advertise their involvement in the program.

Participating producers work with their local veterinarian to develop a herd health plan addressing biosecurity, herd testing, and management of high-risk animals. Producers then obtain a "level of certification" based on the health status of their herd, and their testing plan (whole herd testing vs. individual animal testing). Higher levels of certification suggest a herd is lower risk of being infected with the disease.

To date, thirty-nine veterinarians have completed the required online training for participation in the program. The DOL would like to thank those veterinarians for their interest and continued conversation with producers about Johne's disease management. Montana producers and buyers of Montana cattle are recognizing the importance of testing and maintaining confidence in the quality of seedstock our state has to offer.

Please reach out to Dr. Anna Forseth with questions: [anna.forseth@mt.gov](mailto:anna.forseth@mt.gov), 406-444-2939. ▫ By Anna Forseth, DVM

## **Diagnostic Lab Update:**

The Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (MVDL) will be performing diagnostic testing for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) heading into the 2020 general hunting season. Currently, all CWD testing in the State of Montana is being outsourced by Fish, Wildlife and Parks to the veterinary diagnostic lab at Colorado State University. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks conducted just over 7,000 tests last year and is anticipating as many as 14,000 tests during the fall of 2020 with most of this testing projected to be performed at the MVDL. The MVDL will be offering both the ELISA screening test and the immunohistochemical montest which is used for confirmatory testing as well as regulatory testing of captive (farmed) cervids.

Also, MVDL is excited to announce that the Clinical Microbiology section has been hard at work improving and increasing our capacity. Using additional biochemical tests, we can now differentiate between *Moraxella bovis* and *Moraxella bovoculi* in house. We have also increased our capacity for culturing and identifying anaerobic organisms from clinical samples, including *Fusobacterium* sp. and *Clostridium* sp. We look forward to continuously improving and expanding the services offered to our clients and adding more testing modalities in the future. If there are diagnostic tests that you would like to see the MVDL perform, please don't hesitate to reach out to the lab by calling (406)-994-4885 or sending an email to [mvdil@mt.gov](mailto:mvdil@mt.gov) and we will do our best to see if we can provide those services.

The MVDL is also pleased to announce the addition of Daniel Arenas and Brian Eilers to our dedicated team of diagnostic lab technicians. Both Daniel and Brian are graduates of Montana State University and have Master of Science degrees in Chemistry and Biology, respectively. Prior to attending graduate school at MSU, Daniel worked as a staff scientist at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia. He has joined the Molecular Diagnostics lab section at MVDL. Brian graduated from MSU in 2003 and has worked in multiple labs in the MSU Chemistry Department over the past 17 years. Brian has joined the MVDL Virology lab section. We are extremely excited about the addition of these talented employees to our already exceptional staff. ~ By Greg Juda, Ph.D.

## **Electronic Health Certificates:**

As the January 1, 2021 deadline for transitioning to electronic Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (eCVI) inches closer, the Department of Livestock wants to ensure that veterinarians are prepared and have the needed support to successfully make the transition.

There are several available technologies for veterinarians to issue eCVIs, including two new options that we expect to see go live in 2021. As a minimum, we recommend that all veterinarians sign up for and become familiar with the fillable PDF eCVI. This option is free to use and can be issued in the field without internet connection. The PDF eCVI is best for small numbers of animals or large uniform groups of animals that do not require individual ID to be listed on the eCVI. For large groups of cattle with diverse identification, two options exist:

1. Addendums to eCVIs. A separate electronic document that is transmitted with the eCVI, may include information such as official identification numbers, breed, age, sex, individual test or vaccine information. For addendums to be accepted, the following conditions must be followed:

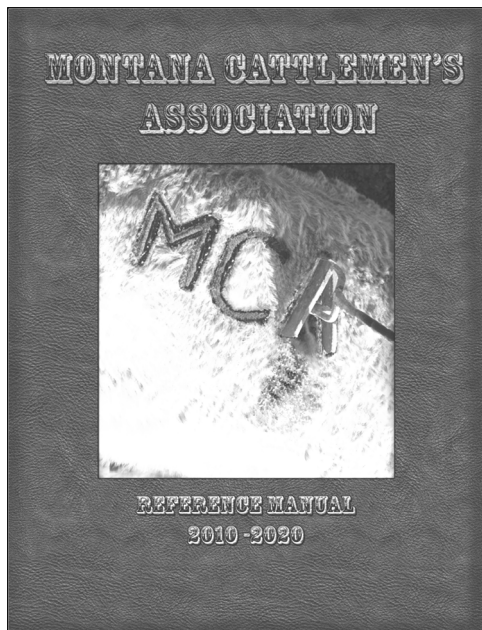
- a. The CVI must reference the number of addendum pages, with the CVI itself being page 1 (1 of 3).
- b. The addendum must be numbered accordingly (2 of 3, 3 of 3, etc.).
- c. The CVI number must be documented on each page of the addendum.
- d. Addendums should be sent electronically to the department at [eCVI@mt.gov](mailto:eCVI@mt.gov) as either excel, comma delimited (CSV), or other spreadsheet files with the CVI number as the subject of the email.

2. Use of an eCVI technology that allows the upload of official identification into the body of the CVI. This also requires that official identification numbers are in an excel or CSV format. Individual eCVI technologies will have specific formats for files to be uploaded. Please review guidance specific to the product you are using. The Department is happy to help if you still have questions or need assistance.

With the proposed transition to RFID tags on hold, cattle will continue to move interstate with visual official ID. Visual ID can be recorded electronically chute side or can be handwritten and later entered into a spreadsheet format. RFID tags can be scanned using an electronic RFID reader and tag lists downloaded from the reader for inclusion on eCVIs, test charts, or vaccination certificates.

Look for additional information in the coming months, including options for phased in use of eCVIs and a session on the use of eCVIs at the Montana Veterinary Medical Association Winter Meeting. If you need additional help or guidance as you make the transition, please contact Dr. Tahnee Szymanski at [tszymanski@mt.gov](mailto:tszymanski@mt.gov) or (406) 444-5214. ▫ By Tahnee Szymanski, DVM

# 25% OFF SALE !!



The Montana Cattlemen's Association Brand Book and Reference Manual is a deluxe hard cover three-volume series which catalogs Montana's recorded livestock brands. It also includes some special "extras": ranch histories, western poetry, traditional cowboy recipes, and photos. **GREAT GIFT!**

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**EASTERN:** Phillips, Valley, Daniels, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Garfield, Rosebud, Treasure, Big Horn, McCone, Richland, Dawson, Prairie, Wibaux, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, and Carter.



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**Books can also be ordered online at [www.montanacattlemen.org](http://www.montanacattlemen.org)**

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## ***Montana Brand Re-Record is Quickly Approaching!!***

***MONTANA LIVESTOCK BRAND RE-RECORD PERIOD***

***JANUARY 1, 2021 to DECEMBER 31, 2021***

***\* Watch for upcoming 2021 Brand Re-Record information to arrive  
in your mailbox in December 2020.***

***\* All Montana brands will be re-recorded in 2021.***

***\* The cost to re-record a brand will be \$175 per brand.***