



Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2023

PO Box 536 ~ Vaughn, MT 59487

Web: www.montanacattlemen.org

Email: mca@montanacattlemen.org

Phone: 406-467-2251

From the Desk of MCA Past President Gilles Stockton . . .

It has been a pleasure and an honor to have served these past three years as MCA's President. We have a good organization and an active board of directors who are addressing the important issues affecting livestock producers in Montana. Richard Liebert has agreed to step up as president for the coming two-year term and I hope that you all agree. He shall provide excellent leadership.

MCA as an organization is on firm ground. We continue advocating for Country-of-Origin-Labeling and restoring competition in the cattle markets. Board member Ken Morris sits on the Montana Beef Council and Wally Congdon attends the Montana Ag Coalition meetings. We also have questions concerning the terms of the Confederated Salish Kootenai water rights settlement, and have commented on the Bureau of Land Management's decision to allow the American Prairie Reserve to graze bison on public lands.

This year our annual meeting was in Great Falls and we covered many of these issues plus more. The meeting started with a presentation by Dr. Marty Zaluski, State Veterinarian, who reported on disease risks to the Montana cattle industry. He was followed by Mike Honeycutt, Executive Director of the Montana Department of Livestock, who explained issues addressed by that agency including the result of the brand re-record, which went very well. The brand re-record fees provide much of the funding for the Department of Livestock for the coming ten years.

This was followed by Matt Rains of Montana Farmers Union reporting on the progress of the Montana Premium Processing Co-op which will be ready to begin operation this coming summer. The slaughter and processing facility is now in place in Havre and they have an agreement with MSU-Northern to assist in training students in meat cutting.

Two legislators were in attendance and they introduced themselves and explained their legislative priorities. Senator Butch Gillespie is a veteran legislator and needed no introduction. He has been a long-term MCA member. Representative Russ Miner is newly elected from H.D. 19. MCA looks forward to working with both of these gentlemen.

In the session before lunch, Vickie Olsen of the Montana Public Lands Council and the Phillips County Grazing Association explained her organizations' concerns over the recent decision by the BLM to allow the American Prairie (formally the American Prairie Reserve) to raise bison on their BLM allotments in Phillips County. Her organizations filed a lawsuit challenging this decision by BLM. The State, Montana Stockgrowers Association, and the Montana Farm Bureau have filed Amicus Briefs on this suit. Montana Cattlemen's Association is in the process of preparing our own Amicus Brief.

Dr. Robert Taylor, Alpha Professor Emeritus, College of Ag, Auburn University explained the results of his research on cattle markets. His latest paper entitled "Harvested Cattle, Slaughtered Markets" lays out the four options available to cattle

producers if they expect to reform the current market structure. In this space it is not possible to go into detail but you can see his presentation on the MCA website (<https://montanacattlemen.org>) and read his paper at (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4094924).

Senator Jon Tester addressed the group outlining his legislative priorities for this coming year. As we all know, this is the year that they will begin to put together the Farm Bill which is always contentious. Sen. Tester said that a priority will be to have the American Beef Labeling Act (COOL) included in the Farm Bill. Jon, for some reason, is not on the Agriculture Committee, while Sen. Cory Booker from New Jersey is. They have a very strong working and personal relationship. You will enjoy this little YouTube video that they put together in support of the principles of market competition in the cattle industry: <https://youtu.be/nTeZ5yWf9kU>

We invited Governor Greg Gianforte to address our meeting to give us his priorities for agriculture in the coming legislative session. The Governor, however, failed to respond even after numerous invitations. To fill that afternoon session our own Vice President, Wally Congdon, stepped up to explain the status of the CSKT Water Compact.

Wally has been engaged by a number of the counties of Northwest Montana to represent them on this issue which ultimately impacts most of the water rights holders in Montana. The State Legislature passed the Montana Water Compact in order to settle water rights claims made by the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) over most of Montana's drainages. Without clear and unencumbered water rights it is difficult to buy and sell property or invest in municipal water treatment facilities.

The Water Compact asks the Federal Government to compensate the CSKT in return for them relinquishing all water rights claims off of the reservation. The problem stems from the Bill that Senator Steve Daines sponsored which goes beyond what the Compact requested, and modifies the Compact but does not explain these modifications. For instance, the Daines Bill does not require the CSKT to relinquish all water rights claims. This poses a big problem. Wally is helping these counties file objections in the Water Court, asking the Court to clarify what is the actual impact of the modified Compact.

I will be staying on the MCA Board of Directors representing the Eastern District and will continue to write articles, which in any case, is what I prefer doing. I am just starting an article questioning why we are spending checkoff monies to promote beef exports when we would not need to export beef if we were not importing cattle from Canada and Mexico or beef from everywhere else.

Governor Gianforte Appeals Judge's APR Bison Grazing Decision

HELENA, Mont. – Governor Greg Gianforte announced on December 27, 2022, his administration has filed its briefing in the appeal of a judge's decision denying the state's petition for stay after the Biden Administration approved the American Prairie Reserve's request to graze bison on Bureau of Land Management land in northeast Montana.

In briefing, entitled a *Statement of Reasons* (statement) and submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Board of Land Appeals, the Gianforte administration again requested a stay of the decision pending appeal, highlighting failures by the judge in denying the stay this fall.

First, the administration argues the judge failed to sufficiently analyze the state's legal arguments. "This summary denial inadequately addresses the Executive's statutory authority arguments and completely ignores the Executive's regulatory authority arguments," the statement reads, restating the arguments in favor of a stay.

Second, the administration asserts that in denying its petition for stay, the judge failed to properly assess the magnitude of harm to the State because it limited its review to the harm caused to one allotment.

"The Final Decision authorizes permits on all allotments in this case. The Executive requested a stay of the Final Decision in its entirety—not just those portions APR feels inclined to affect on a given day. To find otherwise subjects the Executive to an untenable game of whack-a-mole," the statement continues. The statement explains that the denial of a stay infringes on the State's ability to manage state trust lands.

Following the judge's order, DNRC notified APR that bison are not presently authorized under state law to graze state trust lands on several of the allotments at issue in the case. In response, APR expressed plans to implement a new fencing regime in an effort to avoid state trust lands and utilize a portion of the allotment. The administration highlights this departure from the BLM's Final Decision in its statement.

"Allowing APR to proceed in deviation from a contested Final Decision, in the absence of analysis and public involvement, is not only legally fraught but disingenuous to the process leading to the Final Decision."

Finally, arguing the judge failed to adequately analyze public interest, which weighs in favor of a stay, the statement continues, "It is not in the public interest to permit such an offense to persist, especially pending appeal."

The statement also contends public interest weighs against usurping the State's authority over state trust lands as well as against federal administrative agencies, like the Bureau of Land Management, bending the law and exceeding the scope of its authority.

The statement in support of the appeal may be found at:
https://governor.mt.gov/docs/12.22.22--SOR_IBLA_2023-4.pdf



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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS WERE DUE JANUARY 1, 2023. IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR DUES, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW OR RENEW ONLINE AT: mca@montanacattlemen.org/Membership

Why should I be a part of MCA?

MCA was formed in the 1950's to represent Montana cattle producers on issues vital to the future of our industry. MCA is a producer-driven, grassroots, all volunteer organization committed to ensuring profitability for you and your family as well as for future generations. Our goal is to effectively address the concerns of Montana cattle producers, both statewide and nationally, and we need your input to continue to do so.

Name: _____

Spouse Name (if joining): _____

Ranch Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Own cattle: ____ Yes ____ No

Tribal member: ____ Yes ____ No

⋮

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 _____

TOTAL AMOUNT SUBMITTED: \$ _____

*Only members owning cattle have voting rights ~ One member—one vote
Associate members do not own cattle but are supportive of MCA goals*

Join online at www.montanacattlemen.org ~ OR ~ mail this completed form along with your check to:

**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!

The Cattle Market IS Broken

By Ken Morris, MCA Director

A January 5, 2023, Drovers article written by Nevil Speer titled "The Better Investment", states that the cattle markets are not broken and cattle producers should drop the idea of passing legislation in DC to fix them. Instead, we should sharpen our pencils to cut costs and pursue our own 3rd source verified specialty product lines as a way to increase our revenue. If you are like me that pencil is getting pretty short and there is nothing left but the eraser.

I have included graphs by Nevil Speer and Cattlefax at the bottom of this page to illustrate how broken this market is and why that pencil really got shorter in the past three pandemic years. Since four companies process at least 80% of the fat cattle in the U.S., do you really think that they want to help small private brand labels? So, we producers are going to stampede to the smaller processors each with a private brand idea to grab that remaining 20%. This remaining 20% are going to fill niche markets to make more than a \$30.00 a year annual return per cow. One year's worth of labor and risk to earn \$3000 on each 100 head of cows. Got a thousand head? Make \$30,000. The extra labor you need to hire is going to bring your bottom line to zero quicker than the guy running 100 head.

So, if the American Packing Cartel sees that those 20% niches are raking in a higher price per pound then they are at the wholesale level, how long do you think they will allow that to happen? All they have to do is bring in more cheap foreign beef, crater every price on every cut at every store across America, and all of the high retail specialty meat will turn brown and end up in the trash. At least that is what the retailer will tell them. More than likely this premium 3rd party sourced, narrow origin packaged beef will really improve the taste of all that cheap imported meat when it is all mixed together. Only problem when that does happen we are all really going to be in trouble.

Next step for the packers is their own origin specialty brands. Think about it. Maybe that is why they really don't want us to level the playing field for everyone by passing Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling.

Do you want to help improve all American cattle producer profits? Get involved by contacting our Senators and Representatives in DC. Contact info can be found on the MCA website along with info on the members of both the House and Senate Ag Committees to get these bills passed:

The American Beef Labeling Act (Senate bill 2716 & H.R. bill 7291)

This restores Mandatory Country Of Origin Labeling for Beef that will be bullet proof from attacks by the World Trade Organization. Remember also that the latest surveys have found that 85% of American consumers want to know where the beef they are feeding their families originates. To be labeled origin U.S.A. the beef must Born, Raised and Slaughtered in the U.S.

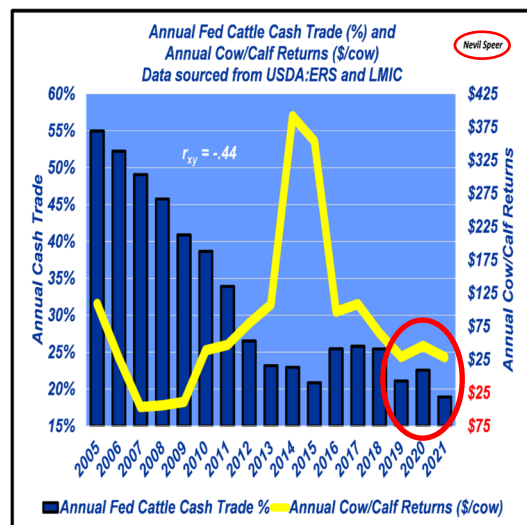
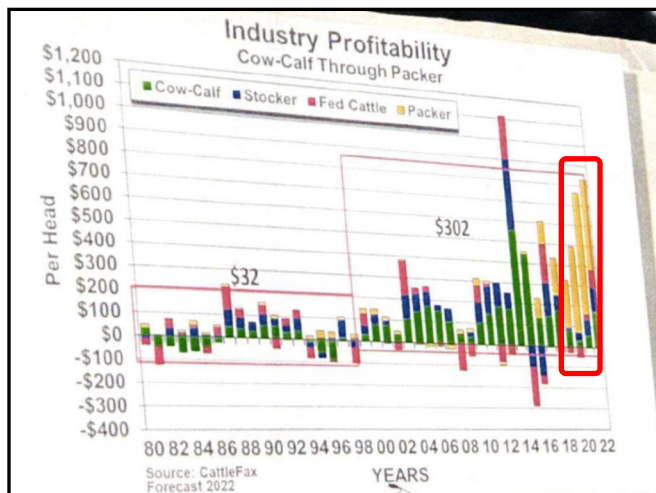
The 50/14 Market protection Bill (Senate Bill 949)

This bill forces the packing cartel to buy 50% of the fat cattle they process in a cash market in each of five regions. This will provide competition and market transparency to the USDA who publishes these results daily. This is the best of many bills circulating in Congress; the rest are a watered down version of this. This will give cattle feeders much better bargaining power. As cow/calf producers we can get detailed sale results from livestock auction reports including video sale results. At the moment fat cattle sellers do not have this luxury. Remember if the cattle feeders don't make any money, we won't either.

The Meat Packing Special Investigator Act (Senate Bill 2036)

This bill strengthens the Packers and Stockyards Act by allowing the USDA or the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice to examine violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act and to prosecute. For some time now the USDA has had a blind eye investigating these violations. Bringing the Federal Trade Commission and the Justice Department in on these investigations should help the cattle industry by penalizing the Big 4 Meat Packers.

Remember the following graphs are from Cattlefax and Drovers and not something I made up to illustrate how messed up things are.



50 Diverse Groups Urge Swift Enactment of American Beef Labeling Act

Source: R-CALF USA

January 10, 2023, Billings, MT — Today, 50 cattle, farm, rural and consumer groups sent a joint letter to U.S. Senate and House members who, during the last session of Congress, cosponsored the American Beef Labeling Act that restores mandatory country of origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef.

The letter expressed the groups' gratitude for the congressional members' leadership and support of the American Beef Labeling Act during the last session of Congress and urged them to reintroduce the measure in the new Congress that started on January 3, 2023. In their letter, the groups pledged their support to assist Congress in the swift enactment of the bill.

Referencing a recent poll conducted by Morning Consult, the letter states that 86% of American voters favor the American Beef Labeling Act and that it is a commonsense policy that has remained popular with the American people since Congress rescinded country of origin labeling for beef in 2015.

The letter was addressed to the American Beef Labeling Act's bipartisan group of Senate cosponsors: Sens. John Thune (R-SD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), John Hoeven (R-ND), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), John Barrasso (R-WY), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY); and to its bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives: Reps. Lance Gooden (R-TX), Ro Khanna (D-CA), and Morgan Griffith (R-VA).

The letter reveals the objective of the American Beef Labeling Act is to ensure that beef produced from U.S. born and raised cattle is distinguished in the marketplace and that consumers have accurate information as to the origins of the beef they purchase for their families.

Groups that joined the letter include: American Economic Liberties Project, American Grassfed Association, Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH), Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform, Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, Cattle Producers of Washington, Coalition for a Prosperous America, Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association, Consumer Federation of America, Dakota Rural Action, Farm Action Fund, Farm Aid, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Food & Water Watch, Government Accountability Project Food Integrity Campaign, Hometown Credit Union in Kulm, ND, Independent Beef Association of North Dakota, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri, Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska, Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Kansas Cattlemen's Association, Kansas Farmers Union, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Montana Cattlemen's Association, Montana Farmers Union, National Dairy Producers Organization, National Family Farm Coalition, National Farmers Union, National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, National Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE), Nebraska Chapter of WIFE, Nebraska Farmers Union, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oglala Sioux Livestock & Landowners Association, Oklahoma Independent Stockgrowers Association, Organization for Competitive Markets, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, R-CALF USA, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Rural Vermont, South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, Southern Colorado Livestock Association, Stevens County Cattlemen's Association (WA), Texas Animal Protein Producers Prosperity & Security Group (TAPPPS Group), United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), United States Cattlemen's Association, and Western Organization of Resource Councils.

Water Court deadline is Feb. 9

Did you know that the Water Court has granted a 60-day extension for filing an objection to the CSKT Compact? This is fantastic!

Please file an objection to protect your water rights no later than Feb. 9, 2023. For more information about why it is important that you file an objection, go to www.equalwaterrights.com.

This Water Compact is not based on either the US Constitution or the Montana Constitution. The preliminary decree is a whopping 36 pages, filled with legalese and lacks clarity. Even the directions given for filing an objection are confusing and unclear.

In addition, only 22% of the people affected by the Compact received the preliminary decree, which is a direct violation of those citizens' right to know. This cannot be a coincidence and smacks of collusion!

Objections may be filed at courts.mt.gov/courts/water/Notices-Info/PublicNotices.

USDA Seeks Public Comment on Proposal to Strengthen Animal Disease Traceability Regulations

WASHINGTON, January 18, 2023 – The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing to amend animal disease traceability regulations and require electronic identification for interstate movement of certain cattle and bison. APHIS is also proposing to revise and clarify record requirements. These changes would strengthen the Nation's ability to quickly respond to significant animal disease outbreaks. Major animal disease outbreaks hurt our ranchers and farmers and all those who support them along the supply chain, threaten our food security, and impact our ability to trade America's high quality food products around the world. Rapid traceability in a disease outbreak could help ranchers and farmers get back to selling their products more quickly; limit how long farms are quarantined; and keep more animals from getting sick.

Interested stakeholders may view the proposed rule in today's Federal Register at <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2023-00505/use-of-electronic-identification-eartags-as-official-identification-in-cattle-and-bison>.

Beginning tomorrow, members of the public may submit comments. **All comments must be received by March 22, 2023.** APHIS will review all comments and address them in a final rule.

Animal disease traceability, or knowing where diseased and at-risk animals are, where they've been, and when, is important to ensuring a rapid response when animal disease events take place. USDA is committed to implementing a modern system that tracks animals from birth to slaughter using affordable technology that allows for quick tracing of sick and exposed animals to stop disease spread. APHIS has worked extensively with stakeholders on this issue and electronic identification and records for livestock movement emerged from these discussions as valuable goals for safeguarding animal health. APHIS decided to pursue these changes through notice and comment rulemaking to ensure transparency and maximize public participation in the process.

The proposed rule would require official eartags to be visually and electronically readable for official use for interstate movement of certain cattle and bison. It would also revise and clarify certain record requirements related to cattle, including requiring official identification device distribution records to be entered into a Tribal, State, or Federal database, and available to APHIS upon request.

The key to protecting U.S. livestock health, producers' livelihoods, and the U.S. economy in an animal disease outbreak is swift detection, containment, and eradication of disease. This proposed rule would allow USDA to do just that.



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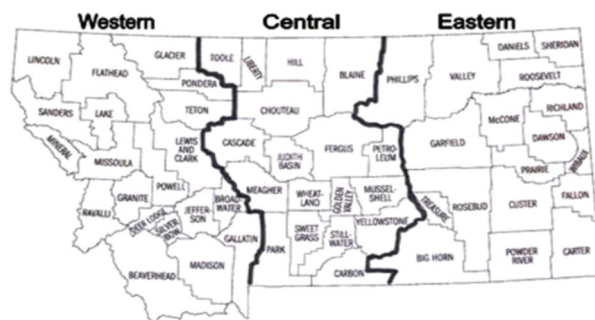
Toll Free
Choteau 1-800-400-2575
Great Falls 1-877-265-7133

Please refer to this map when completing your ballot on the next page:

***EXPLANATION OF MCA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS TERMS:**

Officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer serve two-year terms.

Directors: Two directors are elected from each district; four at large directors elected from any part of Montana; one business director; one Native American director, for a total of 12 directors. Directors are nominated and elected by the majority vote of the membership within each district and serve three-year terms.



Refer to this district map when voting for directors

MCA ANNUAL OFFICIAL BALLOT

For MCA Voting Members Only

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE GRANTING TO AMERICAN PRAIRIE THE RIGHT TO GRAZE BISON ON PUBLIC LANDS IN PHILLIPS COUNTY, MONTANA.

WHEREAS the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), based on a superficial and inadequate Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-L010-2018-0007-EA), has approved American Prairie's petition to utilize 63,065 acres of public lands in Phillips County to graze bison; and

WHEREAS the BLM:

1. Does not require perimeter fencing adequate to contain bison;
2. Allows the removal of 35.7 miles of cross fencing, destroying approximately \$267,000 of public property;
3. Ignores the danger to the public using those public lands;
4. Ignores the costs and danger to neighboring landowners dealing with stray bison;
5. Allows year round grazing by bison on some allotments, and a change in the turn out date to the first of April on others, with no analysis as to the impacts to the rangelands;
6. Ignores Taylor Grazing Act provisions that does not recognize bison as a species authorized to use BLM administered public lands;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Cattlemen's Association opposes the granting to the American Prairie the right to use public lands for bison until BLM addresses the issues presented above.

☐

Approve resolution

☐

Disapprove resolution

We hope you will consider volunteering to be a part of our board. We have board meetings once per month via telephone conference. The meetings last between one to two hours. As a director your input on this monthly call enables MCA to keep up to date with issues concerning our industry. Would you please consider becoming a director or officer for MCA for just an hour or two of your time?

The following Officers were nominated for a two-year term. All members who own cattle may vote for Officers.

Approve Y or N

President: **Richard Liebert** _____ or Write in _____

Secretary: **Ken Morris** _____ or Write in _____

* * * * *

The following Directors were nominated for a three-year term.

Western and Eastern directors may only be voted on by MCA members in those districts who own cattle (see map on previous page). All members who own cattle may vote on At Large directors.

Any tribal member may vote for the tribal district director and do not need to own cattle.

Approve Y or N

Western District: Write in _____

Eastern District: **Gilles Stockton** _____ or Write in _____
(2 directors)

Second Eastern Director nomination: Write in _____

At Large: **Jim Baker** _____ or Write in _____

Tribal District: Write in _____

☐

Yes, I own cattle and am a voting member of MCA

Please return completed ballot no later than March 10, 2023 to:

MCA ~ PO Box 536 ~ Vaughn, MT 59487

'Beef on Every Plate' helping feed Montanans

by Jamie Henneman, *The Prairie Star*

For the last 15 years, the "Beef on Every Plate" program run by the Montana Cattlemen's Association has been connecting food banks in Montana with beef raised in the state and donated by ranchers. The non-profit organization receives donations of cattle from ranchers that are processed into one-pound packages of ground beef and distributed to food banks throughout Montana.

Jan McDonald, program coordinator, said the program fills a need in rural communities while providing a benefit to ranchers. "For the ranchers donating to the program, 100% of their donation is tax deductible," she said. "We make sure the meat is getting not only to food banks in populated areas, but also to rural places that don't have as much access to good quality meat."

Every year the "Beef on Every Plate" program accepts donations of animals that are processed and distributed to communities, ranging from 5-15 animals each year. The program helps to address a real need, McDonald noted. "As cattle producers, we always have beef in the freezer. Unfortunately, this is a luxury that too many Montanans do not share. Many people are on fixed incomes, are single mothers, or the working poor. The need is overwhelming," she said. "The Montana Cattlemen's Foundation has provided beef for over 325,000 meals since we started 15 years ago." According to the USDA, one in seven Montanans struggle with hunger and 15 percent of Montana households are "food-insecure," with people skipping meals or going to bed hungry.

Because the Montana Cattlemen's Foundation relies on donations to cover the cost of processing, recent contributions from the Town Pump gas station chain have been critical. The Town Pump gas station chain donates \$5,000 a year towards processing costs. Individual donors also support the program annually. The cost of processing one donated animal can be fairly significant, making the donations towards the program critical. "We processed beef in Miles City this past month and the processing was \$874, so as you can see, we need all the contributions we can get to keep this program going," McDonald shared.

McDonald said the future of the program depends on the participation from both ranchers and financial donors. "This year, we have completed six donations of beef and we'll do as many as we based on donations of beef and money," she said. "We are a non-profit organization, and everything we receive goes to Montana."

"BEEF ON EVERY PLATE"

One in seven Montanans struggle with hunger; one in five children in Montana live in households that struggle with hunger. USDA reports 11.5% of Montana households are "food insecure" and often skip meals or go to bed hungry, including the elderly and young children. Many on fixed incomes, single mothers, and the working poor simply cannot afford to purchase quality meat to feed their families. Montana Cattlemen's Foundation has organized the **"BEEF ON EVERY PLATE"** program to enable cattle producers to donate beef to help feed our neighbors. To date we have provided beef for over 327,000 meals!!

As cattle producers, we always have beef in the freezer. Unfortunately, this is a luxury that too many Montanans do not share. The need is overwhelming! If you wish to donate a cow, bull, or steer, please call the Montana Cattlemen's Foundation 406-467-2251 to make arrangements. For those who do not own cattle, cash donations are also needed to help pay for costs associated with processing the beef. Montana Cattlemen's Foundation is working with the Montana Food Bank Network and others to distribute the hamburger throughout the state. With your help we can provide assistance to Montanans in need!



Montana Cattlemen's Foundation for Research, Education and Endowment is a non-profit tax-exempt charitable foundation organized under IRS tax code Section 501(c)(3).

All of your contributions are fully deductible.

There are no administration costs, so 100% of your donation goes to this program!

For more information please contact:

MONTANA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION
PO Box 536 ~ Vaughn, MT 59487 ~ (406) 467-2251

Email: mca@montanacattlemen.org

Web: www.montanacattlemen.org

Your Support Is Appreciated!

Cowlandia – The Cattlemen's Nightmare

Drover's never fails to meet expectations for disseminating nonsense. In an article in the Drovers Daily, written by Nevil Speer (January 3rd 2023, aginfo@farmjournal.com) we are offered a vision of a place called "Cowlandia" where a "free trade" utopia for cattle producers is imperiled by "anti-globalists." Only one thing about this fairytale rings true: "free trade" always was a fairytale.

What "free trade" has given us is the off-shoring of much of America's industry. The loss of millions of good paying jobs - impoverishing entire sections of our country. The theft of sensitive technology including much that affects our national security. Global supply chains ridiculously sensitive to disruption. And a trade deficit running at more than a half a billion a year for the past thirty years.

As for us in the cow business, "free trade" has not given us much of anything except for headaches and red ink. Just sticking to recent history (we won't mention the rotten meat from Brazil, or the market dislocation caused by BSE cattle from Canada, or the fact that Canada subsidized their feeding sector), in 2015 Country of Origin Labelling for beef (COOL) was repealed because, the World Trade Organization, decided that labeled beef violates the principals of "free trade." For some reason, only beef and pork labeling violates this principal. Immediately, cattle prices collapsed resulting in the loss of some 45,000 independent feedlots, and who knows how many cow/calf operators.

We are told by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) that each year, thanks to "free trade" in beef exports, hundreds of dollars are returned to the pockets of beef producers. In 2020 this apparently amounted \$381.91 per head. I don't think that I got my check, maybe it got lost in the mail, because I can remember 2020 as not being all that great. In fact, the spread between producer returns and the packer/retail cartel was the largest ever. According to Senator Chuck Grassley, packers were clearing \$1000 per head after owning the cattle for just two weeks.

The CBB through the NCBA spends a lot of our checkoff dollars on promoting exports of beef, and this alleged \$381.91 dividend is, supposedly, our reward for having paid that \$1.00 per head tax. In 2020 we imported 3,339,329,000 pounds of beef and veal. This is the equivalent to 5,640,758 head of cattle. The Checkoff collects \$1.00 for each 592 pounds (apparently the amount of beef resulting from one Brazilian cow) so it also amounted to \$5,640,758 in Checkoff tax revenue. That same year we also imported 2,114,667 head of live cattle from Canada and Mexico. Presumably this resulted in another \$2,114,667 dollars in the Checkoff kitty. This would be a grand total of \$7,755,425.

Back in 2020 the CBB says that they spent \$8.35 million promoting the export of beef, \$594,309 more than what they collected from imported beef and cattle. Since we exported only the equivalent of 5,901,372 head (2,950,686,000 pounds divided by 592) that leaves us with a surplus of imports over exports amounting to 2,777,158 head.

So how grateful should we be for this alleged \$381.91 bonus? Let's say that if we only exported the same amount that we imported, and not 2,777,158 extra head to over supply the market, what would have been the price of cattle in 2020? Wouldn't that have put the \$381.91 per head bonus, that I never noticed, to shame?

Why are we importing beef and cattle, collecting the checkoff tax on them, and then spending that much and more to export beef that we imported in the first place? Doesn't make a lot of sense does it! Cowlandia the "Free Trade" utopia is a fairytale that definitely benefits someone, however, I am yet to understand how it benefits me.

By the way, I am not an "anti-globalist" but I do believe that we have a right to protect our national sovereignty and our strategic industries. What is more strategic than food? The "globalist free traders" are using imports (and exports) to manipulate the US and world markets for beef and cattle. In the process, destroying ranches, farms, independent feeders, and rural communities. "Free trade" has not been a good bargain.

Gilles Stockton
Grass Range, MT



C. Robert Taylor spoke at Cattlemen's Day to "Competition and Fairness in Cattle & Beef Markets". He has supplemented his presentation with the following article regarding Canadian beef labeling. MCA President Gilles Stockton commented, "The issues and principles involved are complex and confusing. The argument in its simplest form is that we have the moral right to a competitive market. What that means in practice and how we get or maintain market competition gets very complicated very quickly. Economic theory and legal precedent complicate the arguments, then we have the influence of politics and the fact of packer market power. It is really complex and I think our discussion Saturday helped our membership sort through those issues. Also thanks for passing on the info on the Canadian labeling system. I too have wondered how they get away with it. It looks as though they only label the Canadian and leave the imported unlabeled. We, on the other hand, tried to account for born, raised, and harvested which added an accounting cost to the process. I don't fault the Canadian government in this labeling issue. They are looking after the interests of their citizens and industries. It has always been our own government which is happy to throw cattle producers under the bus. Maybe the better metaphor is under the truck hauling Canadian cattle."

Canadians have their own labeling, so how can they legitimately object to US labeling? See highlights in the fact sheet below.

Canadian Beef Labelling Fact Sheet

Buying Canadian Beef

A lot of beef is imported into Canada every year – \$455 million in 2002 alone! Competition is a good thing. However, there have been situations reported where imported beef is misrepresented as Canadian. To be an informed buyer, you need to know what to look for and what to do if you suspect fraud. Remember, knowledge is your best defence.

Make sure you understand labelling requirements.

Product of Canada

The words "Product of Canada" stamped on the box does not mean the product in the box is from Canada – it simply means that the beef has undergone some form of processing in Canada. The product in the box may be Canadian but it could also be imported beef that has been "reworked" (i.e. undergone trimming or portioning) in Canada.

Canadian Federal or Provincial Inspection Stamp

The Canadian Federal or Provincial Inspection stamp on the label or box doesn't mean the beef inside is Canadian – it just means that the product has been inspected and approved at a Canadian plant as meeting a standard set of health and safety guidelines under the supervision of the CFIA. The stamp will also have a number listed on the bottom that refers to the plant at which the product was processed. For a list of establishments and their associated numbers, go to the CFIA website at: www.inspection.gc.ca.



from industry, sets the grade standards. Only Canadian beef that has been processed in a federally or provincially inspected facility can be assigned a Canadian grade name by the CGBA. Grading is not mandatory.

One sure way to know that your beef is Canadian is to ensure the official **Canada Grade Name** is clearly printed on the label. To be "official" the Canada Grade name must be noted as follows; it must be shown in these words with or without the maple leaf:



CANADA AAA OR HIGHER
CANADA AAA



CANADA A OR HIGHER
CANADA A



CANADA AA OR HIGHER
CANADA AA



CANADA PRIME

If you want to be sure the beef you buy is Canadian, what do you look for?

Look for the the Canadian Grade.

The Canadian Grading System

The Canadian Beef Grading Agency (CBGA) is a private, non-profit corporation. They have been accredited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to deliver grading services for beef in Canada. The Federal Government, based on recommendations

These grade labels refer to Canada's top grades, which have minimum marbling requirements, and set characteristics for maturity, muscling, meat and fat colour and texture.

Any variation on these names as listed above is not allowed. For example "Angus AA," "Canadian A," "AAA," "Certified A or higher," "Premium AAA," "Mucky Lake Top Quality AAA Beef" are not allowable grade designations. Remember that the colour of an animal's hide, or designation of a special name or program, is not a grade. If you find mislabelled product, question the supplier and report the suspected misrepresentation to the CBGA.

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Q. “The box I have doesn’t say anything about a grade – now what do I look for?”

Any products not marked with a Canada Grade name must be labelled “UNGRADED” or bear the *grade designation* of the country of origin (there is no requirement for the name of the country of origin to appear). This applies for all beef products down to an individual piece size of 125 cm³ (5 cm x 5 cm x 5 cm or 2” x 2” x 2”) and would include most portion controlled steak products. If the label doesn’t give an official Canada grade name or the grade designation from the country of origin or the word “Ungraded,” it is not properly labelled. Make sure you question your supplier. If the box you have does not comply with the regulations it should be identified to the Canadian Beef Grading Agency (see below for contact information).

Q. “There’s a bunch of information on the box written in felt pen. Is this ok?”

According to section 7.12 of the Meat Hygiene Manual only the weight may be hand written on a label or box. All other information must be pre-printed or applied to a shipping container by means of a printed pressure-sensitive label or applied by on-line printing. Handwritten descriptions, including grade designations are not acceptable. If any required information is not presented as noted above, question the supplier.

Q. “The printing on my box says “Canada AA or higher,” does this mean I am getting AAA beef in my carton?
You should be aware that although the carton might be labelled “Canada Grade AA or higher,” it does not guarantee there is higher-grade product in the carton, only that there may be higher-grade product included. Do not assume that you are getting a higher quality product than you paid for.

Q. “I buy my beef from a local commercial butcher – some of their product isn’t labelled at all. What should I do?”

Currently commercial butchers – those companies operating with city or municipal food handling permits and not provincially or federally inspected – are not required to use the same labelling practises as provincially or federally inspected facilities. It is recommended that all beef be purchased from approved sources. Ask your supplier about their food safety and labelling practises.

Q. “Why do I have to be so vigilant? Isn’t someone in government responsible for ensuring all the meat I buy is properly labelled, no matter who I buy it from?”

The industry is structured in such a way that there is no ongoing monitoring of boxed beef products, with the exception of establishments where grading services are provided. The industry must be self policed and buyers must take responsibility to insist on label accuracy in a “buyer beware” approach. It is important to know what questions to ask and what to look for to ensure the products you buy for your guests is the quality you want. Ask your supplier about the grade of beef you purchase.

Q. “I am not buying a full box of product so I will not see any original box labels. How do I know what I am getting?”

Unfortunately there is no requirement at this time to put the grade label on each vacuumed package of product. It is important that you ask for written verification from your supplier as to grade, country of origin, whether the product has been previously frozen and other pertinent details such as trim level.

Q. “There’s a lot of liquid in the vacuum bag of beef I received – is this normal?”

Occasionally, previously frozen beef is misrepresented as fresh. Customers who have ordered and are paying for fresh product want to make sure that is what they are getting. If there is an unusual amount of liquid (purge) in the vacuum bag, confirm with your supplier that the product has not been previously frozen and that it has been delivered under proper conditions (i.e. a refrigerated truck).

www.beefinfo.org/foodservice

For more information on Canadian Beef Grading Standards:

Visit the Canadian Beef Grading Agency website at www.telusplanet.net/public/cbga2 and follow the links to Grading.

OR – visit the Beef Information Centre website at www.beefinfo.org and follow the links to Foodservice / Beef Cuts / Grading. A copy of the fact sheet entitled “Canadian Beef Grading (for Foodservice)” is also available for downloading free of charge from the Beef Information Centre website by following the links to Resource Order Centre / Foodservice Resources.

To lodge a confidential complaint on a suspected case of misrepresentation of Canadian beef please contact the Canadian Beef Grading Agency (contact information following). All reports are kept confidential by CBGA. You will not be identified to the supplier when CBGA investigates.

ONTARIO 100 – 2233 Argentinia Road
Mississauga Ontario L5N 2X7
TELEPHONE 905 821.4900
FACSIMILE 905 821.4915

ALBERTA 310 – 6715 8 Street NE
Calgary Alberta T2E 7H7
TELEPHONE 403 275.5890
FACSIMILE 403 275.9288

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NEWSLETTER

Montana Cattlemen's Assn.
P.O. Box 536
Vaughn, MT 59487

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Great Falls MT

MONTANA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION MISSION STATEMENT

To address market interests, serve to support Montana's environmental, cultural, and historical heritage, and protect the interests of Montana cattle producers in international markets and trade issues.

The Montana Cattlemen's Association shall be true environmentalists in protecting and advancing their environmental position in water rights, mineral rights, and natural resources.

* * * * *

Montana Cattlemen's Association has a long history going back to the 1950's of representing Montana cattle producers on issues vital to the future of our industry. Our goal is to continue that tradition with the help of experienced cattle producers across the state—just like yourself!

Montana Cattlemen's Association is a producer-driven, grassroots organization committed to ensuring profitability for the Montana cattle industry. We are dedicated to increasing profit opportunities for you and your family as well as for future generations.

WHY JOIN MCA?

- ◆ Producer-driven grassroots policies
- ◆ Credibility and integrity within the cattle industry and in Helena
- ◆ Working only for Montana cattle producers to increase profitability
- ◆ Membership numbers strengthen MCA's effectiveness
- ◆ MCA works with legislators, businesses, communities and other like-minded organizations in the development of rural Montana
- ◆ Opportunities to become involved within the organization
- ◆ Every cattle producer has a voice in decisions that affect his livelihood

