

Spring 2026

THE *South Dakota* CATTLEMAN

The official publication of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association





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SDCA

Calendar of Events

- March 18: Board of Directors Meeting | Zoom
- March 15-21: National Ag Week
- April 21-24: Legislative Conference | Washington D.C.
- May: Beef Month
- May 28-June 4: Young Cattlemen's Conference
- July 12-14: NCBA Summer Business Meeting | Denver



July 12-14, 2026

Gaylord Rockies

Save the Date

Summer Business Meeting

Join the cattle industry's leading voices and organizations at the Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting

Advertising Opportunities

The **South Dakota Cattleman** is published six times a year and sent to SDCA members including beef producers, beef industry supporters, property owners, allied industry partners, as well as state and local government officials.

Advertising deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

The SDCA e-newsletter, **The Cattle Guard**, is emailed to all SDCA members every week. **The Cattle Guard** contains updates and news from SDCA, industry partners, and NCBA.

Follow us on our social media platforms to stay informed of the latest SDCA news, events, and information.



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Mission

To advance the interests of South Dakota Cattlemen through representation and promotion of the beef industry.

Vision

To be an organization where members can work together to protect their interests; seek solutions to industry problems; provide a unified voice, and to build the good will, esteem, and recognition the industry deserves.



South Dakota Cattlemen's Association



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SDCA

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Craig Bieber, President
craig@bieberredangus.com

Vaughn Thorstenson, Secretary/
Treasurer
vwthor@venturecomm.net

Dawn Butzer, VP of Membership
dawnbutzer@hotmail.com

Warren Symens, Past President
symens@venturecomm.net

Regional Directors

Cody Hanssen, Northern Region

Troy Hadrick, Northern Region

Maggie Mendel, Northeast Region

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Colby Olson, Southeast Region

Maria Buus, Southeast Region

Kory Bierle, Southern Region

Quinn Mortenson, Southern Region

Clint Doll, Western Region

Devin Stephens, Western Region

Abby Morse, SDSU Collegiate
Cattlemen's Club

SDCA Staff

Taya Runyan
Executive Director
trunyan@sdcattlemen.org

Megan Sanders
Executive Assistant
office@sdcattlemen.org

Galle Waletich
Director of Outreach
gwaletich@sdcattlemen.org

Ella Stiefvater
Communications Manager
estiefvater@sdcattlemen.org

For additional contact information, visit sdcattlemen.org.

Cover photo by Sam Swanson

South Dakota Cattlemen's Association

CONGRATULATES

Kory Bierle

on his appointment to the
South Dakota Brand Board!

In February, Governor Larry Rhoden appointed fifth-generation rancher Kory Bierle to the South Dakota Brand Board. Bierle owns and operates Madsen Ranch Land & Cattle near Midland, South Dakota, along with his wife Robin, daughter Sage, and son Kruse. The State Brand Board is made up of five members appointed by the Governor.

In addition to serving as the Southern Region Director for the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association (SDCA), Bierle served as the chair of the SDCA Brand Committee and has been actively involved in the Brand Board ad hoc working group.



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FACTS MATTER – FROM CATTLECON TO THE SOUTH DAKOTA CAPITOL

Craig Bieber, SDCA President

I'm going to be blunt: in today's world, facts don't always get the attention they deserve. We see it in the headlines. We see it online. And unfortunately, we're seeing it more than ever in politics right here at home. Something that happened at CattleCon this year stuck with me. During an event, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. spoke directly to cattle producers. Think about that for a second. Not speaking about us. Speaking to us. That doesn't happen unless the conversation is changing. And I believe the reason it's changing is simple, it's because we've got the facts on our side thanks to the investments our industry has made in proving them.

For years, the public was told the same story over and over:

- Red meat is bad
- Fat is bad
- Eat more grains

We all know how that story impacted our industry. Now, the entire nutrition world is re-evaluating what "healthy" really means. Protein is back at the center of the conversation – or on top of the upside-down food pyramid. Nutrient density matters again. Whole foods are being recognized for what they are. In plain terms the food pyramid has flipped in our favor.

That shift didn't happen because somebody woke up one day and decided to be nice to beef producers. It happened because there is a mountain of credible research and the Beef Checkoff helped build it.

Opinions and loud voices don't move policy. Research moves policy. Research that includes peer-reviewed studies, nutrient data, and long-term work that can stand up to scrutiny. That's the kind of research the checkoff has supported for decades. It's not flashy, but it's powerful. Now, when the administration and federal agencies make changes to the dietary messaging and nutrition priorities,

they can do it with confidence because the science is there.

What can we learn from this here at home? In South Dakota, agriculture is the number-one industry and is tied in some way to nearly every issue tackled by the legislature. But even here, we're seeing bills introduced that are driven more by emotion, assumptions, or politics than by real facts. Some of the legislation being floated in the South Dakota House this session is, quite frankly, not backed by good science, good economics, or good common sense. And once government starts making decisions without facts, it rarely stops with one issue.

Producers can't afford to sit on the sidelines. If there's a lesson to learn from CattleCon and this national nutrition shift, it's that facts still win but only if we're willing to show up with them. This is where SDCA's role matters. SDCA is committed to advancing sound policy created by our membership and driven by facts and not headlines, pressure, or politics. Our policy positions come from producers, are grounded in realworld experience, and are backed by data that can stand up to scrutiny.

South Dakota producers are practical people. We live in the real world. We don't have the luxury of making decisions based on feelings instead of facts. Whether we're talking about nutrition in Washington or legislation in Pierre, the standard should be the same- if you're going to make policy, it better be backed by reality.

I was encouraged by what I saw at CattleCon. The beef industry is stronger when we can point to research, data, and real outcomes. That's the foundation the checkoff has helped build. We face more "headline-driven" policy ideas both nationally and right here in South Dakota, we need to keep doing what cattle producers have always done best. **Stay grounded, stay involved, and keep demanding the facts.**

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Allied Industry Membership information available online at sd cattlemen.org



INTRODUCING YOUR NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF MEMBERSHIP

Dawn Butzer, SDCA Vice President of Membership

Hello! My name is Dawn Butzer, your VP of Membership for 2026. Growing up, my mom liked to keep a clean kitchen, so she kicked me out in the barn with my dad. He ran a sale barn in southeast Iowa that was known for its fat cattle auction, and I was always in his shadow. In the summer, I'd work the countryside with him visiting fat cattle customers, helping farmers decide which cattle were ready for market.

In the 1980's, E. coli O157:H7 was first recognized as a foodborne illness associated with improperly cooked beef. There were several outbreaks and people were getting sick. The markets took a hit, and I remember my dad trying to explain to his customers why the market fell. I was devastated that beef was getting a bad rap for getting people sick. I was devastated for our producers. It was at that time the Iowa Cattlemen's started Youth Beef Team to help spread the word about how to properly cook beef and promote the cattle industry. I remember thinking, "All we have to do is educate the public how to properly cook beef!"

In 1996, while I was in high school, I attended my first Iowa Cattlemen's Convention for professional training on how to speak to the public about our industry. That was when I realized the important role state cattlemen's associations play in a producer's world. It's easy for the stories about our industry to get twisted, especially when the public is generations removed from the farm. Having an organization dedicated to having our backs and amplifying our message makes a difference.

South Dakota Cattlemen's Association stays in front of the public and policymakers, keeping the story straight. It can be frustrating; however, SDCA is committed to bringing facts and integrity to the debates on important issues. It's not always easy work, but as I was reminded during a recent Sunday morning service, "The just man is a light in the darkness to the upright." Psalm 112: 4-9. That's what your membership supports. SDCA is supporting your family's legacy of cattle production

when you can't because you're knee-deep in work. SDCA works in Pierre, follows legislation that impact producers and their business. When it's not legislative session, our SDCA board is engaging with members at Regional Roundups across the state, serving beef at Cattlemen's Cookouts, and is, as always, just a phone call away when an issue comes up in your area.

My husband Matt and I both grew up on family farms but our dreams of the cattle business took us away from those farms in search of something new. Now with our two boys, Barrett (15) and Beau (10) we started from scratch here in Alcester, SD. I know how much we had to fight our way in to make it work running a feedlot, cattle pots and a cow/calf herd. My SDCA membership is an extension of us fighting the good fight in agriculture.

It takes a lot of rain drops to make a flood - so I encourage you: if your membership means to you what it means to me, recommend it to a fellow producer.

South Dakota



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S DCA directors and members traveled to Music City to attend CattleCon 2026 to conduct policy work, expand their knowledge in educational sessions, participate in business meetings, and build connections with fellow producers and industry professionals.

REGIONAL MEETING

The Region VII Meeting was held to share recent area developments and facilitate engaging conversations with representatives from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.



POLICY MEETINGS

SDCA Directors participated in NCBA Policy Committee Meetings making policy decisions by voting on important matters affecting South Dakota beef producers. Topics of conversation included the encouragement of working lands, the Asian longhorned tick, and the scope of Livestock Risk Protection (LRP).

MEETING WITH BEEFSD

SDSU Extension's current beefSD class attended CattleCon. Before the convention kicked off, a coffee shop conversation was had to provide a base knowledge of the meetings and discussions that would happen throughout. SDCA leadership outlined the importance of grassroots policy and the NCBA policy making process. The participants then had the chance to meet South Dakota representatives serving on the Cattlemen's Beef Board and Federation of State Beef Councils. In addition, NCBA Federation Chair Travis Maddock was present to further dive into the separation of the CBB and Federation.

RUSCHE EDUCATION SESSION

South Dakota's very own Dr. Warren Rusche delivered a Cattlemen's College education session titled, "The Weight of Progress: Are Bigger Cattle Better for the Beef Industry?" The presentation showed the steady increase over time of carcass weights and the impacts that it has on cow/calf producers and packing plants.



CATTLECON SPECIAL GUEST: RFK JR.

On the final day of CattleCon26, attendees were surprised by a special guest appearance from U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Secretary Kennedy joined NCBA Past President Buck Werhbein for a conversation about the newly updated Dietary Guidelines and the science behind the major shift in the food pyramid.

During the discussion, Secretary Kennedy stated, “We put an end to the 50-year war on saturated fats.” His comments highlighted protein as an essential component of human nutrition. SDCA applauds Secretary Kennedy for acknowledging the vital role that high-quality protein plays in maintaining a healthy diet.



COWBOY'S NIGHT AT THE OPRY

To round out the CattleCon experience, Cowboy's Night at the Grand Ole Opry in the historic Ryman Auditorium proved to be a highlight. Vince Gill, The SteelDrivers, The Castellows, and Don Schlitz took the stage in downtown Nashville.



SAVE THE DATE FOR CATTLECON 2027

Mark your calendar and plan to attend next year when CattleCon returns to Nashville.





WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER

Buck Wehrbein, Past NCBA President

I know, I know. Time goes by fast. We all say it, but still, it's hard to believe I'm sitting down to write my final column to NCBA members.

NCBA has existed for more than 125 years for one simple but vital reason: to stand up for America's cattle producers — the men and women who care for the land, raise cattle and put in long days to keep this business moving forward. None of that work happens without engaged cattlemen and women like you. Your involvement is the foundation of everything we do and, as I close my term as president, I've never been more proud to stand alongside you as members of this association.

Because of that strong grassroots presence, NCBA was able to deliver meaningful results this past year. Together, we have voiced strong opposition to increased beef imports from Argentina, secured tax relief to help producers keep more of what they earn, and defended private property rights by pushing back against regulatory overreach through WOTUS. We've fought for common-sense reforms to the Endangered Species Act, worked to create a more favorable tax and regulatory environment for future generations of cattle producers, led the effort, along with our state affiliate partners, to keep New World Screwworm out of the U.S., and advanced trade opportunities that promise long-term benefits — including Australia opening its doors to imports of U.S. fresh beef. We made some meaningful progress with Secretary Rollins as our government works with grassroots producers to understand the true needs of rural America and how our business contributes to the fabric of our communities.

This past year also reminded us that market signals matter. We're experiencing record prices for cattle and beef, reflecting both historically low cattle numbers and strong demand for our product. For generations, cattle producers have worked to deliver the safest, highest-quality beef in the world, and today we are finally seeing fair prices for our products. Even amid market turbulence and political rhetoric surrounding prices, our markets proved resilient, just as they always do. To witness this level of demand is truly remarkable. It's something I wish my dad could see. For everyone to recognize what we've always known — that our product is exceptional — is nothing short of incredible.

Of course, our work as an association is never finished. There will always be more to accomplish, especially as we continue to invest in the next generation of leaders, because the future depends on them just as much as it depends on us. At the same time, NCBA continues to grow and adapt, evolving to meet the changing needs of our members and the business we serve. As the German proverb reminds us, "Food is never eaten as hot as it's cooked." In other words, things often seem more daunting in the moment than they truly are. We can get bent out of shape and scared to death, but when we arrive at the challenge, it's rarely as bad — or as good — as it first appeared. Perspective matters, and with steady leadership and collaboration, we navigate uncertainty and keep moving forward.

When I began this year, I wrote that I was truly honored to serve as your NCBA president. That hasn't changed. Your trust in me has been humbling, and I am deeply grateful for it. From day one, I said my confidence didn't come from what I could accomplish alone, but from the incredible people I stand alongside and you have proven that true at every turn.

The true strength of this association lies in its members. You are the backbone of our industry, the driving force behind our advocacy, and the reason we continue to grow and adapt. Your engagement, insight and commitment to our shared mission — to improve the business climate, grow beef demand, and expand the world's access to U.S. beef — are what make NCBA so effective.

This year reinforced something I said early on: leadership is about listening. I've endeavored to hear you, to respect every voice and to lead with honesty. Together, we've faced emerging threats, navigated policy shifts, and secured wins that will shape the future of our industry. As I prepare to pass the gavel, I'll leave you with this: your membership matters more than ever. Every voice and every perspective strengthens our ability to fight for your interests. Stay engaged. Share your ideas. Encourage young producers to get involved.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your president. It has truly been the honor of a lifetime.

God bless, and happy trails.

Congratulations

NCBA President, Gene Copenhaver!

The Virginia Cattleman took the seat as NCBA's President at CattleCon26.



Photo courtesy of NCBA.

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2026 NCBA POLICY PRIORITIES

NCBA's policy focus for 2026 is to defend the free market, promote free trade, and reduce regulatory burdens to preserve opportunities for producer profitability and strong beef demand. There will be an increased focus on elevating and defending the voices of real cattle producers and grassroots membership driven policies.

- Continue to press the administration to roll back harmful regulations to keep working lands working.
- Enhance and strengthen U.S. mitigation measures against the incursion of New World Screwworm.
- Protect the U.S. cattle herd from foreign animal diseases and pests through heightened awareness and preparedness actions.
- Expand market access for U.S. beef exports and hold trade partners accountable to ensure equivalent animal health and food safety standards for imported beef.
- Promote science-based nutrition policies and sound, fact-based information for consumers.
- Push for further hours-of-service flexibility, increased truck weights, and continue delaying ELD requirements for livestock haulers.
- Safeguard the U.S. cattle and beef supply chain by working with the administration to ensure there is a strong workforce to limit processing disruptions for producers.

NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION

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South Dakota *Cattlemen's* Association
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
Spotlight

Meet Logan Schlim

By SDCA Contributor Isabelle Mairose



Logan Schlim is from the small town of Carthage, South Dakota, where he lives on his family's farm with his wife, Madyson, and daughter, Rory. Together, they are beginning their own journey in the cattle industry.

Logan attended Butler Community College in El Dorado, KS, where he immersed himself in the livestock judging program. After earning his associate degree, Logan returned home to South Dakota and continued his education at South Dakota State University. At SDSU, he majored in animal science while competing on the university's livestock judging and meat evaluation teams, further sharpening the skills he would carry forward into the cattle industry.

In addition to livestock judging, Logan was active in many different clubs, including Collegiate Cattlemen's, Block and Bridle, and Collegiate Farm Bureau. These experiences have prepared him for leadership roles in agriculture.

"Throughout my involvement in the livestock judging teams and various campus clubs and organizations, I have been able to develop and enhance my public speaking and networking skills, allowing me to hold and conduct conversations with all sorts of people," said Logan. "I believe combining my communication skills with my industry education will help me have necessary conversations with consumers and to ensure our industry and way of life are preserved for generations to come."

From a young age, Logan played an active role in his family's cattle and row-crop operations. "It didn't take me long to realize that my true passion was raising cattle," Logan says. The family farm focuses on producing high-quality feeder cattle that excel in growth and performance, while placing a

strong emphasis on herd longevity. The Schlim family retains their own replacement heifers, allowing them to select for phenotypic traits that improve retention rates. Building on that foundation, Logan has found his niche in developing a purebred herd, with the goal of one day marketing high-quality seedstock.

**NEVER BE AFRAID TO VOICE YOUR OPINIONS
AND CONTINUE PUSHING TOWARD A MORE
AGRICULTURALLY EDUCATED WORLD.**

- Logan Schlim

In addition to farming, Logan currently works as a feed representative and nutritional consultant for Prairie Ag Partners. Logan enjoys the nutritional aspects of the cattle industry, and he strives to serve producers to the best of his abilities, helping them with feed practices and management.

Logan enjoys engaging in conversations with fellow producers as well as those less familiar with the beef industry, which is one of the reasons he was drawn to the Leadership Academy. "I want to build connections across the state and help spread knowledge and awareness of the beef industry to the common consumer, ensuring our livelihood can withstand the test of time," Logan says.

He plans to apply the skills gained through the program to continue advocating for the industry. "I've always enjoyed having the tough conversations when it comes to supporting agriculture," he said. "I take pride in having the humility to acknowledge our faults, while also reminding others of the positive impact our industry has on so many aspects of everyday life."

Logan is grateful for the opportunities and blessings the cattle industry has provided for both him and his family, and he remains optimistic about its future. "There are so many new and improved tools and practices available to producers today that have greatly increased the efficiency and effectiveness of managing cattle," Logan says. "The sky is the limit when it comes to continuing to improve one of the world's highest-quality sources of protein."





QUICK & EASY TRUTHS ABOUT THE BEEF CHECKOFF

WHO OVERSEES THE BEEF CHECKOFF PROGRAM?

The Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) facilitates the Beef Checkoff program. There are currently 101 CBB members who are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and represent nearly every state across the country. These dedicated cattlemen, cattlemen, and importers take time away from their own cattle operations to voluntarily serve on the board and make informed decisions on behalf of the Beef Checkoff and the producers who fund it. There are no packer representatives on the CBB.

DOES THE CBB TAKE A STANCE ON GOVERNMENTAL OR REGULATORY POLICY ISSUES?

No. According to the Beef Promotion and Research Act and the Beef Promotion and Research Order, the Checkoff is a national, producer-funded program, and as such, its funds cannot be used to influence or lobby for government policy or action. There are Beef Checkoff contractors that have legislative branches or policy focused areas within their overall organizations. However, Checkoff dollars cannot and are not shared with that sector of those organizations. By law, Checkoff dollars are only utilized for promotion, research, and education, which is strictly enforced by CBB.

DOES THE CBB HAVE ANNUAL AUDITED FINANCIALS? CAN I SEE THEM?

Yes. Every fall, an independent, outside auditing firm thoroughly reviews all CBB and Beef Checkoff financials. The contract for this firm is renewed each year and voted on by producers on the Budget and Audit Committee. The CBB's audited financials are public and can be found on DrivingDemandForBeef.com

WHY ARE IMPORTERS INVOLVED IN THE BEEF CHECKOFF?

By law, beef importers also pay into the Beef Checkoff – approximately \$7 million annually. Therefore, the Secretary of Agriculture appoints a proportionate number of importers to the Cattlemen's Beef Board. Of the 101 members serving on the CBB, importers make up seven percent.

ARE SMALL BEEF PRODUCERS INVOLVED IN THE BEEF CHECKOFF?

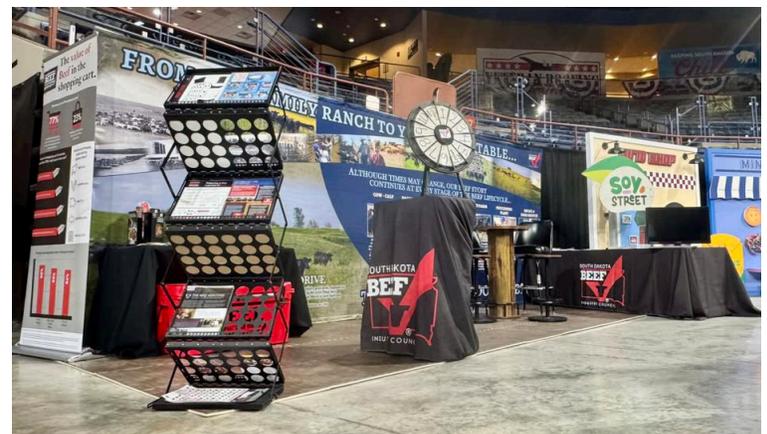
When it comes to service on the CBB, operation size doesn't matter one bit. The Board's 101 all-volunteer membership comes from around the country – from the smallest, family-run farms to the largest feedlots, and regardless of size, each member only gets one vote. Since members can only serve two back-to-back, three year terms, new members are selected annually. Any producer, big or small, is eligible for a seat at the table.

KICKING OFF 2026 WITH STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NEW CONSUMER EDUCATION TOOLS

The South Dakota Beef Industry Council (SDBIC) has launched 2026 with momentum, visibility, and a renewed commitment to connecting with consumers across the state. From major event outreach to innovative educational materials, the organization is expanding its reach and reinforcing beef's role in South Dakotans' daily life.

A SUCCESSFUL HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN REACHES THOUSANDS

SDBIC closed out 2025 with a highly successful holiday campaign that reached thousands of South Dakotans. The campaign highlighted beef's versatility during the festive season and helped strengthen consumer confidence in choosing beef for family meals, celebrations, and gatherings. The strong engagement set the tone for an active and impactful start to the new year.



NINE DAYS OF OUTREACH AT RODEO RAPID CITY & THE BLACK HILLS STOCK SHOW

From January 30 through February 7, SDBIC spent nine days at Rodeo Rapid City and the Black Hills Stock Show—one of the region's largest and most influential agricultural events. While the show traditionally draws a strong producer audience, this year brought a notable increase in consumers eager to learn more about beef nutrition, production, and cooking.

The SDBIC booth was supported by several Jr. Beef Ambassadors, whose energy and knowledge helped create a welcoming and educational environment. Board members also joined the team throughout the week, engaging directly with attendees, and sharing beef's story.

CHECKOFF DOLLARS AT WORK

Industry Council Executive Director

A Beef. It's What's For Dinner.® cooler giveaway ran throughout the event, drawing strong participation. At the close of the show, Gage was selected as the lucky winner.

SDBIC also proudly sponsored several key events, including the Beefy Chili Cookoff, the 4-H Youth Day Beef Cookoff, and a Women in Ag panel titled "From Ag to Entrepreneurship: Building Multifaceted Careers." SDBIC Director of Communications & Marketing Amanda Kammerer served as a panelist, offering insights into career development and the evolving role of women in agriculture.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AT THE KCCR FARM, HOME & SPORT SHOW

On February 21–22, SDBIC continued its outreach at the KCCR Farm, Home & Sport Show in Pierre. This hometown event delivered warm hospitality and strong attendance from Pierre and surrounding communities. Attendees were highly engaged, eager to talk beef, and proud to include it in their meals. The show provided another valuable opportunity to connect with consumers and answer questions about beef's role in a healthy, balanced diet.

The South Dakota Cattleman

NEW EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND CREATIVE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Looking ahead, SDBIC is investing in new ways to reach and educate consumers. The organization has been developing fresh materials designed to make beef information more accessible, engaging, and family-friendly.

One of the newest tools is an interactive beef-themed placemat created for restaurants. Designed for kids, the placemat blends fun activities with simple, accurate beef facts—helping young diners learn where beef comes from, how it fits into a healthy diet, and why it matters to South Dakota agriculture. The placemat is part of a broader effort to meet consumers where they are and spark curiosity in the next generation.

A STRONG START TO THE YEAR

With a successful holiday campaign, major event participation, and new educational tools rolling out, the South Dakota Beef Industry Council is off to a powerful start in 2026. Through community engagement, producer support, and innovative outreach, SDBIC continues to champion beef as a vital part of South Dakota's culture, economy, and everyday meals.

SDBIC UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- March 7** WA Pavilion Ag Day | Sioux Falls
- March 17-19** Central Plains Dairy Expo | Sioux Falls
- March 23** SD Beef Industry Council Quarterly Board Meeting | Pierre/Zoom
- April 20-22** SD State FFA Convention | Brookings

Follow us on Facebook or check out sdbeef.org for more SD BEEF information.

To learn more about the Checkoff, visit DrivingDemandForBeef.com or contact the South Dakota Beef Industry Council.

Cattlemen's Beef Board | 303-220-9890

SDCA

Day at the Capitol

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors, Policy Chairs, and Class I of the Cattlemen's Leadership Academy met in Pierre January 28-29 for a full two-day event that included new board member orientation, the first quarterly board meeting of 2026, a legislative social, leadership academy graduation, and a full day of legislative events at the Capitol.

The legislative social at Drifter's Event Center was well attended and gave association leaders an opportunity to meet with legislators and discuss bills that would be addressed during the 101st legislative session. Governor Larry Rhoden and First Lady Sandy Rhoden were among the guests while Class I of the Cattlemen's Leadership Academy were recognized and Representative Drew Peterson, District 19 was presented with the Friend of SDCA Award.



The Day at the Capitol began with the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee. Trevor Johnson represented the leadership class and addressed the committee. On the agenda was Senate Bill 38, an act to increase the CAFO permit fee. SDCA has worked with the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources the last several years on the bill and Past President Warren Symens provided testimony in favor of the bill, which passed. The group had the opportunity to also sit in on the Senate Ag Committee as well.



John McCullough, with Legislative Research Council, met with the group to give background on the legal, administrative, and research assistance LRC provides to legislators during session and throughout the year. This unique and nonpartisan office plays a critical role in making session run smoothly!

Governor Rhoden and Lieutenant Governor Tony Venhuizen took a few moments to meet with the group while at the Capitol as well.

The next stop was a brief walk to the Joe Foss Building which houses the DANR and GFP offices. Secretary Hunter Roberts welcomed SDCA and provided an update on the general permit hearing that will take place later this spring and bills and priorities for the agency during the 2026 session. Wendy Semmler, Director of Property Tax at the Department of wjoined the discussion and gave a brief overview of the many property tax bills that had been introduced at the time and how ag might be impacted.

In the House, directors were on hand to watch the floor debate over HB 1064, a trigger bill that would take effect and allow direct sale of meat from the producer, if the federal authorities ever permitted direct sale of custom exempt meat for retail sales. Despite compelling opposition testimony from many producers and processors, including our own Troy Hadrick, the measure passed the House.

The day wrapped up with an introduction by Representative Will Mortenson in the House and by Senator Brandon Wipf in the Senate.



**SDCA
IN THE HOUSE**



**SDCA
IN THE SENATE**

This annual event offers a valuable opportunity to participate in the legislative process, connect with key decision makers, and serve as a visible reminder to South Dakota's 105 legislators that farmers and ranchers are impacted by the decisions they make in Pierre. SDCA leaders are committed to advocating for the cattle industry and ensuring that its members' voices are heard in Pierre.



2026 | *Legislative Update*

By the time this issue hits mailboxes, the 101st session will have all but wrapped up (except for the final date reserved to consider gubernatorial vetoes on March 30th). The legislators wrestled with the big issues like property tax relief, whether to allow or restrict data centers, how to fund the big three, and worked diligently to pass a balanced budget.

Here are the highlights on some of the bills SDCA worked on over the nine-week session. For a full recap check out our bill tracker and weekly updates at sdcattlemen.org.

CELL-CULTURED PROTEIN

House Bill 1077 was in essence a ban on cell-cultured protein products by defining them as adulterated foods. This isn't a label or information for a consumer, this is a regulatory definition that would trigger any adulterated product be pulled out of commerce. This bill became quite contentious. Proponents of the bill worried about the safety of these products and expressed concern that these products would seek to compete with traditional products having a negative impact on the cattle industry.

SDCA took a different approach. While we understand and agree that these cell-cultured science products are gross and will never compare to the REAL beef raised by our ranchers, we acknowledge that they have been approved for manufacture and sale. We fought against these products when they came to market, but when the FDA approved them for manufacture, cattle producers demanded that the inspection include the same strict inspection by USDA. We fought for fair and accurate labeling at both the state and federal level, which was a major win. We went a step further and when the Department

of Defense briefly considered funds to develop products, we fought back them and the DoD withdrew their proposal. We supported legislation at the state level that similarly prohibited state funding for these products.

So why with a history of pushing back against cell-cultured protein products, did SDCA oppose the state level ban? Because the impact of the bill was more far reaching than future cell-cultured protein in the stores, it set the stage to destroy real opportunities for farmers and ranchers now. Banning legal and approved products we don't like establishes a template for other states to ban products they don't like. SDCA argued that legislation like HB 1077 had potential to restrict markets for South Dakota farmers and ranchers in the future. A cell-based protein ban in SD today, could lead to traditionally-raised beef ban tomorrow in another state.

Proponents also cast doubt on the ability of FDA and USDA to regulate the very food safety system we rely on to ensure our products are trusted across the nation and around the world. SDCA argued that a patchwork of state regulations created confusion and distrust in that critical food safety system.

While the bill passed the House and later the Senate on a very close vote, Governor Rhoden vetoed the bill because while everyone agrees that cell-cultured protein is inferior to the real deal, California style legislation that bans legal products of manufacturing methods is not how South Dakota does business.

The legislature ultimately passed a separate bill, Senate Bill 124 to put a moratorium on cell cultivated products being manufactured or sold in South Dakota for five years. While

the risk of litigation and retaliatory legislation from other states against otherwise legal products was mitigated by this compromise, it still cast doubt on the food safety system in the U.S. which SDCA voiced in its opposition.

SDCA looked past the rhetoric and hysteria about the unknown. SDCA viewed this issue through a much wider lens, considering all the unintended consequences that had nothing to do with cell-cultured protein, but that posed REAL risks for producers.

CAFO FEE INCREASE

After two years working with the Department of Ag and Natural Resources on a fee increase to fully fund and make improvements to the CAFO program, SDCA supported Senate Bill 38 to allow for an increase on the per/head fee. The measure passed and was signed by Governor Rhoden.



BRAND BOARD

House Bill 1267 sought to expand the brand inspection statewide. SDCA policy supported the current west river inspection area and therefore opposed the bill. The measure was killed in House Ag 8-4.

House Bill 1020 raised the fee cap for the Brand Board to set their fee at a level that covers their costs. SDCA supported the bill and the \$1.65 fee cap, anticipating the fee will be set below that rate. The measure was strongly opposed by LMA, but garnered support from both SDCA and Stockgrowers and was passed and signed by the Governor.

Two new Brand Board members were appointed by Governor Rhoden. Kory Bierle and Ross Cuny came before the Senate for confirmation during the 101st session.

BEEF CHECKOFF

House Concurrent Resolution 6016 called for reform to the Beef Checkoff by supporting the OFF Act in Congress. We recognize that there is a lot of misinformation out there about the Checkoff. SDCA opposed the resolution because the

Checkoff has overwhelming support and many of the critiques of the program simply were untrue. The resolution failed 34-32 in the House.

Checkoff Facts

The original authority for the Checkoff only authorizes: promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information. It explicitly prohibits lobbying or influencing legislation.

Organizations that engage in lobbying may also have separate, non-lobbying divisions that conduct eligible work (promotion, research, etc.). When such organizations receive checkoff contracts, the funds are restricted to non-lobbying activities and are subject to USDA approval and audit. This structure has been upheld repeatedly under USDA oversight and in court challenges.

The Beef Checkoff doesn't exclusively promote American beef because the law authorizes promotion of "beef and beef products." Importers pay into the program and the program is national in scope. Promotion cannot legally discriminate based on country of origin. Country-of-origin-specific promotion would require statutory change and could conflict with trade obligations.

DIRECT SALE OF CUSTOM EXEMPT MEAT

House Bill 1064 was a trigger law that only takes effect if a federal law is changed. If the federal law ever allows for the direct sale of custom exempt meat. Proponents of the bills incorrectly claimed that it was difficult to buy inspected meat in individual cuts and this bill would allow for more access to local meat allowing producers to sell uninspected meat direct to consumers. SDCA, local processors, and several producers with thriving inspected/direct-to-consumer businesses testified against the bill because it was unnecessary, unsafe, and confusing to producers and customers. Despite strong opposition, the trigger bill passed and was signed by Governor Rhoden.





SDCA *Working for You*

Taya Runyan, SDCA Executive Director

JANUARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The first quarterly meeting of the year was held in Fort Pierre on January 29. In addition to new board member orientation and regular business, the Board welcomed Ryan Eichler from the SD Cattlemen's Foundation to report on the foundation's recent strategic plan and what the future holds for the organization. Representative Will Mortenson from District 24 took time away from the Capitol to join the group for lunch to talk about property taxes and other legislative issues that are important for farmers and ranchers. Finally, Abby Melnikoff from the NCBA membership team provided a presentation on new opportunities for student members.

The next Board of Directors Meeting will be March 18, 2026, via Zoom.

these events or being part of the committee, please reach out to the office or any board member for additional information. These events are important fundraisers for SDCA!

Feeder Committee Hosts Cattlemen's Education Day

The Feeder Committee along with SDSU, Merck, and the SD Soybean Checkoff hosted a successful one-day event in Brookings on February 19. Attendees toured the SDSU Meat Lab and enjoyed sessions on carcass quality and grading, soybeans and feeder cattle, implant rule updates, and a cattle market update. Thank you to our sponsors, the animal science grad students for a wonderful lunch, and especially Dr. Warren Rusche for the successful event!



Southern Region Director

The first order of business in 2026 was filling a vacancy on the board by appointing a new director for the Southern Region, Quinn Mortenson of Hayes, SD. Quinn ranches full time with his wife and family, is the vice president for his local Cattlemen's affiliate, and serves on the volunteer fire board. Welcome Quinn!

Ag United

Maria Buus and Dawn Butzer were tapped to attend Ag United meetings as ex-officio members. The initial focus in 2026 is working on consumer outreach efforts.

Resource Committee

Craig Bieber, Vaughn Thorstenson, Nick Wilkinson, Warren Symens, Clint Doll, Troy Hadrick, and Carl Johnson were appointed to the resource committee. This group will not only review financials and recommend a budget for FY 2027, but they are also reviewing membership dues and allied industry fees. Membership dues have not been increased since 2021.

Cattlemen's Cookout Committee

The committee is already making plans for summer events such as Dakotafest, the Agtegra Appreciation event, and the Red Power Roundup. If you are interested in volunteering at one of

Thank you, Sponsors!



MERCK



**SOUTH DAKOTA
SOYBEAN
CHECKOFF**

MERCK PARTNERSHIP

We are excited to announce a new partnership with Merck Animal Health, the Round Up the Support with Revalor and Ralgro (see back cover for additional details). Start saving your empty implant cartridges and bring them to any of our Region Roundup events or the 2026 Annual Convention. We will be announcing additional drop off sites on our website and social media platforms throughout the year!

FFA SPONSORSHIP

Once again, the SDCA is proud to sponsor the 2026 State FFA Convention, specifically the Beef Production Placement Proficiency Award. The award area recognizes FFA members who work for a cattle producer applying progressive management practices to efficiently produce and market beef. The convention will take place April 20-22 in Brookings.

SUMMER BUSINESS MEETING

In early February, SDCA leaders attended the NCBA Cattle Convention in Nashville, TN. While important work was done there, there is still much to do in the policy development process. Industry leaders from around the country will meet in Denver this July for the annual Summer Business Meeting. If

there is new policy you would like to see SDCA bring forward, please contact the office or a member of the board to discuss next steps.

Make plans to attend and help shape the future of the beef cattle industry July 12-14 at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center.



LEGISLATIVE FLY IN

This three-day event in Washington, D.C., is where cattle producers and industry leaders meet with congressional representatives and federal agencies to advocate for policies that support the beef industry. The conference includes policy briefings, issue deep dives, and Hill visits with members of the South Dakota congressional delegation to discuss key issues. It's an opportunity for members to make their voices heard and ensure the priorities of cattle producers are represented in national legislation. If you are interested in attending April 21-24 in Washington D.C., please reach out to office@sd cattlemen.org for more information and a link to register.

Updates from Capitol Hill —————

In late February, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruled that President Trump did not have authority to unilaterally impose tariffs via the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. This ruling has the potential to impact producers who have felt pressure from rising input costs and retaliatory trade measures. This ruling only impacts tariffs levied under IEEPA, but it calls into question the tariffs available to the executive branch. The exact impact to cattle producers will play out in the months to come.

Before the SCOTUS ruling was issued, several other announcements impacting trade were released by the administration:

Argentina

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative announced the signing of the United States–Argentina Agreement on Reciprocal Trade and Investment (ARTI). As part of this agreement, the U.S. will receive duty-free access up to 80,000 metric tons for all beef exports to Argentina. SDCA has concerns about the additional imports of Argentine beef. Importing beef should only be conducted with countries who have food safety and regulatory standards fully comparable to those of the United States. Anything outside of our standards should be restricted.

Taiwan

U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) announced the signing of an Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) between the United States and Taiwan. This is a significant development because it will establish duty-free access and remove non-tariff barriers for our beef exports in our sixth largest beef export market. Greater market access in southeast Asia is important as we diversify from unpredictable trade partners such as China.

Indonesia

U.S. beef exports will now have duty-free access to Indonesia. Gaining access to the Indonesian market, where U.S. beef has faced significant barriers. As part of a new trade deal, Indonesia will purchase at least 50,000 metric tons of U.S. beef annually and now recognizes USDA authority on food safety and animal health, opening more opportunities for exports.

FARM BILL 2.0

In February, House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson released the text of Farm Bill 2.0 (the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026). While many of the cattle industry priorities were addressed in the reconciliation bill last year, there are additional measures in the Farm Bill 2.0 that will have a positive impact for cattle producers. New provisions included in the Farm Bill 2.0 include:

- Improving the implementation of conservation programs.
- Expanding access to credit and increasing outdated agricultural loan limits.
- Amending veterinary grant programs to relieve ongoing rural veterinary shortages.
- Clarifying animal disease traceability eligibility under the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP).
- Establishing a five-year pilot program to help expand custom-exempt processing facilities and increase consumer access to locally raised beef.



Learn more about NCBA's Farm Bill Policy Priorities here.



ARE YOUR COWS GETTING WHAT THEY NEED?

Julie Walker

South Dakota State University Extension Beef Specialist

Cow/calf producers' goal is to have every cow produce a calf every 365 days which requires adequate nutrition. Early lactation is the highest nutritional requirement of beef cows. When looking at the order of how nutrients are used: basal metabolism, activity, growth, energy reserves, pregnancy, lactation, additional energy reserves, estrous cyclicality, initiation of pregnancy, and excess reserves; reproduction is near the bottom. It is one of the first things to get sacrificed if the female is not getting the nutrition she needs. Ensuring they are getting the nutrition they need to fulfill all of these processes starts with a balanced ration.

Balancing a ration is comprised of two parts: the animal requirements and feedstuffs nutrient content. To determine what is required by the animal, we need to know some information about them. Nutrient requirements are impacted by a number of factors including animal size, stage of production, milk production, age of animal and others. Starting with the correct weight of animals is key. If you don't have a scale on your operation, using cull cow weights is a good starting point. Energy requirements increase about 10-15% for every 200 pounds body weight. Since we don't milk beef cows, knowing the milk production level requires some estimation, A couple of tools that provide some guidance 1) milk EPD's and 2) body score condition (BCS). High milk EPDs are predictive of higher milk. It isn't an exact number but an indication if you should use low, average or a high milk level. If feeding the cows at a given level (20 pounds of milk at peak production) and BCS is decreasing, it might mean they are milking more than thought. Energy requirements increase 15-20% with each increase of 10 pounds of milk. Table 1 gives an example of how nutrients change by a few of various factors.

The second key component of a balanced ration is feed testing. Feed testing is essential to keep feed cost down without compromising cattle health or performance. In addition to cost efficiency, feed testing can mitigate productivity losses associated with underfeeding, particularly in cows approaching calving or breeding season. Using book value for feedstuff provides large opportunities for over- or under- supplying nutrients and is not recommended. A question frequently asked is, "Why is testing needed every year from the same fields?" Yearly feed analyses is important since growing and harvest conditions are changing always. Forage quality and the nutrient concentration of other feedstuffs are impacted by precipitation received, growing-degree days, timing of cutting, harvested with or without rain during drying, plus many other factors.

Feed testing is an affordable management tool with big payoffs. It gives producers the insight they need to make smart decisions—whether that means extending feed supplies, fine-tuning nutrition for each stage of production, or preventing the costly consequences of under-feeding or the unnecessary expense of over-feeding with no return on investment. Testing cost is around \$50 per sample and that generally includes protein, energy, and minerals. In most markets, not just today, gaining one additional calf will pay for feed testing and then some.

As we get into the calving season and early lactation period prior to the start of the breeding season, producers have about 45 days of delivering feed and then hopefully the pairs will be moving on to green grass. If your feeds have not been tested for nutrient content, there is still time. It can still pay to test to ensure the cows are getting everything they need at this critical time. Once the grass greens then we can start shifting out attention to our forage production plan prior to turn out to ensure adequate available biomass is critical.

Table 1. Nutrient requirement of beef cows.

Stage of Production	Current Weight, lb	DM Intake, lbs/d	TDN, % DM	Nem, Mcal/lb	CP, % DM	Ca, % DM	P, % DM
1,400 lb cow							
Mid-gestation		23.1	50	0.44	7.5	0.30	0.18
Late-gestation		25.9	54	0.51	7.5	0.27	0.18
Early lactation							
* 25 lb/d milk		33.9	59	0.57	10.3	0.30	0.20
* 30 lb/d milk		35.8	60	0.59	10.8	0.32	0.21
* 35 lb/d milk		37.6	61	0.60	11.3	0.34	0.21
Replacement Heifer (mature weight 1,400 pounds)							
Mid-gestation	900		22.4	57	0.55	8.3	0.38
Late-gestation	1020		24.7	58	0.56	8.4	0.32
Early Lactation	1120		29.2	62	0.40	10.5	0.32

* Peak milk production

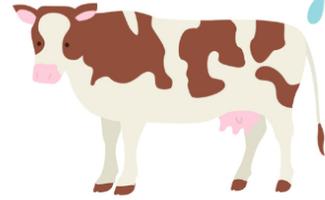
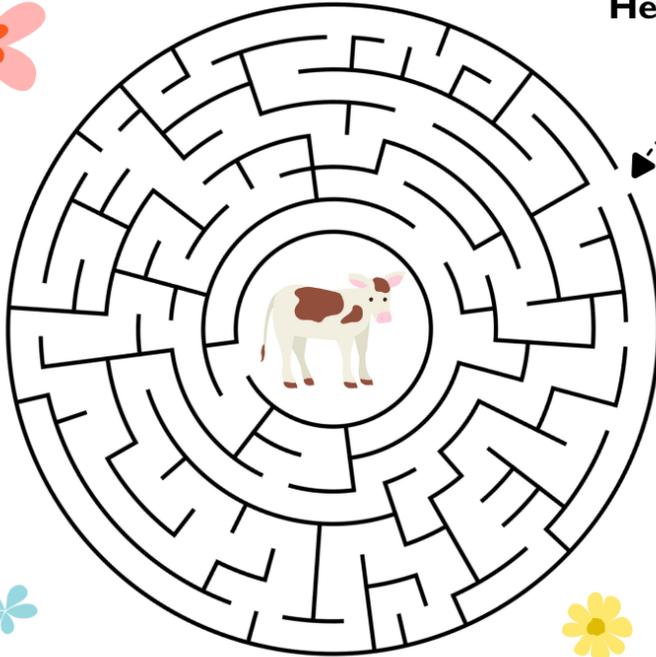
Source: Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle, 8th Revised Edition.

FOR THE

CATTLEKIDS!



Help the cow find her calf!



Answer on page 32



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DIETARY GUIDELINES

Why Do They Actually Matter?

The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) marked a major win for the beef industry. The updated guidelines nearly double the recommended daily protein intake. The DGAs build a healthy diet around whole foods, limits highly processed foods and added sugars, and prioritizes protein at every meal like nutrient-dense beef. With the pyramid flipped, beef is placed at the top alongside other whole foods such as vegetables, fruits, and healthy fats.

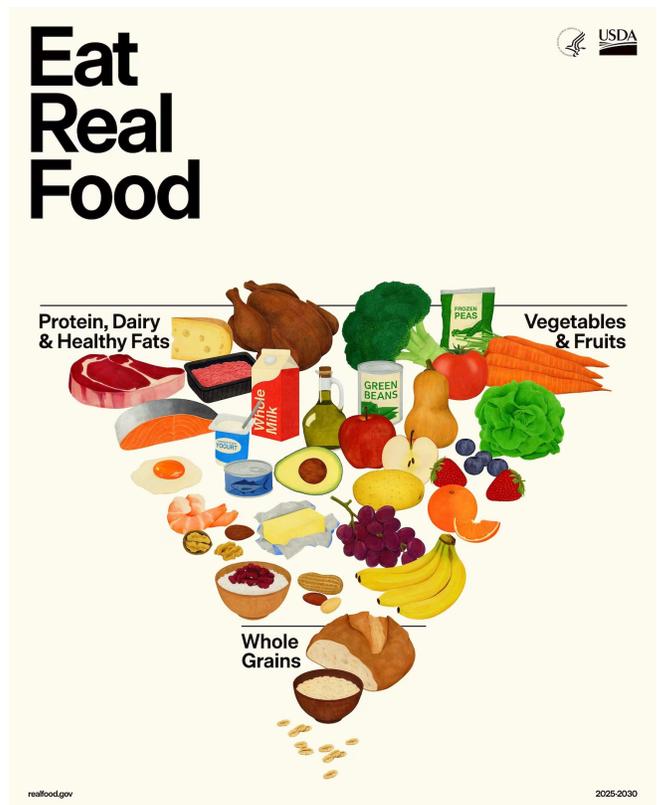
While cattle groups around the country recognize this as a victory, many folks wonder – Why does this matter? Most Americans aren’t scrolling through the DGAs before heading to the grocery store, but, as cattle producers, there are important reasons we should care about these changes.

First, it is encouraging to see an administration that sees red meat as a valuable, nutrient dense food, not a threat. For decades, the beef industry was criticized for saturated fat content and unfairly linked to heart disease and diabetes. Despite strong scientific evidence that beef belongs in a healthy diet, many previous administrations dismissed that data. Now, federal policymakers are paying attention and acknowledge the decades of Checkoff funded research done on beef nutrition. Next time you hear rhetoric claiming the Beef Checkoff doesn’t impact our industry in a positive way – remember how your investment paid off in a big way in the new DGAs.

Second, DGAs matter because they serve as the basis for federal nutrition programs, school meal standards, and public health messaging. While the average American doesn’t look at the food pyramid when making their grocery list, the DGAs are the guide for meals served to millions of Americans every day. Federal nutrition programs impact millions of Americans. Citizens who rely on SNAP and WIC programs will have more access to purchasing beef. Our children in public schools will be served more nutritious meals that incorporate beef. Prisoners, the United States Military, and other federally funded programs will follow

these guidelines for meals served. More people consuming our product is a massive win for our industry.

The updated DGAs are a step forward for our industry. When national nutrition policy recognizes beef as an essential part of a healthy diet, it strengthens our credibility, expands our market, and ensures the next generation grows up with access to wholesome, high-quality protein. This is the kind of progress that doesn’t happen by accident, it happens because producers invest in research. The 2025–2030 guidelines affirm what we’ve always known: beef fuels a healthy diet. That’s something every cattle producer should be proud of.



Affiliate Snapshot



The Kingsbury County Cattlemen's Association welcomed more than 300 attendees to De Smet for its Annual Meeting and Banquet, an evening that showcased the strength of the local cattle industry and its continued impact on the community.

From meaningful conversations to excellent entertainment, the gathering highlighted the important role Kingsbury County cattlemen and women play in advancing the beef industry and supporting the next generation of agricultural leaders. Guests enjoyed a prime rib dinner while conducting the association's annual business meeting, followed by scholarship presentations recognizing students for their commitment to agriculture and education.

A major highlight of the program was the continued expansion of the Beef-to-School program, an initiative that provides county schools with fresh, locally sourced beef. Made possible through the generosity of animal and processing sponsors, the program ensures students have access to high-quality protein while strengthening the local agricultural economy. The Kingsbury County Cattlemen's efforts reflect their commitment to promoting beef and building strong community partnerships.

The impact of the event reached far beyond the banquet hall. Thanks to the generosity of attendees, the live auction raised more than \$6,000 for support of local FFA chapters and \$6,350 for the Beef-to-School fund through auction items. The funds going towards further strengthening programs that benefits area producers and students.

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association is proud to recognize the Kingsbury County Cattlemen's Association as an outstanding affiliate. Their leadership, community involvement, and commitment to promoting beef continue to make a meaningful difference.



SOUTH DAKOTA CATTLEMEN'S FOUNDATION — UPDATE —

HUMAN NUTRITION STUDY LAUNCH

A BIG STEP FORWARD FOR BEEF RESEARCH

One of the most exciting things happening right now is the launch of a groundbreaking human nutrition study focused on the health impacts of a beef-centric diet. This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT), and it is designed to provide the first high-quality evidence on how a healthy beef-centric diet may support metabolic health and overall well-being in adults with metabolic dysfunction.

The timing of this research could not be more important. According to information released, more than one-third of U.S. adults, or 115.2 million Americans, are prediabetic, and metabolic syndrome affects 42% of U.S. adults.^{1,2} Lifestyle factors like diet and physical activity play a major role in improving metabolic health, and there is growing interest among consumers in higher-protein and animal-based eating patterns.

This study is being funded through a research grant provided by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, along with co-funding partners including the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation, the Texas Beef Council, and the Nebraska Beef Council.

The research is being conducted by SGS Nutrasource, a globally recognized research institution. The study will evaluate key markers including glycemic control using continuous glucose monitoring, inflammation through biomarker analysis, and lipid-related risk factors through an advanced lipid panel. It will also measure quality of life and adherence, which is an important part of understanding whether a dietary approach is realistic and sustainable.

Participants will consume 70% of their daily energy intake from beef for five weeks, with remaining calories coming from other protein and fat sources and low-carbohydrate foods such as berries and vegetables. The study diet excludes all grain foods.

Ryan Eichler, President of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation shared, "Nutrient-dense beef is foundational to most people's lifestyles, so we're excited to support research to better understand how a predominantly beef diet may help improve the health of millions of Americans."

This is the type of research that helps move the conversation forward and ensures the beef industry continues to be backed by credible science. As more details become available about the human nutrition study, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation will share.



Mitchell Livestock –

Leaving a Legacy

Since the earliest days of selling livestock, local livestock auctions have played a vibrant role in communities across the state. From the trucks bringing cattle to and from the sale to the people in the stands to bustling cafes serving up hot beef sandwiches, each aspect of the sale barn connects and unites local communities and cattle enthusiasts.

Mitchell Livestock owner, Jarrid Herrmann, says that local livestock auctions have a multi-faceted value that shouldn't be overlooked.

“Nationwide this is what the markets are based on - cash sales,” Herrmann said. “It’s a hub for the community, good for the local economy and true price discovery starts right here.”

Originally from Dodge City, Kansas, Herrmann brings a wealth of knowledge to the South Dakota cattle industry. He comes from a strong family background in numerous livestock endeavors tracing back to the beginnings of Natural Beef in Dodge City and the Ford County Feedyard. Herrmann began his own story in 2017 by purchasing Cherokee Sales Company in Cherokee, Oklahoma, with the help of his wife Patrice and partners Brad and Abby Lewis. While he loved serving the cattlemen and women in wheat pasture country, Herrmann said he wanted to diversify and connect more people. “The northern market has always intrigued me,” Herrmann said. “I think they have some of the best cattle in the world right here

in South Dakota.”

Not only would a move north help address the calf deficit he saw in the south, it would also allow for more leverage during times of drought and provide a way to build community between cattlemen across the country. When there was an opportunity to purchase Mitchell Livestock in 2022, Herrmann decided it was time to make his way to South Dakota.

Now, after nearly four years in Mitchell, Herrmann said they have continued building upon what was started years before and introduced new ideas for growth, but he extends most of the credit back to the salebarn's roots.

Since the facility opened on September 15, 1978, there have been more than a few faces who have built it into what it is



today. Laney Edwards, the face and voice of the Mitchell Livestock Auction; Ray Henderson, who built the facility and started the thriving cow side of the business; and previous owners including Joe Varner, Don Stang, and Marion Rus have all had an influence on the sale barn from the past to the present.

Moving forward, Herrmann is bringing their team's core values to the front and center.

"People know what to expect when they come here," Herrmann said. "Consistency, integrity, and urgency: those are three very important things we want to live out."

In practice, Herrmann has implemented those values in weekly sales team meetings, facility updates, and improving technology to provide their customers with the highest level of service. He hopes that his customers know when they unload their cattle, they will be taken care of the same way every time and when they start a sale it is done professionally and the same way each time. In the future, he hopes to introduce additional producer education opportunities covering livestock risk protection, weather forecasts, and a variety of other important industry topics.

Investing in the cattle industry in South Dakota is top of mind for the Mitchell Livestock team. Herrmann says that his encouragement to cattlemen and women is simple:

DO THE RIGHT THING WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING, [AND] WHATEVER DOLLAR YOU PUT IN YOUR CATTLE IS GOING TO PAY OUT.

-Jarrid Herrmann

"Make sure you're producing a product that other people are wanting. We want to continue making you money because that's what keeps us in business," Herrmann said. "I highly encourage you to reach out to your sales representative, make a marketing plan, and continue educating yourself."

At the end of the day, Herrmann's goal is to serve the producers of today while creating opportunities for the next generation. While there are many obstacles to getting a start in agriculture, he says it's more important than ever to communicate with your local sale barn, involve the young people, and invest in the future of the industry.

Herrmann and his wife have two small daughters of their own who have inspired his vision for what he wants to accomplish.

"The overall goal is to provide them an opportunity to be involved in agriculture," Herrmann said. "The barrier to entry

is so high but I want to provide a place for people to get asked 'how did you get that job?' That's a great place to work."

Building on the past, strengthening the present, and investing in the future of the cattle industry are key components of Mitchell Livestock and will continue to guide their team for years to come.



CALVES FROM OTHER SOURCES

Matthew Diersen, PhD

Griffith Chair in Agricultural Finance at South Dakota State University

A few longer-run trends continue to dominate the supply-side story of cattle in South Dakota. Beef cow numbers continue to decline. The number of feeder cattle outside of feedlots has remained stable. Some inputs remain stable relative to the higher observed cattle prices. These aspects are considered below as they are either directly or indirectly related to the sources of calves.



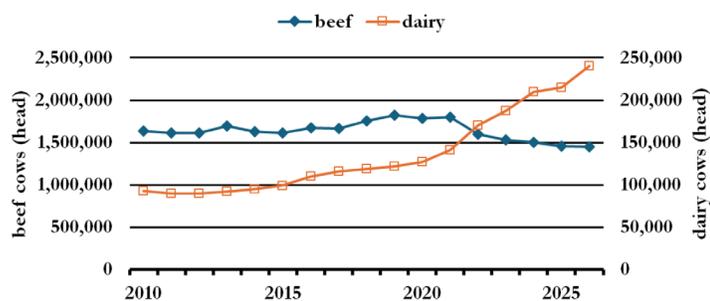
combines the number of non-replacement heifers, steers weighing more than 500 pounds, and calves weighing less than 500 pounds. The number on feed is subtracted, leaving a residual total outside of feedlots. Different cow types explain a little of the recent growth. The increase in dairy cows exceeded the decrease in beef cows from 2025 to 2026. Heavier weights, or adding more weight to existing animals, may be

Earlier in 2026, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released cattle inventory estimates with breakdowns at the state level. There were some minor revisions to the 2025 estimates also. The total inventory level for South Dakota was revised slightly lower, mainly among heavy steers and among calves.

another factor. If a feedlot or backgrounding operation feeds animals longer, then those animals will remain in inventory for a longer time. Slaughter weights, for example, have continued to get heavier at the national level.

One trend that has not changed in recent years has been a continued slow decline in the number of beef cows that have calved (figure 1). During the early 2010s, beef cow numbers declined at the national level but had been steady in South Dakota. Since 2021, the number of beef cows in South Dakota has declined, reaching a total last seen in 1977 following a severe drought. Fewer cows mean fewer calves. Since 2021 in South Dakota, the decline in beef cows has been partially offset by a sharp expansion in dairy cows. Historically, the number of beef cows was more than ten times the number of dairy cows. Although calves from dairy cows are becoming more prevalent, they still represent a small share of the overall number of calves.

Another source of calves and feeder cattle are inshipments. These are the net level of cattle brought into the state, estimated annually by NASS, mainly from state-level sources. For example, some calves from western states may be bought by feedlots in South Dakota. Some calves from South Dakota are bought by feedlots in southern states. The level of inshipments has been steady, suggesting calves from other locations continue to flow into South Dakota (figure 2). The lagged nature of this measure, the 2025 total will not be released until late April 2026, is a limitation for decision making.

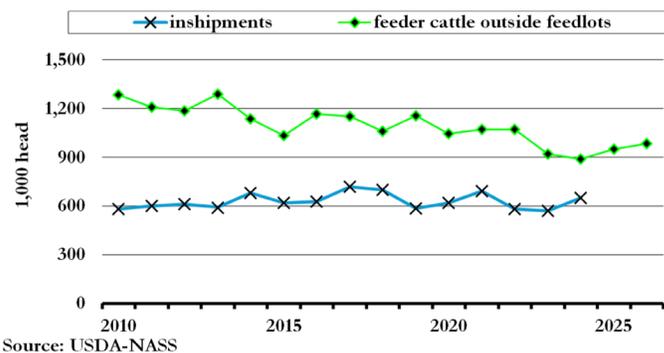


Source: USDA-NASS

Figure 1. South Dakota beef cow and dairy cow inventory levels, 2010-2026.

The number of cattle on feed has been constant for the past decade. As of January 1, 2026, the number on feed was 435,000 head in South Dakota. Large feedlots, those with more than 1,000 head, had a total inventory of 230,000 head. Small feedlots had a total inventory of 205,000 head. The absolute decline in beef cow numbers has been reflected in smaller calf crops, especially in recent years.

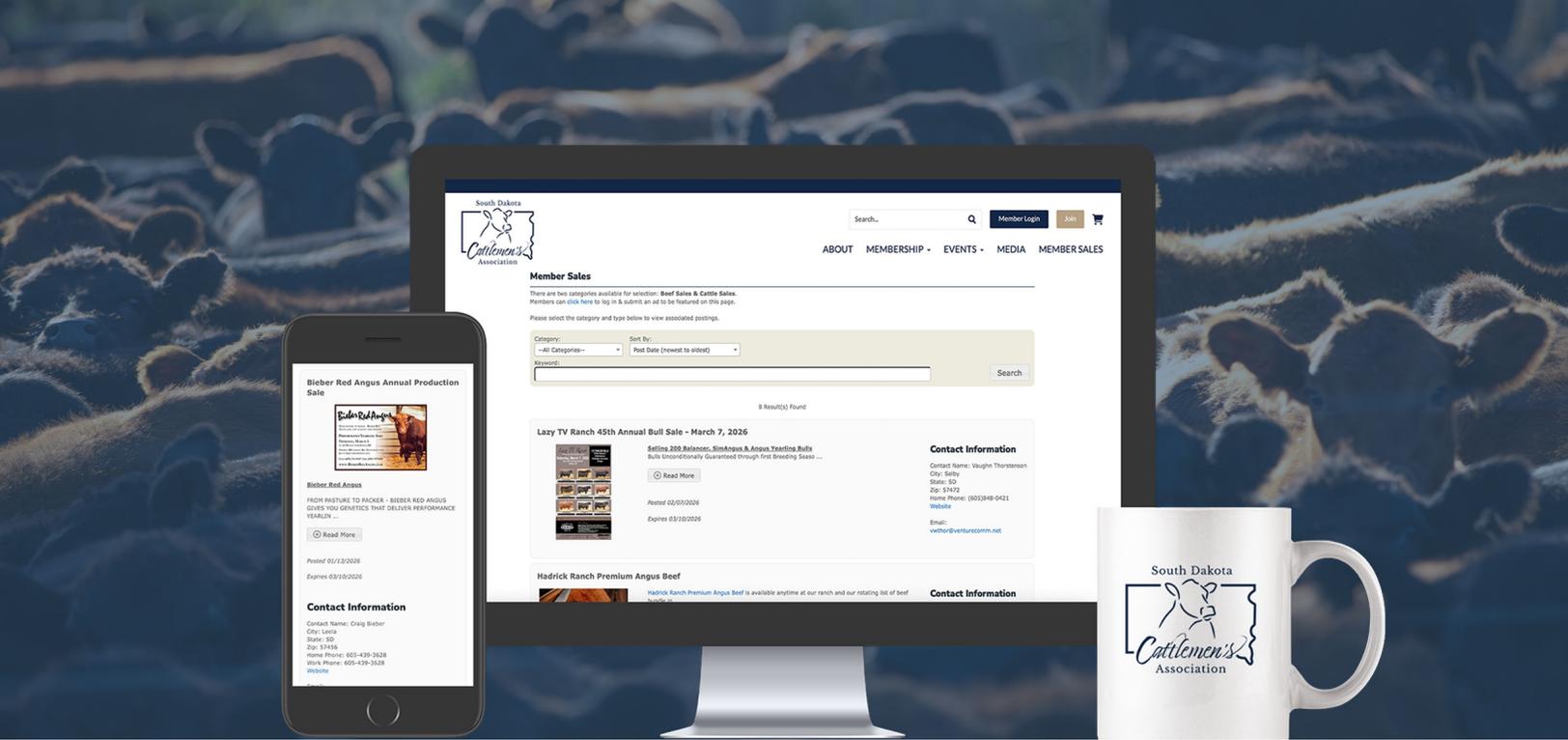
The number of feeder cattle outside of feedlots has been increasing slightly for the past two years (figure 2). That tally



Source: USDA-NASS

Figure 2. South Dakota cattle inventory levels, 2010-2026.

Calf and feeder cattle values reflect parts of the fed cattle supply chain. Corn and hay prices have fallen after better production has eased supply pressure. Receiving a little less attention is the price for pasture and forage. Pasture rent from NASS for South Dakota fell slightly in 2025 to \$31.00 per acre. The grazing fee rate from NASS for South Dakota on an animal unit month basis was up slightly in 2025 to \$36.50. Fewer beef cows would mean less demand for grazing, putting downward pressure on fees. Low grazing costs, in turn, could facilitate cowherd expansion or running yearlings on grass.



SDCA MEMBER SALES SITE *is Back and Stronger than Ever*

Cattle and bull sales are ramping up across South Dakota, and the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association is excited to announce the return of a valuable free tool for our producers: SDCA's Member Sales Site.

This refreshed platform was built to better connect SDCA members with buyers, neighbors, and consumers looking for high-quality South Dakota cattle and beef. Whether you're marketing registered bull semen, promoting an upcoming sale, or offering locally raised beef direct to consumers, the Member Sales Site puts your listings in an easy-to-find, public location on SDcattlemen.org.

HOW IT WORKS

Submitting a listing is quick and straightforward:

1. Log in at SDcattlemen.org using your SDCA member account.
2. Complete a short submission form with sale details or beef offerings.
3. Submit! SDCA staff will review and publish your listing to the public Member Sales page.
4. Once live, your listing becomes visible to potential buyers across the region and beyond.

SDCA members, now is the perfect time to take advantage of this free opportunity. Showcase your cattle, promote your beef, and reach a wider audience. SDCA Member Sales Site spotlights the high standards and dedicated work that define South Dakota's cattle business.



**SCAN TO VIEW
MEMBER SALES**



A Night with the Stockyards



Advocating for the number one industry in South Dakota is no small task. It encompasses a statewide effort from farmers, ranchers, businesses, organizations, and so many others that relay the story of how food gets from the farm to the table. The Stockyards Ag Experience was founded on the mission of “connecting agriculture to our lives.” Located in downtown Sioux Falls, the Stockyards Ag Experience was created by a group of forward-thinking agriculturists to honor the past, present, and future of agriculture in South Dakota and provide experiential learning opportunities for all visitors.



To support that critical work, industry leaders and agriculture supporters gathered on February 12 for The Stockyards Soiree celebration. According to the Stockyards Ag Experience Executive Director, Abby Bischoff, the event is a reflection not only of the organization but of the community behind it. “This might have been the most energized year yet for The Stockyards Soirée. From the stories Jim (Woster) shared, to the attendees that filled the room to the creative, locally sourced food we enjoyed, the event made it clear our mission is alive and well.” Bischoff said. “Connecting people to agriculture is fueled by our passionate supporters and we are honored to do that work.”



Since it began in 2017, the Stockyards Ag Experience which showcases the history of how the stockyards made Sioux Falls the amazing and bustling town it is today, has welcomed people from all 50 states and 46 countries. The South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association was proud to be an event partner of The Stockyard Soiree and supports continued statewide agriculture advocacy efforts.

A black bottle of Kinzie Ghost BBQ Sauce with a black cap and a spray nozzle. The label features the Kinzie logo and the words 'GHOST BBQ SAUCE'.

Kinzie

Ghost BBQ Beef Ribs

Ingredients

- 1 slab beef ribs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup Kinzie Ghost BBQ Sauce, plus more for dipping

Instructions

1. Prep the Ribs: Pat the ribs dry with a paper towel. Peel off the membrane from the back of the ribs, then cut into sections that will fit into your pressure cooker. Season generously with salt and pepper.
2. Cook in the Pressure Cooker: Place the onion, celery, and water into the pressure cooker pot. Add the seasoned ribs on top. Secure the lid, select High Pressure, and set the cook time for 15 minutes.
3. When the cook time ends, turn off the pressure cooker. Let the pressure release naturally for 10 minutes, then perform a quick release to release any remaining pressure.
4. Finish in the Oven or on the Grill: Carefully remove the ribs and transfer them to a baking sheet or directly to a preheated grill or oven at 350–400°F (medium-high heat).
5. Brush one side of the ribs with Kinzie Ghost BBQ Sauce and cook for 3 minutes. Flip, brush the other side, and cook for another 3 minutes.
6. Slather with extra Kinzie Ghost BBQ Sauce or serve the sauce on the side for dipping. Serve immediately and enjoy!

Pro Tip: For extra smoky depth, finish the ribs over real charcoal and let them rest 5 minutes before serving.

SDCA AFFILIATE CONTACTS

Black Hills: Britton Blair, Vale • 605-347-0426 • britton.blair@yahoo.com

Central: Derek Chase, Huron • 605-354-3695 • derekchase07@gmail.com

Clark Hamlin: Chance Popham, Hayti • 605-880-2717 • P4cattleco@gmail.com

Davison-Hanson: Calli Williams, Letcher • 605-695-1990 • callicwilliams@gmail.com

East Central: Andy Dupraz, White • 605-693-3191 • adupraz@itctel.com

Kingsbury: Nick Wilkinson, Lake Preston • 605-203-0711 • wilkinsonn77@gmail.com

McCook-Miner-Lake: Pete Hanson, Fedora • 605-421-8251 • hansenrancher@gmail.com

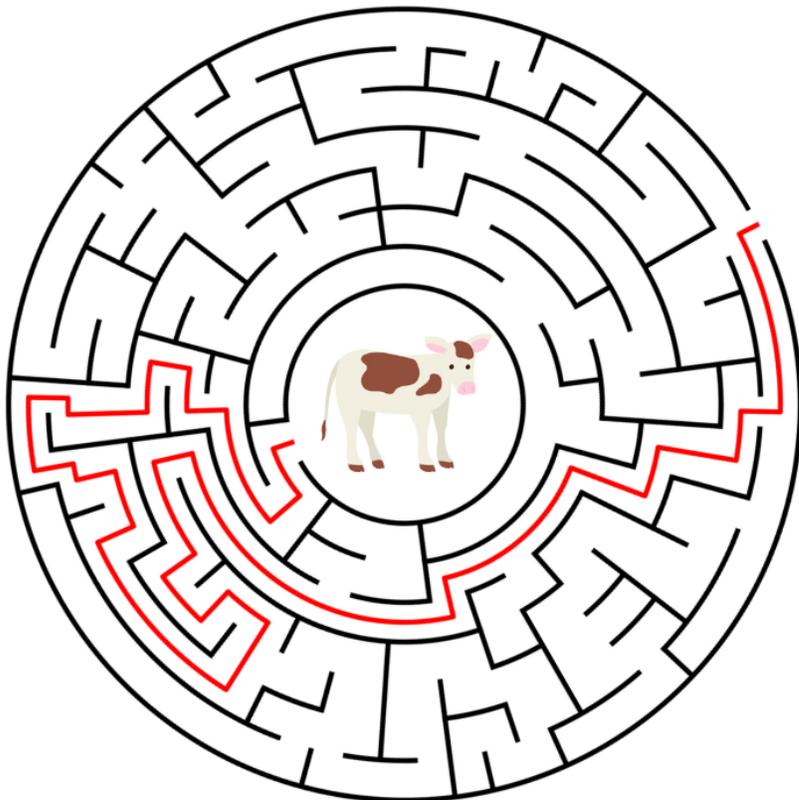
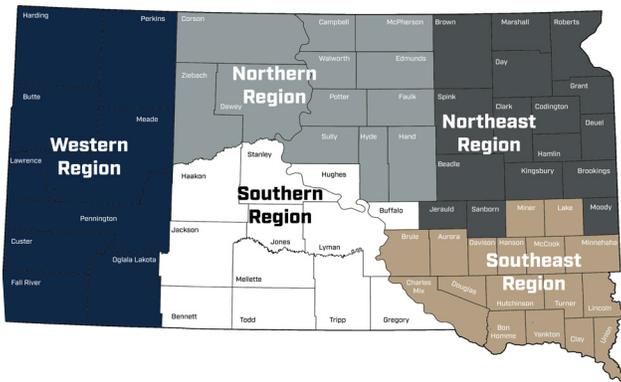
North Central: Bryan Gill, Timber Lake • 701-730-0134 • bigredgenetics@hotmail.com

Northern Oahe: Jay Jones, Trail City • 605-845-3082 • jones@westriv.com

Sioux Basin: Carl Johnson, Dell Rapids • 605-651-5064 • cjohnsonfarm@outlook.com

South Central: Kent Geppert, Kimball • 605-778-6227 • geppert@midstatesd.net

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Puzzle on page 23

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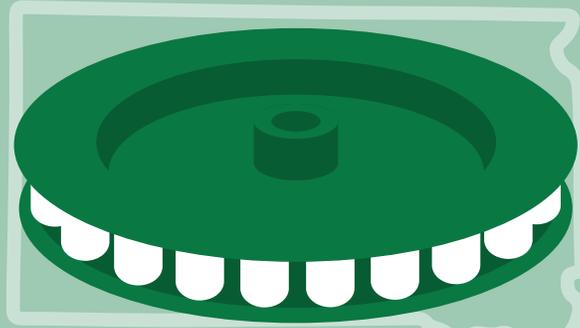
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