

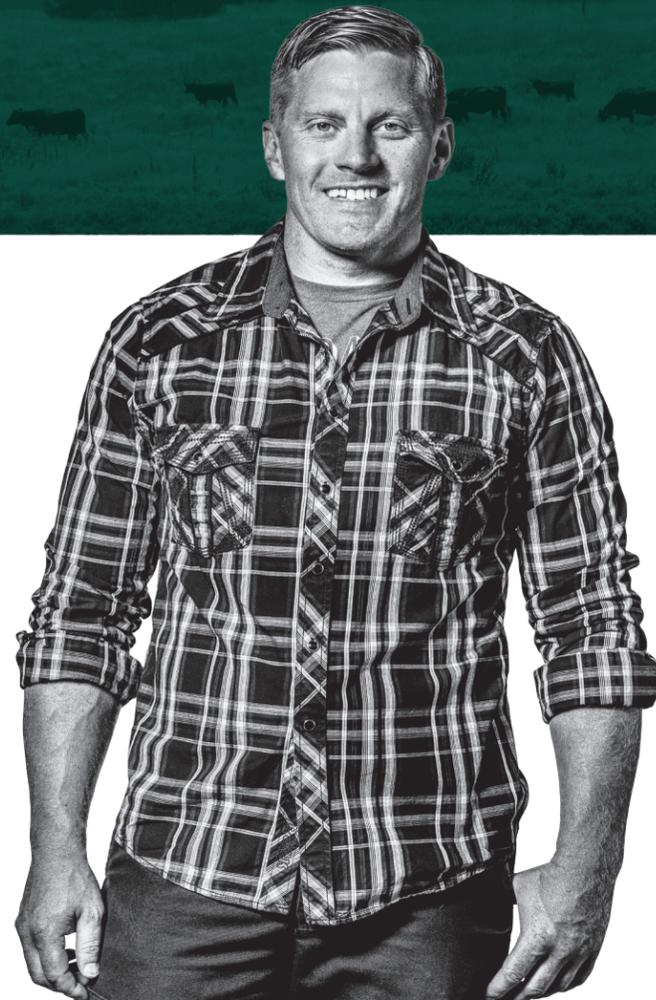
Summer 2025

THE *South Dakota* CATTLEMAN

The official publication of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association



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- July 7 - 9: NCBA Summer Business Meeting | San Diego, CA
- July 16: Mitchell Region Roundup | Mitchell
- August 2: Agtegra Customer Appreciation Event Beef Booth | Huron
- August 5: Gettysburg Region Roundup | Gettysburg
- August 11: Leopold Conservation Award Tour at Stomprud Ranch | Mudd Butte
- August 15: Full Circle Ag Cattlemen's Cookout | Aberdeen
- August 19 - 21: Dakotafest | Mitchell
- August 27 - Sept. 1: State Fair | Huron
- Sept. 14: Spearfish Region Roundup | Spearfish

SDBIC Events

- July 10: Keloland Beef Burger Showdown Winner Announcement on Keloland Living
- July 11: Stockyards Ag Experience Summer Carnival | Sioux Falls
- August 16: Brown County Fair Beef Day | Aberdeen
- August 19-21: Dakotafest | Mitchell
- August 27 - Sept. 1: South Dakota State Fair | Huron



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 with a circulation over 1,000.

Advertising deadline is the 5th 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.





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From the Cattle Pen

Warren Symens, SDCA President

It's often difficult to write an interesting, relevant article or find motivation to think of an idea. Sometimes we are provided themes to guide us. The most recent prompt was seedstock marketing. Finally -- something I know a thing or three about.

As I write this, my boys and I just finished sorting and hauling heifers to their respective paddocks and clean-up bulls, and soon we'll pull CIDRs on the first half of the artificially inseminated cows. This is where marketing really begins; with the breeding decisions that will affect our herd for many generations of bulls and replacement heifers, as well as our customers who place their confidence in our decisions and purchase our genetics for their herds.

An interesting point I came across recently was about the power of small decisions. When asked about time travel, people say that going back would be scary, because one small decision or action could change their future forever. However, most people feel powerless to affect change in the present. There's no more obvious way to prove this than looking at the cattle business. One bull bought 15 years ago, or one cow culled that could've produced the next great cow, can change things forever. When you're marketing genetics, you're marketing your decisions based on knowledge and desire to move the industry forward. Similarly, the decisions made by the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, even the smallest ones are made with the same thoughtfulness and study.

I've mentioned before that we're in the people business. A good seedstock producer knows that it doesn't matter if they have the best genetics on earth. If they don't have good customer service and don't stand behind their product, they won't be in business very long. Most seedstock producers offer at least a one-year breeding guarantee on bulls, as well as free delivery within reason. These are just two ways breeders provide more than just cattle to their customers.

I was three years old when my family held our first production sale in 1981. Since then, I've witnessed the tools available for cattle and producers change and increase exponentially. At our operation, we offer genomically enhanced expected progeny differences (EPDs), which means every calf has a DNA sample on file that adds accuracy to the data. In fact, we include an updated supplement sheet on sale day that includes carcass ultrasound data that can't be collected

before the catalog goes to print. As technology increases, so does our ability to market predictability to buyers.

Another example of technology that may seem obvious, but that has only recently been utilized is online auction services. All cattle are available for viewing up to and including sale day, but it's vastly different than in years past. We may have been one of the last seedstock operations to stop running bulls through a sale ring and instead hired an online auction company to put up flat screens. Our repeat customers from around the country have never set foot on our operation or seen the cattle they buy in person before they bought them. Repeat buyers are interested in honesty and integrity as much as anything.

Have I mentioned we're in the people business? Offering tools and customer service is important, but if we misrepresent the cattle we're marketing, there won't be repeat customers. Cattle that are ready to breed, structurally sound enough to continue to mature without breaking down, easy to handle, and make the breeding season without dropping too far in condition, are a critical part of marketing. While we can talk about it, advertise it, and announce it from the block on sale day, it must be proven in the pasture. That's how we keep producers satisfied and coming back.

Thinking back to our first sale, I can't say enough about the foundation my dad and his brothers laid, and the program they built on that foundation. I always thought one of the best decisions they made was to build an on-site sale barn at our farm. Now, it's easier to host a sale with video instead of a live ring, but those packed bleachers of the past were the built the customer base of today. Customers who join us in person get a little added benefit, because the local ladies from the church bake pies so the folks can get the full sale barn experience: hot beef dinner and a slice of homemade pie.

Our industry can only be successful by marketing itself to consumers using every tool available, being involved in rapidly developing technologies, and having honesty and integrity in all that we do. I'll always believe that we as farmers and ranchers are beef producers, who raise cattle, and are in the people business.

Symens Brothers
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Foundation Invests in the Next Generation of Beef Leaders

South Dakota's beef industry is evolving, and the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation (SDCF) is investing in the next generation to carry it into the future through scholarship opportunities.

Since 2016, the SDCF has offered a total of \$125,000 in annual scholarships to South Dakota students pursuing post-secondary education at in-state institutions. Scholarships are available to students who intend to continue their careers in the industry, whether in beef production or supporting sectors.

"We award five scholarships each year," said Ryan Eichler, SDCF President. "There's always strong interest in the scholarship opportunity, and more importantly, strong candidates."

The scholarship impact is now visible across the state. Many former scholarship recipients have found careers in the industry, whether returning to their family operation or pursuing new industry roles. "It's exciting to see our scholarship alumni becoming leaders in the field and some have even become Cattlemen's members. That's the

kind of long-term outcome we hoped for."

Recently, the Foundation expanded its scholarship program and partnered with Lake Area Technical College to offer up to \$14,000 awarded to one new, first-year student pursuing a future in South Dakota's beef industry. In return, the recipient commits to working the state's beef industry for a least three years post-graduation.

"Our first recipient is now working as a herdsman for a ranch in western South Dakota," said Eichler. "We need more people with hands-on, technical skills in production agriculture, and this scholarship is making that happen."

SDCF's scholarships aren't just financial awards; they're opportunities for meaningful careers and ongoing involvement in South Dakota's largest industry.

"These young people are passionate, capable, and committed to our state's agricultural future," said Eichler. "We're proud to help get them started and even more proud to see where they go."



Miles Hoffman
Animal Science | South Dakota State University

"I was very honored to be chosen as the recipient of the 2024 Cattlemen's Foundation Prime Time Gala Scholarship! I take great pride in understanding and advocating for the success of the South Dakota cattle industry and being recognized by the industry's leaders at the Prime Time Gala was a great honor to me!"



Henry Wright
Animal Science | Mitchell Technical College

"This scholarship helped me financially, but to have the support of South Dakota beef producers and businesses pushes me to thrive inside and outside the classroom. I'm excited to be a part of the South Dakota beef industry and return their investment in me."



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The Leave Your Mark Legacy Fund is a voluntary fundraising campaign to support specific SDCA programs and initiatives selected by the SDCA Board of Directors that will advance the interests of cattlemen across our state and ensuring the sustainability and growth of the organization. The SDCA Board of Directors has elected to earmark contributions to the Leave Your Mark Legacy Fund in fiscal year 2026 to support the administration of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Leadership Academy. Contributions to the Leave Your Mark Legacy Fund are tax deductible, thanks to the partnership between the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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Grounded in **FAMILY**, Focused on **OPPORTUNITY**

Meet Bill Even, Commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development



The other evening, my son snapped a photo that really stuck with me. It was of his Angus cows and calves under a rainbow on our family farm near Humboldt. It reminded me of the hope and optimism that define agriculture and the people who work the land. That spirit keeps us moving forward—through the highs and lows—year after year.

That sense of optimism has been a constant thread throughout my life, from working on our fifth-generation family farm to serving in roles that span agriculture policy, law, and business. My great-grandfather homesteaded our farm in Dakota Territory in 1884, and that legacy has been carried forward by each generation through hard work, resilience, and a strong commitment to community.

Growing up in South Dakota, I learned that agriculture isn't just a job—it's a way of life. It's about family, neighbors, and communities coming together to help each other out. Pitching in to fix equipment, serving on the school board, and lending a hand to neighbors are just a few ways South Dakotans support one another. Those moments taught me the values that continue to guide me today.

I began a new chapter in May when I returned home to South Dakota to serve as Commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED). I'm honored that Governor Larry Rhoden has entrusted me with this role at a time when our state is truly Open for Opportunity. Our state's economy is strong. In fact, we've led the nation by winning back-to-back Governor's Cups for economic development. Those are big shoes to fill, and our GOED team is up to the challenge to maintain that momentum and carry it forward. Working alongside Governor Rhoden, a leader who understands the importance of agriculture and economic growth, makes this work especially meaningful.

South Dakota's beef industry is at the heart of our state's economy and heritage. With 1.46 million beef cattle grazing our pastures, we rank fifth in the nation for beef production and first in beef cows per person. But beyond the numbers, it's the families who raise these cattle that make our industry strong.

Over 9,500 small family operations with fewer than 500 head of cattle are the backbone of this sector. These ranchers are more than just producers; they're the volunteer firefighters,

the youth sports coaches, the folks serving on county commissions and shaping ag policy. They're the ones who keep our communities strong, safe, and free.

Having served as South Dakota's Secretary of Agriculture from 2007 to 2010, I've seen firsthand how the cattle industry supports our economy—from the jobs it creates to the communities it sustains. Later, during my time at the National Pork Board, I had the privilege of working alongside farmers across the country who faced similar challenges and opportunities. Through my work on animal health initiatives, market development, and sustainability efforts, I always carried with me the lessons learned from my roots on a South Dakota farm.

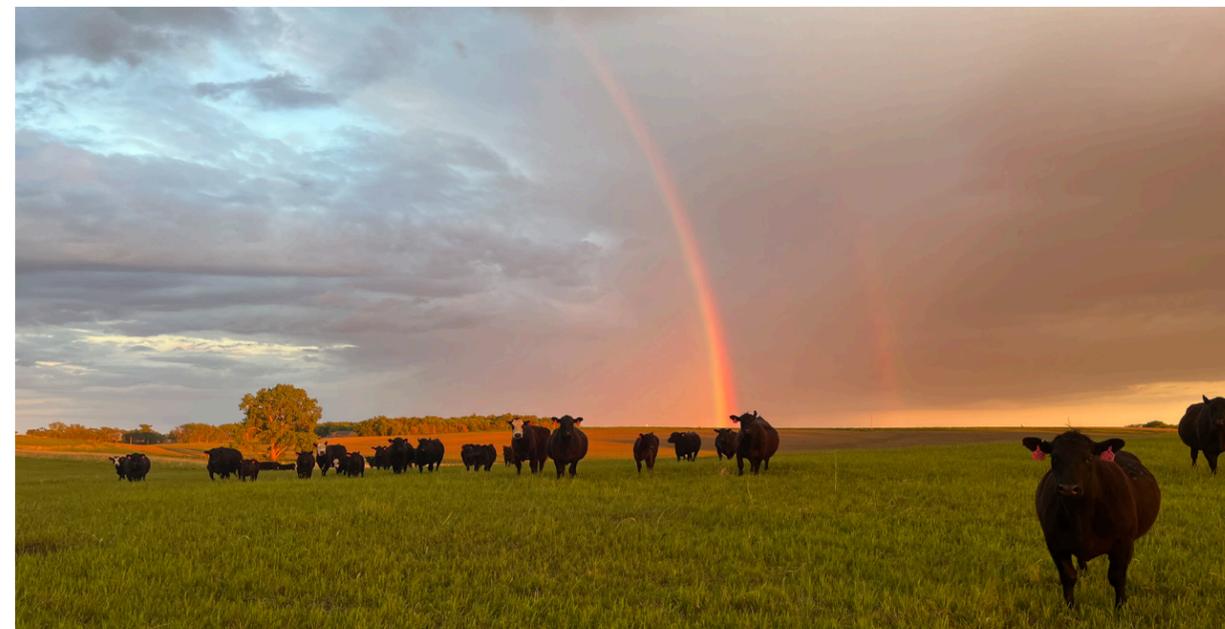
Those lessons shape how I approach economic development today. At GOED, I'm committed to making sure our state's business climate works hand-in-hand with agriculture. That means investing in things like good roads, broadband access, and reliable utilities—things every rancher and small business owner depends on. It also means working to create opportunities so we can add value to what we produce and keep more dollars right here in our communities.

Like any good cattle operation, success requires planning, teamwork, and a respect for the people who came before us. That's the mindset I bring to my role at GOED. We're working hard to build a team that supports South Dakota as a place where businesses and communities can thrive. We're here to help local businesses expand, connect ranchers to new markets, and listen to what people need.

One of the most important things I've seen throughout my career is that success in agriculture is built on teamwork. From harvest crews working side by side, to families sharing meals in the field, to neighbors stepping in when times get tough, it's always the people who make the difference. That same spirit is what drives me every day in this new role.

As I get settled into this position, I'm excited to work alongside so many of you who make South Dakota's cattle industry strong. I'm grateful for the chance to bring my background, my experience, and my commitment to agriculture and economic development back home. Together, we can build on South Dakota's proud beef industry and create more opportunities for the next generation.

Thank you for everything you do to care for your animals, your land, and your neighbors. Here's to a strong, hopeful, and prosperous year ahead. Let's keep South Dakota's beef industry and our entire state strong, safe, and free.



Angus cows and calves under a rainbow on the Even family farm — a reminder that sometimes the real pot of gold is the herd itself.



Bill Even on his family farm near Humboldt, South Dakota, checking cows on corn stalks after harvest.

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Inshipments & Prices

Matthew Diersen, PhD

Griffith Chair in Agricultural Finance at South Dakota State University



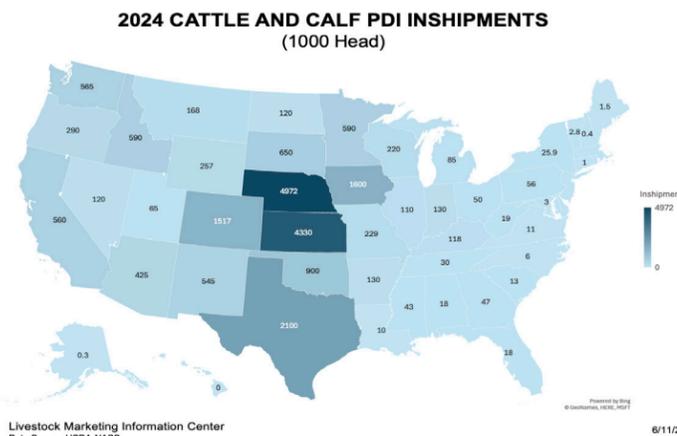
Smaller cattle inventory levels have been the trend in South Dakota and across the United States. That means that feedlots, concentrated in several states, have had fewer cattle to compete for to keep lots running efficiently. Some insights into inventory movements can be drawn from NASS's annual Meat Animals Production, Disposition, and Income report. State-level data are in the report for beginning inventory levels, calf crops, and inshipments (or cattle from other states). From that, farm slaughter, death loss, and marketings are subtracted giving ending inventory levels. The report also provides a breakdown of pounds of cattle (think liveweight) produced and marketed.

Inshipments would be a tally of cattle that came from some other state and could be calves, feeders, cows or bulls. In a typical year, most states see some level of inshipments (see figure). In 2024 the states in the northeast had low volumes of inshipments and Hawaii had none. States with large inshipments totals, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Iowa, and Colorado, are large feedlots states. Texas has a large calf crop, limiting demand for cattle from other states. Inshipments were also high in California, Idaho, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Washington. Neither New Mexico nor Minnesota is reported separately in Cattle on Feed reports.

Specifically in South Dakota, the number of inshipments during 2024 was higher than in 2023 and 2022, but typical for the past decade. The death loss in 2024 was the lowest in the past decade and lower than the national average. Production and marketings, at 1.6 and 1.9 billion pounds respectively, were both down from 2023. However, higher prices resulted in an increase in cash receipts. The ratio of production to marketings in South Dakota, at 0.84, is higher than in feedlot states like Nebraska and Kansas and lower than in cow-calf states like Missouri and Florida.

NASS announced they were again conducting the mid-year inventory survey and releasing the related Cattle report. This will give a July 1, 2025, overview of cattle at the national level. The survey should reduce surprises by giving objective estimates of the calf crop and the status of heifers being held as replacements. Without the estimates, everyone is left guessing about the level of feeder cattle outside of feedlots.

How much do prices typically change in the coming months?



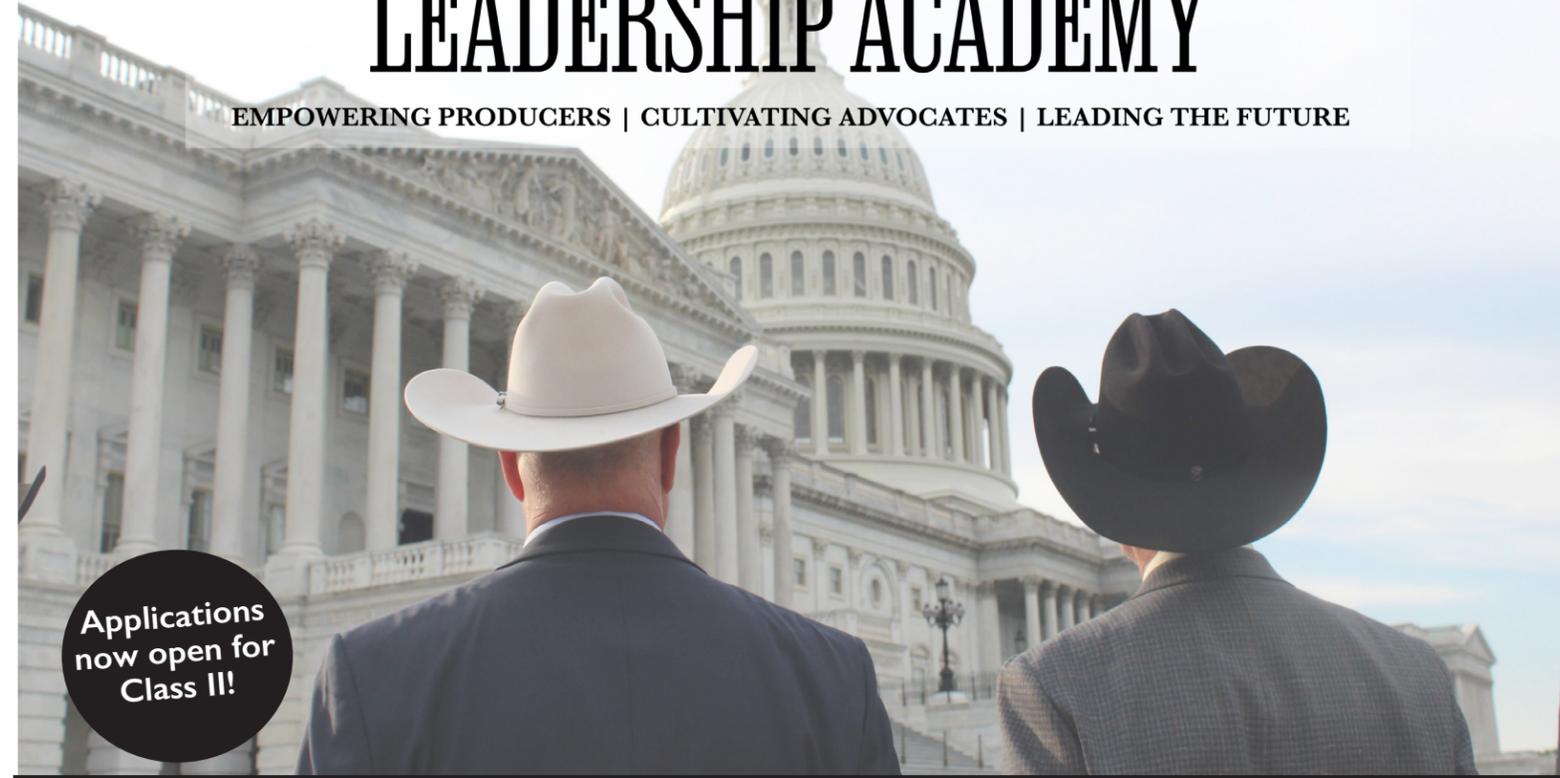
Consider the November feeder cattle futures contract. The November contract spans several sources of uncertainty from yearlings coming off grass, to any early weaning, to feed price changes, and to fall runs of calves. Feeder cattle contracts expire the last Thursday of the month unless there is a holiday such as Thanksgiving. Thus, in November the contract often expires a little closer to the middle of the month. The average of November contract prices during June can be compared to the average during the early part of November (up until the roll to the next contract month or year) to assess what a typical change might look like.

In June of 2024, the November 2024 contract averaged \$259.86 per cwt. In early November of 2024 the same contract averaged \$248.96 per cwt, a decrease of \$10.90 per cwt. Over the past 20 years the average change was an expectedly dull decline of \$1.49 per cwt. In addition, the average price level increased in 9 and decreased in 11 of the years. With a futures market you want both the buyers and the sellers to be disappointed half of the time. Despite being unbiased, large changes can happen in this market in just under six months of time. The largest changes happened at the last peak of the cattle cycle. During 2014 the price increased \$31.85 per cwt, while during 2015 the price decreased by \$38.99 per cwt.

How much are prices expected to change in the coming months? The implied volatility of feeder cattle futures would be an indicator to watch. Usually, volatility is measured as an annual percentage, and it says how much futures returns are expected to change. During June, the average implied volatility of the upcoming November contract has ranged from 11.0 to 23.9 percent over the past ten years. Last year it averaged 13.4 percent during June. Despite high prices, the volatility is up only slightly this year, averaging 14.8 percent in early June. Thus, the cost to offset risk in this market, using options, for example, remains low for both buyers and sellers of cattle.

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August 2026 | Seminar III: Mentorship & Consumer Outreach

October 2026 | Seminar IV: Fall Tour & Persuasive Communications

December 2026 | SDCA Convention & Trade Show

January 2027 | Leadership Academy Graduation & SDCA Day at the Capitol

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Applications are now open for Class II of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Leadership Academy! Participants will make a positive impact on the industry, drive sustainable growth, and shape the future of the beef production industry. Participants will be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks to give a voice to the next generation of influential leaders in the industry!



From the **FIELDS** to **FIRST ROUND**

Grey Zabel's Journey to the NFL



In the heart of South Dakota, where fields stretch for miles and Friday night football is a community wide

event, Pierre native Grey Zabel talked to SDCA about growing crops and dreams.

Now a first-round NFL draft pick by the Seattle Seahawks, Zabel's path to the big league goes far beyond the gridiron. It's a story shaped by faith, farming, family, and football – the "Four F's" that Zabel proudly lives by.

Small-town Roots, Big-time Dreams

"It's been an absolute joyride," Zabel said, reflecting on his journey from Friday night lights in Pierre to Saturday college game days at North Dakota State University (NDSU), and now, preparing for Sundays in the NFL. "Hard work prevails. It doesn't matter where you are, if you're good enough, coaches are going to find you."

Grey's close-knit family prioritizes hard work and humility. He credits his parents, Mark and Tanna, and his coaches for instilling the values that got him where he is today. "I have two of the best parents a kid could have. They've been at nearly every game in high school and college, supporting me every step of the way."

Faith in the Field

Zabel's journey is about more than football; many life lessons were rooted in his upbringing on the family farm in Mound City, South Dakota. During his career at NDSU, Zabel continued to help with the family's operation and rented 253 acres of his own.

"It was a bit of a circus balancing it all," he laughed. "I couldn't harvest everything myself, but my dad and our neighbor helped a ton. I'm grateful for the opportunity to throw my hat in the ring and operate acres of my own."

With his NFL career now underway, Zabel's dad, Mark, will keep the farm running at home. However, when summer rolls around, Grey plans to return and scout the crops during the off-season.

"Farming teaches you a lot of the same things football does – discipline, perseverance, and trust," he said. "You never know when the rain will come or when a football injury might end your season. You put in the work, pray for the best, and leave the rest to the man upstairs."

Fueling up with Beef

Like any true South Dakotan, Zabel doesn't shy away from his love of beef. "If you want to gain weight or lose weight, it all depends on how much steak you eat," he said. "In college, I was a regular at Texas Roadhouse."

Grey's mom, Tanna, comes from a family that raises cattle, so Zabel understands the nutritional power of beef, and the pride that comes from knowing where your food is raised.

"In Seattle, I've noticed there's a lot of seafood, which is great, but I'm definitely going to introduce my teammates to South Dakota steak," he said. "A good ribeye or T-bone, occasionally paired with a Busch Light and a pickle, goes a long way," he laughed.

Representing Rural America

Zabel wears his roots like a badge of honor. "I'm proud of being from small-town South Dakota. I played for my community, represented my state at NDSU, and I'll continue that with the Seahawks."

He hopes his journey can serve as an inspiration for kids in rural areas dreaming big.

"If your dreams seem achievable, they're probably not big enough," he said. "Dream big. Work hard. Be the best human, athlete, and competitor you can be. You never know who's watching."

Whether it's on the football field or in the fields of South Dakota, Grey Zabel is proving that small-town beginnings can lead to the biggest stages as long as you're willing to put in the work.



Pierre Governors, NDSU Bison, and Seattle Seahawks



Parents, Mark & Tanna, at Seahawks headquarters



Photos courtesy of Campea Photography and Seattle Seahawks.



Timed AI and Estrus Expression: A Key to Better Fertility Outcomes

Dr. Jessica Drum, Kendal Green, Riley Puck, Hunter Haberman



Artificial insemination (AI) remains a valuable tool for enhancing herd genetics, but producers must consider the advantages of estrus detection versus Fixed-Time Artificial Insemination (FTAI) protocols. Estrus detection allows for breeding based on individual cows' heat cycles, accounting for natural variations in estrus onset within a group. By inseminating cows during their peak fertility window, producers can achieve more precise timing and potentially improve conception rates. Research indicates that cows inseminated 12 hours after estrus onset had higher pregnancy per AI (P/AI) rates compared to those bred up to 24 hours later (Graves et al. 1997). Additionally, studies have shown that breeding 6–12 hours after estrus detection resulted in better conception rates than insemination occurring 12–18 or 18–24 hours post-estrus (Nebel et al. 1994). However, estrus detection requires consistent daily observation or investment in heat detection technology, which can be costly and time-intensive.

By contrast, FTAI streamlines breeding through hormone synchronization, ensuring cows ovulate at roughly the same time for a scheduled insemination session. While it eliminates the need for heat detection, conception success depends on precise protocol execution. Since all cows are inseminated at the same time, there is less flexibility for individual animal breeding management. However, small adjustments to timing, hormone administration, and management practices can significantly impact success rates.

How do you know if your fixed-timed AI has the potential to provide the maximum performance? A good indication is the expression of estrus from the day of the prostaglandin (PGF) to AI. Although FTAI protocols do not utilize estrus detection, they are designed to AI around 12 hours after most of the synchronized herd expresses estrus. Especially considering that the breeding time after estrus expression is associated with the success of reproductive programs.

In the FTAI protocols, ovulation is caused by the use of a Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone (GnRH) injection, regardless of whether an animal has exhibited estrus. However, ovulation occurring before estrus can lower conception rates due to insufficient estrogen levels, leading to a less-than-ideal uterine environment for sperm survival (Perry and Perry 2009). Research on heifers has shown that those expressing estrus within 24 hours of FTAI had larger follicle diameters,

higher estrogen concentrations, and greater pregnancy rates compared to those that did not (Perry et al. 2007). In dairy cows, those that expressed estrus have been reported to have over a 10% higher conception rate for both FTAI and embryo transfer, along with reduced pregnancy loss (Pereira, Wiltbank, and Vasconcelos 2016). Similar findings have been observed in mature beef cows, where those detected in estrus by the time of AI achieved 20% higher pregnancy rates than their non-estrous counterparts (Whittier et al., 2013).

A recent research study, conducted through a collaboration between SDSU and extension specialists from Missouri and Tennessee, found that modifying the 7&7 protocol by adding GnRH on day 0 and PGF on day 7 significantly increased estrus expression to 90%, compared to the standard 7&7 protocol. However, this adjustment did not impact pregnancy rates (Palcheff et al. 2025).

Considering that these protocols recommend AI at 66 ± 2 hours after P4 implant removal, a follow-up study from SDSU revealed substantial variation in estrus onset when using the 7&7 protocol and its variations in a small group of 87 cows, highlighting the need for further refinement to optimize reproductive outcomes (Figure 1).

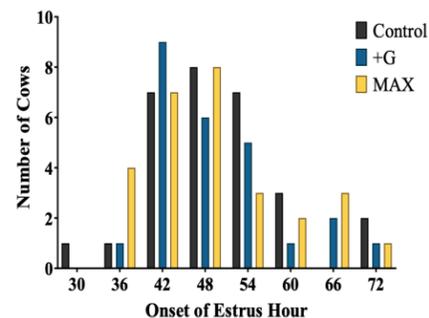


Figure 1. Distribution of onset of estrus times in 6-hour intervals across the 3 groups. Onset of estrus hour after progesterone implant P4 implant removal of 87 cows (29 per group). Values indicate the number of cows that were in the standing of estrus at that specific time.

A large-scale analysis of estrus incidence led by SDSU, with heat observations conducted every six hours for 96 hours after PGF and P4 implant removal, also revealed a wide variation in estrus onset. The first signs appeared 36 hours post-P4 removal (Figure 2 on the next page), with the majority of cows displaying estrus by 48 hours.

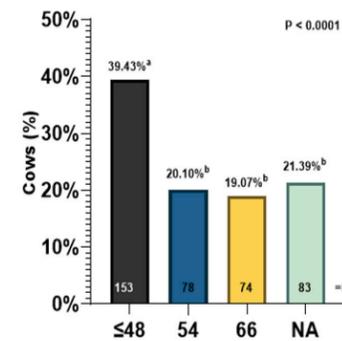


Figure 2: Cows (n=338) separated by onset of estrus in relation to the Progesterone implant (CIDR®) removal. The group <48 hours includes cows that expressed estrus before and by 48 hr. Data presented as a percentage (%) of total heifers or cows across time. a b c At each onset of estrus time, groups indicate significant differences.

Additionally, cows inseminated 12–18 hours after estrus onset showed higher pregnancy per AI (P/AI) compared to those bred at 66 hours, which included animals that either did not exhibit estrus or only showed estrus at 66 hours (Figure 3).

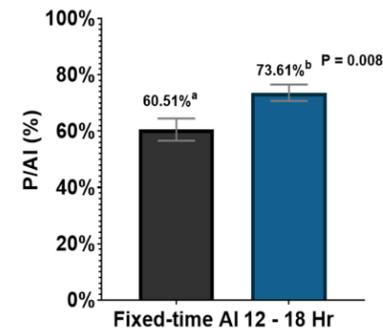


Figure 3. P/AI for Cows that were inseminated at the recommended time for fixed-time AI vs. Cows that followed the AM/PM Rule (12-18 hrs after onset of estrus). P/AI – Pregnancy Per Artificial Insemination (AI). a b c Between each AI Time group indicates significant differences.

Which leads to a final question: if we cannot AI 12 h after heat, what are the best option, before or after that?

Inseminating earlier rather than later may be the best approach for P/AI. The common recommendation is that AI should be performed before ovulation. Insemination performed 12–24 hours before ovulation results in a higher percentage (68%) of good-quality embryos compared to both earlier (24–36 hours before ovulation, 41%) and later (0–12 hours before ovulation, 41%) insemination, while post-ovulation insemination leads to a significantly lower percentage of good embryos (6%) (Roelofs et al. 2006), demonstrating the limited post-ovulatory viability of oocytes.

Altogether, those results indicate the potential of this protocol to be optimized to obtain better pregnancy rates by adjusting the insemination time to one that would benefit a great proportion of cows. The optimum time needs to be chosen carefully, and the question that remains unanswered is: what time would be better than 66h? During this past breeding season, SDSU have been working on testing AI at 54h vs 66h after PGF during the 7&7 protocol. We hope to have that question closer to answered soon.

References found on page 32.

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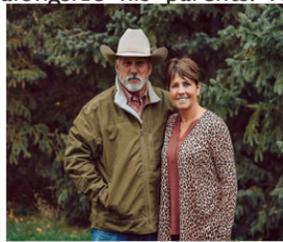
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In 1931, Alvin and Gebe Thomas purchased 320 acres that is known today as Thomas Ranch, in Sully County near Onida, South Dakota. In 1964, their son Harry Thomas graduated from South Dakota State University (SDSU), and with his wife Kay and newborn son Troy, returned to Sully County and began a partnership Alvin and Gebe. Also in 1964, they bought their first Charolais cattle from Texas. Soon thereafter, the Avignon breeding line from Nebraska was also introduced due to their maternal traits and ability to better adapt to their environment. Along with other partners, they expanded to produce purebred Simmental cattle holding their first bull sale in 1972. By 1986, the Simmental herd was dispersed and to meet the customer demand for Black Angus genetics, a purebred Black Angus herd was added in 1991 followed by Red Angus. In 2009, Thomas Ranch stepped back into the Simmental breed.

In 1985, Troy married Veabea and together they worked alongside his parents. They were blessed with the birth of their first daughter in 1987, Taylor, who tragically passed away in a car accident at age 14. In 1989, Troy, Veabea, and Taylor moved to Cimarron, Kansas, where Troy managed the Dewey Charolais herd. Cally, their second daughter, was born in 1990. After five years, Troy



and his family returned to South Dakota to join Harry and Kay on Thomas Ranch.

Throughout high school, Cally competed in livestock judging at various levels, as well as rodeo. She attended SDSU for two years while competing in college rodeo, then transferred to Kansas State University where she continued to rodeo and judge livestock. After graduation, she returned to Thomas Ranch where she assisted with the marketing of cattle and horses. In 2017, Cally married Clint Kindred of Oelrichs, South



Dakota. Clint and Cally farm and ranch alongside Clint's family but returns home frequently and continues to manage social media for Thomas Ranch, work with cattle sales, and manage the horse operation with Harry.

Today the Thomas Ranch is primarily a seedstock operation with additional enterprises including horses, show calves, and pheasant hunting. Their program primarily consists of registered Angus cattle, with some registered Charolais and Red Angus cows and commercial cattle that are used for embryo placement. At Thomas Ranch, replacement heifers are bred by artificial insemination off natural heat for one heat cycle during mid to late May. In June, the spring calving cow herd is bred, with the fall calving cow herd last to be bred in November. The Thomas Ranch hosts an annual production sale on the second Tuesday of April. During sale week, a small online sale is also held selling fall barn show heifers as well as semen and embryos. The private treaty calf sale is held in September which markets show heifers and a few steers. To round out the year, the Christmas Classic Sale takes place online consisting of show heifers, semen, and embryos.

The overarching goal at Thomas Ranch is to produce profitable cattle for their commercial cow/calf customers. They strive to improve genetics, but their top priority is visual appearance and structural correctness of the cattle, disposition, performance, fertility, and general health. Due to their location, their cattle run on large pastures requiring their herd to have the ability to travel distances to water and feed in all weather conditions.

In 1963, Thomas Ranch began artificially inseminating cattle with purchased semen and from their own herd sires. Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) that are considered during sire selection include birth, weaning, and yearling weight, rate of gain, scrotal circumference, and maternal traits.

Thomas Ranch provides a first breeding season guarantee, free delivery in South Dakota and surrounding states, and a volume discount to bull customers. Information provided with a bull purchase includes pedigrees, EPDs including birth weight, adjusted weaning weight, adjusted yearling weight, average daily gain, weight per day of age, ultrasound information, scrotal circumference and fertility, and genomic testing. Thomas Ranch

utilizes not only their own website, but also various breed associations to provide information and photographs to current and prospective customers, making advertising much easier compared to when it all was done through the mail.

Thomas Ranch is proud to have raised and added to the genetic battery of the Charolais breed by raising and promoting numerous National Grand Champion bulls as well as heifers. Thomas Ranch exhibits all four breeds at the Black Hills Stock Show (BHSS) and is fortunate enough to win the Supreme Bull and Heifer numerous times over the years. In addition, they also show at the South Dakota State Fair. A proud achievement was winning the prestigious Challenge Trophy from the Charolais Association at the national show for a total of 10 years. Individuals of the Thomas family have received numerous awards at the BHSS: Troy was recognized as Charolais Herdsman of the Year in 1987, Harry received the Stockman of the Year award in 2002, Troy and Veabea were named Stockman of the Year in 2018, and Veabea was honored as South Dakota Ag Woman of the Year in 2022. Thomas Ranch received the American-International Charolais Association Seedstock Producer of the Year and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Environmental Stewardship Award in 2008.

In addition to the Thomas family, several dedicated ranch and farm hands are integral to the operations success, allowing for Troy and Veabea to be involved in other areas of the industry. In earlier years, Troy and Veabea did not have the support staff behind them and were not as involved in leadership roles within



the industry. Within the last 20 years, they have taken various leadership positions and become active in industry organizations.

Troy is a past director of the Charolais Breed, chairman of the Charolais Activity Committee, BHSS Advisory Board member, and director and president of the South Dakota Angus Board. Veabea is a past member of the South Dakota Beef Industry Council, South Dakota Beef Breeds president, Federation director, and co-chair of the Consumer Trust Committee. She also sat in on the Operating Committee that allocates Beef Checkoff dollars. Currently, Veabea is serving her second three-year term as a Cattlemen's Beef Board member.

Troy and Veabea offer advice to young producers to build a quality support network including an animal nutritionist and agronomist. Their nutritionist analyzes the available feedstuffs produced and creates appropriate rations. Thomas Ranch is fortunate to have an ethanol plant close making it convenient to add corn byproducts to their rations.

Another piece of advice for those working on generational operations is that the time comes when not everyone can physically do what they used to. In these situations, it is important to step back and give grace.

According to Veabea, "our biggest success in all of Thomas Ranch is the friendships and acquaintances that we have made through the years with the people in the cattle industry." Looking into the future, they are excited to see what is in store for Thomas Ranch.



"Our biggest success in all of Thomas Ranch is the friendships and acquaintances that we have made through the years with the people in the cattle industry."

- Veabea Thomas





TRADE MISSION IN MEXICO

Written by Larry Stomprud, SDCA Member and Trade Mission Participant

I recently returned from a trade mission to Mexico organized by South Dakota Trade (SDT). I was co-sponsored by South Dakota Farm Bureau and South Dakota Cattlemen's Association. My intent for going on the trip was to explore the possibilities of exporting bull semen, cattle embryos, and live cattle to Mexico and obtaining contacts to facilitate these types of transactions. It may seem as though I was trying to reinvent the wheel because these exports are already taking place, but there is nothing like face-to-face contact. On the trip, I joined the new President and CEO of South Dakota Trade, Jesse Fonkert and the Deputy Commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED), Joe Fiala as well as other GOED staff. Other delegates were Todd Mortensen, representing Beef Logic; Iron Shield Industries, an agriculture equipment manufacturing company from Garden City; Cytion, a biological supply company based in Sioux Falls, Albany Farms, a Ramin noodle manufacturing company in Belle Fourche, and a board member from South Dakota Dairy Producers representing the cheese industry.

Upon arrival in Mexico City, we were treated to a walking tour of the historical and cultural center of Mexico City. Being Sunday afternoon, the streets were full of people, vendors were busy, and museums and churches were active. Thankfully my boots fit well because we walked quickly, condensing a four-hour tour into two hours. Our tour guide was enthusiastic and well versed in Mexican history, culture, and architecture. I wish I had time to absorb more of what he had to tell us.

Our first meetings took place on Cinco de Mayo with staff from the US Embassy including representatives from the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) and Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), giving us a flavor of the business and political climate of Mexico from the US perspective. Interestingly Cinco de Mayo, is not celebrated in Mexico the same way we celebrate July 4th. Instead, most of Mexico recognizes September 16th as their Independence Day. It was humorously stated that Cinco de Mayo was simply an excuse for Americans to drink margaritas.

Later we were treated to a tour of three levels of high-end supermarkets by Sr. Gerardo Rodriguez and Sr. Lorenzo Elizade, both employees of the U.S. Meat Export Federation. I was interested in the meat cases and was not disappointed. U.S. beef, pork, and to a lesser extent lamb were attractively displayed, and USMEF encouraged increased demand for U.S. meat. It was interesting that there was a QR code on each package that gives the consumer recipes for that cut of meat, that was something I haven't seen much of in the U.S.

We were then treated to a tour of Dipcen, a meat importer. They import fresh meat from the U.S., further process it, and sell it to mostly high-end retailers and restaurants. The day we visited the plant; they were processing hams from Smithfield. The plant was exceptionally clean, and we were subjected to a lengthy sanitizing protocol before we could enter the working area. Following the tour, several of us treated ourselves to an excellent steak (from an Angus Ranch in Oklahoma) in a 5-star hotel. It was an excellent eating experience.

Our last day in Mexico City began with a breakfast meeting with Sr. Rodriguez and Sr. Elizade from USMEF, Todd Mortensen, Tim Czmowski (Cheese-mow-ski), and me. Although I had met Sr. Rodriguez and Sr. Elizade in my capacity as USMEF board member and Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) member, it was the first time I had the opportunity to have a sit-down conversation with them. I thought the exchange of ideas was very fruitful and was highly informative to learn the challenges, successes, and plans for growing demand for U.S. meat in Mexico.

Our next meeting was with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Minister was in Washington D.C. meeting with USDA Secretary Rollins, so we met with the Undersecretary. Their Ministry of Agriculture is not all that involved in trade, but I did pick up on some points of interest:

- There is interest in building ethanol plants in Mexico using sugar cane as the source.
- Mexico is short on wheat due to drought in northern states. Blaming climate change. Possibilities for additional exports from SD.
- Those wheat acres are more adaptable to growing grain sorghum but need expertise and export markets.
- Phytosanitation is a concern.
- They say they are taking the New World Screwworm situation seriously.
- Concern about the balance of trade.
- Concern about water (sound familiar?)
- Small coffee growers in south Mexico produce gourmet coffee but are selling it for commodity prices. Opportunity for South Dakota coffee roasters to form a co op and partner with Mexican growers. GOED Deputy Commissioner Fiala is working on this.

Our next meeting was with the Minister Counselor for Commercial Affairs. He and his staff assured us that they are more than willing to help coordinate linking importers and exporters, provide business contacts and any other support required to facilitate trade between the two nations. And for our final meeting, we met with the Foreign Affairs Ministry (the equivalent of our State Department) and the Ministry of Economy, where they laid out the philosophy and goals of the new Sheinbaum administration.

That afternoon, while most of the delegation was touring a large soybean crush plant, I had a one-on-one meeting with a Mexican employee of Trans-Ova. Should I get into the semen exporting business, I think she will be a valuable contact as she is familiar with and knows the contacts of the breed associations and large ranches that use artificial insemination.

Following our two-hour meeting, she was gracious enough to take me shopping to get some gifts for family. During that trip,

I was able to pick her brain as to the culture of Mexico, the cartels, etc. The following morning, we had one last breakfast seminar with Deputy Commissioner Fiala presenting "DOING BUSINESS IN SOUTH DAKOTA" to interested business owners. A man named Luis sat next to me and following the presentation, I found out that he represented an agricultural supply company and could quite possibly be an important contact should I get into the semen export business.

The trip was very educational for me, and I thank South Dakota Farm Bureau and South Dakota Cattlemen's Association for sponsoring me. Also, thanks to South Dakota Trade and The trip was very educational for me, and I thank South Dakota Farm Bureau and South Dakota Cattlemen's Association for sponsoring me. Also, thanks to South Dakota Trade and the Governors Office of Economic Development for an educational and stress-free trade mission. I think both are doing good things to facilitate exports from South Dakota.



Our tour of the Mexico City Central Market was the most memorable part of the whole mission trip. I'll give a few statistics, but the full impact of the market isn't relatable unless you experience it. Opened in 1985. Covers 327 hectares (808 acres), 7000 warehouses, 40,000 workers, 350,000 customers/day, 50,000 trucks/day bringing meat, produce, and other items, mostly from central and southern Mexico. Most of the retailers and restaurants in Mexico City buy their supplies here daily. The produce was beautiful. Some meats were refrigerated, some unrefrigerated, but we were told by the end of the day, it would all be sold. We were treated to several delicious tacos at one of the vendors.

I'd note here that the Mexicans, especially in Monterrey were very welcoming. I even made a South Dakota connection. The Public Engagement Coordinator at the Embassy is a delightful young lady by the name of Brenda Garcia. She was an exchange student at Sully Buttes High School around 1995 and credits her experience there, at least in part, with her current employment.





Making the Most of Membership

Calli Williams, Vice President of Membership

The start of summer (typically) brings a sense of peace to ranchers as they begin hauling pairs to summer grass. Ranchers can park the feed wagon and focus on their grazing programs while maintaining their herd's health.

Our operation (TW Angus) is located near Mitchell, which like much of South Dakota had a winter season of minimal snow cover and a dry start to spring. We were nervous about how long we would need to feed cows before going to grass. Mother Nature cut it close, but we were fortunate to catch some timely rains just before our summer turn out date – Memorial Day weekend. What a difference moisture can make!

2025 marks the first year that I was not driving a pickup and trailer alongside my husband to kick off the summer grazing season. Why? I said yes to a trip of a lifetime as I traveled across the country with sixty other cattlemen and cattlemen. As much as it felt like I was missing a family holiday while my husband and kids hauled pairs to grass, I am thankful for the opportunity I was given to attend the Young Cattlemen's Conference on behalf of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association.

While attending the Young Cattlemen's Conference, we toured every sector of the beef industry. We visited the Five Rivers Feedlot, which is currently feeding 1.8 million pounds of feed per day. We then toured the Tyson Beef Packing Plant where cattle are being processed every 10 seconds. We continued traveling east as we stopped at Certified Angus Beef and ended our adventure with two days spent with our boots on the ground in D.C. You can read my full summary of the Young Cattlemen's Conference in this month's magazine (pages 26-27), but there's one important

takeaway I wanted to share with our readers and that is the importance of networking.

Traveling for eight days with sixty strangers and a schedule packed with media training, strength finding workshops, on-site tours and more, you might not think there would be much time to develop relationships with others but that wasn't the case for the YCC Class of 2025.

The final evening in D.C., there were multiple class attendees with tears in our eyes as we said our goodbyes. We just spent eight days with like-minded individuals who are the future of the beef industry. First-generation ranchers, multi-generation ranchers, geneticists, ruminant nutritionists, editors, and feedlot managers. You name it – we had that sector covered. Our class was well-rounded, and I am confident when I say, you WILL hear their names in the near future as their leadership roles are just getting started.

Networking is important and I cannot stress that enough. We all have the capability to network through our phones and social media outlets, but the best networking is done in person. When you say yes to attending events like YCC, our Region Roundups, or South Dakota Cattlemen's Convention, you are creating connections that will last a lifetime. You are creating connections that are beneficial as you gain friends, resources, and even allies. Remember the saying, "it's not what you know, but who you know." You can't put a price on the importance of networking.

That being said, I look forward to seeing great attendance at the 2025 Region Roundups and wish you all a long, healthy grazing season!



Interested in attending YCC next year?

If you're considering attending YCC in 2026, contact the state office or a member of the SDCA to learn about the nomination process.

Learn more about YCC and become a member of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association today!



YCC



NCBA



YOUNG CATTLEMEN'S CONFERENCE

Affiliate Snapshot

MEET THE CLARK-HAMLIN AFFILIATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Taylor Monnens

Taylor Monnens is the daughter of Jesse and Lori Monnens. Her family farms and raises cattle and quarter horses. In the fall, she will attend North Dakota State University to study Animal Science, with plans to pursue veterinary school and specialize in large animal medicine.



Parker Schmidt

Parker Schmidt is the son of Ryan & Amanda and is from Raymond, SD. He recently graduated from Clark High School and grew up helping on his family's farm, raising Black Angus cattle and pigs. This fall, he will attend Mitchell Technical College and study Electrical Construction and Maintenance.

SEE YOU AT THE REGION ROUNDUPS

June 27 | Watertown, SD | Labbie's Sports Bar & Grill

July 16 | Mitchell, SD | Palace Brewery

July 22 | Pierre, SD | Cattlemen's Club Steakhouse

July 23 | Winner, SD | Winner Livestock Auction

July 24 | Wall, SD | Red Rock Restaurant

August 5 | Gettysburg, SD | Bob's Steakhouse

September 14 | Spearfish, SD | Killian's Food & Drink



Join SDCA at a regional meeting near you! Roundup dates, locations, and programs will be added regularly - scan the QR code for the latest updates!

Photos courtesy of M Lazy Heart Photography

Celebrating Women in Agriculture

Agricultural Women's Day 2025

Kelsey Geraets, President of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Auxiliary

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Auxiliary had the privilege of joining the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association booth at this year's Agricultural Women's Day, and let me tell you — it was a blast. There's something special about spending a day surrounded by strong, hardworking women who share a deep love for agriculture.

Throughout the event, I got the chance to visit with ranchers, farmers, and folks from all walks of ag life. The energy was infectious and filled with encouragement, curiosity, and good old-fashioned fun. It was a reminder that while agriculture may be rooted in tradition, it's also growing and evolving, just like the women leading the way.

Some of the biggest topics of the day were agritourism, growth, and gratitude which are themes that hit close to home for many of us. Whether it was learning how to diversify an operation with on-farm experiences or talking through ways to scale sustainably, the conversations were full of practical ideas and personal stories. And in between the sessions? Laughter, swapping stories, and sharing what's working (and what isn't) on our own places.

One thing that stood out to me was how much emphasis was

placed not just on improving operations, but also on improving life. Running a ranch or a farm takes grit, but it also takes heart — and remembering to enjoy the ride is just as important as managing the herd.

Events like this remind me how powerful community can be. Women in agriculture are balancing a lot — from calving season to kids' schedules — and it's easy to feel like you're doing it all alone. But when we come together, swap ideas, and support each other, we all walk away a little stronger (and maybe with a few more tricks up our sleeves). Here's to the women shaping the future of agriculture, with resilience, creativity, and a whole lot of heart.

Speaking of women shaping the future of agriculture, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Auxiliary has an exciting event coming up. We have a booth at the Sioux Empire Fair on August 2nd. You can find us in the Pipestone Discovery Barn — make sure to stop by and say hello!

For more information, make sure you follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



Leadership, Learning, and Lending a Hand: The Power of Showing Up for South Dakota Cattlemen

Craig Bieber, Vice President

South Dakota's cattle industry has always been rooted in strong character and quiet leadership, the kind that shows up early, stays late, and doesn't ask for recognition. That same spirit is alive and well in our 2025 Cattlemen's Leadership Academy class. I have had the opportunity to join the class as they gain a deeper understanding of cattle production, rural values, and the importance of engaging in the policy decisions that affect our livelihoods. They give me confidence that the future of SDCA—and South Dakota cattle country—is in good hands.

As we work to build future leaders, we're reminded that leadership isn't always about holding a title. Sometimes, it's simply about being willing to show up and serve. One assigned reading for the Cattlemen's Leadership Academy was *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*, by Adam Grant, an organizational psychologist and professor at the Wharton School. In the book, Grant challenges us to question our assumptions, to stay curious, and to remain open to rethinking what we know. That message resonates deeply in agriculture, where adaptability and humility often matter as much as strength and knowledge.

Volunteering with SD Cattlemen's is one way to live out those principles. When you give a few hours of your time to help at an event, you're not just serving steak sandwiches or burgers or shaking hands, you're strengthening the voice of South Dakota producers. You're helping us tell our story to policymakers, consumers, and the next generation of ranchers. You're saying, "this industry matters, and I'm willing to stand up for it."

We have several opportunities coming up where your help is needed:

- **Agtegra Appreciation Night – August 2 | Huron**
Be part of our outreach to crop and livestock producers—help us represent SDCA and share our mission as we serve meals to attendees.
- **Dakotafest – August 19–21 | Mitchell**
Join us at one of the biggest ag shows in the region. Whether you're talking about policy or help make sandwiches -- it all makes a difference.
- **Full Circle Ag Cattlemen's Cookout – Aug. 15 | Aberdeen**
A chance to serve beef and connect with consumers and neighbors—this event builds community support for the cattle industry.

We can't stress this enough: volunteers are the backbone of this association. SDCA succeeds because members are willing to invest time and energy into protecting our way of life. If you care about where our industry is headed, if you believe in the value of cattlemen standing together, then we need you to step up and get involved.

Whether you're a seasoned member or new to the association, these events are great ways to contribute, learn, and connect. Please contact the SDCA office if you're willing to volunteer.

Strong leaders don't wait to be asked. They raise their hand. Let's keep that tradition alive.

Volunteers needed
at
DAKOTAFEST
August 19 - 21



Volunteers are key to the success of the Dakotafest beef booth. SDCA will contribute a donation to civic and youth groups that provide at least 3 volunteers for a shift in exchange for your community service!

Sign up today!
Scan the QR code and plan to volunteer today!



See you at the State Fair!

Catch a ride with SDCA!

SDCA volunteers will be driving courtesy carts around the fairgrounds! Look for our logo on the cart, hop in, and chat with a member of SDCA!



Learn more about SDCA!

Look for SDCA signs inside the DEX! Take a picture with one or more signs and tag us on social media!



South Dakota *Cattlemen's* Association
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Seminar 2 Recap:
**SPRING TOUR & MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS
 TRAINING**

Leadership Academy Spotlight: Mitchell VanderWal

by Kristen Smith, SDCA Contributor

The second seminar of the 2025 Cattlemen's Leadership Academy was held in late June in the Aberdeen area. In addition to support from our partners, Farm Credit Services of America and South Dakota Corn Utilization Council, the seminar was sponsored by The Cattle Business Weekly. Seminar II included the spring industry tour, leadership sessions, and media & communications training. The two-day event offered participants a full-spectrum learning experience -- from pasture to plate -- while building participants' confidence to communicate effectively through both traditional and digital media.

The seminar started at DemKota Ranch Beef processing facility in Aberdeen. DemKota is a USDA-approved, fully integrated beef processing plant that sources cattle from family farms within a 250-mile radius, most from South Dakota and North Dakota. Class I met with DemKota leadership including Matt Bode, Vice President of Cattle Procurement, Mark Stammer, Vice President of Human Resources, and Rachel Line, Director of Technical Services. The conversation spanned a range of topics including DemKota's mission, cattle markets, procurement strategies, workforce development, and the company's efforts in rural economic growth in Aberdeen. Following the discussion, the class toured the entire facility for an in-depth look at beef processing in action.

Following the tour, the group traveled to Faulkton to visit Hadrick Ranch, where they enjoyed an incredible brisket lunch and conversations with Troy and Stacy Hadrick. Hadrick Ranch is known for their commitment to quality beef and customer connections, including their partnerships with restaurants across South Dakota including Minervas, Morrie's Steakhouse, Grill 26, and Paramount Cocktails & Food in Sioux Falls. Troy and Stacy shared their story about how media coverage shaped their operation and informed their mission and values moving forward. The couple weighed in on goal setting, succession planning, advocating for the industry and more.

To wrap up the day, the class joined SDCA President Warren Symens, Vice President Craig Bieber, Peggy Bieber, and Bridgette Readel for dinner at Mavericks Steak & Cocktails, where they proudly serve DemKota beef. It was a great way to round out day one and take in the full pasture-to-plate experience.



Day two began with a leadership discussion led by SDCA Executive Director Taya Runyan. The group discussed the assigned reading, Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know by Adam Grant. The conversation challenged participants to reflect on their own assumptions, embrace curiosity, and approach conversations like a scientist -- being open to learning, questioning, and growing. Other exercises explored how to "read a room" and build connections with different audiences.

In the next session, the class had the chance to take what they learned during the leadership discussion and apply it to real scenarios during media training with "farm kid extraordinaire" Bridgette Readel. Bridgette is the owner of Lilac Lane Media, a partner in AgMafia, and Ag Director for WDAY Radio/Flag Family Media. She shared practical strategies for preparing for interviews, refining messaging, and becoming confident advocates for agriculture across various media platforms. The class also talked about the benefits (and potential pitfalls) of using large language artificial intelligence models (like ChatGPT) and explored strategies to use them effectively.

The final stop of the seminar was near Britton for a tour of Symens Brother Limousin with SDCA President Warren Symens and his uncle, John Symens. Participants learned of the ranch's history, Limousin genetics and their seedstock program, rangeland management, and business transitions. The class also had the chance to look at the cow herd which was a highlight after being away from their own operations!

Thank you to DemKota Ranch Beef, Hadrick Ranch, Bridgette Readel, and Symens Brothers Limousin for your hospitality, insights, and commitment to the cattle industry.

Mitchell VanderWal grew up in Brentford, South Dakota and currently resides on his family's operation located near Howard, South Dakota.

In his later high school years, Mitchell's family owned and operated a small feedlot along with their cow-calf herd near Brentford. Since then, they have relocated further south of Howard, where they continue to follow many of the same practices, principles, and ideals as before, just in a new location.

"While our cow numbers have fluctuated over the years, we continue to develop a strong passion for beef production," says VanderWal.

The VanderWal family runs 40 purebred Red Angus and Shorthorn cows they utilize for seedstock production. Mitchell runs 40 purebred Hereford and Hereford cross cows with the purpose of generating attractive, maternally driven seedstock that fits well in the industry.

For the past three years, the VanderWal family has partnered with Reisch Farms, a feedlot, row crop, and cow-calf operation where they assist in the management of the commercial cow herd in addition to general farm practices.

"Both my and my parent's cows are bred with the purpose that if they do not fit as well into the seedstock sector of the industry, they will thrive in a feedlot setting producing quality beef for consumers," says VanderWal.

VanderWal's focus on generating phenotypically attractive cattle that not only serve a purpose in producing beef for the industry but also ensures the future generations can continue producing cattle that serves that same purpose in the future.

While at South Dakota State University, VanderWal took a strong interest in developing a strong network where he could connect with as many people as possible. Joining clubs and organizations, allowed him to network and meet many people.

During his time at SDSU, VanderWal took on leadership roles in the Collegiate Cattlemen's Club, Little International, and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences Prexy Council. This allowed Mitchell to truly learn the interworking's of what it takes to be a leader.

"Being involved as an Animal Science Ambassador, CAFES Ambassador, Dairy Club Member, Swine Club Member, Wool Judging Team Member and even an occasional attendee of the swing dancing club, I was able to meet so many awesome people across the industry through my college experience,"

says VanderWal.

The pinnacle of VanderWal's college experience may have been his involvement on the SDSU Livestock Judging Team, where he was fortunate to receive high accolades at numerous national contests and visit livestock producers across the country.

Aside from his collegiate involvement, VanderWal took a huge interest in the Junior Red Angus National Board of Directors and served on that board for two years. Much time was also spent as a member of the Hereford, Shorthorn, and Red Angus Junior Association.

"I can proudly say that my time spent as a Red Angus Junior Board member has taken me places I never imagined I would go!" says VanderWal.

VanderWal strives to communicate with numerous individuals at events to learn from others. He aims to be a person who can converse and connect, share thoughts, ideals, and discuss industry topics.

He hopes that someday, he can be a consistent source of wisdom for young enthusiasts and share his thoughts on how to make a start in the industry.

"I hope to raise my children in a manner similar to what my parents did for me and my sister, continuously finding ways to involve their children in the operation and allow them the chance to own livestock of their own," says VanderWal.

The Cattlemen's Leadership Academy gives VanderWal the opportunity to spend time with producers and get their perspective on what livestock production in their eyes.

He's eager to share ideas with producers and listen and learn from industry professionals, whether at each seminar or through Academy classmates.

"I knew the Leadership Academy would be an excellent opportunity to grow -- not only in my own skillset but learn from industry professionals who have seen so many facets of this great industry," says VanderWal.

VanderWal hopes to continue raising quality seedstock cattle that can be marketed to both fellow seedstock producers at a smaller scale and any young cattle enthusiast eager to begin their own herd. He hopes to extend his commercial cow herd to allow himself the opportunity to feed and market larger quantities of cattle that enter the feeding sector of the industry and remain a staple as quality feeder cattle.



Seminar Snapshot



*Thank you to
 the seminar
 sponsor!*



South Dakotan Attends Young Cattlemen's Conference

Written by Calli Williams, SDCA Vice President of Membership and 2025 YCC Participant

The Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC) – a conference that was on my “five-year plan” and became a reality in June. As I write this article to share my experience, I have been home from YCC for less than two weeks, and I am still wrapping my head around everything we did over the course of this eight-day conference.



The YCC class of 2025 kicked things off in Denver, Colorado, at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) headquarters. During our stay in Denver, we heard from NCBA CEO Colin Woodall, NCBA President-Elect Gene Copenhaver (who also traveled with us for the entirety of the conference), and we were given an overview of NCBA's history from Todd Johnson, the Senior Vice President of Federation Services.

While in Denver, we also heard from Cattle Fax representatives (one of whom was in our YCC Class), we toured the facilities for a behind-the-scenes look at what happens every day within the NCBA offices, and enjoyed incredible hospitality and five-star restaurant quality meals from the NCBA culinary team.

My top two favorite workshops at NCBA headquarters were Spokesperson Training and the StrengthFinder Development workshop. It was during these two specific workshops that I witnessed fellow classmates stepping out of their comfort zones and putting in the work to become better spokespersons for our industry. Through the StrengthFinder activity, we combined different strengths to meet a common goal as a team, while also learning more about ourselves and

our leadership strengths in the process.

The NCBA team also shared data from a recent Consumer Insight Study, and there are two specific results I want to share with you. “When considering how cattle are raised for food, over 80% of consumers responded positive to neutral. Over 90% of consumers express a positive to neutral perception of beef as a protein.” Those statistics are proof that our Checkoff dollars are doing exactly what we need, along with the producers who continue to share their stories and promote the beef industry.

To round out our time in Denver, our group of 60+ individuals hopped on buses and made our way to Five Rivers Cattle Feeding at Kuner Yard. What an eye-opening experience! Most cattle producers have been involved with a feedlot at some point in their career, but seeing how well a feedlot the size of Five Rivers operates is astonishing. A number that will stick with me forever, especially when feeding our own cattle, is this specific Five Rivers location feeds 1.8 MILLION pounds of feed PER DAY. The cattle are well cared for with top notch working facilities, strict protocols for processing incoming cattle, managing diets between custom cattle pens, all natural pens, etc., and a team dedicated to keeping the facility efficient and utilizing the natural resources at hand.

After the tour of Five Rivers Cattle Feeding at Kuner Yard, we were back on the buses and headed for Greeley Hat Works. What a fun evening! A majority of our YCC Class was fitted for a hat by owner Trent Johnson. The team at Greeley Hat Works is dedicated to the detail and quality put into not only their handmade hats, but also in the customer service and hospitality expressed to our group. Personally, I am excited about the hat I ordered to arrive in the upcoming months!

Day four of the Young Cattlemen's Conference took us to Sioux City, Iowa.

We toured Tyson Beef Plant in Dakota Dunes, followed by a tour of Empirical Foods in South Sioux City, Nebraska. When given the opportunity, I think every cattle producer should tour a packing facility such as the Tyson Beef Plant. The technology utilized within this facility, along with the irreplaceable employees, allows Tyson to process roughly 5,000 head per day -- that's one head processed every ten seconds. When cattle inventory is higher, they can process one head every 6-8 seconds, but due to the lower cattle numbers and less cattle being processed each week, they are working efficiently to harvest 5,000 per day.

As a cattle producer and someone who feeds just a small amount of steers per year, I walked away from the Tyson tour confident in how our cattle are processed and being able to share that message with consumers. The facilities, the training process for employees, the safety standards in place for both our livestock and the employees were reassuring to see first-hand.

After our short stay in Sioux City, Iowa, our group was back on the plane and headed for a location that I was most excited about – Wooster, Ohio! We were given the opportunity to tour the Certified Angus Beef headquarters, Culinary Center, and newly built warehouse along with two retail visits.



I had the opportunity to intern with the Certified Angus Beef Marketing and Education team during the summers of 2013 and 2014. To say I was excited to get back to a place that opened my eyes to marketing and see the changes made over the last ten years was an understatement.

Whether you are an Angus producer or not, the Certified Angus Beef Brand is something to admire. They go above and beyond with everything they do! From hosting chefs in house for Chef Summit, where Chefs are given the opportunity to fabricate a carcass and later execute their talents by preparing a beef dish, to the Certified Angus Beef Brand promotion and education in place for consumers, chefs, retailers, and ranchers alike.

The final leg of our Young Cattlemen's Conference took us to Washington, D.C., where we spent a full day preparing for our one-on-one meetings with state representatives. Our preparation day started with a somewhat overwhelming feeling for our class, but after listening to the NCBA staff bring us up to speed on issues facing our industry and assisting us with mock interviews, we were ready for what we were about to face on the Hill!

As we prepared for our meetings with our respective representatives, I couldn't stress enough how thankful I am to have representatives who understand that agriculture makes our state run, and the importance of taking care of the families who are farming and ranching. It was very evident that some of my classmates were not in the same boat as they were not only going in to discuss issues facing our industry, but also to defend ranching.

I would like to thank our Executive Director, Taya Runyan, for not only coordinating a full day of meetings on the Hill but also for taking the time to travel to D.C. and for attending those meetings. We had the opportunity to meet with Senator Mike Rounds, Leader John Thune and Representative Dusty Johnson. We also had the opportunity to tour the Senate with fellow South Dakotan and Secretary of the Senate Jackie Barber. While watching from the gallery, we were able to watch several senators



introduce resolutions on the floor including Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Senator Adam Schiff (D-California).

While visiting with our congressional representatives, we discussed the New World Screwworm and the economic impact it will have if the New World Screwworm is not addressed in a proactive way. We also discussed the finances facing young farmers and ranchers within the industry, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement, the Farm Bill, and the new dietary guidelines. Our meetings may have been short, but they were impactful.

The Young Cattlemen's Conference was a whirlwind of a trip, but a trip I am thankful to have completed. The trainings, tours, and congressional meetings were all incredible, but the network gained was outstanding. I can confidently say that what started as a group of 60+ strangers ended as a group of close friends who will be in touch for years to come. I am thankful to have gained friends and allies that cover the United States over the course of this eight-day journey. A good friend of ours had once said, “we are an optimistic bunch, or we wouldn't be here” and that rings true after completing YCC. The individuals who made up our YCC Class of 2025 are optimistic, driven, goal-oriented and focused on continuing to improve the beef industry while serving not only as producers, but also powerful advocates for the beef industry.

Thank you to the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association for giving me the opportunity to represent SDCA and complete the trip of a lifetime.





Taya Runyan
SDCA Executive Director

SDCA Working for You

JUNE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The SDCA Board of Directors met in Pierre on June 20. The Board reviewed budget recommendations from the Resource Committee and passed the annual budget for the fiscal year that started July 1. The Board heard from Tony Leif, Executive Director for the South Dakota Ag Land Trust, who provided an update of the work they are doing to secure easements that protect ag lands from urban development. Warren Symens was appointed to serve on the Animal Disease Research & Diagnostic Laboratory (ADRDL) Advisory Committee as a representative of SDCA.

Beef Booth / Cattlemen's Cookout Committee

The Beef Booth at Dakotafest and our new Cattlemen's Cookouts are the main fundraisers for the Association. Please consider a Cattlemen's Cookout for events in your community and volunteer for one of our planned events.

Dakotafest tickets went on sale on the SDCA's website May 15. Pre-pay tickets can be purchased at a discounted rate if you know how many you plan to use during the event. For those looking to provide tickets to clients or employees, post-pay tickets can be ordered, and you will be invoiced after the event for ONLY redeemed tickets. We also offer the ability to print your own post-pay tickets as long as they adhere to the guidelines (scan the QR code on page 3 to learn more and place an order). The volunteer sign up to cook and serve is also available (see page 23 for details and a link to sign up). If you plan to be at the event, please support the SDCA by volunteering for a shift.

SDCA will also host a food vendor booth at Agtegra Appreciation on August 2 in Huron. This one-day event is a great opportunity to spend time volunteering with fellow SDCA members in the booth and socialize with attendees at the Agtegra event.

Consider volunteering to cook/serve at a Cattlemen's Cookout! We will be serving steak sandwiches on the Full Circle Ag event at the Brown County Fair on August 15. Contact the office or sign up for a volunteer shift if you are interested in helping. If you or someone you know is interested in having the SDCA grill for an event, please fill out the Cattlemen's Cookout Interest form to check availability.

SDCA Feeder Committee

The Feeder Committee is planning a spring educational series. This collaboration with our commodity partners and SDSU will be a great opportunity to learn more about the research they are doing and what it means for improving operations for you!

PROPERTY TAX

During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Interim Comprehensive Property Tax Task Force was created to review of property tax policies and identify impactful, substantive measures to provide significant and lasting tax relief for the homeowners of this state. The Task Force will look at factors impacting schools, local and state governments, as well as consider reduced spending and new

revenue sources to provide property tax relief.

There will be five public meetings in communities across the state where the public can provide feedback and testimony:

- June 25 | Sioux Falls
- July 17 | Rapid City
- August 13 | Aberdeen
- September 23 | Pierre
- October 22 | Pierre

To learn more about property tax in South Dakota, and why the current productivity method makes sense for ag land, see page 29.

CATTELMEN'S LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Cattlemen's Leadership Academy is in full swing! Each seminar includes sessions on leadership, industry knowledge, and communication. Class I participants are engaged, insightful, and full of enthusiasm. A full recap of Seminar II can be found on page 24. Seminar III will be August 8 in Sioux Falls where participants will focus on the impact of agriculture and the cattle industry in our urban centers, participate in community outreach events, and learn about how to make the most of mentorship.

The Leave Your Mark annual fundraising campaign started last year after the Association discontinued "Fair Share" dues. In addition to our general fundraising events such as the beef booth at Dakotafest and Cattlemen's Cookouts, this voluntary giving campaign allows the SDCA to pursue mission-based initiatives like the Cattlemen's Leadership Academy. Your generosity allows the Association to develop the next generation of leaders who will advocate for the cattle industry. SDCA partnered with the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation to allow contributions made to the Leave Your Mark Fund to be tax deductible. For more information or to contribute, please see page 7.

NCBA SUMMER BUSINESS MEETING



The NCBA Summer Business Meeting will be hosted in San Diego, CA, July 7-9. This important meeting brings cattlemen's affiliates from across the country together to discuss critical issues in their regions as well as review policy that will be voted on by members at Cattle Con. South Dakota, along with North Dakota, Nebraska,

and Kansas, is part of Region 7. On July 7, the region will meet with representatives from the state associations and state check off organizations, as well as region policy and federation representatives. These meetings are opportunities to network and discuss issues that are important for our region. SDCA President Warren Symens and VP Craig Bieber will be attending on behalf of SDCA. Much like our own policy process, NCBA reviews expiring policy to determine whether it should be allowed to sunset,



be renewed, or amended. New policy can also be considered at Summer Business meeting.

2025 REGION ROUDUPS

Each year, these region events grow and get better! We have some exciting events planned across the state this year and we hope to see you there! In Watertown, there will be an evening social Round Up during the Stockmanship & Stewardship event, with remarks from NCBA CEO Colin Woodall. In Mitchell, there will be live music and a social to follow the program. Across central South Dakota, meetings in Gettysburg, Pierre, Winner, and Wall will provide educational and informative sessions ranging from SDSU Extension to NCBA policy. Finally, in Spearfish there will be a program and social to close out the region events. If you have never attended a Region Roundup, please consider coming this year, and for those of you who already have the dates marked on your calendar, consider bringing a friend or neighbor!

Updates from Capitol Hill

RECONCILIATION

After passing the House, the Senate began working on its version of the reconciliation bill. The goal is to have progress by the July 4 holiday. If this bill stalls in the Senate, many cattle producers will be at risk of a massive tax increase at the end of the year. At the time this publication goes to print, here is a summary of the various tax provisions in the reconciliation bill that matter to cattle producers:

Death Tax: Like the House-passed text, the estate and gift tax exemption amount is increased to \$15 million per individual and \$30 million per couple, adjusted for inflation annually, and makes this exemption permanent. Stepped-up basis remains untouched, and there are no changes to 2032A Special Use Valuation.

Section 199A: Senate-proposed text permanently extends Section 199A Small Business deduction at 20%. The House-passed text permanently increased the deduction to 23%.

Section 179: Like the House-passed text, Section 179 expensing is increased from \$1 million to \$2.5 million and increases the phaseout threshold to \$4 million. These limits are annually adjusted for inflation.

Bonus Depreciation: Senate-proposed text reinstates 100% bonus depreciation, permanently. House-passed text reinstates 100% bonus depreciation for five years.

Disaster-Related Casualty Loss: Like the House-passed text, the Senate-proposed text permanently extends itemized deduction for personal casualty losses resulting from federally declared disasters. This is an extension of the Federal Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2023 that was enacted by Congress in December 2024.

NEW WORLD SCREWWORM

When SDCA was in Washington D.C. this past April and again during YCC in June, one area that NCBA and state leadership focused on was securing funding and a solid plan for combatting the threat posed by New World screwworm (NWS). Now in late June, Secretary Brooke Rollins unveiled USDA's comprehensive strategy to fight NWS. As cases continue to spread in Mexico, protecting the border and our nation's herd is a top priority. USDA broke ground on a NWS sterile fly dispersal facility at Moore Air Base near Mission, Texas. Moore Air Base was previously part of the nation's screwworm eradication effort in the 1960s, and now this base will be the cornerstone of our renewed fight against this

parasite. The base's proximity to the border will make it easy for sterile flies to quickly be deployed to the areas of the U.S. most at risk.

Currently, there is only one sterile fly facility in the world, located in Panama, and it is producing about 115 million flies per week. To build an effective barrier along the U.S. southern border, the U.S. needs to produce more than 300 million sterile flies per week.

SOUTH DAKOTA PROPERTY TAX

Fast Facts



HOW YOUR PROPERTY TAX IS CALCULATED

Property taxes are not collected by the state of South Dakota. They are locally levied, locally collected, and locally spent. Over half the property tax bill is based on the public school education levy set by the Legislature. The rest funds local government services.

Here's how the system works:

Budget Decisions: Local governments (counties, cities, townships) determine their annual funding needs. State law limits budget growth rates.

Assessment of Property: County assessors determine the value of real property, based on market value. State law establishes rules for assessors to follow, to ensure fairness for all taxpayers. Valuation appeals can be made to the county.

Setting the Tax Rate: The county auditor calculates the levy (tax rate) by dividing the total local need for cities, counties, townships, by the taxable value of property in the jurisdiction. This levy is applied equally among all classes of property.

Calculating the Tax Bill: The local government levy and the school levies are applied to the taxable valuation of your property. The school general education levy varies among agricultural land, owner-occupied homes, and commercial property.

Collection and Distribution: The county treasurer collects property taxes and distributes them to fund local schools, cities, counties, and townships, based on the budget needs.

WHY PRODUCTIVITY MAKES SENSE FOR AG LAND

✓ It removes non-ag influences in the purchase price and mitigates the need to convert farm and ranch land to non-agricultural uses.

✓ It is based on the capacity of the land to produce crops or forage.

✓ It promotes fairness among like properties.

✓ It aligns South Dakota with 47 other states that use a productivity model for determining ag land taxes.

The Importance of Healthy Stream Banks to Ranching Operations

Jameson Brennan, Assistant Professor/Extension Specialist - Livestock Grazing



One of the main limiting factors to livestock production on South Dakota's rangelands is water. Spring and summer moisture is essential for forage production and stock dams and streams often serve as critical water sources for grazing livestock. Understanding the importance

of riparian system function is key to holding on to every drop of rain that falls on a ranch.

Riparian areas are transition zones between water and land ecosystems. Simply put, riparian areas include stream banks, flood plains, and wetlands and other areas adjacent to bodies of water. Though we tend to think of riparian areas in South Dakota as areas that are adjacent to flowing rivers, many areas, especially in the Western part of the state have ephemeral streams. These are streams that flow only briefly following a rain event. Although riparian ecosystems comprise less than 2% of the landscape, they are the veins that feed the prairie, supporting up to 80% of life. Riparian areas provide key services including flood control, nutrient sequestration, wildlife habitat, forage production, and clean water. Riparian areas also provide many economic benefits to livestock producers due to increases in forage quantity and quality, and healthy riparian systems can increase livestock health and productivity by filtering organic material and pollutants from runoff, providing critical clean drinking water resources for grazing animal.

Vegetation and soil in streambanks and floodplains function as sponges that absorb and store water, reducing peak flows during spring snow melt or high intensity storms. Root biomass in riparian systems physically binds the soil together and makes it up to 20,000 times more resistant to erosion. Water that is stored within the system can either recharge groundwater supplies or be slowly released back into the stream channel. In addition, slowly releasing water into the stream channel can replenish essential stock dam

water supplies, extending the availability of surface water later into the grazing season. Increases in soil water holding capacity on landscape scales will result in improved forage quality and quantity. Thus, functioning riparian systems can increase drought resiliency and provide producers with greater flexibility in managing grazing timing and duration.

Improved forage quality often occurs near streams due to increased available soil moisture and can serve as an attractant for grazing cattle to congregate near riparian areas. The physical force exerted by livestock can alter stream banks, and grazing management recommendations within riparian areas often call for reducing growing season grazing duration and intensity to allow sufficient time for riparian plant communities to recover from disturbance. More recently methods such as building structures that mimic beaver dams have been explored to restoring riparian function within South Dakota. Beaver dam analogs (or BDAs) are stream channel-spanning structures constructed with materials near or on site that mimic natural beaver dams. Like beaver dams, BDAs are semi-porous, biodegradable, temporary features on the landscape that function to reduce stream and runoff energy by dispersing flow over a wider area while increasing sedimentation and promoting stream channels to reconnect with floodplain surfaces. BDAs can be constructed by installing a line of posts within the stream channel using a hydraulic post pounder and weaving in conifer branches and sediment to fill. BDAs are built in a series of multiple dams in succession to reduce the significance of an individual dam failure. Research conducted at SDSU has found that these BDAs can increase soil moisture, especially in the spring and summer, and increase surface water by 9.5% and upland vegetation cover by 26% after only two years of installation. Maintaining healthy riparian systems and vegetation is essential for the overall health of the land and can help ranchers improve water holding capabilities on their operation.



4th of July Edition

LET'S COUNT!

Counting activity with 15 firework icons arranged in two columns of three rows each, with a blank line below each row for writing the count.

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS!

Unscramble puzzle with six words and corresponding icons:

- THA: Hat icon
- NSUGSALSES: Sunglasses icon
- TSRAS: Stars icon
- SAU: USA map icon
- FERIWKRO: Fireworks icon
- GFAL: Flag icon

Answers from left to right: hat, sunglasses, stars, USA, fireworks, flag

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Scan to shop the SDCA's storefront!
Want a product that's not in our store?
Let us know and we'll work with Quality
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Timed AI and Estrus Expression:
A Key to Better Fertility Outcomes
Page 14 - 15 References

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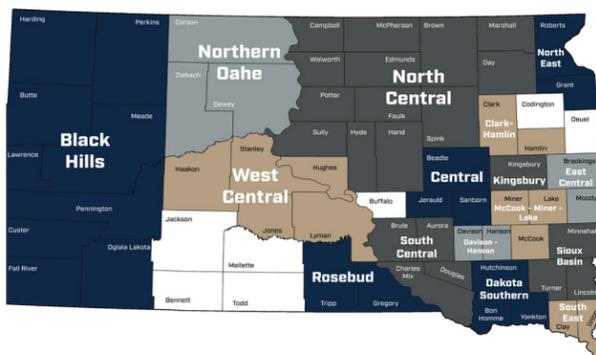
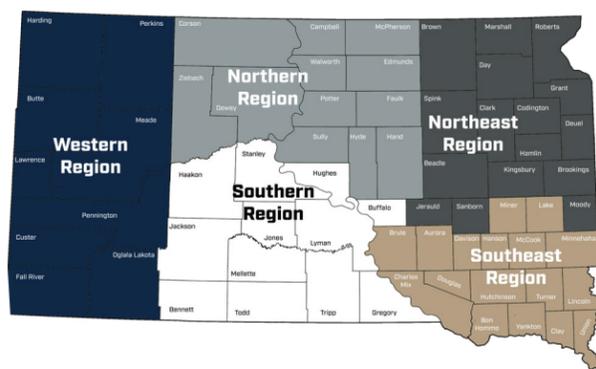
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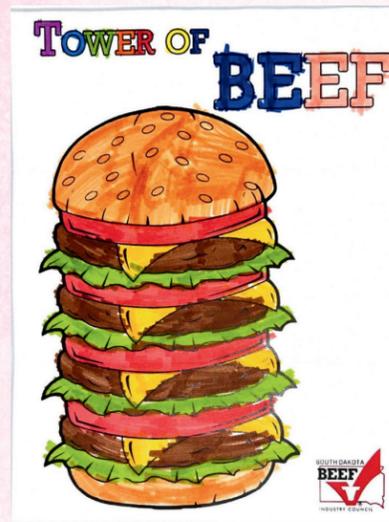


Beef Month Coloring Contest

WINNERS

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association hosted a coloring contest to celebrate May Beef Month. Thank you to all who participated in the contest - there were many great entries!

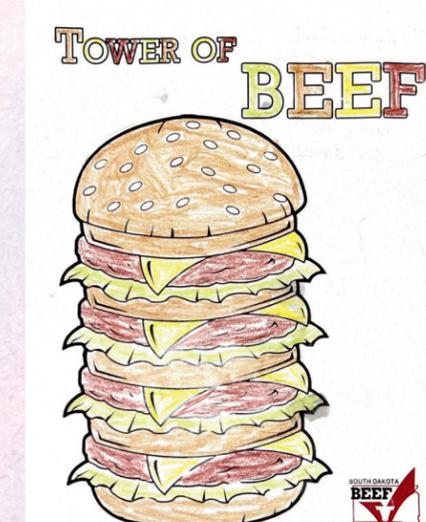
Age 4-7 Winners



Tessa Kilker
Age 5
Britton, SD



Stetson Cole
Age 6
Britton, SD



Hartley Harms
Age 7
Leola, SD

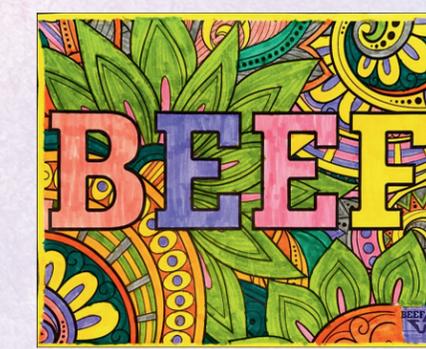
Age 8-11 Winners



Anna Poes
Age 9
Huron, SD



Anika Tom
Huron, SD



Alexa Rojas M.
Age 10
Huron, SD

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