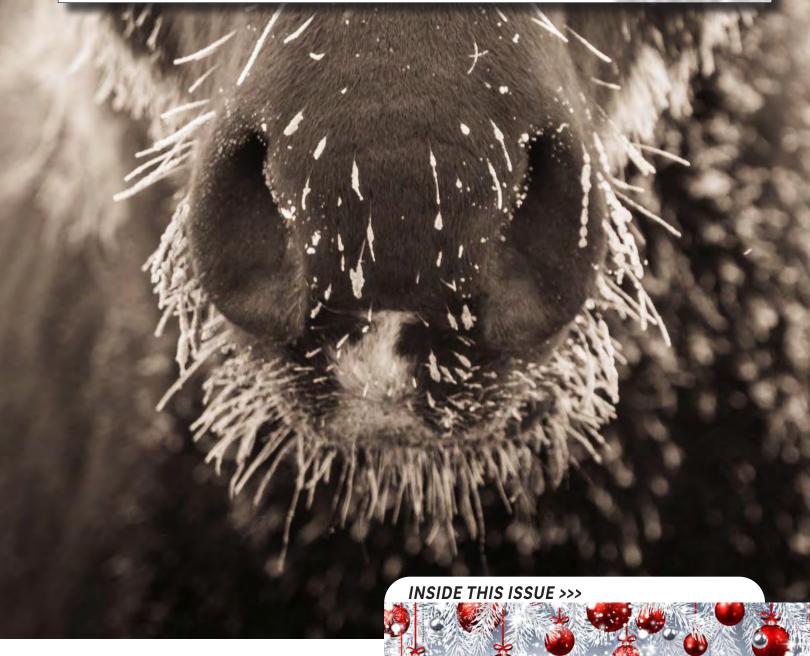
OREGON CATTLEMAN

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DECEMBER 2025



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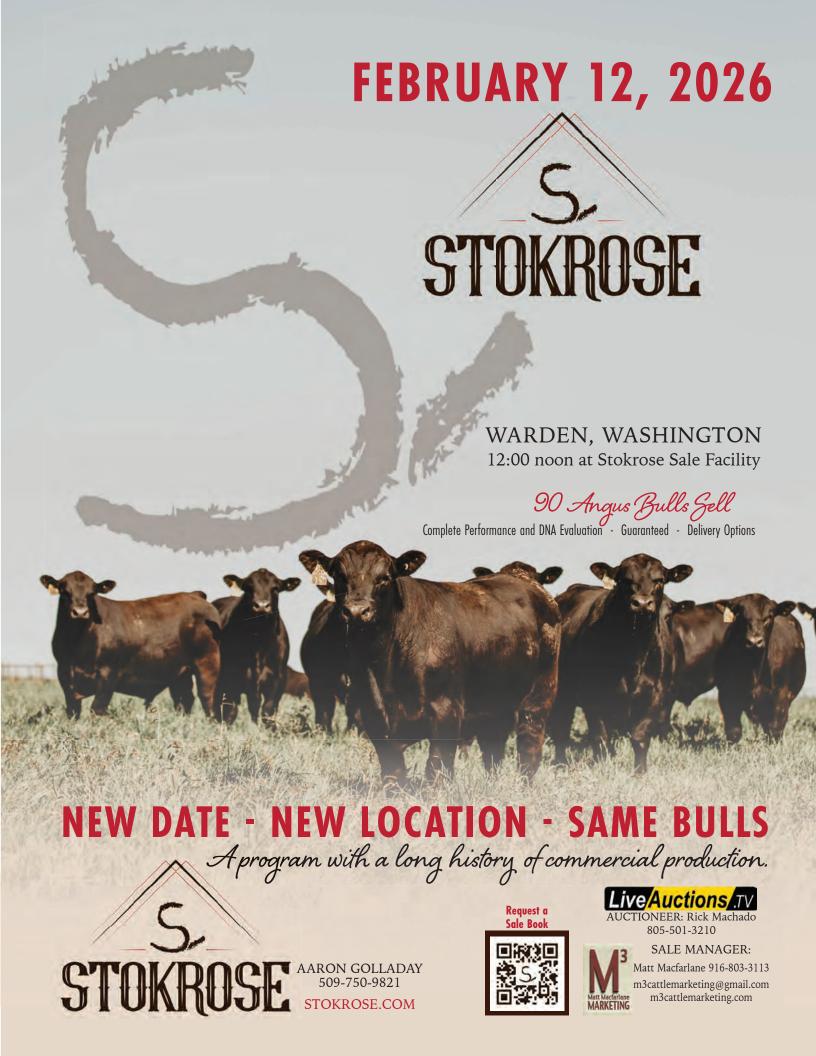
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ON THE COVER

"A bitterly cold day on the ranch" By Morgan Kromm, OCW President Taken at Pueblo Mountain Ranch in Fields, OR



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MCELLIGOTT
FAREWELL: THE
ACCIDENTAL WRITER

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The accidental writer

Matt McElligott | 541-805-8210 OCA President

"Save me some space, please." You don't know how many times I've uttered those words. In fact, I just did it two days ago. You see, as I sit here at cow camp and pen this article, it hits me that this will be the last time I shall write one for the Oregon Cattlemen's magazine. My journey to where I am today began 10 years ago. Ray Sessler was the OCA President in 2015. He asked me to chair the Public Lands committee. Then. and many years after, the Oregon Public Lands Committee had a running article in the OCA magazine. Only back then did Andi Rieber write it. Andi was good and knew her stuff, so when Ray asked if I would step into the chair, I was honored and said I would. After all, I wouldn't have to write the monthly articles, Andi had my back. I remember the call like it was yesterday. I was irrigating when Andi called; she said I would have to write the PLC articles from then on because she was moving to Europe! She had been stricken with Lyme disease, and there was a clinic in Europe with state-of-the-art treatment. She was accepted and was leaving right away. Of course, I said. Your health comes first. God bless and God speed! Oh, by the way, when am I to have this magazine article that thousands of people read done by? In two days was her



reply. You'll do fine, she said as she hung up the phone. My next call was to the editor of the OCA magazine, and that was the first time I had to use that phrase, "save me some space, please." I was just informed that I am writing an article for the magazine. Since then, I've used it numerous times. I don't know how many articles I have written over the years because I never kept them all in one place. But most of all I never figured they would want me to write any more after the first one. The good majority of them were written late at night, as this one is. It is quiet then with few disturbances. My rule of thumb for length is no more than 850 words. I figured that if anybody were to start reading what I wrote, I'd like them to finish it. I always tried to bring a personal flair to them, incorporate a bit of my day into them, like branding, turning out into the forest allotment, gathering in the Fall, or even my own mishaps. Such as the time a cow kicked a sorting stick through my jaw. "Safety First" is also another phrase I use quite often! Weaving in your own personal stories gives the reader a feel of authenticity, but timing had to be right. There are so many stories I've had in my memory bank, waiting to be put to paper, but the timing wasn't right. Like the Elk hunt up Ladd creek in 1981, or the Browning standoff, or why Oregon State University rejected my application for admittance. Those stories will have to wait for another day.

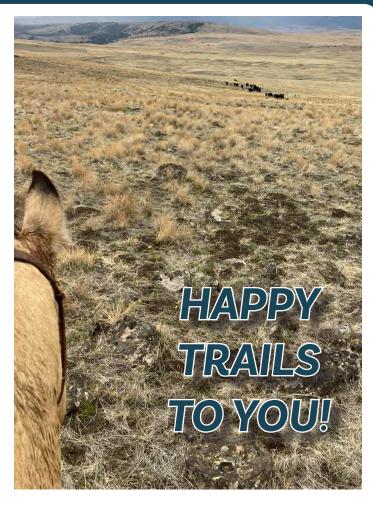
To this day, I am still surprised when someone says to me, "Hey, I just read your article in the Cattlemen's magazine". I wait with trepidation for the following sentence. Did they like it? Did it make them think? Or are they about to say I am an idiot? Most people are nice and say they liked it. But there is one person out there who

corrects my spelling and grammar each month. Must be an OSU graduate! I have hidden a couple here to see how good he is.

As I step down from the role of President, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Ray and all the Presidents who have shown their confidence in me and have continued this journey. Thank you to all the Oregon PLC members who let me represent you and the state of Oregon on the national PLC board for all those years. To the members of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, thank you for entrusting me to lead this great organization for the past two years. Most of all, thanks to my Wife LaDonn, who supported me and pulled double duty when I attended all those meetings.

As I step aside for the next President, let me say, I understand that not everyone can step into a leadership role in an all-volunteer organization like this, but everyone can pay their dues and be a member.

It is bittersweet that this is where I say goodbye, as Roy Rodgers sang, "Happy Trails to You," or for the younger generation, as George Straight sang, "This is where the Cowboy Rides Away!" •







From the desk of your Executive Director

Tammy Dennee, CMP, CAE | 541-980-6887 OCA Executive Director

As I draft this article, I am managing meetings in the Capitol with legislators to discuss wildfire and wolf funding for the upcoming Short Session, pulling the elements of this magazine together to push to the editor, reviewing the program book for the convention, processing payables and receivables, and preparing for the membership renewal season. I know you find yourself juggling everyday responsibilities and can relate.

By the time this issue lands in your mailbox, the Convention will be in the rearview mirror. I sincerely hope you made time to attend all or a portion of this year's Annual Convention. We packed a whole lot into the equivalent of just two days. With more than 30 workshops, policy meetings for the committees, a Beef Quality Assurance certification, and a Wolf Conflict workshop, there was something for everyone and every size of cattle operation. If you didn't, I would love to hear from you about any barriers that kept you from attending. If it were NFR, I can't move that date, but I can appreciate your dilemma. The 2026 Convention will once again be held in Pendleton, the weekend after Thanksgiving. Please consider marking your calendar to attend.

Be on the lookout for your membership renewal notice. We finished 2025 welcoming nearly 120 new members, and it is our ongoing challenge to retain existing members. I want to believe you get busy with everyday life and simply forget to process the renewal request. If you would please be so kind as to renew your membership with the first renewal request, you would be saving OCA staff and postage expenses. With a small staff of two doing the work of multiples every day, we are always on the lookout for time and cost savings. Your membership dues are the primary source of funding for OCA, and every dollar is greatly appreciated. Every member is tremendously appreciated. Without our members, we have no funding and therefore no ability to deliver on

the mission of serving Oregon's 11,000 ranchers. Please accept my sincere thanks for your ongoing financial support.

As we look to the Short Legislative Session, our priorities will continue to be wildfire and wolf depredation funding. Unfortunately, the end of the long session left a couple of funding gaps in these areas. Conversations are already underway to request support from the Governor's Office and the House and Senate Leadership for these funding requests. Updates will be provided to you on a weekly basis in the e-newsletter. If you have an interest in participating in the Legislative Committee meetings during the Session, the meeting time and date will be published in the e-newsletter to invite every member to participate. This is your association, and you are welcome to actively participate in every committee.

We are kicking off a brand-new Leadership Program for Young Cattlemen in the new year. See the information in this issue of the magazine for details. A class of five will be selected from the applications received, so let me encourage you to complete the application for consideration and send it to me no later than January 31, 2026. The Young Cattlemen's Committee, currently led by Mike Alger, is seeking sponsors for the new program. If you have questions about this new opportunity, please feel free to reach out to Mike. You will find his phone number in the last pages of this magazine.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to continue serving as your Executive Director as I start my sixth year. Please participate in the local Livestock organization near you and engage at the state level as your schedule allows. We welcome your perspective.

May the holiday season be filled with family, friends, and community. God bless you and yours, Tammy Dennee, CMP, CAE - Executive Director •

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Recapping 2025 Legislative Achievements

Rocky DallumPolitical Advocate

As we approach the end of the year, the holiday season, Christmas, and all that December brings, it allows us to reflect on 2025, the successes OCA achieved on behalf of Oregon ranchers, and the new year to come. With the long session occupying half of 2025, we had plenty of challenges and made progress on several OCA goals. Our members and legislative champions worked hand-in-hand on major priorities this year. While that work continues, this fall has given us a new perspective on a changing environment in the state Capitol, and a dynamic short session and election year approaching in 2026.

First, let's recap a few key achievements and other priorities for OCA in 2025. OCA took a leading role in solving the wildfire funding crisis at the State Capitol. By the end of the session, tireless work by your OCA staff, board, and members resulted in new funding mechanisms and new appropriations to help reduce the ever-growing burden on small landowners to pay for fire suppression. There's still work to be done, but progress in Oregon's Legislature does not come easy. Similarly, this year we saw significant changes and additional investment in Oregon's wolf depredation and compensation grant program. This bipartisan effort recognizes another challenge that livestock producers pay an outsized share of the cost for. OCA's water committee and members were key players in shaping (and stopping!) countless bills and proposals impacting Oregon's already complex water policy landscape, including the ability to transfer water rights. Our goal is to always protect this precious resource for ranchers and their animals. Finally, after many difficult discussions over the brand inspection program, OCA was able to find a path forward with the Oregon Department of Agriculture's fee structure, which badly needed changes to maintain these important services. All told, the

2025 session was a success for OCA in a difficult political environment. A real testament to the dedication of our members.

The second half of the year in Oregon's political realm has been dominated by talks about government resources and tax revenue, including transportation funding, administration, maintenance, and operations. As we move into 2026, legislators will be figuring out how to balance the biennial budget in the face of continued tax base erosion - Oregon continues to lose jobs throughout the state. It has been tagged as one of the least tax-friendly states in the nation, all while we fail to compete with other states for jobs. At the same time, our student outcomes, housing access, and other services fall well below other states' performance. Legislative leadership will start to feel what Oregon families and businesses already face: hard decisions about what they can afford. Our state has experienced significant growth over the past decade, and policymakers will now have to reconcile slower revenue growth with massive agency budgets and costs. During November's Legislative committee hearings, policymakers heard directly from agencies as to how they plan to reduce their budgets by up to 4%. The state economist gave yet another weary revenue forecast.

We're already seeing the tussle between revenue and agency management play out with the transportation package passed in September's special session, as several Republicans are seeking to refer the gas tax and payroll tax increase to the voters. They have until the end of December to secure over 78,000 valid signatures and let Oregonians weigh in on whether they agree with the potential increases. If they qualify, we will get a true barometer in 2026 for Oregonians' current appetite for tax increases.

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A few other things are shaping up for 2026. The budget crunch is creating more waves than just budget cuts. Legislators will undoubtedly look at existing tax deductions at both the state and federal levels to see if they can claw back tax revenue without requiring a supermajority for a new tax. Whether this raises revenue or further stresses the diminishing employment base is yet to be seen. Finally, some legislators, including the Senate Energy and Environment Committee, are already looking at some existing programs that indirectly cost consumers (or will very soon); the Climate Protection Program (CPP) promulgated by DEQ starts in 2026, and could drive up natural gas costs for consumers and businesses. Some policymakers are looking to link Oregon's program to the cap & invest program in Washington state, which costs significantly less than Oregon's program. These are not easy conversations, particularly with the political history over cap & trade, but a broad coalition of businesses is seeking to replace the CPP with a market-based approach. Otherwise, job losses in manufacturing could accelerate as the CPP begins. Several Republicans are publicly opposed to any carbon program, but the DEQ program is a real threat if not addressed very soon.

Finally, we're getting a glimpse at the election year. Several prominent Republicans have already filed to run for Governor, with more rumored to enter soon. OCA is closely watching Initiative Petition 28, which would criminalize the killing of animals (for food, hunting, fishing, pest control, etc.!). On the upside, in November, we saw eleven potential ballot measures filed by one concerned Portlander addressing a variety of issues, including limiting the ability for voters to approve tax increases, regular review and expiration of existing taxes, eliminating estate taxes, addressing school performance, and more. A bipartisan group of former elected officials has also filed two ballot measures seeking to allow open primaries in Oregon. The 2026 election is shaping up to be dynamic and critical for OCA's work in the coming years.

We hope you all enjoy a wonderful holiday season. Thank you for all you've done this year for ranchers and rural communities throughout the state we love! •



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BAR DYNAMIC AAA 19923789



16 | -2.8 | 89 | 152 | 21 | 1.22 | 52 | 283

SITZ ESSENTIAL 731J

BIEBER JUMPSTART J137 RAAA 4463653



CED | BW | WW | YW | MILK | MARB | HB | GM | 16 | -2.7 | 97 | 164 | 26 | .39 | 43 | 55

FEDDES DRIFTER 181-3201 RAAA 4787684



CED | BW | WW | YW | MILK | MARB | HB | GM | 15 | -2.0 | 80 | 131 | 35 | .70 | 72 | 81

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BIEBER PAYCHECK K102 BIEBER CHECKMATE K126 LCDR PROGRESSIVE 106G ASA 3646242



CE | BW | WW | YW | MILK | MARB | \$API | \$TI 17.7 | -3.1 | 88.0 | 135.9 | 33.0 | .51 | 167.0 | 101.7

WS ENHANCEMENT 25H ASA 3764886



CE BW WW YW MILK MARB \$API \$TI 19.3 -4.2 83.7 134.1 31.7 .92 203.3 109.7

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Wolf Committee Update

John Williams & Veril Nelson

Wolf Committee Co-Chairs

A lot has been happening recently relating to wolves. A wolf compensation law passed the legislature last spring. There are four different efforts to delist the wolf from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Universities are publishing papers on the extent of the economic impact of wolf presence on the livestock industry. That said, the most important issue is that wolves are continuing to expand into more parts of the state, affecting more producers each month. We are seeing increased population density of wolves on and around our ranches. None of the efforts to update the laws/ regulations and research can mitigate the personal impact that ranchers are living with, as we find the mutilated carcasses or remove the frustration when a rancher comes up nine calves short after just 3 months of grazing. Nothing can fill the empty gut feeling as the open cow pen fills up from a preg-test of 80% when you have always had 95%.

As we talk to ranchers about the real impacts of wolves moving into their neighborhoods, a word keeps coming to mind: urgency. Mack Birkmaier told me in 1996 that the wolf was "going to hit the cattle industry like nothing he had ever seen in his life." Unfortunately for us, Mack is a visionary, and his vision is coming true in Oregon faster than most of us expected. Wallowa County continues to be the tip of the spear, with a population saturation of 67 wolves, the minimum count last January. It is becoming clear that we need wolf management objectives that balance wolf populations with available wild ungulates (deer and elk) and to protect the livestock





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industry from constant depredations.

SB777 became law this past summer, removing missing livestock from being part of the compensation program, and in place of that, calves/ yearlings/sheep/goats are to be compensated at a 5-to-1 ratio of confirmed/probable depredations. The cows-to-bulls ratio is up to 3 to 1, and all other animals are compensated at market value. The limit is \$25,000 per animal. The decision of ratios and market values (including elevated values for purebreds, bulls, cow dogs, or ranch horses) is given to the local compensation committees. The Administrative rules are being crafted as we speak. The legislature funded the new compensation program at \$1,000,000.00. This is not enough to pay for current confirmed/ probable depredations at the full rate; however, we are hopeful that the legislators will add money in the upcoming short session.

The biggest issue for over 75% of the state is removing wolves from the federal ESA list. There are three bills and an administrative effort:

THE LEGISLATIVE DELISTING BILLS

- HR845 titled The Pet and Livestock Protection Act, sponsored by Representatives Tiffany & Boehbert + 30 more representatives
- Bill would delist wolves in the lower 48 states and would not allow judicial review unless it can be proven that the species is actually moving towards extinction.
- HB5171 Pacific Northwest Gray Wolves Relief Act of 2025 Sponsored by Representatives Bentz and Newhouse
- Bill requires the Secretary of the Interior to reissue a final rule delisting the gray wolves in Oregon and Washington within 60 days of passage of the bill
- The Endangered Species Act Amendments Act of 2025
- Aims to reform the ESA by clarifying definitions, promoting species recovery, and streamlining the permitting process. It slows down species listings and fast-tracks delisting (including wolves). It also transfers management to states.

In 2020, the wolf was delisted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). On February 10, 2022, a judge in Northern California vacated that decision and issued an injunction, effectively reinstating the wolf on the federal ESA. The USFWS agreed to write a nationwide wolf management plan, expected to be completed in December 2024. The ESA states that the USFWS is to develop a recovery plan "unless [the Service] finds that such a plan will not promote the conservation of the species". The USFWS announced in early November that a management plan would not promote wolf conservation; therefore, they are not writing one. At this time, we are waiting to hear what the plan is to get the injunction removed, thus removing the wolf from the ESA.

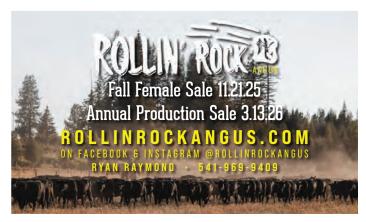
Two recent research efforts have shown the actual costs of wolf-livestock interactions. First is a peer-reviewed paper authored by Tim Delbridge, Assistant Professor, OSU, and David Bohnert, Professor, OSU, titled How does the presence of wolves affect Oregon's livestock producers? EM9545. This paper is based, in part, on data collected from Oregon producers. Tim discussed this effort at previous OCA annual meetings, requesting producers' data. The results show that producers that are "extremely heavily impacted" by wolves have an economic loss of over \$280.00 per cow. It also includes case studies that highlight other challenges wolves pose to ranch operations, such as increased costs due to changes in cattle behavior and "other costs," such as lost genetics.

A second effort is by an interdisciplinary team of UC Davis, California, professors led by Tina Saitone and Ken Tate. They studied "The economic consequences of an apex predator interacting with livestock." They studied three wolf packs' interactions with cattle in northeastern California. The findings, not yet peer-reviewed, suggest that:

- One wolf can cause between \$69,000 and \$162,000 in direct and indirect losses from lower pregnancy rate and decreased weaning weight:
- Total indirect losses range from \$1.4 to \$3.4 million for moderate or severe impacts from wolves;
- 72% of wolf scat samples tested during summer seasons contained cattle DNA;
- Hair cortisol levels were elevated in cattle that ranged in areas with wolves, indicating an increase in stress.

The authors concluded: "It is clear the scale of conflict between wolves and cattle is substantial, expanding and costly to ranchers in terms of animal welfare, animal performance and ranch profitability," they also said, "This is not surprising given that cattle appear to be a major component of wolf diet and the calories drive their conservation success." •





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Oregon Cattlemen's Association announces the start of the

Young Cattlemen's Leadership Program

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) is announcing its Young Cattlemen's Leadership Program for those with an interest in serving the beef industry. This comprehensive training program will expose individuals to the many programs and people that affect and influence Oregon's beef industry.

The Young Cattlemen's Leadership Program is an 18-month commitment and will include one training/activity approximately every 8-12 weeks. The trainings/activities will be completed in 2027 and the give back component and final meeting will be completed by June, 2027.



Scan this QR Code for Program Details and to download Application form,

OR

Request a physical application from the OCA office

OR

visit our website: orcattle.com/yc-leadership-program



Completed applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2026 to be eligible for consideration

Please return the application, along with essay responses and signed Candidate Agreement to the OCA office.

Mailing Address: 1320 Capitol Street NE, Ste 150, Salem, OR 97301

Questions? Contact Tammy Dennee, Executive Director at tammy.dennee@orcattle.com or call 503-361-8941



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Where the (Collared) Wolves Are: Understanding GPS collar technology & wolf location information

Ellie Gage

Based on Wolf Location Sharing: Finding Common Ground by Avery Shawler, PhD, and Matt Collins; Western Landowners Alliance.

Oregon has experimented with multiple ways to share information on the locations of collared wolves with ranchers dealing with wolf conflict. But increased access to collared wolf location information isn't a panacea for wolf conflict – it has limitations. Understanding those limitations and identifying solutions to move forward on this challenging topic are increasingly critical for Oregon ranchers and biologists. A new publication from my organization, the Western Landowners Alliance, called Wolf Location Sharing: Finding Common Ground, aims to increase understanding of this complicated topic, summarize how different states share information, and provide recommendations for both ranchers and agency staff.

Collaring wolves to study their movements is an important tool for biologists. As wolves

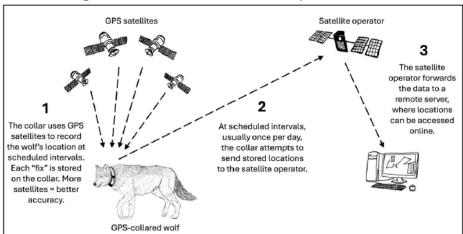
recolonized Northeast Oregon and dispersed across the state, conflict with livestock increased, and determining best practices for wolf location information sharing between agency staff and livestock producers has been a long-standing challenge. For livestock producers, knowing when a collared wolf has passed through or is near their livestock is valuable. They can make management decisions based on where a collared wolf is spending time, such as increasing their presence on the rangeland. Additionally, if a cluster of collar points occurs, they can check to see if a depredation event has occurred. Most importantly, wolf location sharing provides opportunities for wildlife agency staff to engage in conversations with livestock producers to support them and discuss options to reduce conflict.

In the time between when a wolf location is recorded and the data are uploaded to the satellite a wolf can travel a great distance. As I've heard John Williams, co-chair of OCA's wolf committee, say, "The GPS collars tell us where the wolf was, not where it is now." In addition, the location of one or two collared wolves in a pack may not be a good indication of the locations of the remaining uncollared wolves.

VHF radio collars are less expensive, more durable, and have a longer battery life. This technology does not record coordinates; instead, a person with an antenna and receiver must be in proximity to the VHF-collared animal to locate them, a process called radio telemetry. Some agencies in other states have shared VHF collar frequencies and telemetry equipment with producers and range riders to reduce conflicts, with varying levels of success and producer satisfaction. Also, if wolf with a VHF collar disperses (i.e. leaves its pack to search for a new territory/mate) its fate will likely be unknown.

"Many producers recognize that location information is just one tool—not a silver bullet—and that they shouldn't rely on it exclusively. Still, they find it valuable." - Wolf Location Sharing: Finding Common Ground

Livestock producers share mixed



views on the usefulness of wolf location information for reducing wolf-livestock conflicts. Because GPS collars cannot provide real time data, producers can only use past locations to identify general patterns and inform management decisions. Some have used the information to move livestock away from wolves, while others have accidentally moved livestock closer to active den sites due to a lack of communication with agencies. The movement of collared individuals often won't represent the whole pack. especially when packs split up in summer. This can result in misleading interpretations, misplaced efforts, or a false sense of security. Wolf presence near livestock also doesn't always indicate conflict, and even when producers had access to GPS or VHF data, depredations still occurred.

How to request wolf location information from ODFW:

- Call your local ODFW wildlife biologist and ask about receiving wolf location information to help reduce livestock loss. Describe your operation, past incidents, and why you are requesting the information.
- If you're part of a multi-ranch grazing area, consider nominating a single producer person of contact to streamline communications.

Significant resources go into agency efforts to collar wolves, and the technology has room for improvement: collars may stop working shortly after being placed, and the battery life for GPS collars is short. Oregon provides a wolf location summary map to the public that is updated once a year and targeted sharing of wolf locations with producers when there is conflict. Producers can help by identifying a producer in their community to be the point of contact for the agency and request regular communication from the agency. While collar data can help producers respond to and reduce conflict, significant

limitations in the technology must be understood. Ideally, the communication of known wolf locations is part of a larger producer-agency partnership to reduce conflict and support landowners. Of the ranchers and wildlife agency staff that were interviewed in the process of creating the wolf location sharing publication, both groups emphasized that direct field monitoring-such as camera traps, tracking wolf sign, and observing livestock behavior-often provides more accurate, timely insights into wolf activity than collar data alone. •

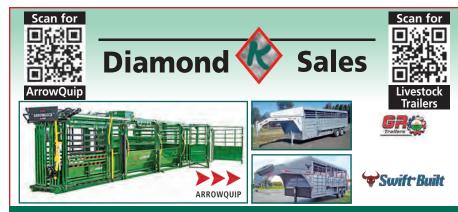


Collared Wolves in Western States: A Comparison

| | AZ/NM | CA | CO | ID* | MT* | OR | WA | WY* |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------|---------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Wolf Population Estimate, 2024 | 286 | ~50 | 15 | ~1235 | ~1091 | 204 | 230 | 330 |
| Percent of Wolves Collared, 2024 | 39% | 26% | All reintroduced wolves collared prior to release | ~2% | ~3% | 14% | 13% | 39%** |
| Collar Type | Mostly GPS | All GPS | All GPS | All GPS | Mostly VHF | Mostly GPS | Mostly GPS | ~2/3 VHF ~1/3 GPS |
| Map Available | public online map | public online map | public online map | N/A | N/A | public online map | private online map | N/A |
| Frequency of Map Updates | Weekly | Daily, every morning | Monthly | N/A | N/A | Annually & as new packs are identified | Every couple of days | N/A |
| Location info scale | 3.14 miles² hexagons | 4.6-mile diameter hexagons | Watershed | N/A | N/A | Pack area | GPS locations | N/A |

^{*}States with wolf hunting do not provide wolf locations publicly

^{**} Percent of wolves collared in Wyoming Wolf Trophy Game Management Area



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The USDA's New Beef Industry Plan: Progress, Gaps, and What's Still Needed

Rebecca Thistlethwaite

Director of the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network, a program of the Center for Resilient Agriculture & Food Systems, Oregon State University. Article adapted from her two-part series posted on LinkedIn. All opinions are her own and not representative of NMPAN nor OSU.



On October 22, the USDA unveiled a new plan to strengthen the U.S. beef industry. The announcement followed public discussion sparked by President Trump's comments about possibly importing Argentine beef to bolster supplies and reduce consumer prices. While the new plan aims to expand production and stabilize markets, many producers, processors, and experts say it misses key opportunities and relies too heavily on repackaged ideas from previous administrations.

As someone who works closely with meat producers and processors, I was surprised that so few stakeholders were involved in shaping the plan. The beef supply chain is complex, and meaningful solutions require collaboration among ranchers, processors, Extension specialists, and agricultural economists. Leaving these voices out has weakened the plan and resulted in proposals that don't fully address the industry's economic and environmental challenges.

THE STATE OF THE U.S. BEEF INDUSTRY

According to data from USDA, the U.S. beef cow herd is now the smallest it has been in nearly 70 years. Yet consumer demand and consumption remain strong. For the last couple years, Americans have paid the highest nominal beef prices in history, while cattle have simultaneously brought record-high prices. Despite those numbers, herd sizes continue to shrink and are not expected to rebound until late in the decade.

Beef remains one of the most important agricultural commodities in the country, with production in all 50 states. About 29% of U.S. farms listed beef cattle as part of their operation in the 2022 Census of Agriculture, down from 35% in 2017. The industry's contraction is driven largely by drought, rising input costs, and slim profit margins—factors the new USDA plan only partially addresses.

WHERE THE USDA PLAN FALLS SHORT

Expansion of Public Lands Grazing - Less than 2% of U.S. beef production comes from cattle grazed on public lands. Expanding access to vacant federal allotments—many of which are unsuitable for grazing—will do little to increase national herd numbers. Additionally, agencies that manage these lands, such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service, have seen staffing cuts of more than 30%. Without adequate personnel to manage permits and monitor land health, expanding grazing access is largely impractical.

"Product of the USA" Labeling - The plan's mention of enforcing "Product of the USA" labeling rules is not a new initiative. The rule was finalized in March 2024 under Secretary Tom Vilsack, with implementation set for January 2026. It requires that meat labeled as a U.S. product must come from animals raised, harvested, and processed domestically. The rule closes a long-standing loophole that allowed imported meat to carry the U.S. label after minimal processing. Enforcing it is essential but not a novel reform.

Repackaging Earlier Programs

- Several components of the new plan appear to be continuations or rebrands of existing programs:

- Cattle Contract Library pilot (2022) - launched to improve market transparency.
- Remote Beef Grading pilot (2024) – aims to support small processors.
- Inspection overtime cost-sharing (2022) - designed to help small plants but now less relevant as many operate below capacity.
- Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (2022) – supported new or expanded plants, many of which now struggle with limited beef supply.
- Farm to School grants (2010)

 promote local purchasing,
 though schools and food banks
 have seen fluctuating support
 for local meat procurement.

While these programs have value, simply relaunching them without addressing fundamental herd and market challenges does not meaningfully strengthen the industry.

ECONOMIC REALITIES FOR PRODUCERS

Most U.S. beef producers are small, independent cow-calf operations averaging about 45 animals. In the past two decades, they earned more than \$50 in profit per cow in only about half of those years. Given this volatility, it's understandable that few are expanding herds. Input costs for feed, fuel, equipment, etc. have risen sharply, while market access remains dominated by four large packers.

Recent trade and tariff policies have also increased uncertainty. Prices dropped by roughly \$100 per head following recent announcements about expanded beef imports, illustrating how sensitive markets are to global supply shifts and political machinations. At the same time, ranchers face higher costs and limited labor availability due to tightening immigration enforcement in related sectors.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PROFITABILITY

Several practical measures could help stabilize producer income and incentivize herd growth:

- Expand risk-management tools such as insurance to protect against prices falling below production costs.
- Increase access to low-interest loans for operating costs and livestock purchases, especially for beginning ranchers.
- Create targeted financing for replacement heifers and cow-calf pairs, which have become prohibitively expensive.
- Invest in producer education to improve profitability, soil health, grazing management, and herd genetics through partnerships with land-grant universities and private educators.
- Ease trade tensions and reduce market volatility by scaling back tariff conflicts that raise costs for inputs like feed and steel.

STRENGTHENING MARKET FAIRNESS AND CONSUMER DEMAND

Market concentration continues to be a major concern. Enforcing and updating the Packers and Stockyards Act to prevent anti-competitive practices is vital to ensuring fair prices for ranchers. Empowering the Department of Justice to investigate consolidation within meatpacking would also help level the playing field.

On the consumer side, clear labeling and targeted marketing can boost demand for domestic beef. The "Product of the USA" rule will help eliminate misleading labels, while national and regional marketing efforts could emphasize local and sustainable production. Public purchasing programs—such as schools, hospitals, food banks, and military contracts—should prioritize American beef to strengthen domestic markets and rural economies. Adequate funding for those programs must follow.

Research and pilot projects for full-carcass utilization, domestic hide tanning, and by-product innovation

could also increase value for each animal while reducing waste.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE PRESSURES

As of late 2025, nearly half of the continental U.S. is experiencing some level of drought. Nineteen million cattle are located in drought-affected counties, and wildfires have burned more than 10 million acres of rangeland since 2020. These conditions reduce forage availability, weaken pasture health, and drive producers to cull herds.

Federal agencies such as NOAA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Forest Service, and the BLM need adequate funding and staffing to manage drought monitoring, fire prevention, and range restoration. Revitalizing these agencies would help collect vital data and support better on-the-ground management.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE SOLUTIONS

- Invest in soil health programs.
 For every 1% increase in soil organic matter, an acre can retain roughly 20,000 more gallons of water. USDA and NRCS should continue promoting soil-building practices as drought mitigation.
- Expand technical assistance.
 Public agencies, Extension,
 NGOs and others need
 resources to help ranchers
 adopt regenerative grazing and
 water-efficient practices.
- Increase outreach on risk-management insurance for drought, wildfire, and floods through the USDA's Risk Management Agency.
- Support research on virtual fencing and other technologies that can reduce infrastructure costs, manage grazing rotations, and protect sensitive lands.
- Encourage coexistence with wildlife and predators. Grazing permittees can use guard animals, range riders, and temporary fencing to protect livestock while improving range health and biodiversity.

Managed grazing—on both private and public lands—can be an effective tool for reducing invasive species and wildfire risk, but only with proper oversight and ecological balance.

WHAT'S WORTH SUPPORTING IN THE USDA PLAN

The USDA beef plan contains a few positive ideas that are unlikely to change herd numbers and beef supply but may improve conditions for new producers. Improving interagency communication, insurance tools, and enhancing support for beginning farmers and ranchers are worthwhile initiatives. The challenge will be execution-ensuring these measures are fully funded, staffed, and accessible to producers of all sizes. Since the 2018 Farm Bill has expired, there will be much work to do to reboot and fund these USDA programs.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The average U.S. beef producer owns fewer than 50 animals and faces a narrow profit margin each year. Unless the core issues of land access, drought resilience, fair market competition, and financing are addressed, herd expansion will remain limited.

A strong national beef plan must:

- Involve a broader range of stakeholders—including ranchers, processors, land managers, and economists—in its development. It should be non-partisan in nature, use long-term thinking, and the best available science.
- 2. Combine economic, environmental, and market reforms that continue and further refine existing programs.
- 3. Strengthen domestic production capacity while maintaining fair and transparent trade policies.
- Provide technical and financial support to small and medium-sized producers who form the backbone of rural America.

The U.S. beef industry is vital to both agriculture and national food security. The USDA's new plan represents a starting point, but much more research, collaboration, and investment will be needed to ensure a resilient, profitable, and sustainable future for America's cattle producers.

Eastern Oregon Deer Hunts Shift from WMUs to Deer Hunt Areas: Landowners be aware of coming LOP tag changes

Brian Wolfer | brian.h.wolfer@odfw.oregon.gov Wildlife Division Deputy Administrator, ODFW

ODFW will transition from Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) to Deer Hunt Areas in Eastern Oregon starting with the 2026 season.

These new Deer Hunt Areas match the natural ranges of mule deer herds. The transition will improve harvest and herd management and make it easier to track how herds respond to management actions.

This change affects all Eastern Oregon deer hunting, including bucks, does, and all weapon types. Elk, antelope, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats will remain under WMUs.

LOP deer tags will also be impacted as the formula for allocating LOP tags will be changing to account for changes to the structure of management objectives and shift from WMUs to mule deer herd ranges and the new Deer Hunt Areas.

ODFW staff is developing a proposal for modification of this formula, which will go before the Fish and Wildlife Commission for approval at their meeting on January 16, 2026. ODFW staff have been talking about options for the modification of this tag formula with sports group and landowner group representatives, including

OCA. LOP tags for white-tailed deer specific hunts will not be subject to the formula used to set LOP mule deer tags.

Written descriptions for Deer Hunt Areas will be provided in the 2026 Big Game Hunting Regulations, on MyODFW.com, as well as hunting apps such as OnX. 2026 regulations will be posted online at ereguations.com, and printed copies will be available at license agents by December 1.

Maps and other information is available now showing the relationship between WMUs and 2026 Deer Hunt Areas – visit myodfw.com/articles/eastern-oregon-deer-hunts.



ODFW recognizes that private lands provide valuable habitat for Oregon's wildlife. The Landowner Preference Program (LOP) is important for landowners who want to hunt their land or provide an opportunity for friends and family.

ODFW is currently reviewing the registered tax lots of each LOP account to determine which Deer Hunt Area the landowner is eligible for. Until an LOP account is assigned to the Deer Hunt Area in which it occurs, landowners may not be able to fully complete their tag distribution lists. We anticipate



The number of limited LOP mule deer tags available for each hunt will be provided to registered landowners by May 1, 2026. The number of LOP tags available for each mule deer hunt is determined by a formula that considers the total number of controlled hunt tags available for that hunt through the controlled hunt drawing and the performance of that mule deer population relative to the population management objective. Again, this formula will need to be adjusted to account for changes to the structure of management objectives and shift from WMUs to mule deer herd ranges and the new Deer Hunt Areas.

MORE ABOUT THE CHANGES FOR DEER HUNTS IN 2026:

New Naming System - Deer Hunt Areas align with the 22 herd ranges identified in the 2024 Mule Deer Management Plan, and many have been renamed to avoid confusion with existing WMUs. New hunt areas will use a new alphanumeric system to identify hunt areas within herd ranges. For example, hunt area #1 within the Northeast herd range would be NE 01.

Larger Hunt Areas - The previous 47 WMUs are being replaced by 43 new Deer Hunt Areas mapped to reflect summer, winter, and migration corridors. Consequently, some hunt areas will be slightly larger than the traditional WMUs. These larger hunting areas will be less impacted by closures and allow hunters more flexibility in response to wildfire or hunting pressure.

Preference Points - The preference point system has not changed, and a hunter's 100 series and 600 series preference points are not affected. However, given that many WMUs were combined or split to accurately reflect the movement of mule deer, preference points required to hunt a given area may be less predictable for the next few years. Hunters should consider this uncertainty when deciding how to use preference points.

Tag Adjustments - In Northeast Oregon, seven new hunt areas will have separate mule deer and white-tailed deer hunts. Hunters in those areas will have to choose which species they will target. Tag allocation was based on observed proportions of each species in the harvest and will provide an additional level of harvest management resolution for mule deer. •



PECEMBER 2025

Cattle Ranchers Can Help End Hunger

John Burt

Executive Director, Farmers Ending Hunger



The need to engage in the fight to end hunger in Oregon is greater than ever. Oregon Food Bank reports higher numbers of people accessing the food bank network today than during the COVID pandemic. One in eight Oregonians, at last count, were food insecure, with one in 6 children at risk. And, more recently, the suspension of SNAP benefits (food stamps) during the Federal shutdown put 750,000 Oregonians at risk of needing to access supplemental food sources. While the causes of these circumstances are out of our control, there are many ways we all can help.

Farmers Ending Hunger has continued to generate significant amounts of food commodity donations over its 20-year history. Annual donations of over 1 million pounds of onions and potatoes, 100,000 pounds of fresh sweet cherries, 110,000 pounds of Krusteaz baking mix, and 73,400 pounds of hamburger are the primary donations delivered to Oregon Food Bank and its Regional Food Banks. Included is the Capeco Food Bank in Pendleton, OR.

The opportunity for additional donations is significant. This is especially true for Oregon cattle ranchers. Many of your local Livestock Associations already participate in "Ranchers Feeding Kids". Ranchers Feeding Kids is a partnership between cattle ranchers and their local school districts. Individual head of cattle are donated, processed, and the resulting meat is delivered to the school. In recent years, Farmers Ending Hunger has stepped up to cover the cost of processing the

donated cattle. The key impact of this program is that donations are made at the local level, most often in smaller rural communities.

Our first involvement with Farmers Ending Hunger was in 2010. Anna Marie Chamberlain was the Malheur County, Oregon State University Extension Faculty at the time. She reached out to me because they were receiving donated cattle at the time through the Malheur County Cattlemen's Assoc, but could not afford the processing costs. I agreed to cover the costs if Farmers Ending Hunger could count the pounds. The rest is history.

The Malheur County Cattlemen's Association is a great example. Bonnie and Chris Christensen have led the efforts there, and to date. over 50 heads have been donated. Schools in Willow Creek, Adrian, and Jordan Valley are examples of where the donations have landed. The Prairie City School District in Grant County has also taken advantage of the program, and about thirty heads have been donated and processed for them. And Dayville School District also participated. Beef is such a great source of protein, and the school cafeterias can't ever have too

To make the RFK program work, it just needs a grower willing to donate one or more head of cattle. A locally accepted processing facility has been located, and a time has been scheduled. Transportation is best provided by the donor, but can be arranged. As we all know, processing capacity in Oregon is limited, so line time may be the biggest challenge. Your local connections will really help in this

area

Another source of donated meat animals has begun to get more traction recently. The 4-H and FFA livestock auctions at County Fairs offer buyers the option of donating the animal rather than simply sending them for resale. The auction committees partner up with a local food bank or pantry to receive the donated meat products. A processor has usually been lined up for the auction, and the donated animals are sent there as well.

The cost of processing has become harder to cover for the local food banks and Farmers Ending Hunger has been approached to help. So far, Washington, Marion, and Benton County Fairs have partnered with Farmers Ending Hunger to have donated animals processed. All breeds of livestock are accepted, including mostly hogs in Washington County.

Individual donations directly to food banks are always welcome and require about the same approach as Ranchers Feeding Kids. Find a local processor and get the costs covered. Any of you who chose to do this are encouraged to contact me, and we can arrange to cover processing costs.

I'll be at the Oregon Cattlemen's Conference in December and will be offering a workshop titled "Cattle Ranchers Help Buck Hunger". Please join in if you are interested, or track me down at the conference.

NCBA Trade Update

An update from NCBA's Center for Public Policy



At the beginning of the year, NCBA provided guidance to help the Trump administration deliver on the President's trade goals. Since then, there has been a flurry of activity on the international trade front. Earlier in the year, President Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on several countries that brought world leaders to the negotiating table and has been the catalyst for more trade news than there has been in years, including a trade agreement-in-principle with the United Kingdom, that would give U.S. beef more access to this lucrative market. Along with the flurry of trade news was some turbulence with the announcement that the U.S. will quadruple imports of beef from Argentina to 80,000 metric tons in an effort to lower consumer beef prices. NCBA swiftly responded, ensuring the administration heard loud and clear that any effort to manipulate the markets should be abandoned immediately. Despite that bump in the road, there has still been so much positive progress on the trade front.

President Trump signed reciprocal trade deals with Malaysia and Cambodia, as well as a framework trade deal with Thailand that will see all three countries work to address tariff and non-tariff barriers. President Trump also announced a similar deal with Vietnam, which has been levied with a tariff rate of 20% on its exports to the United States. The high tariff rates on U.S. beef imposed by these four countries have made it difficult for U.S. beef to compete in those markets, but these deals will open the door for U.S. cattle producers to compete with other beef exporters like Australia and New Zealand.

NCBA was a strong supporter of President Trump's renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) into the vastly improved U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) during his first term. USMCA is important because it updated NAFTA to reflect our modern economic needs while protecting the unrestricted duty-free beef access established under NAFTA that enabled our industry to build Canada and Mexico into perennial top-five beef export markets. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is now up for a joint review in July 2026, where the U.S., Canada, and Mexico will decide whether to extend USMCA for another 16 years. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) announced a request for public comments and NCBA submitted formal comments in support of renewing

our beneficial market access under USMCA.

With the renewal of USMCA being up this year, there has been considerable talk about Mandatory-Country-of-Origin Labeling (MCOOL). NCBA has been clear that the U.S. cattle industry must avoid repeating mistakes of the past, while supporting USDA's efforts to improve transparency by implementing the Product of USA labeling rules to promote product differentiation in a voluntary and trade-compliant manner. Studies have shown that MCOOL did not improve producer profitability and did little to differentiate U.S. beef in the market. Instead, MCOOL caused massive compliance costs that were passed down the supply chain to the cow-calf sector, stockers, and feedyards.

In September, NCBA testified at a Section 301 investigation hearing convened by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) on Brazil's unfair trade practices and barriers to U.S. trade. NCBA testified on Brazil's restrictions on U.S. beef and long-standing concerns with the Brazilian government's track record of food safety and animal health. In the past five years, Brazil has sold \$4.45 billion of beef to American consumers but has failed to reciprocate meaningful access for U.S. beef by implementing burdensome technical barriers. At the same time, Brazil has repeatedly waited weeks, months or even years to report raising concerns about food and animal safety. NCBA supports President Trump increasing the tariff on Brazil to 76.4% but continues to urge the Trump administration to suspend beef imports from Brazil until a thorough audit and inspection process proves that Brazil can meet an equivalent level of food safety and animal health.

NCBA has spent years working to increase foreign access to U.S. beef and raising concerns about unfair trade practices by other countries. NCBA is thankful for President Trump and USTR for all their work to engage in international trade negotiations and hold our trading partners accountable. U.S. cattle producers will benefit from the successful negotiation of these trade deals and expanded access for years to come. •



In 1959, Governor Mark Hatfield signed the Oregon Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act, which granted new authority to the director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and established a non-partisan Board of Agriculture (BOA). The Board consists of 10 members appointed by the Governor. These members are responsible for advising the ODA on policy issues, developing recommendations on key agricultural matters, and advocating for the state's agriculture industry. ODA appreciates all the outstanding individuals who have served on the Board over the years. The current members represent a diverse group of producers and public members.

Barbara Boyer has been a member of the Board for over a decade, currently serving as an ex officio voting member. As the chair of Oregon's Soil and Water Conservation Commission, she automatically holds a position on the Board. Boyer is not only experienced; she has previously served as the Chair of the BOA and is a current board member of Juliette's House and the Land Conservation and Development



Commission. Additionally, she is a voting member of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). In Yamhill County, she is known as a co-founder of the McMinnville Farmers' Market.

One of Boyer's primary objectives in her various roles is to educate the public about valuable local and state programs that protect natural resources such as soil, water, and wildlife on farms while maintaining or improving production. Alongside her late husband, she has taken significant steps by removing 24 acres of their farm from hay production to enhance their

riparian buffer. This initiative involved planting 10,000 trees, which directly contributed to cooler water temperatures and improved fish and wildlife habitats.

Boyer continues to make a substantial impact through her farming in Yamhill County, her dedicated community service, and her passion for travel. Her guiding principle is clear: "Lead with Joy!"

Appointed in 2020, Josh Zielinski is a 5th-generation farmer and owner of a mid-sized nursery and farming operation in the heart of the Willamette Valley. His family



business includes a diverse range of crops, such as grass seed, specialty seed, vegetable row crops, hops, and hazelnuts.

After high school, Zielinski attended college in Southern California, where he studied business and Spanish. Upon graduation, he traveled to explore the world beyond agriculture and nurseries. After years of working out of state and internationally, he decided that home was the best place for him. Zielinski considers returning to the family farm and nursery to be the best business decision he could have made, as he learned from those who built the business from scratch.

Zielinski describes agriculture as being filled with challenges, including economic, regulatory, and employment issues, as well as weather and inventory

concerns. However, he believes that the most critical challenge is the rapidly changing markets. Despite the long days and uncertainties, he loves what he does and the sense of accomplishment that comes from hard work at the end of the day.

Outside of his agricultural responsibilities, Zielinski actively serves on the Oregon Association of Nurseries Board and the Chemeketa Community College Horticultural Advisory Committee. In everything he does, he follows the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would like to be treated."



WELCOME



To our New & Recently Renewed Members

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Kevin Byington

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Justin Richardson

Sarah Ryan

Lindianne & Arthur Sappington

Patty Silvius

Nathaniel Slinkert

Phil Wilson

Randy Wolf

DECEMBER 2025

Strengthening Connection and Focus: My Experience at NCBA's Partnerships in Action

Amanda Land



Attending NCBA's Partnerships in Action this year was an experience that deepened my appreciation for the beef community and clarified the path ahead for the Oregon Beef Council. I chose to attend because I wanted to strengthen my knowledge of the beef industry, meet my peers across the country, and learn directly from colleagues with years of experience. My goal was to better understand how to utilize the resources provided by NCBA and to gain insight from other state beef councils. Walking into PIA as a representative of the Oregon Beef Council filled me with pride. I am grateful for my position and I truly enjoy promoting beef and supporting the industry that works so hard to feed people.

One of the most impactful parts of the conference was the session on artificial intelligence and how it can be implemented into the work of beef councils. For smaller organizations like ours, using technology wisely can make a significant difference in what we are able to accomplish with a limited budget. The discussion highlighted tools that can help us work more efficiently, expand our reach, and strengthen our communications. I was also surprised by how different each state beef council truly is. Every council brings its own strengths and challenges, yet the shared commitment to collaboration connects all of us. The new NCBA marketing plan supported this theme and was inspiring to see. Having a well researched and tested plan to follow gives us confidence in our direction and helps bolster our in office marketing work. Hearing how other councils are successfully creating low cost culinary videos in their own kitchens also showed how creative and accessible effective outreach can be.

Another meaningful experience was meeting with staff from the Texas Beef Council. I was able to receive one on one support and guidance on their sports nutrition program. Their willingness to share their expertise reminded me how supportive and generous this community can be. Those conversations gave me practical ideas for how to bring sports nutrition work into Oregon in a way that fits our capacity and meets the needs of our state.

One of the biggest lessons I took away from PIA is the importance of being strategic with a small staff. In order to strengthen programming and expand our impact, we need detailed and efficient plans. This applies especially to the development of a culinary committee and the ongoing improvement of our marketing efforts. With the right structure, these initiatives can grow naturally and become strong long term assets for the council. I was also able to share one of our strengths, which is my background in nonprofit accounting and software implementation. It was encouraging to see how this skill set can support both our internal operations and our collaboration with other councils.

Several new priorities emerged for me during the conference, including completing my BQA certification, developing culinary videos, establishing a culinary committee, and beginning a sports nutrition program for Oregon. These areas will strengthen our outreach and help us connect with new audiences in meaningful ways. Over the next six to twelve months, my focus is to lay the groundwork for these projects and deepen my knowledge of the cattle industry so that OBC can offer stronger, more consistent programming. My long-term goal is to build initiatives that will support our office for years to come and to continue growing professionally so that I can better serve our producers, board members, and partners with clarity and confidence.

One of the most meaningful parts of PIA was the sense of community. I am always delighted by how friendly, supportive, and collaborative my peers in other beef councils are. I left the event with renewed gratitude to be part of this industry and a clearer understanding of how important our shared work is. If someone were attending PIA for the first time, I would tell them to be open, ask questions, and take advantage of the opportunity to learn from people who want to see you succeed.

For me, partnership now means recognizing that we are part of a national effort to support producers, advocate for beef, and share accurate information with consumers. Attending PIA makes collaboration with our national partners possible and gives us the knowledge and confidence to move forward with purpose.

Do you know an individual or a business who should be a member?



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Malheur CattleWomen Reestablish County Organization

Morgan Kromm | 805-801-9960 OCW President | orcattlewomen@gmail.com



Across Oregon, women in the cattle industry continue to show what happens when passion meets purpose. The newest example comes from the eastern edge of our vast state. After many years without an active organization, the Malheur County CattleWomen have officially reestablished their county organization, creating new opportunities for connection, education, and service in one of Oregon's largest and most cattle-rich regions.

For founding member and Public Relations Chair Darby Justis, the spark to rebuild the group began with a desire to give back.

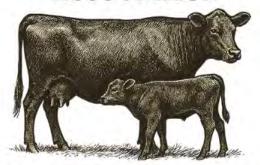
"The interest in rebuilding the Malheur County branch of the Oregon CattleWomen's Association came, initially, from my personal interest in becoming a member of a women-in-agriculture-based nonprofit, with the intention of donating my time back to our community," she said. "Combined with a love for cattle, I remembered the events hosted by the Baker County CattleWomen's and Cattlemen's Associations. The impact they made on the community within Baker County was exceptional, and I knew there had to be a Malheur County branch."

After a bit of research, Darby discovered that there was no longer an active county group in Malheur County, a surprising find given that the county ranks #4 in the nation for cattle per capita. "I knew that there would be optimal interest in this group forming," she said. "After a few emails, text chains, and some planning, the first meet-and-greet for the newly proposed Malheur County CattleWomen was planned."

Other motivated women soon joined Darby: Katharine Davis, who now serves as President; Cindy Clark, Vice President; Maggie McElroy, Treasurer; and Audrey Marchek, Secretary. They are the members of their newly established board. Together, this team laid the groundwork for the county's newest affiliate, working through bylaws, membership outreach, and logistics.

"Timing has been our biggest challenge," the group shared. "For example, a bank account cannot be opened until the bylaws are approved, and funds and bylaws are needed to get a P.O. Box. We overcame these challenges by holding executive team meetings

MALHEUR COUNTY CATTLEWOMEN'S



Advocate. Educate. Legislate.

and working together to ensure all our ducks were in a row and ready to go when the time came. We stayed in communication and worked together."

That teamwork paid off. Today, the Malheur County CattleWomen have eleven founding members and are actively recruiting through public outreach, community events, and social media.

At over 9,900 square miles, Malheur County is Oregon's second-largest, and connecting ranch women scattered across that vast landscape requires creativity. "Given the generous size of Malheur County and the 24/7 ranch working lifestyle our members have, we decided that public outreach was key," the leadership team explained.

To make participation easier, all meetings are available via Zoom, and beginning this spring, the group plans to rotate in-person meetings and events around the county. Their goal is to make sure everyone, whether on the north side near Ontario or the southern desert near McDermitt, feels included and represented.

They're also making a strong push on social media to connect with potential members and share updates. "We welcome kids at our meetings and offer Zoom links for those who have too much going on at home to attend," they said. "Our membership benefits will include discounts that will benefit families."

For their first year, the Malheur County CattleWomen are focusing on community service as the cornerstone of their efforts. "This should help us build our public image and our relationship with our community," they said. Plans are underway to collaborate with local FFA and 4-H chapters, assist with events organized by other agricultural groups, and host their own beef promotion booths at community gatherings.

Their first official event will take place this December. It will be a Christmas party and potluck, complete with an ornament and white elephant gift exchange. It's a fitting way to celebrate a year of groundwork and the start of something new.

"We will provide community service by assisting with other organizations' need for manpower during their events," they shared. "We will partner with local FFA and 4-H groups." In the long term, they also plan to focus more on education and beef promotion as their membership base grows.

When asked what it means to see this group come together, the leadership team didn't hesitate: "This group is a blessing and a sisterhood of like-minded people who are working together to provide community service and promote our ranching lifestyle to the public."

The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose

shines through in every conversation. When asked what their favorite moment has been so far, they said, "Laughter!" "We have had a wonderful time getting the Malheur County CattleWomen going. We invite you to join us!"

For Darby, the journey has been deeply rewarding. "It has been such a blessing to work with, meet, and grow with women in the cattle industry across our state," she said. "I'm looking forward to seeing our group grow, offering new opportunities for youth in our community, and giving back to our agricultural community."

With ambitious goals, including developing a membership benefits package, recruiting 40+ new members, and establishing a visible presence at community events, the Malheur County CattleWomen are already setting a strong example for what local affiliates of the Oregon CattleWomen can achieve.

Their story is a reminder that leadership often starts with one person's idea and grows through teamwork, purpose, and a shared love for the land and livestock.

To become a member of the Malheur County CattleWomen or to learn more, visit our website at www.oregoncattlewomen.org, or the new Malheur County CattleWomen website at www.dapplegrey-digitaldesign.my.canva.site/malheurcountycattle-womensassociation •

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GUEST COLUMN

Interested in Solar before the 30% Tax Credit disappears?

Rob Aldridge | 503-510-5206 Pure Energy Group

Over the last ten years, the cost for solar panels has dropped by 70% per watt while electricity rates have risen by 60% per kWh. As a result, the economics for solar are MUCH improved and in many cases, each \$1 invested in onsite solar can save \$25 to \$30 from your future power bills.

Recent legislation ends the 30% Tax Credit for solar installations after 12/31/2027. Although this seems distant, permission for utility interconnection can take two to six months, depending on the project size. Anyone interested in solar should probably start the process before the end of 2026 to make sure they get the 30% Tax Credit.

A second way to get the Tax Credit is called "Safe Harbor". With a written agreement and at least 5% of the project cost invested before 7/3/2026, the Tax Credits will be available through the end of 2030.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CONSIDERING SOLAR

Panels - Although the installed cost per watt is always a consideration, "you get what you pay for" also applies to solar. Panels should be rated Tier 1, be at least 20% efficient and carry product and production warranties for 25 to 30 years.

Price per Watt - Commercial sized rooftop solar

using USA made panels will typically be priced in the \$1.90 to \$2.40 per watt range, depending on system size. The larger the system, the lower the cost per watt. Ground mounted systems generally cost about \$.15 per watt more but they often will have better energy production.

Tax Benefits - The 30% Tax Credit can be used over 25 years (3 back / 22 forward). Tax Credits can also be sold to a third party for about 85% of face value and if sold, funds received aren't taxable income. In addition to the 30% Tax Credit, solar can be depreciated over five years or expensed in the first year. Solar is also exempt from property tax assessments.

Cash Incentives - Energy Trust of Oregon has a cash incentive for PGE and Pacific Power customers which is typically about 5% of the cost. The USDA has a REAP Grant program which can cover some of the cost for solar, although the program is currently being "reviewed" and may, or may not, be available in 2026.

Net Metering / Aggregation - PGE and Pacific Power customers can receive full retail credit for extra energy exported to the grid. With meter aggregation, multiple meters can be offset without a physical connection between them.

Coops and other rural energy non-profits have their own rules as to Net Metering and Aggregation. It is usually possible to connect at least 25 kW of solar per meter but the value for exporting energy to the grid varies, as does the ability to credit extra production to other meters on the property.

Economics - The economics for solar are a function of the net investment (after tax and cash incentives) compared to energy savings over time. The higher the power rates and the faster they rise, the better the lifetime return on investment. Every net \$1 invested in solar can save \$20 or more from future power bills and the "simple payback" is typically 4 to 6 years. After that, solar produces "free" energy for 40 plus years.

System Size - To estimate annual energy production, the rule of thumb is to multiply by 1.25 in Western Oregon and 1.40 in Eastern Oregon. So, 100 kW of solar in the Willamette Valley should generate about 125,000 kWh per year while east of the Cascades and in Southern Oregon, something closer to 140,000 kWh.

Financing - There are financing options available which can cover up to 100% of the cost for a solar installation. In many cases the annual energy savings will exceed the debt service, making solar cash flow positive from the first year of operation.

Independence - Having one or more solar arrays reduces your operating expenses, which can make the good years even better and the bad years more survivable. Producing your own energy increases

self-reliance and eventually, when batteries and other energy storage systems are less costly, it might make sense to "pull the plug" and go entirely off grid, being completely independent as to your energy needs.

NEXT STEPS

If you want to see if solar is feasible, then the first step is a site visit from which a commercial solar installer can model up design and pricing options. They can also assist with arranging financing, securing incentives and handling the interconnection process with the utility.

If installation before the end of 2027 doesn't look likely, then they can help qualify the project under Safe Harbor provisions which preserves the 30% Tax Credit to the end of 2030. Remember that Safe Harboring has to be done before 7/4/2026 even if the system isn't built until much later.

If you have questions about solar in general or your situation in particular, feel free to contact Rob Aldridge of Pure Energy Group at rob@pureenergy. group or 503-510-5206 (call/text). Pure Energy Group is located near Salem and has installed solar for nearly 100 agricultural customers in Oregon. Rob would be happy to provide a no cost / no obligation site visit if you are ready to consider solar. •

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Regenerative Agriculture Paying Dividends in the Cattle Industry

Scott J. Duggan, OSU Extension Livestock Field Faculty



Ranchers take pride in serving as stewards of the land. Thoughtful grazing and holistic management operational practices have benefited farmers and ranchers for years. The benefits of these practices are vital to the productivity of U.S. ranch lands. Regenerative agriculture practices that help restore rangeland and pastures, protect water resources, and incorporate grazing plans are good for the environment as well as the success of the producer.

Recognizing that regenerative agriculture strategies are key to the strength and resilience of the U.S. beef supply chain, McDonald's USA is participating in the Grassland Resilience and Conservation Initiative. This initiative will invest more than \$200 million over the next seven years to help promote regenerative grazing practices on cattle ranches spanning four million acres in up to 38 states. For McDonald's, a consistent and reliable supply of beef is imperative to keeping the company operational, as beef is central to the business. It is the plan that this investment will link to the strength and stability of McDonald's beef supply. McDonald's will be partnering with the National Fish and Wildlife Association (NFWF), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and key McDonald's suppliers to accomplish this pursuit.

McDonald's believes that its involvement in this initiative will help boost beef supply chain durability and help improve ranchland ecosystems. It will provide participating ranchers economic returns, such as incentive payments, to adopt and/ or improve practices that support regenerative grazing practices, safeguard water systems, and improve wildlife habitat. Financial incentives form a key part of this plan. McDonald's understands the financial pressures producers face and wants to support them as regenerative methods are adopted and improved upon. Major suppliers of the hamburger giant, like Cargill, Golden State Foods, and Coca-Cola are backing this initiative by also contributing funding to the effort.

The main components of the initiative include:

Grazing Management - Develop plans that optimize stocking rates, incorporate virtual fencing, promote plant growth and soil function, and improve wildlife habitat.

Protection and Restoration of Water Resources – Improve water conservation and flood and drought resistance, restore riparian buffers and streambank vegetation. Projects in areas at substantial risk of development or degradation will be more competitive.

Grassland Restoration - Reseed native plants, control invasive vegetation, and modify fencing to facilitate livestock and wildlife movement.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will manage and independently award competitive grants to organizations that will assist participating ranchers in the practice of regenerative agriculture. Presently, NFWF is collaborating with conservation partners across America to identify projects that have the potential to create the most benefit to the productivity of ranch land, while at the same time, protecting wildlife ecosystems, restoring water resources, and improving soil health. According to Chris West, Rocky Mountain Regional Director of NFWF, Oregon is one of 38 Western States that will be eligible to receive grant money. Grantee organizations will help willing ranchers design and implement grassland conservation and grazing management practices that align with each rancher's goals. Participating ranchers will be eligible for both financial and technical assistance.

McDonald's works with Kateri and Carbon Yield, companies who will independently quantify beneficial soil health changes associated with the regenerative practices adopted by those receiving grant funding.

Grant recipients will be announced in January 2026 and posted on the Grassland Resilience and Conservation initiative website at https://www.nfwf.org/programs/grassland-resilience-and-conservation-initiative Ranchers can review the list and contact grantees in their state to learn more about available assistance. Program requirements and application procedures will be shared by the grantees. •

Have you been affected by 2024 or 2025 wildfires?

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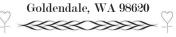


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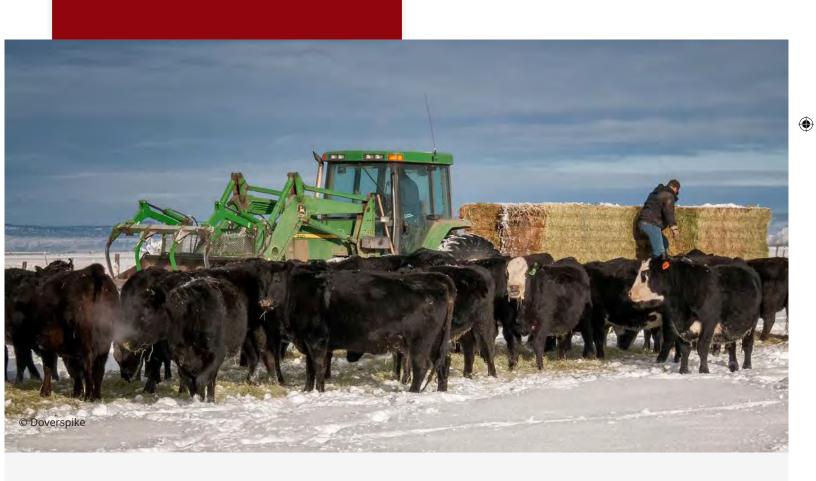
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