



IMPORTANT DATES

Wednesday, March 11, 2026: Steak & Eggs Breakfast

March 13-15, 2026: CCW Spring Meeting - Winters, CA.

APRIL 1, 2026: AESCW SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE!!

Tuesday, April 21, 2026: AG DAY @ the CAPITOL

AESCW Spring Meeting & Luncheon: TBD

Tuesday, May 5, 2026: El Dorado Farm Day

Dear AES Cattlewomen,

Happy February to all! As I write this note, we are about to get 3-4 days of heavy rain, yippee, unless of course you still have calves to process and brand. Our fields will really take off when the sun comes out and warms the ground again. Winter is still a busy time of year, as spring is fast approaching. It will be time to ship before you know it.

I have learned so much over the last two years as your President, and I'm so grateful for the support and cohesiveness of our unit. I've had the opportunity to attend all of the state meetings, make new acquaintances that I have tapped as resources, and be a part of the CCW committees for the selection of the 2025-2026 State Beef Ambassadors and the committees for the redesign of the Beef Ambassador and Scholarship program procedures.

I'm looking forward to the upcoming CCW Spring meeting in Winters, Ag Day at the Capitol, and our general membership meeting in April. The dates to remember can be found here in the newsletter and posted on the AES Cattlewomen website. Feel free to contact me by phone 209-419-0808 or email: Kussmak@flc.losrios.edu to share ideas, ask question of vent if you need to.

Warm wishes for healthy families and livestock,
Katherine



COUNCIL COMMUNICATOR

BEEF COUNCIL RECOGNIZES CATTLEWOMEN FOR BEEF PROMOTION EFFORTS IN HONOR OF LEGENDARY LEADER

from the California Beef Council

The Walt Rodman Award was established in 1982 by the California Beef Council (CBC) in an effort to recognize outstanding beef promotion efforts by California CattleWomen at the county level. Named in honor of long-time CBC executive director Walt Rodman, who led the council from 1957-1971, the CBC sponsors the award program annually in order to recognize the innovative efforts of the state's CattleWomen in sharing the cattle community's story with the public.

The CBC supports those local promotional efforts by the CattleWomen with cash awards to those county units that enter the Walt Rodman Award competition.



Walt Rodman, manager of the California Beef Council, in a 1959 promotional photo for the CBC's successful Holiday Beef Gift Certificate program. Photo courtesy of Joan Linn Bekins.

WHO WAS WALT RODMAN?

Walt Rodman was one of the California beef industry's most visible members for over two decades. In addition to his time as executive director of the CBC, Rodman was part of the show management of the Grand National Livestock Exposition at the Cow Palace during its heyday.

A cattle producer himself, Rodman served as

the president of the Modoc County Cattlemen's Association, one of the largest cow-calf producing counties in the state at the time. He also ranched in Santa Barbara, Contra Costa, San Benito and Sonoma counties, giving him a broad view of California cattle production.

It was Walt Rodman's innovative work in the early years of the Beef Council that he is honored for with the award that bears his name. Because the California Beef Council was the first beef council in

the U.S., every beef promotion that Rodman created was cutting-edge for its time.

The California Beef Council continues to honor his legacy of innovation in beef promotion and education by showcasing the exceptional promotional efforts of California's CattleWomen.



2025 WALT RODMAN AWARD WINNERS

SMALL UNITS

- 1st Place – Placer-Nevada CattleWomen
- Tie 2nd Place – San Diego County CowBelles and Shasta County CattleWomen

MEDIUM UNITS

- 1st Place – Tehama County CattleWomen

LARGE UNITS

- 1st Place – San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen
- 2nd Place – Tulare County CattleWomen

PARTICIPATION AWARDS

- Siskiyou County CattleWomen
- Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento CattleWomen



Congratulations to all the units who participated in this year's Walt Rodman Award Contest on your outstanding efforts to promote beef!

CALIFORNIA CATTLEWOMEN UNITS RECOGNIZE INDIVIDUAL COWBELLES OF THE YEAR WINNERS

In long standing tradition, the annual CCA & CCW Convention served as an opportunity to not only conduct annual business but to celebrate the successes of CattleWomen from units across California.

The CowBelle Luncheon was held during the Convention and the room was decorated with various breeds of cattle flower boxes made by the Siskiyou Unit. The event honored the time and effort of each Unit's outstanding member with a silver bracelet. Chairman **Suze Evenson** shared a brief description of each CowBelle's contribution to their Unit and the industry. In addition, there were tables of mystery gifts for purchase, and the fabulous scrapbook entries were also on display. The American National CattleWomen (ANCW) president, Nikki Weston, entertained the audience with a presentation on the membership benefits of participating in ANCW. The two-hour event ended with the drawing of door prizes provided by each Unit.

The CowBelle of the Year Luncheon is one of the most widely attended events at the annual meeting. Each unit has the opportunity to recognize one member for her outstanding efforts within her unit to enhance beef promotion and further the ranching way of life in her own area of such a highly diversified state.

Congratulations to each of this year's award recipients!

2025 COWBELLE OF THE YEAR HONOREES

KATIE KAVANAH.....ALAMEDA COUNTY
 CONNIE JESS.....AMADOR/EL DORADO/SACRAMENTO
 REBECCA TOOMEY.....BUTTE COUNTY
 TAYLOR ROSS.....FRESNO/KINGS COUNTY
 STACY FELIX CLARK.....GLENN/COLUSA
 JENNA HUNT.....HUMBOLDT/DEL NORTE
 BECKY ALBAUGH.....INTERMOUNTAIN
 APRIL WOODY.....KERN
 COLETTE WRIGHT.....MID VALLEY
 KATELYN MICHAEL.....MODOC
 CERISSA BELL.....PLACER/NEVADA
 TRACY NIÑO.....SAN BENITO
 TORI MELLOTT.....SAN DIEGO
 KAITLIN PROTZ.....SAN JOAQUIN/STANISLAUS
 DEBBIE ARNOLD.....SAN LUIS OBISPO
 JOANNE GARRICK.....SANTA BARBARA
 CHERYL BECKWITH.....SANTA CLARA
 GINGER FOWLER.....SHASTA
 NICHOLE STEVENS.....SISKIYOU
 PAM MICHALEK.....SONOMA/MARIN
 DONNA MARINO.....TEHAMA
 JOEY ARMSTRONG.....TULARE
 HOLLY HARPER.....YUBA/SUTTER



The 2025 CowBelles of the Year Honorees in attendance at the awards luncheon held in Reno, Nev.



SAVEAH CRAMER,
 JR. BEEF AMBASSADOR,
 PREG-CHECKING HER 2026
 AMADOR COUNTY FAIR
 REPLACEMENT HEIFER
 January 24, 2026

Honoring Excellence

Collegiate scholarship finalists were interviewed with a panel of CCA affiliate representatives during the 109th CCA & CCW Convention in Reno in early December. After a preliminary application judging, the 20 finalists interviewed for their share of nearly \$60,000 to fund their educational aspirations. All applicants come from California with unique beef industry interests and experience.

The groups represented on the scholarship panel include: Allflex, USA; CCA Allied Industry Council; the CCA Feeder Council; the California Beef Cattle Improvement Association (CBCIA), representing the Hank Stone Memorial Scholarship; the Livestock Memorial Research Fund (LMRF); a representative for the Tom Grimmius Memorial Scholarship, in

memory of legendary cattle feeder Tom Grimmius.

To qualify for a scholarship, students must be members of CCA's Young Cattlemen's Committee and have either graduated from a California high school or be currently attending a California college or university, majoring in a beef industry-related field. This year, not only were the candidate's applications impressive, but the group also represented both in-state and out-of-state students ranging from the community college level to veterinary and graduate school students.

Recipients of the 2025-2026 CCA scholarships are pictured here. To learn more about how to apply for a CCA scholarship, call the CCA office at (916) 444-0845.



Tayler Chamberlain
 Oklahoma State University
 Veterinary Student
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Lena Fogle
 Midwestern University
 Veterinary Student
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Josephine Hamilton
 University of California, Davis
 Law Student
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Madison Kindberg
 University of California, Davis
 Master's in Animal Biology
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Logan Pomi
 Texas A&M University
 Master of Animal Science
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund & CBCIA/Hank Stone Memorial



Serena Schotanus
 Kansas State University
 Veterinary Student
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Travis Smith
 California Polytechnic State University
 Ag Business & Ag Systems Management
 \$5,000

Livestock Memorial Research Fund



Alexis Wivell
 University of California, Davis
 Masters of Animal Biology
 \$3,000
 Tom Grimmius Memorial



Teagan Wunschel
 California State University, Chico
 Animal Science
 \$2,500
 Tom Grimmius Memorial



Jordan Church
 California State University, Fresno
 Animal Science/Meat Technology
 \$2,500
 Tom Grimmius Memorial

FEATURE ARTICLE:



THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

BY RICK ROBERTI, SIERRA VALLEY RANCHER

Sierra Valley has long been a place where the cycles of life and death on ranches are visible across the landscape. As a rancher who grew up in Sierra Valley, seeing a bald eagle perched beside a livestock carcass is not an uncommon sight, and it's a reminder of the close relationship between ranching and the surrounding wildlife.

Livestock death is an unavoidable part of ranching, despite the best efforts of ranchers. The tradition of maintaining “bone piles”—designated areas where ranchers place the remains of deceased livestock—has served both practical and ecological purposes. Recent changes in wildlife management policies threaten to disrupt this balance.

Bone piles ensure that livestock remains are kept out of the fields and collected in a safe area, usually buried every few years as the pile grows. These piles are not just a solution for ranchers—they are a lifeline for many scavenger species. Throughout the year, and especially in the harsh winter months, creatures such as bald eagles, ravens, coyotes, and other scavengers rely on the bone piles for sustenance. This food source helps these species survive when other options are scarce, making bone piles a vital component of the valley's ecosystem.

Recently, ranchers in Sierra Valley have been encouraged by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to immediately bury livestock carcasses rather than placing them in bone piles. The primary motivation behind this change is the concern that bone piles attract wolves, whose presence is increasing throughout the state.

While the intention behind immediate burial is to deter wolves, this approach has unintended consequences for other wildlife. The removal of bone piles deprives scavengers of a crucial food source. Species such as bald eagles, which have become symbolic of the valley's wild beauty, may struggle to find enough to eat. The ripple effect could extend throughout the ecosystem, impacting everything from bird populations to the health of local predator and scavenger communities.

The increased presence of wolves in Sierra Valley and northern California is poised to change ranching practices and the local ecosystem in profound ways. While efforts to protect livestock are understandable, it is important to consider the broader impacts on wildlife that depend on existing practices. A shift away from bone piles won't keep wolves out of cattle but will harm other species and disrupt the balance that has existed for decades. We've already lost most of our deer population. What's next?

Submitted with permission from Carolyn Roberti

**ANNOUNCEMENT:
ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED
BROOKE MARTIN AND
JAKE MOOS**



Plymouth Foothills Rotary Club (PFRC) members present \$15,000 donation to the Amador Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF) to fund lifesaving research at the UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Article from Ledger Dispatch
Feb 10, 2026

.....I spy AESCW members
Jennifer Mason &
Denise Ding

