

INDEPENDENT BEEF ASSOCIATION OF NORTH DAKOTA

Your state wide voice in the cattle industry!

PO Box 2

Sterling, ND 58572

www.i-band.org

2026-1

President Message

Hello everyone. As your new President, I would like to take a brief moment to introduce myself to those who may not be familiar with me. My name is August Heupel from Medina. I ranch and farm with my wife, Cassandra, and our 5 children. We are a family operation that includes my parents, my brother Jeremiah, and his wife, Joey. It is an honor to lead this organization, and I don't intend to take this role lightly. I think of the men who held this position before me, and they all left big shoes to fill. It is my goal not let them or our members down.



Let's jump right in. What a fall/early winter. The weather, for the most part, has been manageable, yet the pace and workload all seemed frantic (at least it felt that way to me) up until recently. Seems we have hit the winter groove now. Speaking of frantic. The cattle market! From all-time highs to our, I will call an "episode" that was the mini market crash, all based on the "beef is too high" narrative. I assure you, I-BAND actively asked our delegation questions of our delegation and attended many roundtables to help resolve issues. As cattlemen, we are always wary of the next black swan, but it caught me off guard that comments from Air Force One about beef being too high and the possible additional imports from Argentina set off the chain reaction it did. I could fill this whole newsletter with what happened this fall, but just know that we, as a board, take this very seriously, as it affects all of us as producers. One of the common themes of agreement at a few of the roundtables I attended was a serious overhaul of the CME. The CME and the Fundamentals DO NOT correlate whatsoever. The limits and expanded limits need to be reined in at a minimum to prevent the bloodbath that can occur when we hit expanded limits. As we saw this fall, just how fast things can get out of hand and what effect that can have on us out here in the country when it starts falling. One final thing happened with the cattle market this fall. Let's not forget that while the cattle market was crashing due to talk of added imports to relieve

Inside this Issue:

- President's Message
- 20 Years
- Affiliates
- Social Media
- R-CALF Statement
- Buck 'Em
- USCA Statement
- Membership
- DC Stops to listen
- Sponsors
- Farm & Ranch Classifieds
- Business Directory

the consumer of high beef prices (beef is not too high by the way), boxed beef remained steady to a few bucks higher during that time. Why? I will let you decide. Maybe it was never about beef being too high. Maybe the players on the board were on the wrong side of it and needed to be healed. All the more reason the CME needs straightening out. This has real-life consequences for those of us who just want to raise cattle with fair and competitive markets. In the meantime, please consider one of the many ways to get yourself protected. It's not all doom and gloom, and we really are enjoying some really, really great prices. Let's fight to make them last!

To wrap it up, there is never an end to what pops up on the radar for the I-BAND board. We are constantly working to get MCOOL reinstated, working to get rid of this ridiculous mandatory EID, and working on checkoff reform as always. New world screwworm is another issue; we need to be keeping the southern border closed! All of this can be accomplished with strong voices. Let's call our national delegation regularly and respectfully ask them to help get us what we need! Strength comes in numbers. I have heard this in multiple legislative sessions at our state capital: we just aren't relevant because we don't represent enough producers. We can have the best bill in the world, and we always hit the "we're the little group" roadblock. Please tell your friends and neighbors about what I-BAND stands for and ask them to join or renew their memberships. We need everyone!

Wishing us all good luck with the rest of winter and a strong start to calving, which will be here before we know it. We'll talk again in the spring!

August Heupel

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Statement on Presidential Proclamation Increasing Imports of Argentinian Beef

For Immediate Release

Contact: R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard

Phone: 406-252-2516; r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com

Billings, Mont., Feb. 6, 2026 – Today, President Trump issued a proclamation entitled “Ensuring Affordable Beef for the American Consumer.” The proclamation increases the in-quota quantity of lean beef trimmings that can be imported from Argentina by an additional 80,000 metric tons during the 2026 calendar year, which is in addition to the 20,000-metric-ton annual in-quota quantity limit already applicable to Argentina.

The purpose of the proclamation is to increase the supply of imported lean beef trimmings from Argentina so American consumers would experience a decrease in the price of ground beef.

R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard issued the following statement in response to Trump’s new proclamation.

“Previous administrations had similarly invited increased beef imports from foreign countries with the same expectation that increased imported supplies would lower consumer beef prices. Such analyses by previous administrations accompanied proposals to allow additional beef imports from such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Namibia and Paraguay. In each of these analyses, the U.S. Department of Agriculture predicted that the negative impact to cattle farmers and ranchers would be offset by a larger benefit to consumers.

“In practice, however, consumer beef prices were not reduced by increased supplies of imported beef. Instead, increased quantities of imports correlated with the shrinking of the U.S. cattle herd, the exodus of U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers, and higher consumer beef prices.

“The reason for this is that the U.S. cattle and beef market is so highly concentrated that it is susceptible to the exercise of abusive market power by dominant corporations that can reduce prices paid to cattle farmers and ranchers while raising prices to consumers. In such a concentrated market, dominant players can use additional import supplies to increase their margins rather than lower retail beef prices.

“America’s reticence to manage imports has relegated the U.S. to being a net beef importer for the past several decades, and those excessive imports are a major factor in the ongoing contraction of the U.S. cattle herd, which is now the smallest in over seven decades, and in forcing the exodus of over half of America’s cattle farms and ranches.

“Import volumes reached new record highs in each of the past three years, contributing to the ongoing liquidation of our U.S. cow herd, which is now in its seventh consecutive year of liquidation.

“Our industry is in a state of crisis and needs protection against price-depressing imports so it can rebuild to meet our national security objective of achieving self-sufficiency in beef production.

“While the intent of this agreement is to lower retail ground beef prices, it’s unlikely to achieve the intended result. It’s more likely to cause a reduction in cattle prices for U.S. farmers and ranchers – particularly prices for their cull animals that produce the same lean beef product that will be imported. And because the marketplace remains so highly concentrated, with a manifest disconnect be-

tween cattle prices and retail beef prices, it is as likely as not to have no impact on consumer ground beef prices.

“We’re thankful that this additional 80,000-metric-ton allocation is set to expire at the end of 2026. Nevertheless, inviting more and lower-cost imports into the U.S. market without at least informing consumers of the imported products’ foreign country of origin – so they can choose between imported and domestic beef at their grocery stores – will likely allow any benefits to flow to the global beef packers and retailers at the expense of U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers.

“While we appreciate President Trump’s efforts to achieve greater consumer affordability, what America must do to restore lasting affordability is rigorously enforce antitrust and fair-competition laws, align trade policy with food security through tariffs and tariff-rate quotas, and implement country-of-origin labeling so consumers can choose between imported beef and American beef.”

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USCA RESPONDS TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2026 U.S.–ARGENTINA BEEF TRADE AGREEMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. — United States Cattlemen’s Association (USCA) responded to the Administration’s announcement of a new beef trade agreement with Argentina that will govern trade flows in calendar year 2026.

USCA President Justin Tupper said the association has been engaged with the Administration since the idea of expanded imports from Argentina was first floated.

“The announcement of today’s agreement follows the Administration’s original notice in October 2025 that it would pursue increased beef imports from Argentina,” said Tupper. “Since that time, USCA has remained in close communication with the White House, USDA, and USTR to understand how any new trade arrangement could impact U.S. cattle producers, markets, and the broader beef supply chain.”

According to details shared with industry stakeholders, the agreement establishes a reciprocal 80,000 metric ton quota for each country in 2026, allocated on a quarterly basis. Argentina will be allowed to export up to 80,000 metric tons of beef to the United States in 2026 allocated as 20,000 metric tons per quarter. This addition will not allow for rollover of unused quarterly volumes and is limited to lean beef trimmings only.

The United States will be able to export up to 80,000 metric tons of beef to Argentina in 2026 under the same quarterly volume parameters, without a lean-trim limitation on U.S. product. The new 80,000 metric ton quota is in addition to Argentina’s existing 20,000 metric ton tariff-rate quota, which is not restricted to lean trimmings. As a result, Argentina could export up to 100,000 metric tons of beef to the United States in 2026 under all available quotas.

President Tupper emphasized that USCA’s position has stood firm: “From the very beginning, USCA has been clear: a safe, secure, and resilient beef supply starts with a strong domestic industry. We must continue to focus on how we can rebuild our U.S. cattle herd,” he said. “Any trade agreement must be structured in a way that does not undermine U.S. cattle producers’ ability to compete and does not compromise the integrity of our supply.

“We continue to stress the need for tightened rules of origin and product limitations built into this agreement,” said President Tupper. “We are still deeply concerned about the origin and scale of these imports,” President Tupper continued. “Argentina is currently facing very tight cattle supplies, same as the U.S. A roughly 400 percent increase in access for Argentine product must be treated as a one-time, measure of exception – not a template for routine quota expansions. USCA strongly urges the Administration not to normalize this level of increase for Argentina or any other supplier, particularly when both exporting and importing countries are navigating constrained cattle inventories and heightened volatility. U.S. cattle producers – and U.S. consumers – deserve to know where their beef comes from. Trade policy and labeling policy must move together, not in opposite directions.”

USCA acknowledges the reciprocal design of the deal, while underscoring the need to protect U.S. producers. “While USCA remains opposed to the increase of imports from Argentina, we appreciate the reciprocal nature of this agreement – U.S. beef producers will have equal access to the Argentine market, and the imports into the U.S. are limited to lean trimmings, not all beef products,” President Tupper said. “However, while this is a reciprocal agreement, we must still measure against the economics and pen to paper realities U.S. producers are facing.”

USCA stresses the need for rigorous inspection and transparent reporting as volumes increase. “Transparency will be key,” President Tupper added. “As imports from Argentina and other countries increase, a close and continuous focus on inspection, disease status, and product integrity is non-negotiable. The data must be clear and accessible to producers, processors, and policymakers alike. USCA will be watching this closely and engaging with USDA and USTR to ensure that U.S. consumers and cattle producers are protected.”

Read the full article [here](#)

https://uscattlemen.org/usca-responds-to-announcement-of-2026-u-s-argentina-beef-trade-agreement/?mc_cid=6c7e78f9e0&mc_eid=7825b2caed

Membership

The Independent Beef Association of North Dakota is North Dakota's statewide voice in the cattle industry for the cattle producer. Our membership is primarily made up of cow calf operations in North Dakota. We're a non-profit organization that works in conjunction with other organizations as your statewide and national voice in the cattle industry. We have represented our membership on issues including the Farm Bill, COOL, Waters of the US, HSUS bills, Horse Slaughter, the National Animal Identification System, EPA, Foot and Mouth disease in South America, and the Beef Checkoff. There are numerous issues of importance to cattle producers in the coming year. Strength comes in numbers and I-BAND needs a strong membership to carry out your voice within and outside of North Dakota. We're a grassroots cattle-men's organization, addressing the market interests of North Dakota cattle producers.

I-BAND has been going strong for 20 years now. If you are a new member, a past member or an existing member, we would like you to let us know what you like about this organization and the direction you would like to see this organization take in the future. We take pride in having a membership association where every member's voice is heard through a one member one vote policy. Without the backing of membership, I-BAND would not be in existence. We wish to thank each and every one of you for your support. Any comments can be directed to any I-BAND board member or drop us a line at: I-BAND, Box 2, Sterling, ND 58572.

Strength comes in numbers and I-BAND needs a strong membership to carry out your voice within and outside of North Dakota. Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to any friends, neighbors or businesses that may be interested. If anyone would like to schedule an informational meeting in their area please contact any I-BAND Director.



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DC stops to listen: Cattle producers meet with USDA Secretary Rollins on labeling, Checkoff issues - Carrie Stadheim

The Conservative Political Action Conference arranged a meeting this week between a small group of ranchers and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.

Several members of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association and several members of R-CALF USA gathered with Secretary Rollins on Feb. 11, 2026, to discuss their priority issues they believe will help restore long-term profitability to the U.S. cattle industry.

R-CALF USA Checkoff Committee chair Brett Kenzy from Gregory, South Dakota, along with several other individuals who attended the meeting, have previously visited on zoom calls in recent weeks.

When the cattle spokesmen finally sat down with the secretary, they brought a message different from typical "big ag" policy.

Checkoff reform and accurate labeling of beef were two of the main topics, said Kenzy.

"We need to revisit the Beef Checkoff. It should be working for the people who pay for it. It should have an American emphasis," he said. "It shouldn't be available to lobbying organizations."

Kenzy said Rollins told the group that she is "well aware" that four meatpackers control 80 percent of processing capacity which creates a bottleneck of power. "She said she knows we need transparency, she knows we need to promote American beef because it's the envy of the world," said Kenzy.

"It was a tremendous opportunity to express to the Secretary that it is an exciting time to be in the cattle industry. The combination of a record small herd and incredible beef demand, due largely to the MAHA movement have created a "white swan" for cattlemen in terms of record high prices. We see the administration's efforts to create America First negotiated trade instead of rules based Free Trade that has hollowed us for decades. We see the Administration reversing the radical climate agenda that threatened our profitability and freedom. An administration that values property rights. The investigation of packing and retail by the DOJ and FTC shows a realization that competitive transparent markets are what is missing in our industry. The communication between consumers and producers that occurs via real supply and demand signals have been disrupted by the concentrated power of packing and retail. We have a 70 year low in cow numbers and haven't had a 70 year drought- we have had distorted supply signals that have artificially depressed the market and told us we had an oversupply of cattle. That disconnect is proven by not needing to remember far back when consumers paid record prices and we were losing a lot of money raising cattle. That is why people have left the industry.

"Trust in our system is what's needed to rebuild our cow herd to a level that will allow American food security. Einstein said that you cannot trust those who created a problem to fix it, and it is refreshing to have an administration with the courage and work ethic to hear from all sides," said Kenzy

Grow it in America, label it American and promote it as American. America has the best beef and the best consumers in the world. It's time to act like it. If cattlemen and consumers don't stand up and stand together now we will just see the status quo continue- shrinking productivity with a powerful few controlling a bigger piece of a shrinking pie.

"My dad always said the hardest thing to do is get Washington to admit that there is a problem because then they have to fix it. He said the second hardest thing is to get them to fix it and not just throw money at it."

"I'm excited. We have a Secretary of Agriculture who sees the trajectory of our industry and has a genuine curiosity about why we have less and less cattle, less and less cattlemen, why we're so reliant on imports. She's aware the Beef Checkoff needs modernizing. I just keep thinking 'pinch me, I must be dreaming,'" he said.

Kenny Graner, a St. Anthony, North Dakota rancher and former president of the United States Cattlemen's As-

sociation also attended the meeting. He said the most exciting thing is the fact that CPAC reached out to ranchers – some of whom represented organizations like R-CALF and USCA, and some of which were independent – to hear their thoughts and suggestions on how to create long term profitability in the cattle industry.

Kenny Graner (far right), Brett Kenzy (behind and to the right of USDA Secretary Rollins) and several other ranchers meet with USDA Secretary Rollins (in red) to speak to her on behalf of the Conservative Political Action Conference about cattle industry issues. CPAC | Courtesy photoimage-57

“We are working on checkoff reform, competition and labeling,” he said. Graner said that two gentlemen in the group discussed what they call substantial transformation, or a regulation loophole that they believe has allowed imported beef to be avoid labeling although the law says otherwise.

Graner left the meeting inspired. “If there’s a chance to get labeling, get some reform in the checkoff, of course competition, that will still have to be codified through Congress, but I don’t think we’ve ever had a more friendly secretary in the 20 some years that I’ve been lobbying. Right now, we have a secretary that wants to make a difference for the independent ranchers, independent feeders and independent processors. She’s there,” he said. I feel better than I’ve ever felt that this administration is going to do something to help bring back young people to ranching, he said.

Graner described CPAC as a huge organization and pointed out the benefits of being involved in it due to the connections ranchers can make with consumers. “We are educating them and they are getting behind us,” he said.

As far as the Argentinian beef imports, Graner said they helped explain why that beef will likely not lower beef prices for the consumer. “We explained that imported beef can be purchased at a discount because of the exchange rate, and then the retailers re-package it and label it as US beef, and charge the consumer the same price they do for U.S. beef. If we want to lower the price for the consumer, let’s label it, then you will have the opportunity to sell imported beef to the consumer cheaper, and inform them of what they are buying,” he said.

According to its own website, CPAC is “the nation’s oldest conservative grassroots organization and seeks to preserve and protect the values of life, liberty and property for every American.”

The CPAC meeting happened to align with a Feb. 12, 2026, breakfast meeting with the Secretary attended by Kenzy and other R-CALF members including President Dave Hyde, Vice President Eric Gropper, Property Rights Committee Chair Shad Sullivan and Lonesome Lands podcast reporter Jim Mundorf. The men had time to describe in detail their top priorities to the Secretary. Additionally, Sullivan and Mundorf interviewed the Secretary in person. Sullivan and other ranchers had also met with Rollins the day before (Feb. 11) to support the unveiling of USDA’s Farmer and Rancher Freedom Framework.

Hyde said of the breakfast meeting: “We talked to her about how we need MCOOL and how we need Checkoff reform. I tell you what, that lady is genuine as can be. She’s something else,” he said.

“When I introduced myself, I said I’m Dave Hyde. I’m the guy that gave you the Tri-State Livestock News Eat American Beef sweatshirt. She said, ‘I still wear it.’”

<https://www.tsln.com/news/dc-stops-to-listen-cattle-producers-meet-with-usda-secretary-rollins-on-labeling-checkoff-issues/>



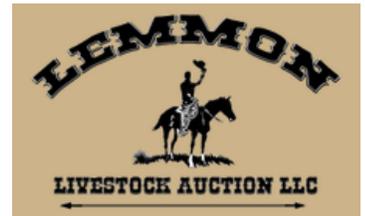
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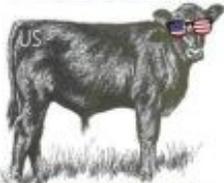
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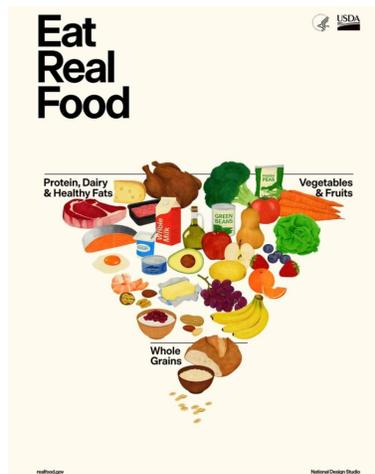
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Kyle Shively
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Medora Kologi
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