

SAGE SIGNALS

The Voice of the Nevada Livestock Industry

Volume L, #7 | July 2026

PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR THE NCA MEMBERSHIP



Submitted Photo

Allie Fait
2026 NCA Scholarship Recipient



Submitted Photo

Sophia Stanton
2026 Marvel-Andrae Scholarship Recipient



Submitted Photo

Kylee Simper
2026 Marvel-Andrae Scholarship Recipient



Submitted Photo

Matti DeLong
2026 Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship Recipient



Submitted Photo

Kerstyn Countryman
2026 Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship Recipient

2026 Scholarship Recipients Announced

By Martin Paris, Nevada Cattlemen's Association Executive Director

The Nevada Cattlemen's Association (NCA) Research and Education Committee is pleased to announce five scholarship recipients this year. The NCA would like to congratulate Allie Fait of Fallon, Nevada, for being selected as the 2026 NCA Scholarship recipient; Sophia Stanton of Yerington, Nevada, and Kylee Simper of Fallon, Nevada, for being selected as the 2026 Marvel-Andrae Scholarship recipients; and, last but not least, Matti DeLong of Winnemucca, Nevada, and Kerstyn Countryman of Washoe Valley, Nevada, for being selected as the 2026 Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship recipients.

The Nevada Cattlemen's Association annually awards the NCA Scholarship to first-year college students beginning to pursue an education within the agricultural industry. This award is open to Nevada high school graduating seniors planning to attend a trade school, junior college, or four-year university and major in an agriculture-related field.

The Marvel-Andrae Scholarship is targeted toward students either entering their first year of college or already enrolled in college and working toward a degree in agricultural economics, agricultural business, or animal/meat science. We would also like to recognize Agri Beef for its continued support of the Marvel-Andrae Scholarship program. NCA greatly appreciates our partnership with Agri Beef and thanks them for their continued support of students pursuing careers in agriculture.

The Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors, as well as students already enrolled in college or trade school. This scholarship is also intended for students who are obtaining a degree or training that

will help them hone their skills for the betterment of agriculture.

All three scholarships are awarded to exceptional students who work hard, excel academically, and represent agriculture in a positive way. We thank all the students who applied for these scholarships and are confident they will be strong future advocates for Nevada's ranching and farming communities.

NCA Scholarship Recipient

Allie Fait recently graduated from Churchill County High School in Fallon, Nevada, and will be attending Utah State University, where she plans to pursue a degree in Animal and Dairy Science. Allie grew up with a strong background in agriculture and livestock production. She has been active in FFA, 4-H, HOSA, Hope Squad, National Honor Society, student council, and several livestock and agricultural organizations. She also served in numerous leadership roles, including Churchill County FFA President, Nevada Junior Livestock Show Youth Advisory Council member, 4-H Junior Livestock Leader, and National Honor Society President. Allie hopes to use her education to pursue a career in embryology and artificial insemination, with a focus on genetics and helping livestock producers improve herd quality and efficiency.

Marvel-Andrae Scholarship Recipients

Sophia Stanton of Yerington, Nevada, has been selected as one of this year's Marvel-Andrae Scholarship recipients. Sophia is currently a sophomore at the

— Continued on page 5 —



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Dave Baker, President, Nevada Cattlemen's Association

Demographics and the Long-Term Outlook for Agriculture

Demographics aren't something most of us think about daily. Population trends morph slowly over time, often over decades, making them easy to overlook. But demographics may be one of the most important forces shaping the future of our economy, labor markets, and agricultural industry. The developed world is entering a period characterized by aging populations, lower birth rates, and shrinking workforces, while much of the population growth in the coming decades will happen in developing nations. These changes will present both challenges and opportunities for producers, businesses, and consumers alike.

Look at today's labor market, for a clear example. For many years, economists assumed there would always be a steady supply of workers available to fill open positions. That assumption is becoming less reliable. The Baby Boomer generation is retiring in large numbers, removing millions of experienced workers from the labor force, while younger generations are not entering the workforce quickly enough to replace them. Some estimates suggest that roughly three workers are leaving the workforce for every new entrant joining it.

There are several factors contributing to this trend. Birth rates have declined for decades, slowing growth of the working-age population. In some cases, the U.S.-born workforce has begun to shrink. Net migration trends have not provided the labor force growth many economists expected. The combined result of these factors is a tighter labor market and a smaller pool of available workers.

Most business owners don't need a government report to tell them this. Help wanted signs are everywhere. Businesses spend significant amounts of money recruiting employees, and many positions remain open for extended periods of time. Despite economic uncertainty, unemployment remains relatively low. When I was in college, economists often described the natural rate of unemployment as being around six percent. Today, the unemployment rate is just over four percent. During the 1980s, unemployment rates were often considerably higher than they are today.

The labor market many older Americans entered was very different. If a young worker lost his or her job in the 1970s or 1980s, there were often several people in line to fill that position. In 1975, overall unemployment peaked near nine percent, and unemployment among young workers bordered on 20%. Finding work was often difficult. Today, many workers have multiple employment options, and

employers frequently struggle to find qualified applicants. That reality naturally changes attitudes and expectations in the workplace.

The United States is not alone. Across much of the developed world, populations are aging, birth rates have fallen below replacement levels, and life expectancy continues to increase. As a result, fewer workers are available to support growing numbers of retirees. In many advanced economies, people 65 and older are expected to account for nearly one-quarter of the total population within the next few decades.

Historically, birth rates often declined as societies became more industrialized. In agricultural societies, children were frequently viewed as economic assets. They contributed labor to family operations and often helped support aging parents. Land was relatively abundant and families tended to be larger. In industrial societies, the situation changes. Children require substantial investments of time and money, housing becomes more expensive, and women have greater opportunities in education and the workforce. As a result, family sizes tend to decline.

Compared to many developed nations, the United States may be somewhat better positioned. The Millennial generation is relatively large compared to Generation X, giving the country a broader base of workers entering their prime earning and productive years. The next ten to fifteen years may still be challenging as large numbers of Baby Boomers retire, but the United States has more demographic flexibility than many of its international competitors. Whether that advantage continues will depend in part on future family formation and birth rates.

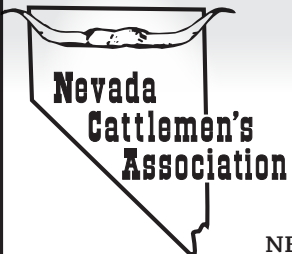
China faces a different and potentially more severe demographic challenge. Its population is shrinking, birth rates have fallen to record lows, and the population is aging rapidly. This creates difficulties not only because there will be fewer

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We would like to thank the following people for joining or renewing their membership with Nevada Cattlemen's Association between May 27 and June 26, 2026.

(New members are in bold.)

- **Anderson Cattle Company**
- **Brackett Livestock Inc., Addy Brackett**
- **Brackett Livestock Inc., Belle Brackett**
- Brackett Livestock Inc., Bert Brackett
- Brackett Livestock, Katie Brackett
- **Brackett Livestock Inc., Sarah Brackett**
- Brackett Livestock Inc., Will Brackett
- Cat Creek Cattle Co., Carrie Rahier
- NV Water Solutions LLC, Thomas Gallagher
- Powder River, Inc., Diane Hunter
- **Real Western Adventures, Dale Critchfield**
- Rafter Down A Ranch, C. Ralph Allen
- Sand Springs Ranch, Marta Agee
- Smiley Ranch, James & Edward Smiley, Tracie Fitzgerald
- Walter Whitfield
- Wickahoney Cattle Co., Carrie Rahier



Official Publication of the
Nevada Cattlemen's Association

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Dave Baker, Pres. | Marlow Dahl, Pres.-Elect | Wade Small, 1st Vice Pres.

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE CONTINUED

workers supporting more retirees, but also because China increasingly needs stronger domestic consumption to support economic growth.

Younger people tend to be the strongest consumers. They are raising families, purchasing homes, buying vehicles, and investing in household goods. Older populations generally spend less. The Chinese government recognizes the need to stimulate domestic consumption, but doing so has proven difficult. For agriculture, however, China's large population remains significant. Even if only a small percentage of Chinese consumers increase their consumption of products such as beef, the impact on agricultural markets can be substantial.

While populations are aging and stabilizing throughout much of the developed world, the opposite is occurring in many developing nations. Africa currently has the fastest-growing population and is expected to add billions of people over the coming decades. This growth also presents both opportunities and challenges.

Many African countries remain heavily dependent on imported food despite possessing large amounts of potentially productive agricultural land. Industrial agriculture is expanding, but in many regions, production is still dominated by small farms using limited mechanization and relatively low levels of capital investment. Modernizing agriculture

requires infrastructure, equipment, technology, and investment, all of which can be difficult to obtain when significant financial resources are already being spent on food imports.

For many developing nations, the primary challenge may not be producing food alone but producing food that remains affordable for rapidly growing populations. As incomes rise and diets change, demand for protein and higher-value agricultural products is likely to increase as well.

As producers and small business owners, most of us focus on the next season, the next calf crop, or the next few years. Demographic trends operate on a much longer timeline. However, they may ultimately prove to be among the most important forces shaping labor availability, consumer demand, economic growth, and agricultural markets.

Much of the developed world is entering an era of slower population growth and aging populations, while much of the future growth in both population and food demand will occur in developing nations. For a long time, our economies have relied on expanding numbers of workers and consumers. What happens when that growth slows or reverses remains one of the most important economic questions of our time. The next ten to thirty years are likely to bring significant changes, and agriculture will be directly affected by many of them.

Interesting times.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NCBA Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting

— July 12–14, 2026 —
Aurora, Colorado
Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center

Public Lands Council Annual Meeting

— September 15–17, 2026 —
Copper Mountain, Colorado
Copper Mountain Resort

NCA 91st Annual Convention & Trade Show

— November 12–14, 2026 —
Elko, Nevada
Elko Convention "E" Center
www.nevadacattlemen.org/events-meetings/convention-and-trade-show

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VIDEO ROYALE

MONDAY, JULY 27

Superior Sunrise - 7:30 a.m.
Video Auction - 8:00 a.m. (PDT)

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Superior Sunrise - 7:30 a.m.
Video Auction - 8:00 a.m. (PDT)
28th Annual Superior
Livestock Cowboy Golf
Tournament - 5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Superior Sunrise - 7:30 a.m.
Video Auction - 8:00 a.m. (PDT)
Customer Appreciation Dinner
Featuring live music from
Ned LeDoux, Kevin Davis and
Waylon Thibodeaux - 6:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

Superior Sunrise - 7:30 a.m.
Video Auction - 8:00 a.m. (PDT)
Social at Ormachea's
Live music from Waylon
Thibodeaux and Kevin Davis

FRIDAY, JULY 31

Superior Sunrise - 7:30 a.m.
Video Auction - 8:00 a.m. (PDT)



JULY 27- 31, 2026

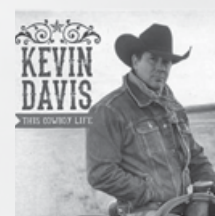
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Scholarship: *Continued from page 1*

University of Idaho, where she is studying Agricultural Business and Accounting. She is involved in Sigma Alpha Sorority, where she serves as Recruitment Director, and Women in Agriculture, where she serves as Treasurer. Growing up raising animals and being surrounded by agriculture helped shape Sophia's passion for the industry and gave her a strong appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and resilience it takes to be involved in agriculture. After completing her education, Sophia hopes to work in a role that directly supports farmers and ranchers, whether through financial services, agricultural sales, or management.

Kylee Simper recently graduated from Churchill County High School in Fallon, Nevada, and will be attending Utah State University, where she plans to pursue a degree in Agricultural Business. Kylee was involved in 4-H, FFA, National Honor Society, Block F, varsity girls soccer, and varsity girls basketball throughout high school. She also served in several leadership roles, including as team captain for both soccer and basketball, FFA Chapter Sentinel, and treasurer of both the National Honor Society and Block F. Kylee grew up with a strong background in agriculture, spending time riding horses, checking cattle, helping at the sale barn, and raising and showing hogs. She hopes to use her education to give back to the agricultural industry and assist those working in the field.

Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship Recipients

Matti DeLong recently graduated from Lowry High School in Winnemucca, Nevada, and will be attending New Mexico State University, where she plans to pursue a degree in Nursing with a minor in Agricultural Communications. Matti is a sixth-generation Nevada cattle rancher and has been involved in ranching,

rodeo, FFA, and livestock throughout her life. She has served as FFA President and Humboldt High School Rodeo Club President, and has been involved in National Honor Society, varsity basketball, Nevada High School Rodeo, advanced dance, community service, and several other extracurricular activities. Matti hopes to use her education to help others through nursing while staying connected to her ranching roots and remaining active in cattle ranching. She plans to continue giving back to the agricultural industry that helped shape her life.

Kerstyn Countryman is currently a third-year Doctor of Veterinary Medicine student at Cornell University and works at Cornell University's Hospital for Animals. After veterinary school, Kerstyn plans to complete an equine internship before returning to Nevada, where she hopes to eventually open her own ambulatory practice and provide rural mixed-animal veterinary care. Her long-term goal is to move to Austin, Nevada, and serve the surrounding rural communities, where there is a strong need for veterinary services. While at Cornell, Kerstyn has published research on equine infectious neurological diseases and has also helped create a mental-health initiative for veterinary and rural communities. Having grown up partly on a cattle ranch and partly on a Native reservation in Nevada, Kerstyn hopes to return home and serve the people, animals, and communities that helped shape her.

Congratulations again to Allie, Sophia, Kylee, Matti, and Kerstyn. We wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors. NCA is proud to support these students and is confident they will continue to serve Nevada agriculture well. We look forward to seeing all they will accomplish.

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Nevada Beef Council Update — July 2026

Your Checkoff Dollars at Work

By Annette Kassis—Director, Consumer & Brand Marketing

New Campaign to Amp Up Grilling Season Across Six Western States Includes Nevada



Family style is in style! Beef's unbeatable flavor and versatility make it worth every bite.

Photo courtesy of BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com.

social events, and the general sense of freedom the season evokes.

Beef is the undisputed star of summer grilling, with a majority of people citing burgers and steaks as “must haves” for the grill. This is consistent with BeefResearch.org data that continues to show that sales peak for beef during key summer holidays. However, that same research shows that rising grocery costs continue to shape purchase behavior, with consumers looking more toward budget and value, which may in turn lead them to try new cuts, flavors, and techniques. From a consumer marketing standpoint, the focus is on driving big flavor with big value messaging.

As part of the national Beef. It's What's For Dinner. (BIWFD) summer grilling campaign, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, is coordinating efforts to extend the national summer campaign through targeted strategies focused on reaching consumers across the Western States. Working to inspire and encourage summer grillers to choose Beef for their upcoming meals while also increasing brand awareness and positive perceptions of Beef, the Western States campaign encompasses:

California	Oregon
Washington	Idaho
Nevada	Arizona

Scheduled to run from June 15 through August 31, this Western States campaign is being funded by contributions from three non-Western states: Oklahoma; Iowa; and

You can cook dinner...or you can grill it. So, what's the difference? While it's true that both result in a meal, grilling seems to embody place, feeling, and memory, especially summer grilling. Whether you call it a cookout, a barbecue, or go straight to the point and invoke the name of the appliance itself as both noun and verb, grilling is synonymous with summer meals, so-

North Dakota. Each of these states contributes a percentage of the total campaign budget. The campaign itself includes ads running across both Connected TV (CTV) and online audio, reaching relevant and engaged consumers who are watching and listening to premium content.

For example, while listening to music on digital audio platforms (Pandora, iHeart, Spotify, etc.), the BIWFD ad will appear during a break promoting beef's message. The ads are un-skippable and have an option to learn more on the BIWFD website. For CTV, a viewer within the campaign's target audience watching a TV show on a popular channel such as ESPN, HGTV, Discovery, or Food Network through their Smart/Connected TV will see a :15- or :30-second Beef Checkoff-funded ad during the natural commercial breaks in the show. The ads are non-skippable videos, and the viewer must watch the entire video to completion to continue their show.

Campaign spend in each region is determined by an optimization process that prioritizes the most cost-efficient impressions, video views, and audio listens across the Western States. Total ad spend is expected to be correlated to relative population by state. While the scale of the campaign allows for market saturation beyond the large urban markets, this campaign is expected to have a higher presence within the more densely populated urban markets within the Western States, such as Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, **Las Vegas**, Phoenix, and Boise.

“This kind of cooperation among the state beef councils is not uncommon,” said Bill Dale, executive director of the Nevada and California Beef Councils. “States with historically high cattle numbers but lower population numbers have long recognized the benefit of helping fund consumer outreach in more populous states with larger urban areas. The Nevada Beef Council actually allocates zero dollars to this extensive campaign.”

Beef on the grill – the sizzle, the aroma, the deliciousness – fuels the summer, brings people together, and epitomizes the season's laid-back vibe. And Beef's big flavor and big value make it worth every bite.



Amp up grilling season! Bold flavors, marinades and spices boost grilling season and impress the whole crowd.

Photo courtesy of BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com.

NEVADA BEEF COUNCIL

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USDA Issues Directive to Restore Grazing on National Forest Lands and Strengthen Support for America's Ranchers

Washington, D.C. – June 12, 2026 – Today, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced the distribution of a comprehensive directive (tinyurl.com/mkb22tee) to all U.S. Forest Service employees from the Office of the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE). These actions advance implementation of the Advancing Grazing on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the USDA–Department of the Interior Grazing Action Plan, delivering on the Trump Administration's commitment to strengthen American ranching, restore multiple-use management on federal lands, and combat regulatory lawfare

against producers.

"America's ranchers are an integral component of our rural economies, our food security, and our national strength," said Secretary Rollins. "For too long, bureaucratic overreach and activist-driven lawfare have undermined the multiple-use mandate of our National Forests and Grasslands. Today, we are empowering line officers with clear direction and reaffirming grazing as an essential tool for healthy landscapes and vibrant rural communities."

The letter to Forest Service employees, addressed from Secretary Rollins and referencing the detailed implementation directives from Under Secretary Michael Boren, emphasizes the historic role of grazing on National Forest System lands. These actions build directly on the October 2025 USDA Plan to Fortify the American Beef Industry and the March 31, 2026, MOU (PDF, 1.1 MB) signed with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.

emphasizes the historic role of grazing on National Forest System lands. These actions build directly on the October 2025 USDA Plan to Fortify the American Beef Industry and the March 31, 2026, MOU (PDF, 1.1 MB) signed with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.

Key Elements of the Directives:

- Expanding access to prioritize permitting vacant and closed allotments
- Maximizing grazing flexibilities to keep working lands working
- Eliminating delays by streamlining permitting and allotment authorizations
- Elevating rural Americans by giving ranchers a better voice
- Improving service by setting expectations for positive engagement with ranchers.

By elevating grazing as an Administration priority, USDA is protecting the roughly 23,000 permittees and lessees who rely on public rangelands while delivering more affordable, American-raised protein to consumers.

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We have 936,000 email and 1.6 million mailing addresses for sportsmen who either hold or applied for big game licenses in a western state. We send out 2,000 to 5,000 emails every day. The trips we offer will get plenty of exposure to sportsmen. If you would like to discuss your landowner hunting license program, please email, text, or call my cell. We are proud to be a new Regional Associate Member of the NCA.

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Investing in People: Strengthening the Future of Our Industry

by Gene Copenhaver, NCBA President

In agriculture, we often talk about legacy. We often measure it in the continuous improvement of the land and cattle we care for, and operations passed from one generation to the next. But perhaps our most important legacy isn't found in what we raise, it's found in who we develop. Leadership within the cattle industry has never been more critical, and the responsibility to cultivate it belongs to all of us.

That's why I believe so strongly in the importance of leadership development and knowledge transfer across our industry. Whether it's a seasoned producer sharing decades of experience or a young cattleman bringing fresh perspectives, the exchange of ideas is what keeps our industry resilient and forward-looking.

One of the most impactful ways we foster that exchange is through leadership programs like the Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC). This program isn't just a series of tours or sessions — it's an immersive experience that connects participants to every segment of the beef supply chain. YCC provides a comprehensive view of our industry's complexity and opportunity.

What truly sets YCC apart is the interaction between participants themselves. These young leaders come from diverse backgrounds — different states, production practices and perspectives — and they leave with a deeper understanding of each other and a broader network that will serve them for years to come. Just as importantly, they return home equipped not only with knowledge, but with confidence and a renewed sense of purpose.

I had the privilege this spring and summer of attending numerous state cattlemen's association meetings across the country, and I've seen that same spirit of connection and collaboration at work. These gatherings are more than just business meetings, they're vital forums where producers can share ideas, learn from one another, and build relationships that strengthen our collective voice.

At every stop, I've been reminded that our industry's strength lies in its people.



Whether it's a hallway conversation about market trends, a discussion on policy priorities, or a casual exchange over a cup of coffee, these moments of connection matter. They are where mentorship happens, where innovation begins, and where future leaders find their footing.

NCBA and its nationwide network of state affiliates play a unique and important role in facilitating these connections. We have the ability to bring together cattle producers, industry leaders and stakeholders from across the beef supply chain. Through our meetings, committees and programs, we create opportunities for networking, development and strategic discussions that help shape the future of our industry.

Just as importantly, our organizations serve as a bridge between rural communities and the broader state or national conversation.

When we strengthen our producers, we strengthen the communities they call home. And when rural America thrives, our entire nation benefits. The work we do, advocating on behalf of cattle producers, fostering leadership, and building connections, extends far beyond the pasture gate.

Looking ahead, the challenges and opportunities facing our industry will require thoughtful, informed leadership at every level. That leadership won't emerge by chance — it will be cultivated through intentional investment in people, programs and relationships.

So, whether you're a seasoned producer or just starting out, I encourage you to engage. Attend your state meetings. Participate in leadership development programs. Share your knowledge and be open to learning from others. Because in the end, the strength of our industry isn't just measured in production — it's measured in the leaders we develop and the connections we build along the way.

I like to say that we might be from different landscapes but we're the same people. Together, we're not just raising cattle, we're raising the next generation of leaders who will carry this industry forward.

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No Surprises Here

by Colin Woodall, NCBA CEO

I remember receiving the call just before Thanksgiving 2024 that New World screwworm had crossed from Guatemala into Mexico. After looking at the supply of sterile flies and the geography of Mexico, it became clear we would have to do battle once again with this gruesome pest. The only question was when.

When is now. New World screwworm entered Texas in early June and began its spread. We were neither shocked nor surprised that it arrived. It took the fly more than a year and a half to make it to us, and the industry put that time to good use getting prepared. The United States was ready.

NCBA began our work with USDA during the last days of the Biden administration, making sure the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was aware and engaging with us and the Mexican government. APHIS once again proved to be a good partner by putting their best people on this project. USDA provided personnel, expertise, equipment and a lot of money to mount the strongest defense they could in Mexico. Once President Trump was inaugurated, we worked to educate his new team on the New World screwworm threat so they could continue the fight. In May of 2025, Secretary of Agriculture Rollins shut down the border to Mexican cattle as a way to get more of the Mexican government's attention and cooperation. It worked and I believe the improved joint effort is what slowed the northward advance.

Since then, we have embarked on a producer education campaign to provide information on the history of New World screwworm and help our members like you begin to prepare for the invasion. We have conducted countless presentations, interviews, podcasts and more to get the word out. Our website holds many resources including guides on how to identify this pest. This topic has dominated every NCBA meeting and leadership call as well.

NCBA isn't doing this alone. The state and national partnership is another reason the cattle industry was prepared. Few people expected the fly to show up first in any other state than Texas. The producer leadership and staff of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA), the Texas Beef Council, and the Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA) have led the charge in their state. They have built and led coalitions to educate livestock producers, landowners and the wildlife community. They kept the pressure on the state government to put the required effort into preparation, and they have also worked with USDA-APHIS and Congress to ensure the federal government was working with the state teams.

Cow-calf producers have been the tip of the spear, and TSCRA President Stephen Diebel has been a part of every call, meeting and briefing. His staff haven't slept much in months, especially Jason Skaggs and Peyton Schumann, because they have been working to prepare and improve every detail of the response. The Texas Beef Council team has been working overtime to keep this from impacting beef demand, and the TCFA leadership and staff have been instrumental in developing the industry and government response. As I'm writing this, there is a case in New Mexico and the New Mexico Beef Council and New Mexico Cattle Growers are providing leadership in their state, as well. We will see more state leadership as the infestation spreads.

You will be glad to hear that the Texas State Veterinarian, Dr. Bud Dinges, is a former chairman of NCBA's Cattle Health and Well-Being Committee, and he and his team have worked closely with all of us. Their leadership at the Texas Animal Health Commission also helped develop and drive the USDA "Playbook" being used to guide the overall response. Playbook development allowed every NCBA



state partner an opportunity to provide direction, feedback and edits to USDA. Many of our state partners also worked with their state animal health officials to engage in this process, too.

The response plan was ready, and it is being implemented very effectively. Like any plan, practical application exposes weak points, but the responding agencies and producer groups have been able to pivot and improve the response. The response has not shut down the flow of cattle, and the cattle markets seemed to barely notice. More importantly, it hasn't become a sensationalized media story, nor has it impacted beef demand.

This is an animal health emergency that is going to inflict economic damage to those in and around the infested areas. The time, resources, money, labor, and animal health products required to fight back and protect our cattle will impact the bottom line. However, the bottom line is that nothing about the New World screwworm situation has been a surprise. It is not a surprise that the fly crossed the border. It is not a surprise that it is spreading. It is not a surprise that the government and industry were ready to spring into action. We will eradicate New World screwworm once again, it is just a matter of time until we have enough sterile flies, or other new technology, to make that happen. Until then, NCBA will work with the state associations and beef councils to win this fight.

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YCC Class of 2026 Strengthens Leadership and Industry Knowledge While Building Lifelong Connections

By National Cattlemen's Beef Association

For more than four decades, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's (NCBA) Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC) has served as the premier leadership development experience for emerging leaders in the cattle industry. From May 28 through June 4, 2026, the latest class continued that tradition, gaining firsthand exposure to every segment of the beef value chain while building skills and relationships that will help shape the future of the industry.

YCC is made possible through the generous support of John Deere, Tyson Foods, Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, Farm Credit and Merck. Their commitment to developing future industry leaders ensures participants receive a comprehensive look at the people, businesses and organizations that drive America's beef industry forward.

This year's class included 69 participants representing state cattlemen's associations and breed organizations from across the country. Since the program's inception in 1980, YCC has graduated more than 1,000 participants through 44 classes, creating a nationwide network of informed and engaged cattle industry leaders.

"The YCC program was originally designed to provide emerging leaders with a deeper understanding of the entire beef value chain while also helping participants better understand NCBA's role in the cattle and beef industry," said NCBA President-Elect Kim Brackett, who joined the group. "Through the trip, each of us is gaining valuable knowledge and experience that helps us be stronger advocates and more effective leaders for the industry."

The Class of 2026 began its journey in Denver, Colorado, where participants spent three days immersed in the work of NCBA. At NCBA headquarters, the group received briefings from staff across the organization, learning about membership, communications, government affairs, producer education, marketing, events and the many programs that support cattle producers nationwide.

The time in Colorado also included a visit to Five Rivers Cattle Feeding's Kuner Feedlot, where participants gained a firsthand understanding of modern cattle feeding operations. The Colorado portion of the trip concluded with a reception hosted by Greeley Hat Works, and provided participants an opportunity to continue building relationships in a unique setting.

From Colorado, the class traveled to Sioux City, Iowa, where they explored another critical segment of the beef supply chain. Participants toured Tyson Foods' Dakota Dunes processing facility, witnessing the complexity and efficiency required to safely process beef products for consumers. The group also visited empirical Foods, gaining insight into innovative technologies and processes that maximize value throughout the production system.

"It's critical we understand the entire beef value chain in order to better understand the challenges facing our industry, both as producers and as leaders," Brackett said. "As a group composed mainly of cow-calf producers and feedlot

operators, the time spent at Tyson and empirical showed the group the inner workings of a sector many of us aren't exposed to regularly. It allowed us to see, firsthand, some of the challenges facing other segments of the industry and gave all of us a better understanding of just how complex the industry really is."

On June 2, the class traveled to Wooster, Ohio, to spend the day at Certified Angus Beef's headquarters. There, participants gained a deeper appreciation for the retail and foodservice sectors that connect beef producers directly with consumers. Through presentations and discussions with industry professionals, participants explored evolving consumer preferences, purchasing trends, and the marketing strategies that help maintain beef's position as the protein of choice for millions of consumers.

The final leg of the trip brought participants to Washington, D.C., where they experienced firsthand the policy and advocacy work that is central to NCBA's mission. Participants learned about NCBA's grassroots policy development process and received briefings on the legislative and regulatory issues currently impacting cattle producers.

Following a full day of preparation and issue briefings, participants put their training into action on Capitol Hill, meeting directly with members of Congress and congressional staff to advocate for the issues most important to cattle producers and rural communities. For many participants, these meetings served as a reminder that effective advocacy begins with informed producers who are willing to share their experiences with elected officials.

The program concluded with a reception and NCBA-PAC auction, where participants demonstrated their commitment to the future of the industry by raising more than \$94,000 in support of NCBA-PAC's efforts in D.C.

Led by 2026 YCC Chair Leoma Donsbach of Montana, the Class of 2026 brought together participants from diverse backgrounds, regions and sectors of the beef industry. While the program provided invaluable educational opportunities and industry exposure, many participants agreed that the relationships formed throughout the week may prove to be the most lasting benefit.

"Over the past eight days, our class developed a shared commitment to strengthening the cattle industry," Donsbach said. "As we return home, I'm confident that all of us have a broader understanding and appreciation of this industry, a renewed appreciation for advocacy, and a depth of commitment to not only serving this industry, but our communities as a whole. We also now share a bond that will last the rest of our lives, and that's one of the things that is truly special about the YCC program."

Individuals interested in participating in future Young Cattlemen's Conference programs are encouraged to contact their state affiliate cattlemen's association or breed association to learn more about nomination opportunities and the selection process.