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April is a month where the cattle industry really gets busy, this year is no different, except, we have some exciting things happening. For example, price for slaughter steers and heifers (fat cattle) are setting new records and calf and yearling prices continue to set new highs.

Easter week, April 13-20, 2025, Superior Livestock Video Auction sale is being held in Natchitoches, LA April 16-17. Hopefully, new highs for our Louisiana calves, yearlings and replacement cattle will be set! Speaking of Easter, the Lenten season is normally a time where beef consumption decreases

and demand for beef is lower, not this year. Both demand and consumption of beef increased even with higher prices. Now, if Ma Nature will revert to “normal” weather where our forages can “spring up” and rye grass continue to produce abundant growth so our good Louisiana calves can put on excellent weight to produce a profit at market time. So, keep those new-born calves alive and growing. Keep in close contact with your marketing agent and be flexible in your marketing plan. Enjoy what this month of April brings you!

Dave Foster, CEO

NALIVKA – TARIFFS, TRADE BALANCE, & U S PUBLIC DEBT

Most of that news and conversation centers on higher prices that will be the result in tariffs, but is there more to the story?

By: John Nalivka

Since tariffs became the highlight of the Administration, they also became a highlight of the news as well as much of the conversation among Americans. Most of that news and conversation centers on higher prices that will be the result. It should be noted that currently, U.S. tariffs are among the lowest in the world and at the same time, there are few Americans who know or understand much about tariffs.

I have been asked by clients since the tariffs became a hot topic, for my professional opinion on the impact of increasing U.S. import tariffs. My response has consistently been that I believe the impact at this point is difficult to determine, but at the same time, I did not think the impact would be as negative as many have suggested. In the past, I have not supported tariffs. Not that I necessarily look for support for my opinion from the Federal Reserve, but they did indicate today the “inflationary impact of tariffs will be both transitory and relatively small.”

There are two related topics that I believe also deserve more attention - the U.S. balance of trade and U.S. public debt. On Jan. 1, 2025, the U.S. balance of trade for goods and services stood at a negative \$156,000,000,000. That is MINUS 156 billion dollars! This is 152% greater than on Jan. 1, 2015. Monthly balance of trade data provided by the Federal Reserve of St. Louis goes back to 1992. Every month in this entire series shows a negative value. The value of goods and services that we import is valued at \$156 billion MORE than those that we export. Aside from the availability of foreign-made goods, Americans have the willingness and ability to buy those imported goods. However, at some point, that large of a trade deficit may at some point become a problem, if it isn't already.

Another figure and one that may be closely related is the U.S. public debt. On Oct. 1, 2024 (most recently released data) our public debt was \$36,000,000,000,000 and 122% of GDP. That is 36 trillion dollars and double what it was 10 years earlier! In January 1966, it was 366 billion dollars and 40% of GDP!

Perhaps, it would be more beneficial for Americans to begin thinking “big picture” with regard to our trade deficit, the negative impact of an overwhelming federal debt, and long-term food security on the well-being of all Americans.

PRODUCERS URGE CONGRESS FOR GRAZING POLICY TO HELP PREVENT WILDFIRES

Allowing cattle to graze is a well documented tool to help remove the fuel that can lead to wildfires.

By: Maggie Malson

Wildfires have been in the news recently with many West and Midwest states burning acres in 2025. Texas had the second largest fire in history a year ago, burning 1,058,482 acres. The West also had an extreme fire year in 2024 with four states burning at or close to a million acres in each, including California, Idaho and Wyoming. Oregon set a record of burning 1.9 million acres.

Kaitlynn Glover is the Executive Director of the Public Lands Council (PLC) and works on natural resources for the National Cattleman's Beef Association (NCBA). She spoke about wildfires and the importance of common-sense grazing policy as a wildfire prevention tool with guest host Michelle Rook on AgriTalk.

"I feel like no matter any time in the year, no matter which year we're talking about, there's always going to be an anniversary of a big fire in the West," Glover says. "The fire in Texas was absolutely devastating, and we've seen fires since then in California and Idaho and Washington and in these western states, and even in these Midwestern states, where you have a lot of grazing, you have a lot of forage build up, these grasses that dry out, especially if it's dry later in the year. Grazing really is the best tool to be able to remove that risk from the landscape."

Glover says it's a huge asset to be able to raise cattle on grazed acres. But all that green grass in the spring turns into a liability if it's not grazed off and dries out in the later months of the year.

"We have several 100 million acres that are public land, where you have a much wider space, and somewhere on the order of 145 million acres of those are grazed," Glover says. "Each of those animals removes 1000s of pounds of fine fuels that that really can ignite on a dime. You just need a bad lightning storm to be able to have the next big fire conditions. So, grazing is really important."

In his testimony on Feb. 11 in Washington, D.C., Tim Canterbury, Public Lands Council President and Colorado rancher, talked about the benefits of grazing, Glover shared.

"One thing that really stuck out to me was this number 45," she says. "Grazing reduces the risk of fire ignition by 45% and that doesn't matter whether you're on public land or private land pasture. Whatever it is, reducing that risk is absolutely critical. Whether you're in Washington or you're in the Texas panhandle, you're really looking at how you can apply grazing in a way that reduces that risk and allows you to protect those acres for the future."

When it comes to policy, PLC looks for approaches that respect multiple use of public lands.

"It's sort of like the Swiss Army knife of Land Management in the West," Glover says. "Whether you're hiking or biking or hunting or having energy development, the piece that makes public lands work is making sure that they're healthy, they're open and available."

Glover points out that for western rangelands, grazing is what has kept them healthy over time.

"64% of Western cattle spend time on federal lands grazing," she says. "It's valuable forage, but it also is a huge protector of those landscapes in a very direct way."

The question on everyone's mind is what specific changes are needed from Congress or the Department of Interior to cover public lands and grazing of those lands to strike a balance. Glover has seen some traction in the targeted grazing space as private land operators, farmers and ranchers can look at their pastures and make quick decisions.

Creating fire break or using grass in a different way by moving animals around are examples she shares.

"That decision is very fast and you're able to take action very quickly if it hasn't been identified as a grazing allotment on federal land," Glover adds. "In contrast, the agencies have been really reluctant for a long time to use grazing as a management tool."

PLC continues to reiterate to lawmakers that grazing is not only a use, because it feeds into a commodity, but also a management tool that can be deployed in a lot of different places. Congress is working on bills that would direct targeted grazing in these other spaces.

"Typically, we think about reducing fire risk by cutting tall trees," Glover explains. "We also are looking for some additional authorizations for getting some of the smaller fuels out through grazing, preventing that woody encroachment that we see so often in the Midwest."

She says through those targeted grazing principles progress was made during the last Congress.

"We've seen the House pass targeted grazing legislation, especially related to fire," she adds. "We're looking forward to continuing that momentum in the Senate this year as well."



Happy Easter

MILLENNIALS AND PROTEIN CRAZE BOOST MEAT SALES TO RECORD HIGH

The retail meat industry sold 500 million more packages in 2024 than they did in 2023. Of that 500 million-package growth, 62% was driven by millennials.

By: Jennifer Shike

Despite the extreme inflationary pressure on income now, consumers continue to lean into their love for meat in 2024.

"2024 was the strongest year on record for meat, with growth for beef and chicken, pork, lamb had a really good year, bison, veal, you name it," says Anne-Marie Roerink, owner of 210 Analytics, who conducted the 2024 Power of Meat study. "It was just an all-around fantastic year, and it really underscored that despite consumers having that pressure on income and being in the non-stop balancing act on what to spend their money on, meat won one big."

How Did Meat Win?

When times are tough, people start to cook at home more often, Roerink says. A part of the dollar that came out of food service restaurants went into the retail grocery store space. She says part of the dollar might end up back at restaurants. But, that's not a bad thing for the meat industry. The balance between retail and restaurants tends to be a good thing.

"For years, we worried about whether millennials were going to be meat and poultry consumers like the generations before them. The answer is a resounding yes," Roerink says.

Millennials, especially the older half of this age group, are starting to come into their income potential.

"Many millennials now have children," she adds. "And those children are starting to be the age where you think you go to the grocery store for the entire week, and about two days later, your pantry, fridge and freezer are empty."

The retail meat industry sold 500 million more packages in 2024 than they did in 2023. Roerink says 62% of that 500 million-package growth was driven by millennials.

"That's been a key finding for all of us," she says. "Millennials do approach meat and poultry a little bit differently, so that's going to mean more change in years to come."

Another reason why the meat industry is doing so well is Americans' massive focus on protein.

"If you walk around the store, from your mac and cheese to your Skippy peanut butter, protein call-outs are everywhere," Roerink explains. "But at the same time, this is going hand in hand with some people saying, 'I want fewer ingredients in the things that I buy. I want a more natural form of food.' That combined focus on protein with more wholesome foods has really put meat and poultry back into driver's seats as well."

What Do Millennials Really Want?

Roerink says millennials are focused on convenience more than ever. This is largely attributed to their life stage – running around and balancing time between family and work like generations before them.

"They have more focus on sustainability and animal welfare," she adds. "With their approach and values relative to meat and poultry, I think we're going to see some different needs in terms of transparency. They truly do want to hear from the producers. They want to understand what kind of life the animal had, how you approach water management and everything else."

She says it may sound crazy, but consumers do want to know how their food is produced. And if they don't hear it from the producer, they may dream up their own descriptions, she points out.

"Often times when we think about our meat category, we use industry terms. We approach it from a scientific angle," Roerink says. "This means nothing to consumers. They want to know more, but we need to speak in a language that makes sense to those consumers."

DR. CLYDE BAGLEY NAMED THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF RESEARCH AT THE SU AG CENTER

Baton Rouge, La. – Clyde Bagley, Ph.D., has been named Vice Chancellor of the Southern University Ag Center. The appointment was made on Feb. 21, 2025, during the Southern University System's Board meeting.

Dr. Bagley has over 40 years of experience in agriculture research and academia. He filled the position on March 1, 2025.

As the Vice Chancellor of Research, Dr. Bagley will promote and expand the research mission of the SU Ag Center by increasing and supporting the scholarly activities of faculty, students, and partners/collaborations; provide guidance and leadership to faculty through collaborations, the development of professional enhancement programs, and assistance in seeking and obtaining extramural funding. He will be responsible for the administrative oversight of the operations and maintenance of research facilities and experiments associated with the research sites. He will also work with officials from the Southern University System, as well as state and federal officials.

Prior to becoming the SU Ag Center's Vice Chancellor for Research, Bagley was the Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Director of the Beef Research Unit at the Ag Center.

Dr. Bagley earned a B.S. and M.S. degree from Louisiana State University and a Ph.D. from Virginia Tech University.

CONSIDER THE COST IMPLICATIONS OF EXTENDING DAYS ON FEED IN THE FEEDLOT

Extending days on feed for feedlot cattle could boost profitability, but comes with risks.

Source: Iowa State University

Increasing days on feed for feedlot cattle isn't a new idea. However, several recent research studies have shown that as cattle get bigger, a large percentage of their weight gain is in the form of carcass weight gain. Grant Crawford, associate director of cattle technical services at Merck Animal Health, said this concept, termed carcass transfer, allows cattle feeders the opportunity to extend days on feed and increase profitability on certain groups of cattle. This is particularly true if cattle are sold on a carcass-weight basis.

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CONSIDER THE COST IMPLICATIONS OF EXTENDING DAYS ON FEED IN THE FEEDLOT

Crawford, who spoke at the 2025 Feedlot Forum in northwest Iowa, said the current situation with low grain prices, near-record-high fed cattle prices, and near-record-high feeder cattle prices offers a unique situation.

“Current feeder cattle prices narrow profit projections, and there may be an advantage to adding more pounds to the cattle that are already in the feedlot- and already paid for,” he said. “Especially compared with purchasing and placing a lighter weight feeder and taking the risk that these new cattle may not produce a profit.”

Crawford explained some recent research regarding increased carcass weight and live weight gain per day.

“A very rough estimate of carcass transfer is that 75% of live weight gain during the extended feeding period (extending past the normal finishing weight) is in the form of carcass weight,” he said. “The research we have conducted shows steers gain approximately 2 lbs/day carcass weight and 2.6 lbs/day live weight with extended days-on-feed. These estimates can be used to predict performance, incremental cost-of-gain, and added revenue from extending days-on-feed.”

Extending days-on-feed typically makes more sense for cattle feeders who sell their cattle on a carcass weight basis rather than a live weight basis. Crawford said this is because of the high percentage of weight gain in carcass weight toward the end of the feeding period.

Also, extending days can be risky when selling cattle on a grid basis. Though extending days may be advantageous for increasing premium quality grades like Prime and Certified Angus Beef, it will likely also increase potential carcass discounts such as Yield Grades 4 and 5 and overweight carcasses.

Heifers versus steers also can make a difference. Heifers are earlier maturing and therefore may realize carcass discounts- Yield Grades 4 and 5 especially- earlier than steers. They’re also less efficient than steers.

While current market dynamics allow producers this opportunity, changes in the dynamics of higher feed prices and lower fed and/or feeder cattle prices may diminish the opportunity to extend days-on-feed.

Producers interested in learning more about how more days on feed could work in their operation can compare past similar groups, Crawford said. Finished weights and carcass weights at typical days-on-feed, feed intakes at heavy weights, and carcass characteristics are important to know. It is also important to know how often the producer sees late-term deaths or morbidities, as this can vary greatly across feedlots.

The bottom line, Crawford said, is it’s important to be pragmatic.

“‘One in the hand vs. two in the bush’ is fitting here because there is risk in feeding cattle longer,” he said.

“For example, larger cattle can be hard on pens, fences, and feeders. Any death loss in market-ready fed cattle is expensive. Weather can also play a major factor, and any potential gains can easily be offset by mud, heat stress, cold stress, etc.”

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