

cattleTRAILS

.....March 2025

To promote the Wisconsin beef business through advocacy, leadership, and education.



WISCONSIN
CATTLEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION



President's Path

Tressa Lacy, WCA President

Spring is around the corner and the legislative session is firing away in Madison. We are looking forward to putting our updated policy book into action this year.

There are a few notable updates for everyone from CattleCon. For the first time in a long while, Wisconsin has a chair within Region III leadership with NCBA. Dr. Amy Radunz was elected as the Region III Federation Chair at CattleCon in January. Amy will serve three years in this role. The vision of the Federation of State Beef Councils is to build beef demand by inspiring, unifying and supporting an effective and coordinated state and national Checkoff partnership. Steve Springer and Arin Crooks were appointed to the Cattlemen's Beef Board. Terry Quam was appointed to Secretary-Treasurer of the Cattlemens Beef Board. The Cattlemen's Beef Board consists of 101 members, including domestic beef, dairy and veal producers, as well as importers of beef and beef products. Members are individually nominated by certified nominating organizations and appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to serve a non-paid three year term. This is all a great representation of Wisconsin on the national level. WCA appreciates these individuals

Stay Informed

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There is a level of uncertainty regarding the political environment and economy.

continued dedication to the Wisconsin beef producer! WCA will be joining our fellow Region III organizations out in DC this fall for the Region III Legislative Congress September 15th-17th. I am greatly looking forward to the benefits to come from WCA becoming more engaged within Region III.

As we look towards the coming months, there is a level of uncertainty regarding the political environment and economy, specifically commodity prices. I encourage all of you to familiarize yourself with NCBA's publications to remain informed. WCA will continue doing what we



can to get information to our members via emails, sharing on the WCA Facebook page and Cattle Trails.

-Tressa Lacy

2024 WCA President

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@WisconsinCattlemensAssociation

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upcoming events:

WPS Farm Show
April 1-3
Oshkosh, WI

Beef Direct Marketing Workshop
April 11
Marriott Madison West

Dr. Temple Grandin Visit
April 11
UW-Madison

Midwest Horse Fair
April 11-13
Madison, WI

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST EVENTS AND INFORMATION

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wisconsincattlemen.com

Steak Trailer Update



Brady Zuck, WCA Steak Trailer Co-Chair

With the warmer weather coming early again this year, the WCA Steak Trailer is fully prepared for another great year of serving our famous beef products across the state of Wisconsin. We look forward to having Dave and Carrie Goss return to manage the Steak Trailer, with a continued focus on delivering a quality product. Dave and Carrie spent time this winter performing maintenance on the trailers to make sure we operate at peak efficiency.

The Steak Trailer is crucial to funding the activities of WCA – without it, we would not be able to continue to operate in our current capacity. Please consider volunteering at the Steak Trailer – even a few hours here and there is a great help! With the on-going challenges with labor that we are all well aware of, coming together as a membership to support the Steak Trailer is more important now than ever.

If you know of a local 4-H/FFA/youth group looking for a fundraising opportunity, consider the Steak Trailer! Please contact Carrie Goss (608-606-2356, wcasteaktrailer@gmail.com) to secure your group's time at an upcoming event for the 2025 season.

We want to thank you all for the support in 2024 and look forward to another successful year in 2025!

-Brady Zuck

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2025 Event Schedule

WPS Farm Show-Oshkosh
April 1-3

Midwest Horse Fair-Madison
April 11-13

Wisconsin State Fair-West Allis
July 31 – August 10

World Dairy Expo
September 30 – October 3

Cattle Trails Advertising

Half-page advertisements are available for placement in an upcoming issue of the Cattle Trails newsletter for \$50 per issue. Ad spaces for the June issue must be claimed by May 15, 2025.

Contact the WCA office for advertising details.
Phone: (608) 228-1457 | Email: kaitlyn@wisconsincattlemen.com

Wisconsin's State Budget Process Begins



Jordan Lamb

WCA Legislative Counsel

The Welch Group

Governor Evers presented his biennial budget package to a joint session of the Wisconsin State Legislature on February 18, 2025. Governor Evers' 2025-27 biennial budget proposal would spend \$118.9 billion in total state and federal revenue, which is an increase of 20.3% over the current state budget. The bill has been introduced as SB 45 and AB 50 and it will now be reviewed and amended first by the members of the Joint Committee on Finance.



Included in the Governor's budget proposal is \$80 million in total funding for farm, agribusiness and food programs. The Governor's proposal includes funding for farmer-led conservation programs at DATCP (i.e., the Producer-led Watershed Protection Grants, Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program grants and Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebates; \$1.2 million for Dairy Processor Grants; \$1.6 million for Meat Processor Grants; \$400,000 to double funding for farmer mental health services; \$15 million to relaunch the PACE program (Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements) to purchase easements that protect farmland from being developed for any purpose other than agricultural use; and \$30 million in state funding for food bank commodity purchases. The Governor also proposed \$50 million in funding for Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP) grants.

Prior to the Governor's release of his budget, the Wisconsin Agriculture Coalition, which includes the

WCA, released its complete list of agricultural budget priorities for the 2025-27 budget bill. The number one priority for the Ag Coalition in this budget bill is securing \$150 million in funding to continue the critical ARIP program. The 2023-25 state budget invested \$150 million to create the nation's first agriculture-specific road funding program to upgrade local roads used to move over 15 million tons of agricultural goods annually. The Department of Transportation received nearly 300 applications totaling over \$500 million—more than triple the available funds – for the grant program. Given its success and the continued need, the Coalition strongly supports funding another round of \$150 million over the 2025-27 biennium to provide support to upgrade additional local agricultural roads across Wisconsin.

The Ag Coalition also supports including continued funding for Wisconsin's incredible successful farmer-led conservation programs; incentives to promote the sales and production of U.S.-produced biofuels; and funding to support increased availability of large animal veterinarians serving rural Wisconsin. To review the complete list of the Ag Coalition's budget priorities, go to https://wfbf.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FINAL_2025-27-Budget-Priorities-Ag-Coalition.pdf.

Once the Joint Committee on Finance finishes reviewing and approving their version of the budget bill later this spring, it will go to the full Assembly and Senate for review. If passed by both houses of the legislature, the budget then goes back to Governor Evers for his final review. The goal is to complete this process before the end of the current fiscal year, which is June 30, 2025.

Membership Update

How do we grow our membership? A question I ponder regularly.

Those of you reading this see the value WCA brings to the Wisconsin cattlemen. Does your neighbor down the road? Why? Have you talked to them about what we do and the importance of WCA?

Our membership is small, but we are mighty, so I don't mean to preach like we aren't fortunate. WCA has a larger portion of youth than the average organization,

which suggests a strong future for us. Where I see continued opportunity is we're missing out on the middle aged, active beef producer. If you have a suggestion on how we can grow our membership whether that populous specifically or in general, please reach out to me.

Tressa Lacy

2024 WCA President

Publications & Membership Chair

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Wisconsin Livestock Owners Encouraged to Renew Their Premises Registration Now for 2025

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), in partnership with the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC), is asking every livestock owner to renew and update their livestock premises registration. State law requires that all livestock* owners register where their animals are kept, and current registrants must renew their premises registration by July 31, 2025.

Registrants can contact WLIC to renew. All registrants should have received email registration notifications from DATCP; however, registrants without email addresses will receive a letter this spring. Livestock owners must register their premises regardless of the number of animals they keep. There is no cost to register. DATCP uses the information to rapidly respond to animal disease outbreaks to protect animal health, the food supply, public safety, and Wisconsin's agriculture economy. Registrant information is never shared or sold commercially. Examples of locations that require registration include:

- Farms and hobby farms
- Backyard poultry flocks
- Veterinary clinics with large animal hospital facilities
- Stables
- Livestock exhibitions, markets, and feedlots
- Dealers and haulers that keep livestock on their property
- Slaughter, rendering, and dead animal facilities
- Any other location where livestock is kept or congregated

Registration renewal is required every three years. By reviewing the information on the renewal form and

providing any updates to WLIC, current registrants can renew their premises registration or, as required, report that they no longer house livestock.

Registering or Renewing a Premises

Those who need to register a new location can find more information on DATCP's website. Failing to register a premises can result in fines and ineligibility for state indemnity payments if animals are condemned due to disease exposure.

Livestock owners can register new premises or renew previous registrations by:

- Following the instructions included in the email directing to review their existing premises registration information directly online
- Visiting <https://wiid.org/premises-registration-renewal/>
- Calling WLIC at (888) 808-1910
- Downloading and mailing a paper application or returning the renewal form

Registrants will receive confirmation once their registration or renewal is processed. Premises ID numbers may be required by certain municipalities, organizations, and/or fairs.

**Livestock in Wisconsin includes: Cattle and other bovine animals; swine; poultry; sheep; goats; horses and other equine animals; farm-raised deer and other cervids; gamebirds including pheasants, quail, wild turkeys, migrating waterfowl, pigeons, and exotic birds raised in captivity; bison; llamas and other South American camelids; ratites such as emus and ostriches; and farm-raised fish.*

Defining success for reproductive and calf crop performance



Written by: Dr. Kimberly Kester, Regional Livestock Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension, Ryan Sterry, Regional Livestock Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension

Setting goals

Setting herd goals is one of the first steps towards driving on-farm success. After all, you can't get where you're going without a clear destination. Goal setting can help you work towards continuous improvement for both herd performance and profitability.

Goals should be S.M.A.R.T., meaning they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based. "Specific" means there is a trait or performance indicator you want to improve, such as weaning percentage. "Measurable" can be tracked or recorded, usually a percentage or number of pounds. "Achievable" and "relevant" need to be a realistic goal that truly matter to your operation. Finally, put it on a timeline so it is "time-based." If you do not give yourself a deadline, it will probably never happen.

Once you have a goal in mind, define the steps or sub-goals. What actions do you need to take to achieve the goal? If you want to improve your weaning percentage, this could be influenced by multiple factors including pregnancy and calving percentage, or even herd health protocols. For newer producers, a goal may be to simply improve your record keeping for the coming year.

Remember that all goals take time. Establish checkpoints where you will revisit the goals you set. This may fit in well after weaning or during a slow season for your farm. Adjust goals as necessary for the next year.

Focusing on the calf crop

Profitability for most commercial cow-calf operations depends on the pounds weaned and marketed from each calf crop. Encouraging farms to develop a record-keeping system is often half the battle (you can't manage what you don't measure); however, records must also be used for decision making to maximize their value. As the 2025 calf crop hits the ground and develops, these are some performance metrics worth tracking. North Dakota State University's Cow Herd Appraisal Software (CHAPS) provides standardized formulas to calculate

performance, as well as benchmarks for comparison (www.ndsu.edu/chaps/).

Pregnancy percentage: (Number of females exposed diagnosed as pregnant / Number of females exposed) x 100%

Calving percentage: (Number of calves born / Number of females exposed) x 100%

Weaning percentage: (Number of calves weaned / Number of females exposed) x 100%

Calving distribution: An analysis of when calves are born, broken into 21-day intervals.

Here's a simplified example in action. Our farm had 50 cows exposed for breeding in 2024, and from them, 40 calves were weaned in 2025. The CHAPS benchmark for weaning percentage is 91.4%, but ours is 80%.

Calculating our weaning percentage was a good first step to identify an area of concern. We need further information, though, to identify what the problem might be and when it's occurring (bull or cow fertility, pregnancy loss, or calf mortality).

Having the necessary records to calculate pregnancy and weaning percentages paints a more complete picture, with a pregnancy percentage of 84% and calving percentage of 82%. An 84% pregnancy percentage tells us something happened around breeding season. Returning to goal setting, to improve weaning percentage, our farm should first focus on pregnancy percentage. We can revisit this goal at calving, breeding, and weaning by monitoring body condition scores, dystocia, and more. We can consult our trusted advisors to help set goals and a timeline, and also identify what needs to happen within the year and what may take multiple years to realistically achieve.

References:

Evaluating the calving season
<https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/articles/evaluating-the-calving-season/>

Production Records for Commercial Cow-Calf Operations
<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g2045>

Beef Direct Marketing Workshop Scheduled for April 11

A workshop for Wisconsin farmers who are direct marketing beef, or considering it, will be held on Friday, April 11 from 1:00 – 4:30 pm at the Marriott Madison West, 1313 John Q Hammons Drive, Middleton. The workshop is offered by the Wisconsin Beef Council and is being held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors (WAMP) annual convention. This will be an opportunity to network with fellow beef producers who are direct marketing, as well as the processors who play a key role in getting beef to consumers.

Topics to be covered during the workshop include:

- **Pre-harvest Influences on Beef Quality:** Beef quality is on the forefront of every direct marketer's mind. Although there are a multitude of factors that can influence beef quality, producers can learn to implement strategies that help prevent dark, firm, and dry beef. This session will explore pre-harvest factors that may influence beef quality. Speaker - Beth McIlquham, UW-Madison Division of Extension, Regional Livestock Educator
- **Guidance for Customers on Cutting Instructions:** What do you mean I can't get 10 Porterhouse steaks and 10 filets from my quarter beef? How much ground beef can I expect? You'll hear from a processor on tips to help customers understand beef cuts when placing their orders. Speaker - Kathy Collins, Country Pride Meats
- **Labeling and Inspection Requirements:** If your farm is ready to transition from selling quarters and halves to individual cuts of beef, this segment will bring you up to speed on the requirements for labeling and inspection needs. Speakers – Jeff Swenson, Joy Barnett, Brian Jorata and Nichole Abbott, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
- **Claims and Terms in Marketing Beef:** Beef producers want consumers to feel confident in their beef purchase, no matter where the consumer makes that purchase. So how can you craft a marketing story that sells your beef while also maintaining overall consumer confidence?

Speaker – Leah Mindemann, Mindemann Farms

- **How to Frame Your Product for Profitability:** This session will provide tips on the variety of decisions to consider when getting started direct marketing, or if you're thinking about a different market to sell to. It will also provide insight into pricing considerations for selling quarters/halves, cuts and bundles. Speaker – Grace Link, Bosben Road Beef Co., Wisconsin Beef Council
- **Wisconsin Beef Council update:** Hear the latest on consumer research and learn about the resources available from the Wisconsin Beef Council to help you sell more beef.



Registration for the Direct Marketing Workshop can be done online at www.beeftips.com/directmarketing or by calling the Wisconsin Beef Council at 1-800-728-2333.

Attendees will be given Friday-only access to the WAMP trade show floor, which will include hot dogs and brats. The trade show is open from noon-6 pm.

If a producer is interested in attending other activities at the WAMP convention, go to <https://wiamp.com/convention/> for the full schedule and to register. You must be a WAMP member to participate in the broader conference. A hotel block is also available at that website.

Dr. Temple Grandin in Madison

Dr. Temple Grandin will be at UW-Madison on Friday, April 11! Dr. Grandin is famous for her groundbreaking approach to decoding animal behavior. Her 50+ years of experience in observing animals shines through

in this conference which shares the title of her highly acclaimed book: *The Grandin Papers*. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/4iWKzVo>

What Can the Checkoff Do?



Tammy Vaassen
Executive Director
Wisconsin Beef Council

Your staff team at the Wisconsin Beef Council has been out and about the last several months attending producer meetings, including BQA trainings, Producing Quality Beef workshops, local/regional/state

cattle organizations and feed coop meetings. This gives us an opportunity to share the purpose of WBC and the Beef Checkoff, including how beef and dairy farmers provide foundational leadership to the program, answer producer questions, and give updates on programs that your \$1/head investment is spent. We often get asked questions that are related to public policy activities, so I thought I'd share some details in this space about what the Beef Checkoff can and cannot do.

The Checkoff cannot influence government policy or action, including lobbying. By law, Checkoff dollars are only utilized for promotion, research and education. Lobbying efforts on behalf of the beef industry are left in the hands of membership organizations; where you can pay dues to support an organization whose policies align with your beliefs – whether that is the Cattlemen, Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, etc. As a member of Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, you regularly see the results of their government relations activities in this newsletter.

Checkoff dollars also cannot be used to promote or research programs, methods, or technologies which primarily relate to live cattle production or marketing OR to sponsor contests, cattle shows or sales, scholarships, awards, or other cattle related activities which are not directly related to the marketing of beef or beef products.

The mission of the Checkoff and WBC is to Grow Demand for Beef. We do that through outreach and programming targeted to consumers, teachers, media and health professionals. Some program examples that your Checkoff investment is allocated to in Wisconsin include advertising, Beef in the Classroom grants, providing lean beef nutrition and research resources to dietitians and cardiac rehab professionals, supporting efforts in retail and foodservice establishments, partnering with the Alice in Dairyland program, regular visits to TV stations in our larger cities, and much, much more. These efforts are designed to keep beef in forefront of consumers meal purchasing decisions, provide them with new recipes and cooking tips, help them understand the nutritional benefits of your



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product, educate future consumers, and any other activity that will help grow demand.

Of the \$1/head that you invest in the Checkoff, WBC retains 50 cents to be spent in programs as directed by our 22-member board. The other 50 cents goes to the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB), who has the responsibility of approving the annual budget for its national checkoff-funded programs. They contract with national industry-governed nonprofit organizations to implement programs to grow demand on a national and international scope. Some of those contractors include the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, U.S Meat Export Federation, North American Meat Institute, and others.

Wisconsin has three producer leaders that serve on the CBB – Arin Crooks, Terry Quam, and Steve Springer. If you have questions about how the Checkoff works, they would be great resources to answer your questions. At the Cattle Industry Convention in February, Terry interviewed for CBB leadership roles and was nominated to serve as Treasurer for the upcoming year.

CBB members serve on Checkoff committees that give guidance to the contractors, provide financial oversight to the Checkoff, and work to ensure compliance to collections and activities of state beef councils. CBB members are appointed by the USDA Secretary of Agriculture from nominations submitted by certified nominating organizations. The number of board seats for each state or region is determined by cattle inventories – there are currently 99 board members.

In the next Cattle Trails, we'll talk more about the National Cattlemen's Beef Association – as they carry both a membership/policy division, are a contractor to the Checkoff and serve as the home to the Federation of State Beef Councils.

In the meantime, I hope you're having a smooth calving season and wish you all the best as planting and grazing seasons quickly approach!



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Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association

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