

# cattleTRAILS

.....June 2026

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



WISCONSIN  
CATTLEMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION

Photo submitted by Abigail George



## President's Path

Jared Geiser, WCA President

It's beginning to feel like summer here in Eastern Wisconsin, with cattle on grass, crops in the ground, and the familiar hum of first-crop hay being made filling the air. Fed and feeder cattle have continued to hit record highs, and summer grilling season is here along with record retail beef prices. At the same time risk and volatility are growing. Skyrocketing fuel and input prices, drought and wildfires impacting fellow cattle producers, and conflict in the Middle East. While none of us can predict what challenges the markets, weather, or politics will throw at us next, we know we'll start each day the same, pulling our boots on and tackling the work at hand.

We have a busy summer ahead. The WCA Executive team along with Wisconsin Beef Council staff, will host NCBA Region III summer meetings here in late July. This is the second annual set of meetings bringing board leaders and exec's from across the region together to collaborate on policy and carry our voices farther at a national level. Tressa will be representing Wisconsin at NCBA's summer business meeting this July, and I'll be spending a few days in Washington DC in early June as part of NCBA's Young Cattlemen's Conference. We continue to prioritize engaging with fellow cattlemen, legislators, and the public on a state and national level following our mission, "To promote the Wisconsin beef business through advocacy, leadership, and education."

Just like cutting hay with a dull sickle is slow and

## Putting Farmers First

"We continue to prioritize engaging with fellow cattlemen, legislators, and the public on a state and national level."

leaves a ragged cut, continued maintenance is critical for our organization to remain effective. Part of that maintenance this year is getting to hear from more of our membership. Below is a QR code and link to our 2026 member survey, designed to help our board know more about our membership and rank our state and national policy priorities. Please take a few minutes to fill this out and help guide the future of Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association.

We are looking forward to seeing all of you in the Chippewa Valley on June 27th for our annual summer tour, our events committee has another great day planned. I hope you all have a safe and successful summer, filled with sunshine, timely rains, county fairs, and all the beef your grill can hold.



Scan the QR code to take our survey!



*-Jared Geiser*

2026 WCA President

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# Steak Trailer Update



### Brady Zuck, WCA Steak Trailer Co-Chair

As we head into the summer months, the Steak Trailer is busy preparing for our largest event, the Wisconsin State Fair. Our first two events of the year, WPS Farm Show and Midwest Horse Fair, went extremely well, with a nice increase in sales at WPS Farm Show. Unfortunately, storms at Midwest Horse Fair reduced our hours of operation, leading to a decrease in sales. We continue to closely monitor the cost of our inputs, especially beef, to ensure the WCA Steak Trailer continues to operate profitably.

On May 4, the WCA Steak Trailer served 300 guests at Oberholtzer Auctions' Customer Appreciation Event. With our new Cooking Trailer, we are able to accommodate smaller events without having to transport multiple trailers.

For the remainder of 2026, we will be attending the following events:

- Wisconsin State Fair- West Allis – August 6-16
- World Dairy Expo – September 29 – October 2
- Due to scheduling conflicts, we will not be able to attend Wisconsin Farm Technology Days

## upcoming events:

**WCA Summer Tour**  
June 27  
Chippewa Valley

**Wisconsin Farm Technology Days**  
July 14-16  
Stratford, WI

**Wisconsin State Fair**  
August 6-16  
West Allis, WI

**CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST EVENTS AND INFORMATION**

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wisconsincattlemen.com

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](mailto:wcasteaktrailer@gmail.com)) to secure your group's time at an upcoming event for the 2026 season.

We want to thank you all for your continued support and look forward to another great year at the Wisconsin State Fair!

## 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 September issue must be claimed by August 15, 2026.

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

# Summer Tour Comes to the Chippewa Valley on June 27

The Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association invites beef producers from across the state to gather in the Chippewa Valley for the 2026 Summer Production Tour on Saturday, June 27. This annual event offers a unique opportunity to learn from fellow producers, build industry connections, and see firsthand how Wisconsin cattle operations are adapting and thriving in today's beef industry.

The day will start at Rooney Angus just outside Chippewa Falls. Rooney Angus is a family-rooted Angus operation built on hard work, integrity, and a commitment to producing functional cattle that perform in real-world environments. In partnership with Green Mountain Angus, the program combines proven bloodlines, performance-focused development, and decades of experience to raise cattle known for calving ease, maternal strength, growth, soundness, and carcass quality.

At their ranch in Chippewa Falls, the operation includes 250 cows and youngstock, totaling approximately 400 head of cattle. Their bulls are developed at the Rooney Angus Bull Development Center in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, where the focus is on slow, steady growth to promote longevity and lasting performance. With an emphasis on honest service, attention to detail, and building long-term relationships, Rooney Angus works to provide dependable genetics and consistent results for cattle producers year after year.

As part of this tour stop, participants will also visit Ranch Brand Meat Company, a vertically integrated beef company founded through the partnership of Rooney Angus and Antczak Angus. Ranch Brand oversees every step of production — from genetics and ranch management to finishing and processing — giving visitors a firsthand look at how premium beef is raised and brought directly from pasture to plate. The operation was built on a commitment to transparency, quality, and craftsmanship, offering a unique perspective on how ranchers are creating stronger connections with today's beef consumers.

From there, attendees will head south to the Strey Farm. The Strey farm near Foster was purchased in 1998 by Steve and Leslie Strey. The original five cows and 80 acres has grown to the current operation of 160 Angus/Simmental commercial cows and 1,000 acres of crops. The Strey's raise their own replacement heifers, and sell

their feeder calves in the fall.

The Streys raise hay, corn, soybeans, wheat, and oats for feed and cash crops. Additional land is rented for summer pasture. Steve and Leslie's daughter, Heidi, and her husband Sam Sipiorski are now part of the operation and are planning for the future.

The Strey's live each day by trying to follow their mission statement: Fostering stewardship, stockmanship, advocacy, and leadership with faith and family, through success and hardship for the betterment of the next generation.

The final stop on the tour will be Kostka Ranch near Strum — a growing beef operation owned by Cody and Leeza Kostka. After purchasing Cody's family farm, the couple transformed the former dairy facility into a beef cattle operation and steadily built their herd from a single calf to approximately 75 head today with an emphasis on Charolais genetics.

As young producers, Cody and Leeza have grown their operation through hard work, perseverance, and a commitment to continuous learning. In addition to raising cattle, they market beef directly to consumers and have built a loyal customer base through transparency, education, and open communication. Their willingness to welcome visitors to the farm and share their story has helped bridge the gap between producers and consumers.

The day will also include recognizing the 2026 Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association award recipients and scholarship winners. Lunch is included with registration, and participants will be responsible for their own transportation between tour stops.

Registration for this one-day program is \$50 per person, or \$45 per attendee for groups of four or more. Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association membership is not required to attend.

Registration is available online at [www.wisconsincattlemen.com/events/summer-tour](http://www.wisconsincattlemen.com/events/summer-tour). For questions, please contact the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association at 608-228-1457 or [info@wisconsincattlemen.com](mailto:info@wisconsincattlemen.com).

# Wisconsin Legislature Adjourns 2025-26 Session Following Action on Key Agricultural Priorities



## Jordan Lamb

WCA Legislative Counsel

The Welch Group

The Wisconsin State Legislature has officially concluded its work for the 2025-26 legislative session. The State Assembly held its final floor period on February 20, while the State Senate

adjourned following its final regular session day on March 17. Lawmakers briefly returned to Madison in May for a Special Session focused on a proposed tax relief and school funding compromise, but the package ultimately failed in the Senate. As a result, the Legislature is now fully adjourned and, barring extraordinary circumstances, will not reconvene until January 2027.

With adjournment complete, all legislation that did not pass both houses is now considered “failed to pass” and would need to be reintroduced during the next legislative session beginning in January 2027.

## Key Agricultural and Rural Bills Enacted

Several agricultural and rural development measures successfully became law this session, including:

- Soybean-Derived Fire Suppression Products (2025 WI Act 178) – Legislation allowing soybean-based fire suppression products to qualify for DNR grant programs.
- Rural Veterinary Loan Repayment Program (2025 WI Act 177) – A new rural veterinary grant program was signed into law to help veterinarians repay educational debt in exchange for practicing in rural Wisconsin communities. While the program was enacted, it currently remains unfunded and will require future appropriations before grants can be distributed.
- Commercial Driver License (CDL) Training Grants (2025 WI Act 159) – This legislation expands



eligibility for CDL training grants beyond training providers in an effort to strengthen Wisconsin’s workforce pipeline.

- PFAS Program and Innocent Landowner Protections (2025 WI Act 200) – One of the most significant environmental measures enacted this session establishes additional PFAS response programs and included protections for farmers and landowners who unknowingly handled PFAS-contaminated materials. The legislation also provides funding for bottled water assistance, research, laboratory work, and expanded DNR staffing.

## Agricultural Bills Vetoed by Governor Evers

Governor Tony Evers vetoed several agriculture-related proposals approved by the Legislature, including:

- Animal Health License Fee Freeze (SB 622) – This legislation would have blocked DATCP fee increases affecting animal markets, dealers, truckers, and transport vehicles. The Governor cited concerns about legislative interference with executive branch rulemaking authority in his veto message.
- Agricultural Warehouse Fire Sprinkler Exemption (AB 956) – This legislation would have exempted certain agricultural fertilizer and pesticide warehouses from automatic sprinkler requirements. The Governor stated the issue should instead be addressed through the building code process.
- Foreign Ownership Restrictions on Agricultural Land (SB 7) – This legislation would have prohibited foreign adversaries from acquiring agricultural or forestry land in Wisconsin. Governor Evers vetoed the bill, arguing it imposed overly broad restrictions regardless of specific risk.
- Lab-Grown Meat Labeling Requirements (AB 554) – Legislation regulating labeling and sale of cultivated meat products was also vetoed because it contained penalties against grocers and retailers who sell products with non-compliant labels.

*continued on next page*

# Wisconsin Legislature Cont.

## ARIP Technical Fix Fails to Advance

A technical correction bill addressing unintended consequences within the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP) failed to pass before legislative adjournment. Current law requires roads to be formally posted to qualify for ARIP funding, which reportedly incentivized some municipalities to post roads solely to access grants. The proposal would have allowed engineering studies as an alternative method of demonstrating road limitations caused by heavy agricultural traffic. Although the bill passed the Senate, it never received a floor vote in the Assembly.

## Tax and School Funding Deal Collapses in Special Session

In mid-May, legislative leaders and Governor Evers negotiated a high-profile compromise package that included property tax relief, school aid increases, and elimination of taxes on tips and overtime income. While the State Assembly approved the proposal, it ultimately failed in the Senate after bipartisan opposition emerged. Three Republican senators joined Senate Democrats in voting against the bill, resulting in its defeat and ending the 2025-26 legislative session with agreement on several significant statewide issues.

## Attention Shifts to 2026 Elections.

With legislative business concluded, political attention is now turning fully toward the 2026 election cycle. All 99 State Assembly seats and half of the State Senate will appear on the November ballot. Additionally, Governor Evers' decision not to seek reelection has created

an open gubernatorial race that is expected to draw significant statewide attention.

Wisconsin's partisan primary election will be held August 11, 2026, followed by the general election on November 3. A significant number of legislators from both parties have also announced retirements or plans to pursue other offices, ensuring substantial turnover within the Legislature heading into the next session.

The following current state legislators have announced they are NOT running for reelection in 2026:

- Sen. Andre Jacque (R) SD-1
- Sen. Rob Hutton (R) SD-5
- Sen. Devin LeMahieu (R) SD-9
- Sen. Steve Nass (R) SD-11
- Sen. Van Wanggaard (R) SD-21
- Sen. Jesse James (R) SD-23
- Rep. Jessie Rodriguez (R) AD-21
- Rep. Robin Vos (R) AD-33
- Rep. Jenna Jacobson (D) AD-50 – Running for SD-17
- Rep. Dean Kaufert (R) AD-53
- Rep. Dave Murphy (R) AD-56
- Rep. Rob Brooks (R) AD-59
- Rep. Jerry O'Connor (R) AD-60
- Rep. Kevin Petersen (R) AD-57
- Rep. Rick Gundrum (R) AD-58
- Rep. Scott Allen (R) AD-82
- Rep. Robyn Vining (D) AD-13 – Running for SD-5
- Rep. Francesca Hong (D) AD-76 – Running for Governor

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# Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association Recognizes Five Scholarship Recipients

The Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association is proud to support the next generation of agricultural and rural leaders through its annual scholarship program. This year, five Wisconsin high school seniors were selected to receive \$1,000 scholarships as they pursue higher education at universities, technical colleges, community colleges, and other post-secondary programs.

The scholarship program recognizes students who have demonstrated a commitment to their education and who are preparing to make meaningful contributions to the agriculture industry and their communities.

**Joe Collins** of the Clinton Community School District was selected as a scholarship recipient. Collins is the son of Jeff and Kathy Collins and plans to attend the University of Wisconsin–Platteville, where he will study animal science and agricultural business.

**Keeley Everson**, daughter of Kylene and Mark Everson, graduated from Fennimore High School. She plans to attend Southwest Wisconsin Technical College to pursue a degree in agribusiness management.

**Mallory Gould** of Mineral Point High School is the daughter of Michael and Michelle Gould. She plans to attend Madison Area Technical College and pursue a career as a veterinary technician.

**Liv Lucas**, daughter of Greg and April Lucas and a graduate of Greenwood High School, plans to attend the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she will study animal science.

**Macy Mitchell**, daughter of Scott and Jolene Mitchell and a graduate of Wauzeka-Steuben High School, plans to attend Southwest Wisconsin Technical College to pursue a degree in nursing.

The Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association congratulates these outstanding students and wishes them success as they begin the next chapter of their educational journeys. Through the scholarship program, WCA remains committed to investing in young people who will help shape the future of Wisconsin's agricultural industry and rural communities.

# Selecting Replacement Heifers



Written by: Casey Lobdell, Regional Livestock Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension (Grant, Green, Iowa and Lafayette) and Beth McIlquham, Regional Livestock Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension (Crawford, La Crosse, Richland and Vernon)

Cattle inventory in the United States has hit a 75-year low. While producers out West may still experience drought in the coming season, Wisconsin producers may be looking to expand their herd. Selecting replacement heifers for your beef herd can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. For the heifers to become economically productive cows, they will typically need to produce at least six calves before they are culled, depending on input costs and feeder calf prices over the life of the cow. Choosing heifers that have the potential for longevity is financially smart. There are many tools and considerations that can aid you in your decision. Often you need to set priorities for your herd and operation before walking down the cow path.

Before selecting heifers or replacement females, producers should assess what is important to them and their herd. Each operation will have different goals based on their environment, resources available, and the current state of their cow herd. Evaluation of the current cow herd is important to gain insight on where the herd needs to improve. Heifers can impact your herd for many years to come.

At the very least, heifers that make the cut should have a desirable disposition and well-constructed feet and legs. Since reproduction is the most important factor for profitable beef production, the ability of that heifer to get pregnant on time is very important. Factors that affect her ability to conceive include nutrition and body condition score, genetics, and management factors, such as health protocols. Proper management is necessary, as good genetics won't make up for poor management.

Heifers that were born early in the calving season are more likely to breed on time. These heifers have had a bit more time to develop and begin cycling compared to heifers born later that year. For commercial producers retaining heifers, it may be beneficial to select heifers from good cows that have proven their productivity in the herd. These cows have demonstrated that they can stay in the herd and match the resources that are provided to them. Their offspring are likely to be similar and may fit into your herd nicely. Commercial producers may also want to consider crossbreeding to gain the value of heterosis.

In combination with goals, physical traits, maternal history, information such as health records and genetic information

can be helpful when choosing heifers to retain or purchase. Choosing replacement heifers from bulls with favorable expected progeny differences (EPDs), in combination with genomic testing on heifers, gives insight into genetic information that can be used when deciding who has a place in your herd. For more information on using genomics as a decision tool, read *Using Genomics as a Decision-Making Tool for Commercial Replacement* (<https://go.wisc.edu/2ztoq3>). For more information on EPDs, check out *Understanding EPDs and How to Use Them* (<https://go.wisc.edu/2z1y37>).

There is an opportunity cost to retain heifers out of your own herd. Each beef producer will be in a different situation and should evaluate if retaining or purchasing replacement animals will work best for their operation. To help determine if raising or purchasing replacement heifers will work best for you, check out the *Extension Beef Replacement Heifer Cost Spreadsheet* created by UW-Madison Extension livestock colleagues (<https://go.wisc.edu/lhyish>).

In conclusion, heifer selection on any beef operation is critical. Whether you are trying to improve the genetics of your herd or improve your bottom line, heifers are a cornerstone of that decision. Establishing goals and selecting heifers using physical traits, maternal history, health records, and genetic information can set you up for success.

## References:

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- University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension. (2026). *Key Considerations for Rebuilding Your Cow Herd*. <https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/articles/key-considerations-for-rebuilding-your-cow-herd/>

## Reviewed by:

- Bill Halfman, Beef Outreach Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension
- Ryan Sterry, Regional Livestock Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension (Chippewa, Dunn and Eau Claire)

# Wisconsin Beef Council & Beef Checkoff Celebrating 40 Years

Tammy Vaassen

Executive Director,  
Wisconsin Beef Council

I hope that June is finding you with healthy calves on the ground and green grass growing! As I think about the beautiful state we live in, this time of year is refreshing and invigorating to enjoy through so many lenses – calves running the pastures, grills in heavy use, and continued strong demand for the high-quality beef you're raising.



This September will mark the 40th anniversary of the Wisconsin Beef Council's (WBC) formation as an organization incorporated in the state of Wisconsin. Did you know that WBC originated as a council (committee) of the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association (WCA)? I thought we might use this article as a little walk-through history to showcase the relationship between WCA and WBC over the years. (\*Notes provided from documents found at the WBC office, if they are incorrect we ask for feedback. These notes are significantly reduced to fit the space. If you're interested in receiving more details, contact me at 608-833-9940 or tvaassen@beeftips.com.)

- ▶ **April 6, 1974:** At a WCA Board meeting Dick Vilstrup discussed the development of a Beef Promotion Council.
- ▶ **April 17, 1974:** WCA President John Craig presided at an organizational meeting of the Wisconsin Beef Council. The minutes read: "As a result of the resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the WCA on Feb. 15 to establish a Beef Promotional Fund from a deduction of 15 cents per head of cattle and 5 cents per head of calves under 300# sold, and a resolution passed at the annual meeting of Equity Co-op Livestock Sales Association to cooperate in such a deduction, the need for a Beef Promotion Council and a proposed budget is necessary."
  - » The makeup of the Council would include: 1 – Midwest, 1 – Equity, 1 – Milwaukee, 2 – meat packers, 1 – University of WI, 3 – WCA Executive board, 1 – Independents, 1 – WI Dept. of Agriculture, 1 – WI Freezer & Meat Processors.
- ▶ **May 30, 1974:** At a meeting in Dick Vilstrup's office, questions were raised as to what animals would be checked off. It was decided to cover all bovine animals, but be a voluntary program. All monies collected would be sent to the National Livestock and Meat Board (NLSMB.) They would keep 1/3 and return 2/3 to the WCA. A new target date was set for beginning the checkoff – September 1, 1974.
- ▶ **Dec. 5, 1974:** The first check from the Meat Board came for \$5,687.35. Initial advertising included radio and restaurant promotions. A news release was mailed asking for ideas to promote beef. The headline was "Beef Men Seek Your Ideas."
- ▶ **March 14, 1975:** A total of \$15,513.12 is now in the treasury. The formal name now became the "Wisconsin Beef Council." Promotions included radio, billboards, sausage point-of-purchase, and state fair exhibits.

- ▶ **1977 & 1980:** Referendums to organize a federal Beef Checkoff failed.
- ▶ **1978:** Current projects being funded included: magazine ads, Wisconsin Livestock and Meat Council sausage promotion, beef nutrition kits and beef cookoff. The slogan was "Beef – the food you're right to like." Nancy Thomas worked extensively with home economists.
- ▶ **Oct. 9, 1981:** Meeting to restructure the Beef Council, followed by a phone conference on 11/6/81. New structure established that designates dollar amounts (collected) required for seats: 1 - \$5,000; 2 - \$25,000; 3 - \$50,000; 4 - \$100,000. Based on dollars sent to the NLSMB the number of seats were as follows: 4 – Equity; 2 – Midwest; 2 – Milwaukee; 1 – Central; 1 – Freezer & Locker; 3 – WCA; 3 – Ex-officio
- ▶ **1984:** Bert Tuckey elected President of the WBC. National Cattlemen's Association working to put beef checkoff in 1985 Farm Bill.
- ▶ **1985:** Beef Promotion & Research Act written into 1985 Farm Bill. The Act authorized the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop a Beef Promotion and Research Order covering specifics of the program's operation. Making amendments to the Act requires U.S. congressional action and, ultimately, a producer referendum with a majority favoring the change.
- ▶ **Summer 1986:** Meeting to restructure the WBC. New seats are as follows: 7 – WCA; 4 – Equity ; 2 – Midwest ; 2 – Milwaukee; 1 – Central; 1 – WI CattleWomen; 1 – WI Meat Processors; 1 – Packer
- ▶ **Sept. 19, 1986:** The WBC Articles of Incorporation were signed by the state of Wisconsin. At the time, Bert and Leigh Tuckey ran checkoff operations from their kitchen.

WCA has retained 7 seats on the Wisconsin Beef Council board over the years, helping to guide the decisions of how the federal \$1/head Beef Checkoff from Wisconsin cattle is invested. Today, WCA leaders also contract with WBC staff to perform certain job functions for Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association. It has been a complimentary relationship as WCA leads public policy and producer education efforts, while WBC implements promotions and consumer outreach programs, altogether aiming to advance Wisconsin's beef industry.

We all know the acronym for TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More. I believe that is true for the leaders representing and guiding the boards of your states' beef organizations. I would personally like to thank the current and former board members for WCA and WBC for the commitment you all provide to Wisconsin's cattlemen and cattlegirls. Your leadership, dedication, and guidance over the years has and continues to show through the success of both organizations towards achieving their missions. To celebrate 40 years of collaboration and success, a reception event will be held later this year. Watch for more details to come soon, and let me know if you've got additional history to add or would like to receive a personal invitation to attend the reception.



## Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association

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