Cow Country Reporter

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News from your CEO

November is an eventful month and by the time you read this article we will have set our clocks back 1 hour on Nov. 2 and we went to the voting polls to do our civic duty, Nov. 4. Looking forward, we celebrate those that are and have given their service for this great country on Veterans Day, Nov. 11 and we give thanks for all our many blessings living in this great country on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27.

I hope those of you who have email got the "USDA Beef Industry Plan" that President Trump and USDA Secretary of Agriculture Rollins released in late October. Please read this document so you will have a clear understanding of what was said, not comments from the local coffee shop.

The market took a huge drop as a result of this announcement, but as we head into November it has turned positive again with less cattle available to turn out to winter grazing. Don't miss the Louisiana Grazing Lands Conference in Alexandria on December 5, 2025, hosted by LGL and LGLCI. For more information go to the Louisiana Grazing Land Conservation Initiative website Louisianaglci.org and click on events.

Keep in touch with your marketing agent and keep those new-born calves alive and growing. Sign up a new CPL member so they too can be part of an organization that supports the growth of the Louisiana cattle industry.

Dave Foster, CEO

Beef Imports to the Rescue?

By: Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Could beef imports from Argentina reduce beef prices in the U.S.?

Argentina is the sixth largest beef producing country and the fifth largest beef exporting country, accounting for roughly 6 percent of global beef exports. Argentine beef production is about 27 percent of total U.S. production. In recent years, Argentine beef exports have been growing with the majority of beef exports going to China along with Israel, the E.U. and the U.S.

Argentina is the ninth largest source of beef imports in the U.S., accounting for about 2.1 percent of total U.S. beef imports thus far in 2025. U.S. imports of Argentine beef have been growing in recent years (recovery in Argentina) and were up 41.7 percent year over year through July (the latest data available since the shutdown).

How much more beef can the U.S. import from Argentina?

It's not clear how much capacity to increase beef exports exists currently in Argentina. Domestic beef consumption in Argentina uses 70-75 percent of total beef production in the country. If, for example, the U.S. doubled imports over 2024 levels, it would likely mostly be at the expense of domestic consumption in Argentina or other export markets for Argentine beef. Such an increase in imports from Argentina would have a negligible impact on the total supply of beef in the U.S. market. In fact, if the U.S. took all of the projected 2025 Argentine beef exports (not likely), it would represent less than 2.5 percent of the total U.S. beef supply.

The Impact in U.S. beef markets

The majority of Argentine beef imports are lean processing beef used for ground beef production. This beef is quite similar to beef imported from Brazil (and most other import sources). Imports from Argentina are less than 10 percent of the imports from Brazil. Increasing imports from Argentina would have a very slight impact in offsetting the reduction in imports from Brazil expected because of the sharp increase in tariffs on Brazil. The impacts on beef imports from Brazil are not evident in the January -July import data and we have not had any updates since then. The August data should have been released in early October.

Record high cattle and beef prices are occurring despite record beef imports. Increased beef imports (mostly lean processing beef) partially offsets decreased nonfed beef production in the U.S., helping to moderate sharply higher ground

Beef Imports to the Rescue?

beef prices and increasing utilization of fatty trimmings from U.S. fed cattle. Argentina is a relatively minor source of beef imports and potential increases would not significantly change the overall supply of beef in the U.S. In short, it does not appear that increasing beef imports from Argentina would have any significant impacts on U.S. beef prices. At most, it might have a very slight (and probably undetectable) impact of moderating expected future increases in U.S. ground beef prices.

Cattle Markets React to Policy Uncertainty on Beef and Cattle Imports

By: James Mitchell, University of Arkansas, Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky & Josh Maples, Mississippi State University Extension

Feeder and Live Cattle futures have fallen sharply over the past 12 days. The CME December Live Cattle futures contract closed at $247.88 per cwt on October 16 but is trading today (October 27th) near $224 per cwt. The CME November Feeder Cattle futures contract closed at $380.95 per cwt on October 16 and is now trading below $339 per cwt. This period has included multiple limit-down days in the futures market. The goal of this article is to provide context for some of the key questions circulating during this market swing. We certainly don't claim to have definitive answers as the situation remains fluid and will continue to evolve.

Argentina Beef Imports

The market shock began on October 16, following President Trump's suggestion that there was a plan to lower beef prices. As more information emerged, it appeared that the proposal centered on increasing beef imports from Argentina. Specifically, the plan would expand the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) from 20,000 metric tons to 80,000 metric tons for Argentina beef, effectively quadrupling the volume of Argentina beef that could enter the U.S. market. Understandably, this announcement has caused considerable concern among market participants.

Could Higher Imports from Argentina Impact Beef Prices?

The short answer is: likely very little. The U.S. is already importing larger-than-normal volumes of beef due to low domestic production and historically low cattle numbers. Year to date through July, beef imports totaled 3.4 billion pounds, up 30% from the same period last year. The September World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) forecast 2025 U.S. beef imports at 5.4 billion pounds, or about 18.4% of total U.S. beef disappearance. The proposed TRQ increase for Argentina—an additional 60,000 metric tons—would account for less than 1% of total disappearance, even if fully utilized.

It is also important to recognize that "beef" is not a single product but a diverse portfolio of products serving different market segments. The U.S. imports primarily lean manufacturing beef used in ground beef production, while the domestic industry produces a larger share of grain-fed, high-quality cuts. As a result, imports tend to supplement the domestic ground beef market rather than directly compete in the U.S. grain-fed beef market. Both the volume and composition of imports are critical for assessing their impact on domestic beef prices and it's hard to see how either would drastically change overall volume or import composition in the United States.

Live Cattle Imports

Markets also had to react to news about a potential meeting this week between the U.S. and Mexico to discuss a possible reopening of the southern border to live cattle imports. The U.S.-Mexico border was first closed to live animal trade on November 2024 following a detection of New World Screwworm in Mexico and remains closed today. Between February and May 2025, when the border was briefly open, weekly feeder cattle imports from Mexico averaged 14,900 head—about 43% lower than the 2020-2024 weekly average.

If a hypothetical agreement were reached to reopen the border, it would likely occur gradually and involve limited entry. In addition, many of the cattle that would have been exported while the border was closed have already entered alternative marketing channels. Therefore, there is little evidence of a significant backlog of Mexican cattle awaiting import. Even if some inventories were available, a phased reopening would somewhat limit any increase in supply that could disrupt U.S. cattle markets.

Have the Fundamentals Changed?

To be clear, recent developments have certainly impacted cattle markets, but they have not materially changed the underlying fundamentals. The U.S. still faces historically tight cattle supplies and lower beef production. While beef cow slaughter has declined notably in 2025, there is little indication of widespread beef heifer retention. When herd rebuilding does begin, fewer animals will enter the beef supply chain in the near term, further tightening supplies. Beef supplies are tight now and will be tighter in 2026. Heifer retention is the key to longer term cattle and beef supply expansion and that is a multi-year process.

It is still too soon to determine the full impact of these market shocks on cash cattle markets. Prices for 500- to 600-pound steers were mostly 1% to 3% lower last week, with a few exceptions. Heavier feeder cattle prices also declined 1% to 3%. The CME Feeder Cattle Index was down 2.5%, or $9 per cwt from the previous week. Given that cattle futures were down sharply today (October 27th), continued weakness in cash markets is very possible this week. While this is more significant than a seasonal decline, it is worth noting that the prices of heavy feeders tend to decrease as we move through fall and approach winter. Regardless, the last couple of weeks have spoken to the importance of price risk management and stakeholders should pay close attention as things continue to develop.

The Nine Most Terrifying Words in the English Language

News of the White House's undefined plan to lower beef prices sent cattle markets lower last Friday.

By: Dennis Smith

In August of 1986, President Reagan held a press conference discussing the role of government in agriculture. He was against government interference in the agriculture markets. His famous quote was the nine most terrifying words in the English language: "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." At this moment, everyone in the beef industry should be terrified. The White House says they have a plan to lower beef prices. The comment sent feeder cattle futures limit down on Friday, Oct. 17, and the most active December live cattle contract closed more than 600 points lower.

In my opinion, President Trump is getting some really bad advice from his Cabinet. There is no way the government is going to force beef prices substantially lower. Details of the "plan" have yet to be released. Odds are high it will involve dropping the 50% tariff currently in place on beef imported from Brazil. This will force beef 90s lower to a

(continued on page 3)

degree which may allow ground beef prices to ease down from record highs. This, in turn, may allow primal beef end cuts to soften slightly, but it won't have any impact on middle beef cuts, which are the most expensive.

The "plan" could also cause beef cow prices to decline, encouraging fewer cows to come to market, actually reducing beef production somewhat. Regardless of what the plan is, the administration is not going to prevent beef production from declining sharply in 2026 and in 2027.

In my opinion, 30 years from now, the political history books will have chapters devoted to the unintended consequences of the Trump tariff time period. History should play an important role in developing and defining government policy. For example, in January 1980, when President Jimmy Carter slapped the Soviet Union with the grain embargo, his intent was to bring them to their knees. Instead, he demonstrated to the Soviets that America was not a reliable source for food. They immediately began investing in infrastructure and agriculture. Today, Russia dominates as the world's largest wheat exporter.

As live cattle and feeder cattle futures closed sharply lower on Friday, a strange thing happened. Packer bids to buy cattle did not waver but held strong. Packers needed cattle, and they paid $4 to $5 higher in the live market and from $8 to $10 higher in the dressed market to obtain slaughter inventory. The demand for U.S. beef remains strong. Last week's boxed beef volume of trade, at 760 loads, was the largest weekly volume going back to December 2023. Since early October, live cattle futures had been building a premium to the cash steer market. That premium structure disappeared quickly on Friday in response to the unknown plan by the government to lower beef prices.

With the cash steer tops last week established at $2.40, I'm expecting December live cattle futures to find solid buyer support near $2.40. This contract settled last Friday at $241.82. The sharply lower trade occurred on a huge spike in volume, the largest daily volume since the lows were established in early September. Two fundamental developments are expected as we proceed through the fourth quarter. The supply of 150+ cattle will drop off sharply, and holiday beef demand will surface. Looking further into 2026, anticipate that placements will continue to drop. If heifer retention begins in earnest, placements will drop substantially. I anticipate sharply higher cattle prices and beef prices during the first half of 2026, and we're positioning accordingly.

Dennis publishes his widely followed evening livestock wire daily. For a free 30-day trial to this information flow, send a request to dennissmith9805@gmail.com.

USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins Visits Louisiana as FSA Offices Reopen Amid Government Shutdown

Source: Louisiana Farm Bureau News

AMITE, La. — U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins visited a USDA Field Office in Louisiana Monday, marking her first stop at one of the 2,100 offices reopened nationwide following a presidential directive to resume operations during the ongoing government shutdown.

Rollins, who was sworn in as the 33rd Secretary of Agriculture about nine months ago, said she was determined to meet with Louisiana Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff and highlight the administration's efforts to support farmers and ranchers during the shutdown.

"Just about 48 hours ago, the president directed us at USDA to reopen every one of the 2,100 FSA offices around the country," Rollins said. "This is actually one of 2,000 offices around the country getting to sit down and meet with these wonderful people."

During the visit, Rollins met with Louisiana FSA state and local employees, praising their service and longevity. She noted that one staff member, Dewanna Pittman, has been with the program for 34 years, while others have worked between four and ten years.

"This isn't just a job. It isn't just you come clock in," Rollins said. "This is a service, and it's a passion, and it's a lifetime."

Rollins said the USDA pulled funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to reopen offices and continue operations, at least temporarily.

"The funding was pulled from our CCC fund and from my perspective and my understanding we are able to continue — obviously not forever but at least for the foreseeable future," she said. "Hopefully the Democrats stop this craziness and open the government. That's really the goal here — let's just get the government open."

Rollins noted that the reopening was critical for farmers currently harvesting crops and awaiting payments. "Without the checks that they're getting from this office behind me, they can't make their plans and plant for next year," she said. "It really did become a food supply issue that the president recognizes."

The secretary said about $3 billion in payments are now being distributed, with an additional $10 billion expected to move out to farmers through existing USDA programs by year's end. She added that an additional relief program for row crop producers impacted by trade disputes with China is being finalized but cannot be announced until the shutdown ends.

"These farmers are caught in the crosshairs of negotiations with China," Rollins said. "China has stopped purchase ordering for soybeans and a few of our other row crops. So we will have an additional program we're finalizing right now and waiting for the government to reopen."

Rollins also addressed recent concerns over potential imports of Argentinian beef following comments from President Trump. She said U.S. ranchers remain the backbone of the nation's beef supply, producing about 10 million of the 12 million metric tons consumed domestically each year.

"Argentina right now only ships in right around 20,000 metric tons," Rollins said. "Even under the best of circumstances, they could probably not get more than 50,000 or 60,000 metric tons. Of a total supply system of 12 million, that's little itty-bitty."

Rollins emphasized that any imported beef typically fills lower-end supply needs, such as ground beef for fast-food chains, and should not threaten U.S. cattle producers.

"At the end of the day, any imports that may come in come in at the bottom of that chain and shouldn't really affect our cattle ranchers as we move out," she said.

Before departing, Rollins praised the diversity of Louisiana agriculture — from dairy and cattle to row crops and strawberries — calling the visit "a blessing."

"My heart is going to stay here a little bit with these wonderful people," she said. "I want to thank them most of all."

When Should You Creep Feed?

Oklahoma State's Mark Johnson explains when creep feeding is a good option for fall calves and what makes the ideal feed for nursing calves.

By: Mark Z. Johnson

For fall calving cow herds, cool season grass pasture can offer nutritional supplementation to cows and high-quality creep grazing opportunity for calves. If the cool season grass you were counting on for fall-born calves is behind or non-existent as of now, consider creep feeding.

Ample research proves creep feeding will increase weaning weights with conversion efficiency ranging from 3 to 20 lb. of feed per pound of added weight gain. A summary of 31 experiments where calves had unlimited access to creep feed show the average increased calf weaning weight was 58 lb.

However, in commercial cow-calf operations, the value of added weight gain has not (historically), covered the added feed, labor and equipment needed. The exception would be when feed is exceptionally inexpensive and (or) when value of added weight gain is exceptionally high. As of now, feed is relatively inexpensive and the value of added weaning weight of calves (up to 600 lb.) is worth in excess $4/lb. (historically high).

When grazing conditions are good, high-quality, abundant forage results in very poor creep feed conversion. Likewise, the greater the plane of maternal nutrition, the poorer the conversion of creep feed to calf gain.

In Oklahoma State University fall-calving experiments, efficiency of creep feed conversion to calf gain is quite good because native range forage quality is low and cows are in a maintenance to negative energy balance (losing weight). Results have been around 4.5 to 5 lb. creep feed:gain when fall-calving cows are getting around 5 lb. of supplemental feed.

However, the more supplement the cow is fed, the poorer the creep feed conversion. Situations that reduce calf nutrient availability (low milk production, low quality forage, overgrazed pastures and thus low forage availability, drought, fall-calving, etc.), improves the efficiency of creep feeding.

Ideal Creep Feed

An ideal creep feed, designed for early stages of calf life, includes a balanced blend of neutral detergent fiber (NDF) and crude protein, allowing for both rumen development and lean tissue growth, plus additional energy (TDN) to help facilitate the growth. Crude protein concentrations should be between 14% and 16%, though protein requirements will vary depending on forage quality and calf performance goals.

Rapidly growing, young calves have a high requirement for protein. Young calves have limited rumen capacity and won't consume large quantities of feed, so nutrient density of the feed is key.

Most commercial creep feeds are pelleted for palatability and ease of handling.

If mixing your own ration:

1. Keep the feed dust-free and well-mixed to prevent sorting,
2. When using liquid ingredients, make sure they do not clog the feeder, and
3. Roll or coarsely crack grains (rather than finely grind) to reduce dust and potential for digestive upset.

Likewise, including an ionophore at an efficacious dose will enhance feed efficiency.

Over-conditioned calves that are marketed at weaning can lead to discounts. The longer calves are exposed to unlimited creep consumption and the lower the forage quality, the more they want to eat. If calves are fed free choice creep for 90 days or longer, there is a risk of over-conditioning. A high quality, limit fed creep feed now, could be an effective bridge to the cool season grass you expect to see later.

Managing your cattle operation as a business enterprise should always be based economics. Evaluating the current cost of inputs versus the value those inputs create is the only logical way to accurately assess profit potential.

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