

# Cow Country Reporter



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News from your CEO

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### News from your CEO

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This week or next you will be receiving your renewal letter for CPL via "snail mail" for July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026. Please update your contact information if you have any changes and thank you for your continued support!

The cattle market continues to move higher. Slaughter steer and heifers coming out of the feed yards brought \$235.00 cwt. in Iowa and Nebraska, the last week in May.

Slaughter cow prices climbed higher also, and feeder cattle made record breaking prices. Check with your marketing agent about the price for your good Louisiana calves again, it may be time to have some information meetings in your area. Let us know if we can assist the Director in your region by going to our website to see the region you are in. Keep those calves alive and growing..

*Dave Foster, CEO*

## FEEDLOT INVENTORY INCHES LOWER

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

The latest USDA Cattle on Feed report pegs feedlot inventories on May 1 at 11.376 million head, down 1.5 percent year over year. This is the sixth consecutive monthly decrease year over year in feedlot numbers though the decrease has been minimal thus far. Figure 1 shows that annual average feedlot totals are slightly lower recently (far right side) but have decreased little in the past 18 months or so.

April feedlot placements were down 2.6 percent year over year, about as expected. Feedlot placements have been variable, down four of the last six months and down a total of 3.6 percent compared to the same period one year ago. April feedlot marketings were down 2.5 percent year over year, also close to expectations. Feedlot marketings were down three of the previous six months, compared to last year, and decreased just 1.6 percent in total during the same six-month period. The result is a slower turnover rate that allows feedlots to maintain higher inventory levels despite decreased placements.

Feedlots have maintained inventories primarily because of two factors: continued heifer feeding and increased days on feed. The April quarterly breakdown showed that the heifer percentage of feedlot inventories dropped to the lowest level in five years but remains above the average of the past 30 years. Data from Kansas feedlots shows that days on feed (DOF) increased in mid-2023 with average DOF increasing by about ten days since. Heifer feeding and increased days on feed have masked declining feeder cattle numbers since mid-2023.

Figure 1. Cattle on Feed and Calf Crop

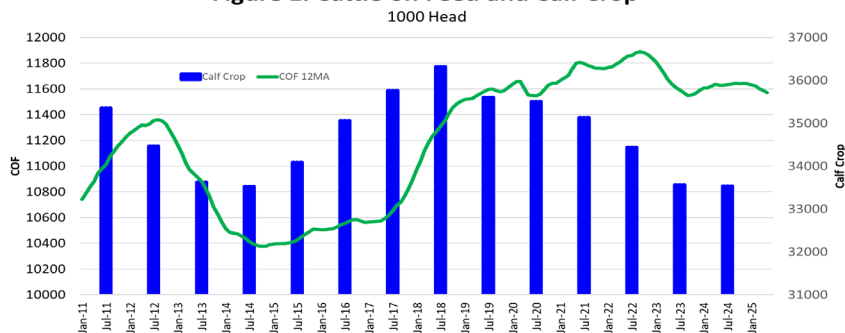


Figure 1 shows that the total calf crop has declined for the past six years, peaking cyclically in 2018. Feedlot inventories have remained relatively steady while the total calf crop declined. The current relationship between cattle on-feed and calf crop is a sharp contrast to a decade ago when feedlot inventories

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## FEEDLOT INVENTORY INCHES LOWER

dropped as the calf crop decreased to cyclical lows. From 2012-2014, average feedlot inventories decreased by 984,000 head. Since the peak in 2022, average feedlot inventories have fallen by just 315,000 head and have varied by a scant 94,000 head in the past 24 months.

There are indications that heifer feeding will decline in the coming months as heifer retention increases. Additionally, days on feed have likely reached a maximum, meaning that no additional gains are likely from slowing the feedlot turnover rate. In other words, the gains from slowing the turnover rate do not continue once the slowing is complete. Both of these factors mean that it is likely that feedlots will see more rapid decreases in average inventories in the coming months.

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## UPSIDE OF A SHORT CALVING SEASON

By: Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

There are several benefits to a short calving season including simplifying cow management, gaining efficiency of labor management, increasing weaning weight and improving uniformity/marketability of the calf crop. Collectively all these advantages lead to one positive potential impact: improved profitability. CattleFax survey data of cow-calf operations sorts participants into three groups: high, average and low profitability. The high profitability group had a shorter calving season with a higher percentage of cows calving in the first 45 days. The shorter calving season creates opportunities to gain efficiency in several areas of management and these operations were able to sell more pounds of while keeping expenses down.

Obviously, more calves born earlier in the calving season equates to more pounds at weaning. What is the value of a single cow calving one heat cycle earlier? If calves gain about 2 pounds a day from birth to weaning, in the current market with a pound of weaning weight valued in excess of \$3, the added 40 pounds of weaning weight is worth at least \$120 per cow. The added benefit of uniformity also improves marketability of your calf crop. Calf buyers prefer to buy load lots of uniform calves so they can be managed similarly. Calf crops with substantial weight variation will be discounted in the market place.

Address the following questions to achieve a shorter breeding season in 2025 and a shorter calving window next spring:

- 1 – Do you have ample bull to female ratios in each breeding pasture?
- 2 - What is the age of your bulls and the number of females they should be expected to cover?
- 3 – Are you managing your 2-year old pairs separate from your mature cows to insure proper development, body condition and potential to breed back quickly?
- 4 – Have all your bulls passed a breeding soundness exam prior to turn out?
- 5 - Is your cow herd in adequate body condition? Is supplemental feed needed?
- 6 – Have you considered an estrous synchronization protocol to tighten your breeding season?

*Reference: Calving Season Length Impacts. CattleFax Trends. Matthew McQuagge. Mid-May, 2025*

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## FIVE PRE-PASTURE TURNOUT TIPS

*Consider these important reminders before opening the pasture gate.*

By: Angie Stump Denton (Farm Journal)

Pasture turnout is an important time in a cow herd management calendar. It is critical to make sure both the forage and cattle are ready before opening the pasture gate.

Considering your cow herd, what should you consider before turnout? AJ Tarpoff, DVM and Kansas State University Extension veterinarian, shares his top five tips producers should consider before sending cattle to pasture this summer.

1. Perform Spring Herd Health Program. Tarpoff reminds producers the importance of doing bull breeding soundness exams before putting the bull to work. He also encourages producers to do pre-breeding vaccinations, consider synchronization options and plan for common pasture ailments such as foot rot and pinkeye.
2. Make a Plan for Internal/External Parasites. Now is the time to decide how you are going to tackle flies, ticks and internal nematodes. Aaron Berger, University of Nebraska beef systems Extension educator, reminds producers there are several options available to help control flies and to consider the option that works best for your management plan.
3. Establish Summer Mineral Program. Tarpoff encourages producers to prepare mineral feeders and calculate needs and delivery intervals.
4. Assess Forage and Fences. Tarpoff says it is important to walk fence lines and scout pastures to determine forage and water availability. "Be sure to check forage availability and make any stocking rate adjustments, if necessary," he says.
5. Check Cattle Identification. Be sure cattle are identified before turnout. This can include brands if required in your area or tags. Along with identification, Tarpoff shares these tips for protecting cattle from theft: lock gates and don't leave cattle penned up overnight in an easily accessible location. He also encourages producers to communicate with neighbors who share a fence line when turning out about what types of cattle are going and how the cattle are identified.

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## **FIVE PRE-PASTURE TURNOUT TIPS**

Ron Lemenager, Purdue beef specialist, reminds producers to watch for two potential health issues that can occur at grass turnout: grass tetany and bloat.

### **Minimize Grass Tetany Risk**

Early season lush pasture grasses are high in water content, potassium and soluble nitrogen, but low in magnesium and energy content. It should be noted that pastures containing legumes provide a grazing diet that is somewhat higher in magnesium.

“Grass tetany can be a problem, especially in older lactating cows that are less efficient in mobilizing magnesium from body stores,” Lemenager explains. “Feeding a high magnesium mineral for several weeks prior to turnout is a standard recommendation to minimize the incidence of grass tetany.”

He reminds producers magnesium, usually in the form of magnesium oxide, is not palatable. Therefore, it is important that mineral intake be monitored.

### **Watch for Bloat**

Lemenager says legumes are beneficial to diet quality — providing nitrogen for companion grasses and increased forage production — but lush legumes can cause bloat. As legumes advance in maturity, the risk for bloat does decrease.

He shares these recommendations to minimize the incidence of bloat:

- Prior to turnout, survey the pasture. Look for large areas in the pasture where legumes are the predominant forage. These areas seem to attract cattle and can exacerbate the bloat problem.
- Make sure cows are full of a dry forage, such as hay, at turnout to reduce the risk of immediately consuming a large meal of lush legumes.
- Don't turnout until the forages are dry. Wet forages (dew or rain) reduce the amount of saliva production as cattle consume and swallow forages. Saliva is important not only as a rumen buffer to control rumen pH, but also as a surfactant that can reduce the surface tension of stable gas bubbles (frothy mass) formed during rumen fermentation.
- Poloxalene containing supplements fed prior to turnout and during the early grazing season act as a surfactant to weaken the surface tension of the stable foam and reduce the risk of bloat.

Through following these strategies with accurate planning and preparation, pasture turnout can be stress free for both the producer and the cow herd.

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## **OFF ACT WOULD INCREASE TRANSPARENCY IN CHECKOFF PROGRAMS**

*Bill aims to reform agricultural checkoff programs by preventing misuse of funds for lobbying and increasing transparency in how they operate.*

By: Kristin Bakker, Digital Content Specialist, BEEF Magazine

Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) recently introduced the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act to protect agricultural producers by enforcing transparency in checkoff programs. Sens. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) cosponsored the legislation.

Under agricultural checkoff programs, which are overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers, producers, importers and other stakeholders for commodities like beef, pork, eggs, milk and soybeans pool resources to fund large-scale generic product marketing and research to help increase overall demand, without promoting a specific individual brand.

Checkoff marketing campaigns created slogans like “Got Milk?” and “Beef. It's What's for Dinner.” These campaigns are directed by multiple boards and are funded by checkoff dollars, which stakeholders pay through regular business activities, a news release from Lee pointed out.

Checkoff funds are prohibited from being used to influence legislation or government action, but Lee claims some checkoff programs have acted unlawfully in the past by partnering with lobbying groups, benefiting some producers at the expense of others. Instances of this behavior were uncovered in a 2012 USDA Office of Inspector General review, and Lee added that more recent audits by the Government Accountability Office revealed that USDA's oversight of checkoff programs still needs improvement.

His new bill aims to reform agricultural checkoff programs by addressing conflicts of interest, preventing misuse of funds for lobbying and increasing transparency in how these promotional programs operate.

The OFF Act would prohibit checkoff boards with assessment revenue of more than \$20 million per year from contracting with groups that influence government policy to carry out checkoff activities. This would exclude contracts with institutes of higher education for research, extension and education.

Checkoff board members and employees would be barred from engaging in any activities that could create a conflict of interest, including those that are anticompetitive, deceptive or disparage another agricultural commodity or product.

The bill increases transparency by requiring entities entering into contracts with checkoff boards to describe goods and services provided or costs incurred and provide accounting records quarterly – which the board must make available to the public within 30 days of receipt.

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## **OFF ACT WOULD INCREASE TRANSPARENCY IN CHECKOFF PROGRAMS**

Checkoff boards must make their budget and any funds distributed available for public inspection. They also would undergo periodic compliance audits by the USDA Inspector General at least every five years, the findings of which would be summarized in a report submitted to Congress and the U.S. Comptroller General for its own periodic audits.

“America’s farmers are being ripped off by federal checkoff programs that take farmers’ money and play favorites with who they serve,” said Lee. “These programs have a reputation for hurting farmers through financial fraud and deceptive practices. The OFF Act will implement accountability measures to cut waste, enforce transparency and ensure that our farmers get the services they pay for.”

Booker added, “America’s farmers and ranchers deserve accountability and transparency when it comes to how their checkoff dollars are being spent. Checkoff dollars too often get channeled to lobbying groups who advocate against the best interests of many of the farmers who are required to pay into the program. This bipartisan bill will prohibit conflicts of interest and anticompetitive practices in these checkoff programs and will ensure that these programs work better for our farmers and ranchers.”

“We must change the agricultural checkoff programs that put money in the hands of corporate lobbyists at the expense of farmers and ranchers,” Warren said. “The OFF Act will put commonsense safeguards in place to ensure accountability and transparency for our farmers.”

The OFF Act is endorsed by organizations representing more than 200,000 U.S. farmers and ranchers, Lee’s news release noted.



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