

# Cow Country Reporter



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News from your CEO

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We are in the last month of the first quarter of March already! Some important dates to observe this month are Daylight Savings Time starts (8th), St. Patrick's Day (17th), Spring Begins (20th and Palm Sunday (29th).

Spring calving season is in full swing, so keep those baby calves alive and growing because when you send them to market, they may be worth \$600.00 plus more than last year. The feeder and calf market continued higher through February, with a little weakness in the last week of February. The beef packers continue to try and buy finished cattle cheaper but as of the middle of February have not been able to accomplish

their goal. Not until the last week in February did we see slaughter steers and heifers \$5.00 cwt. lower from a high of \$249.00 cwt. to \$244.00 cwt. What will March bring? March is also the month that under normal conditions wheat grazers pull cattle off wheat by March 15 and sell them or send them to the feedlot. Not this year! Dry weather conditions coupled with high feeder prices saw many of these wheat cattle going to market in late January and into February.

CPL will have an Information Meeting in Region 5 at John Thompson's Barndominium on March 5. Keep those calves growing and enjoy the beginning of Spring!

*Dave Foster, CEO*

## LIVINGSTON PARISH WOODS FIRE BURNED OVER 200 ACRES

Source: WBRZ By: WBRZ Staff

LIVINGSTON — Crews worked to contain a woods fire near Highway 42 on Monday that reignited after crews got it under control on Sunday.

According to Livingston Parish fire officials, the fire was under control late Sunday night, with a few hot spots near the roadway still blowing smoke. Officials said the fire burned more than 200 acres before being extinguished.

However, due to the windy weather conditions, the fire previously extinguished along Gum Swamp Road erupted into several small fires on Monday. The fires prompted the road closure as crews with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry worked to regain control.

Fire crews and the Department of Forestry had created a fire line by carving out a line in the ground and removing flammable material like vegetation to contain the fire.

"Today is what we call a rekindle from yesterday. Somewhere it jumped the fire line and jumped the road today with the high winds, and it flared back up again," Livingston Parish Fire District 7 Chief Jerry Brook said.

Small fires were popping up, with much of the ground in the affected areas turning black from the fire.

"We're going to be monitoring it between us, and the forestry will be monitoring it tonight and tomorrow, and hopefully the winds will lay down, and it won't flare up again," Brook said.

The renewed flames come as large forest fires burned through parts of Lacombe on Sunday, forcing I-12 to shut down for at least three hours. According to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the fire along I-12 in St. Tammany Parish has since been contained, though crews remain onsite to monitor the area.

Louisiana Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain urged residents to use extreme caution.

"Please don't light that match. Pay attention to the burn bans, which are in multiple parishes, but also pay attention to the National Weather Service. When there's a red flag warning, do not burn anything," Strain said. "A significant number of these fires are caused because someone will light a brush pile and then leave it unattended, and even attended, with a 35-mile-an-hour wind, it will push forward."

Strain pointed to the rapid spread of the St. Tammany Parish fire as an

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## LIVINGSTON PARISH WOODS FIRE BURNED OVER 200 ACRES

example of how dangerous conditions have been.

“What happened in St. Tammany Parish actually jumped the interstate. If you think about that width, that’s more than a football field, and it was pushed by very high winds,” he said. “So please, everyone, exercise caution and don’t light that match. We’ll get through this together.”

He added that the weekend’s fire activity was significant compared to annual averages.

“If you look at the overall number, the number of fires we had over the weekend is about 6% of our yearly average. The amount of acreage that was lost was almost 10% of our yearly average,” Strain said.

To combat the flames, the department has mobilized specialized equipment and crews across the state.

“We mobilize our units, we have about 130 of those that are large bulldozers with special engines, special radiators, special cabs, special plows that are sent out on these large units,” Strain said. “At the same time, we’ll be monitoring fires from overhead. Our aerial division is working with our ground division to help them stay out of harm’s way and to help coordinate the fires.”

The Livingston fire was one of 34 wildfires that erupted across the state Sunday.

WBRZ learned that the area along Gum Swamp Rd. where the fires happened, is a popular spot for hunters.

One of those hunters, Bryson Martinez, says that this was not the first time a fire has happened in that area.

“It’s probably the third time it’s caught on fire. (The last time) It was last year, actually, right here on the same road,” Martinez said.

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## AFTER THE FIRE, THE NEED FOR FEED, FENCE AND PRAYERS

*Here are resources for those looking to donate to ranchers recovering from recent wildfires in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.*

By Angie Stump Denton

Wildfires plagued the Plains last week from southern Kansas into Oklahoma and Texas. Hundreds of thousands of acres of grass are now burned to sand.

The Ranger Road Fire, which started in Oklahoma and made its way into southern Kansas, to date has burned more than 283,000 acres and is 65% contained as of Monday morning, according to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

The Oklahoma Forestry Services reports moderated fire weather over dormant fuels resulted in a downtick in wildfire activity over the weekend, allowing firefighters to improve the containment of recent large fires.

“Conditions also supported opportunity to execute burn plans for prescribed fires,” the report says. “If you engaged in prescribed burning, controlled burns or pile burns over the weekend, please ensure that fire perimeters are mopped up and secured ahead of increasing fire weather concerns Tuesday through the remainder of the week.”

The wildfires have left a path of heartbreak and devastation. From the loss of livestock and homes, barns and shops to pastures and fence, the damage is hard to fathom.

Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur visited Oklahoma producers impacted by the wildfires on Thursday. “Please pray for our farmers and ranchers and our first responders who continue to battle challenging fires and weather,” she says.

Dr. Randall Spare, Ashland Veterinary Center Inc., says nine years after the losses resulting from the Starbuck Wildfire — still the largest, most extensive wildfire in Kansas history — many of the same ranchers have been affected by the Ranger Road Fire.

Spare explains the wildfire was unstoppable with little farmland or breaks to get ahead of the fire plus the extreme wind. The fire started near Beaver, Okla., at 11 a.m., and he reports many ranchers in the path were moving cattle by noon. He says the highest losses occurred where there were no nearby wheat fields or safe pasture alternatives for the cattle.

“When you have contiguous grass for 90 miles, and the fire line was 90 miles long, from Beaver, Okla. to Protection, Kan., and it was moving 70 miles an hour, it’s hard to get in front of it,” he says.

He also explains because of the good moisture in 2025 and good stewardship of the land, there was a lot of tall, dense forage to fuel the fire.

“Many of the best stewards — those who don’t overgraze and stockpile grass for calving and drought management — actually experienced some of the worst damage,” he explains. “Because they’ve done a good job of managing their grass and have forage to eat in the spring of the year before the growing season starts to calve on, they experienced some of the greatest damage.”

Spare says the Ranger Road Fire took the same path as the Starbuck Fire, but it did not burn as many acres in Kansas — about one-third less in comparison.

“The good thing is it did not go north of Ashland. It’s five miles south of Ashland before it starts and not near the acreage burned,” he summarizes. “Since it isn’t like the Starbuck Fire, we have an opportunity as neighbors to help neighbors, whereas before we couldn’t do that because we were all affected.”

He predicts producers in Kansas lost 1,000 to 1,100 head. He adds there will continue to be more loss as producers evaluate cattle condition.

“One of the biggest damage is feet,” he explains. “The walls of their hooves start to fall off due to the fire. And sometimes that doesn’t show up for five days.”

To read the full article, click here: [https://www.drovers.com/news/industry/after-fire-need-feed-fence-and-prayers?utm\\_medium=email&\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-\\_d7eYdsRbYi1yFk7akFQuKzBWV9kU1mq5XCDBSxKRraSoX1GcG6nfba\\_KxApE2am\\_mcJWPF2LibOtlNdARTosEe5t\\_ow&\\_hsmi=405148531&utm\\_content=405148531&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://www.drovers.com/news/industry/after-fire-need-feed-fence-and-prayers?utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_d7eYdsRbYi1yFk7akFQuKzBWV9kU1mq5XCDBSxKRraSoX1GcG6nfba_KxApE2am_mcJWPF2LibOtlNdARTosEe5t_ow&_hsmi=405148531&utm_content=405148531&utm_source=hs_email)

## CATTLE MARKET PUSHES HIGHER AND CATTLE ON FEED UPDATE

By: Josh Maples, Mississippi State University Extension

Cattle prices have pushed higher during the first few months of 2026. Five-weight steer average prices in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Kentucky all topped \$450 per cwt last week. The weekly 5-market average for fed steers was \$246.91. These are each record-high prices and sharply above year-ago levels. Cull cow and bull prices are also at or near record highs.

The 2026 CME feeder cattle futures contracts have regained strength after dropping during Fall 2025. May 2026 feeder cattle futures are not back to the peak from October when price topped \$370 but are sharply higher than they were in late November when the contract price dipped below \$300. The May 2026 CME Feeder Cattle contract closed Monday near \$358 per cwt. The September 2026 contract is near \$355 per cwt. For historical reference, the highest level any feeder cattle contract reached during 2014-2015 was \$241.

There is still much optimism for 2026 cattle prices amid tight supplies and strong beef demand. The latest USDA World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) forecasts an expected improvement in cattle prices during 2026. The latest WASDE estimate is for fed cattle prices to average \$240 per cwt during 2026, up from \$224.37 in 2025.

The latest USDA Cattle on Feed report was released on Friday and showed feedlot inventory at 11.5 million head as of February 1st, a 1.8 percent decline from a year ago. Placements of cattle into feedlots during January totaled 1.74 million head, which was 4.7 percent below a year ago. There were 1.6 million head of cattle marketed during January, which was a 13 percent decline from a year ago. The placement and marketing data were well anticipated ahead of the report. The tighter supplies of cattle continue to show through in the feedlot data. This report marked the 15th consecutive month of declining total cattle on feed.

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## CASH CATTLE PRICES SOAR TO RECORD HIGHS

*Feeders pushed cash cattle bids from \$245 to \$248-249 per hundredweight after packers offered steady prices Friday.*

By: Abby Greiman, Livestock Market Advisor, Ever.Ag

Cattle feeders continue to look for more blue sky a week after setting new all-time highs in the 5 Area Weekly Weighted Average Cash price. Cash traders kept activity quiet throughout the week until Friday, when packers began bidding \$245 per hundredweight in all regions, steady with the bottom side of last week's trade in the north and \$1 lower than last week's trade in the south. Feeders rejected those bids, pushing the price up to \$248 in the north and \$249 in the south. Packers showed less willingness to chase cattle last week than they typically do.

Cash trade has also been strong in the feeder cattle market, as the feeder cattle index set new all-time highs at the end of last week. The index rose to \$377.37 per hundredweight, \$0.86 above the previous high.

After the President's Day holiday on Monday, the live cattle market opened higher on Tuesday following strong cash trade late last Friday. Wednesday and Thursday brought back and forth action, and Friday ultimately reversed some of the early week gains and filled Tuesday's opening gap, as cash trade once again mostly held out until after market close. Ultimately, Tuesday's strength created week-over-week gains, as the live cattle front month February gained \$3.50 per hundredweight, and the April through August contracts were up \$1.25 to \$1.375. Feeder cattle followed a similar pattern, with front month March up \$1.875 on the week, while the April through September contracts were up \$0.775 to \$1.60. Volume remained light in both live and feeder cattle contracts throughout the week.

On the meat side of fundamentals, seasonal trends continue to persist. The cutout moved mostly sideways through the week, with the spot Choice up \$2.23 per hundredweight on the week and the spot Select down \$2.68. The rib continues finding support, while the end meats remain weaker. Packers reduced kills even more last week; the total came in at 516,000 compared to 541,000 the prior week and 565,000 last year. We have not seen non-holiday weekly kills this light since the spring of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Packers are working to prevent margins from sliding further, hoping they can wait out the toughest seasonal period of demand.

The February Cattle on Feed report came out on Friday and matched pre-report expectations. Cattle on feed as of February 1 totaled 98.2% of last year, compared to the average trade guess of 98.4%. Feeders placed 95.3% as many cattle as last January, compared to the average estimate of 96.0%. Feedlots marketed 87.0% as many cattle as a year ago, right in line with the estimate. January 2026 had one fewer business day compared to 2025, which partly explains

the large difference in the marketings number. However, with the extremely small kills that we have seen over the past few weeks, I expect marketings to continue running well below year ago. This will moderate the supply of feedlot cattle in favor of the packer and could slow the cash rally we've seen lately.



## TIGHTER SUPPLIES AND BORDER CLOSURES: A SNAPSHOT OF TODAY'S CATTLE FEEDING INDUSTRY

*U.S. feedlot inventory hits 11.5 million as the closure of Lubbock Feeders signals growing pressure from border disruptions and declining cow herd numbers.*

By Angie Stump Denton

The U.S. cattle feeding industry is experiencing a period of tighter supplies with the feedlot inventory on Feb. 1 reported at 11.5 million. Historically tight domestic supplies and a disrupted Mexican cattle supply chain continue to cause havoc for cattle feeders.

The recent announcement that Lubbock Feeders, a 50,000-head capacity yard in Texas, will cease operations highlights the growing pressure on the sector.

According to EverythingLubbock.com, the decision follows a series of economic and regulatory challenges that have significantly impacted operations.

The article reports typically between 60% and 70% of the yard's cattle inventory originated from Mexico. With the U.S.-Mexico border closed due to the threat of New World screwworm, the feedlot has lost its critical supply chain.

The feedlot plans to finish feeding out its remaining cattle currently on-site before ceasing operations. According to the article, management hopes the property itself will remain in agricultural use, preserving at least part of its legacy.

"Unfortunately, it's not really a surprise," says Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University livestock marketing specialist. "Tighter feeder supplies are squeezing feedlots more and more. Given that this feedlot depended so heavily on Mexican feeders, it really puts them in a bind. Also, they are located pretty close to the city of Lubbock, so I suspect they faced growing pressure and environmental concerns."



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