



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

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# NEWSLETTER

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## **USDA Seeks Input on Revisions to Beef Grading Standards**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is seeking public input on possible revisions to the U.S. Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef to adjust for recent improvements and trends in animal raising and feeding. AMS is also seeking input on a review of beef instrument grading.

The principal official USDA quality grades for young cattle and carcasses are Prime, Choice, Select, and Standard. Significant changes (such as grass fed versus grain fed feeding regimens, instrument grading, management and export requirements) have taken place in the beef industry since the current grade standards were adopted in 1997. AMS is seeking input from cattle producers, food processors, the public and other sources before revising the grades to better reflect the characteristics of meat that is available for Americans to purchase.

Yield grade, an important tool for determining value of both live cattle and beef carcasses, but the beef yield grade standard and equation was developed 50 years ago. Changes that have affected the quality of beef have similarly affected carcass yield, and AMS is seeking input for improving the yield grade equation.

AMS is also requesting comments on a review of the USDA program for beef instrument-grading that was conducted by the American Meat Science Association (AMSA) in response to a report issued by USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG). The beef grading instrument uses elements of the U.S. Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef.

Comments on revising the Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef and on the beef instrument grading review are due no later than Nov. 13, 2014. Find more information, as well as details for submitting comments, at <http://tinyurl.com/beef-grading-standards>.

## **Attorney General Abbott Opposes EPA Proposal to Regulate "Ditches"**

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott earlier this week released the following statement on proposed federal regulations that unlawfully claim the EPA's Clean Water Act authority extends to stock tanks, small ponds and even dry ditches:

"The EPA has no authority to regulate dry ditches and stock tanks on private property – but that is exactly what the Obama Administration is trying to achieve under new rules proposed by the EPA and the Corps of Engineers. First, the EPA has attempted to regulate 'emissions' from schools, churches and apartment buildings, and now they are claiming they can micromanage dry ditches on private property. So today we are beginning the first step in the process of challenging these proposed regulations, which are unlawful and exceed the EPA's authority to regulate navigable waters."

Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA only has authority to regulate "navigable waters." Under new regulations proposed by the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers, the Obama Administration is proposing to dramatically expand the EPA's regulatory authority by claiming that "navigable waters" includes solitary ponds on private property and even what the EPA's own proposal refers to as "ditches."

On Tuesday, Attorney General Abbott submitted formal comments to the EPA and the Corps of Engineers opposing the proposed regulations and explaining that the EPA is attempting to regulate private property that clearly falls outside the agency's jurisdiction. Read Texas Attorney General Abbott's letter to the Environmental Protection Agency at <http://tinyurl.com/abbott-letter>.

TCFA urges you to help "Ditch the Rule" by submitting comments to EPA and the Corps opposing the proposal. Simply go to <http://tinyurl.com/wotus-comments>, fill in your contact information and click submit to pull up prepopulated comments that can be personalized with your thoughts or sent as is.

## **HPWD Board Adopts Rules and Management Plan**

At their regularly scheduled August board meeting, the Board of Directors of the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 (HPWD) approved water conservation rules and a 10-year amended Management Plan outlining locally controlled goals and activities of the district.

“West Texans have always pulled together to find solutions when issues arise. We’re proud to see our city and rural constituents all working together to make the best use of water in our aquifers,” says HPWD Board President Lynn Tate of Amarillo. New rules were developed over an 18-month period in which water users were encouraged to offer input.

“We visited with several hundred individuals throughout the District. Our intent has always been to protect water rights while instituting realistic approaches to water conservation,” says Board Vice President James Powell of Lubbock.

“We have appreciated the time spent by people who were willing to attend our meetings or offer their opinions by email and phone calls. No doubt there will still be questions about some of the finer details moving forward,” Tate says.

He added that the HPWD Board of Directors will be holding county advisory committee meetings and visiting with interested individuals to answer questions. In addition, a question and answer page will soon be posted on the HPWD website. Visit [www.hpwd.com](http://www.hpwd.com) to see the complete rules document and the amended District Management Plan.

## **GAO Report Finds Fault with EPA’s Regulatory Impact Analyses**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on Monday concluding that information incorporated into EPA’s Regulatory Impact Analyses (RIA) of proposed rules lacked transparency. Additionally, the GAO found that the agency did not always monetize the costs and benefits of proposed actions and that the EPA had estimated effects of its regulations on employment by, in part, using a study that is more than two decades old.

“Without improvements in its estimates, EPA’s RIAs may be limited in their usefulness for helping decision makers and the public understand these important effects,” the GAO concluded.

The report examined seven EPA regulations designated as “major rules,” those with an annual economic impact of \$100 million or more. The GAO examined EPA’s analyses for each rule against 2003 guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that lays out best practices for how agencies should evaluate the costs and benefits of rules making their way through the federal pipeline.

“Specifically, the information EPA included and presented in the RIAs was not always clear,” the report found. “According to OMB guidance, RIAs should communicate information supporting regulatory decisions and enable a third party to understand how the agency arrives at its conclusions.”

Two of the rules examined were the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS 2) and the Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC). In regard to the RFS2 RIA, the GAO report concludes the EPA explained the need for the proposed rule – to assess the projected impacts of the renewable fuel volumes established through the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 – but did not describe the problem the rule intended to address and failed to explain the costs, benefits and other economic effects included in its accounting statement. For both the SPCC and RFS2 RIA, the GAO determined that EPA did not present information for a range of alternatives to the proposed rule, though EPA maintains that the information was included in a previous RIA for SPCC and was not justifiable in the RFS2 case.

The report recommends that EPA take steps to improve the agency’s adherence to the existing government guidance, but also that the OMB clarify the best way to apply that practice to the process of estimating costs and benefits of environmental regulations. The report is available at [www.gao.gov/assets/670/664872.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664872.pdf).

## **USDA Announces New Food Safety Procedures Related to Ground Beef**

Earlier this week, USDA announced new procedures that will allow the agency to trace contaminated ground beef back to its source more quickly, remove it from commerce and find the root cause of the incident to prevent it from recurring. Under the new procedures, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will conduct immediate investigations at businesses whose ground beef tests positive for E. coli O157:H7 during initial testing and at suppliers that provided source materials. Traceback investigations will begin as soon as FSIS receives a presumptive positive result and the grinding facility can provide supplier information.

As part of the traceback investigation, FSIS will review establishment records to determine whether the grinding or supplying establishment’s food safety system experienced a breakdown. The agency will also

determine whether the supplying establishment shipped product that may be contaminated to other grinding facilities or further processors. If so, FSIS will take steps to have that product removed from commerce.

The new traceback procedures will be fully implemented on Oct. 14, which is 60 days after publication of the new program in the *Federal Register*, which can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/fed-reg-grnd-beef>. FSIS estimates that dozens more recalls may occur once these new protections are in place.

### **FDA Finds Positive and Negative Trends in Antimicrobial Resistance in Bacteria Isolated From Humans, Retail Meats and Food Animals**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released its National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) 2011 Executive Report on Monday showing both increasing and decreasing antimicrobial resistance trends. The annual NARMS Executive Report focuses on resistance to antibiotics that are considered important in human medicine as well as multidrug resistance (described as resistance to three or more classes of antibiotics).

Under the NARMS program, samples are collected from human, food producing animals and retail meat sources, and tested for certain bacteria, specifically non-typhoidal *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *Enterococcus*, to determine whether such bacteria are resistant to various antibiotics used in human and veterinary medicine. The report also includes data on *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) found in retail meats and chickens. Key findings from the NARMS 2011 Executive Report include:

- Eighty-five percent of non-typhoidal *Salmonella* collected from humans had no resistance to any of the antibiotics tested.
- In people, the five-drug resistance pattern “ACSSuT” (resistance to ampicillin, chloramphenicol, streptomycin, sulfonamide and tetracycline) in *Salmonella* Typhimurium has declined to 19.5 percent in 2011 from its peak in 1997 at 35.1 percent.
- During its 16-year history, NARMS has found *Salmonella* resistance to ciprofloxacin, one of the most common antibiotics to treat *Salmonella* infections in humans, to be very low (less than 0.5 percent in humans, less than 3 percent in retail meat, and less than 1 percent in animals at slaughter).

Monitoring antimicrobial resistance through NARMS is an important component of the overall effort to minimize antimicrobial resistance and promote appropriate and judicious use of antimicrobial drugs in both humans and animals. Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/fda-anti-res>.

### **Calif. Antibiotic Resistance Bill Goes to Governor**

The California Legislature has sent two bills to the governor that would prohibit the use of antibiotics in farm animals as growth enhancers and would establish hospital programs to ensure responsible use of antibiotics in humans, *Meatingplace* reports.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Dianne Feinstein and Kirsten Gillibrand asked the Food and Drug Administration in July for more information on how its recently released policies will curb the overuse of antibiotics in food animal production and what additional steps the agency will take if overuse continues. FDA's recent policies call for pharmaceutical companies to voluntarily remove from their labels the use of antibiotics for growth promotion in animals. The agency also has proposed a rule that would require producers to essentially get a prescription from their veterinarians to obtain nearly all antibiotics.

Approved on a 33-0 vote by the Senate, SB 835 would allow antibiotics to be sold for use in livestock only for medical reasons. For the first time, the antibiotics could be administered only with a prescription and under veterinary oversight. Find the story at <http://tinyurl.com/calif-antibiotics>.

### **Decreased Membership on Beef Promotion Board**

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced on Monday a final decision to decrease membership on the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board from 103 to 100 members. The law authorizing the board requires the board's size to change with shifts in cattle inventory levels.

Originally, the data called for a loss of two seats in Texas. However, comments received with the proposed rule brought up an unusual circumstance in Texas. A previous drought in the area led to a reduction in cattle numbers, but increased precipitation has allowed farmers to begin rebuilding their herds. By the time the reapportionment takes effect with the 2015 board, Texas cattle numbers will warrant the loss of only one seat.

Domestic cattle producer representation on the board decreased from 96 to 94, and importer representation decreased from seven to six. The decrease is based on requirements of the Beef Promotion and Research Order, authorized by the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985. The Order provides for a review of geographic distribution of U.S. cattle inventories and the volume of imported cattle, beef, and beef products at

least every three years and not more than every two years. Board membership then must be reapportioned accordingly.

### **BPI to Hire Workers, Source Beef Trim at Kansas Plant**

Beef Products Inc. announced Monday it plans to begin collecting fresh beef trimmings at its Garden City, Kans., location, in conjunction with the Tyson Foods production operations there, in support of its current Dakota City, Neb., facility which manufactures lean finely textured beef, *Meatingplace* reports.

The Garden City facility will operate two shifts of fresh beef trimmings collection starting Aug. 18 and plans to hire 40 to 45 full-time employees. The Garden City plant was one of three BPI plants shuttered in March 2012 when demand for the LFTB product dwindled after a spate of media and social media stories about the product. The product was never unwholesome or unsafe.

At the time of its closure, the Garden City plant employed 236 workers. Plants in Amarillo, Texas (207 workers) and Waterloo, Iowa (216 workers) were closed at the same time and remain closed.

“BPI continues to experience growth and remains confident this growth will continue. Although business conditions are not yet at the point where we can resume lean beef production operations in Garden City, this is certainly a step in the right direction,” says Craig Letch, BPI’s director of food quality & food safety. “As the global demand for quality lean beef continues to rise, BPI is ready to meet that demand by providing consumers high quality, wholesome, safe and nutritious lean beef, just as we have done for decades.”

Read the full story at <http://tinyurl.com/bpi-kan>.

### **TCFA Feedyard Technician Program**

The Feedyard Technician Program is a joint effort between TCFA, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) with the purpose of preparing youth through knowledge and skill to help build the future workforce of the fed beef industry.

The program offers two distinct career paths: Machinery Operation, Maintenance and Repair in the fall and Cattle Handling and Care in the spring. Students enrolled in the program must first have the training required to be accepted and then complete a hands-on training, a written exam and an interview to complete the program.

The first part of the upcoming Machinery Operation, Maintenance and Repair training will be held Sept. 23 and 24 at Warren Cat in Amarillo. Skills covered in this training include skid loader and wheel loader operation, inspection and maintenance; welding techniques, setup safety and shut down; as well as oxyacetylene torch, cutting methods, setup safety and shut down.

The second and last phase of this training will be held Oct. 21 at WTAMU where they will take the written exam and participate in an interview before receiving their certificate of completion, which is meant to be able to present to feedyards when trying to gain employment.

For more information about this program, contact Brady Miller at [brady@tcfa.org](mailto:brady@tcfa.org).

### **AgriLife Extension Hosts Stocker Cattle Workshop**

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will conduct a Stocker Cattle Workshop at 6 p.m. Aug. 28 at the Happy Community Center in Happy. Topics will include nutritional management of incoming stocker calves and management strategies that affect the value of gain; vaccines and treatment protocols on incoming cattle; a cattle market outlook; grazing insurance products; and a discussion on feed products. Those planning to attend this meeting are asked to RSVP by Aug. 25. The cost to attend is \$10, and a meal will be provided. For more information on the program, visit <http://tinyurl.com/agri-life-cattle>.

### **Feeding Quality Forum**

The 2014 Feeding Quality Forum will be held in Amarillo on Thursday, Aug. 21. A great lineup of topics are in store including a feedstuffs market update; feedyard manager forum on employee retention and hiring; consumer perceptions; feed sample testing and how high quality cattle are affecting the markets. Register today at [www.FeedingQualityForum.com](http://www.FeedingQualityForum.com).

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