



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

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# NEWSLETTER

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Volume 48, Number 36

September 5, 2014

## **Low-Carb Over Low-Fat for Weight Loss and Cardiovascular Health**

A major new clinical study funded by the National Institutes of Health and published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* reveals that people who avoid carbohydrates and eat more fat lose more body fat and have fewer cardiovascular risks than people who follow the low-fat diet that has been pushed for decades.

At the conclusion of the yearlong study, individuals in the low-carb group lost an average of 7.7 pounds more than the low-fat group with significantly greater reductions in body fat than the low-fat group. While the low-fat group did lose weight, they appeared to lose more muscle than fat.

Those in the low-carb group saw markers of inflammation and triglycerides fall, and their HDL, the so-called good cholesterol, rose more sharply than it did for people in the low-fat group. The low-carbohydrate diet group ultimately did so well that they managed to lower their Framingham risk scores, which calculate the likelihood of a heart attack within the next 10 years. The low-fat group on average had no improvement in their scores.

Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University said the research suggests that health authorities should pivot away from fat restrictions and encourage people to eat fewer processed foods, particularly those with refined carbohydrates.

To find more on this study, visit <http://tinyurl.com/low-carb-over-low-fat>.

## **Register Today and Save!**

We hope you plan to attend the 2014 TCFA Annual Convention in Oklahoma City. Save yourself some money by registering today! Go to <http://tinyurl.com/tcfa-conv-reg> or call the TCFA office to register over the phone before **Sept. 25** and save \$50. You still have a chance to win the drawing for a \$500 Cabela's gift card if you send in your registration form by **Sept. 18!**

Don't forget to make your hotel reservations at the Renaissance Hotel using this direct link or phone number, and request the Texas Cattle Feeders Convention block: <http://tinyurl.com/renaissance-hotel-convention> or 1-800-468-3571. This room block expires **Sept. 25**. TCFA also has a block of rooms reserved at the Skirvin Hotel, which expires **Sept. 23**. If you would rather reserve a room at the Skirvin, use this direct link or phone number: <http://tinyurl.com/skirvin-hotel-convention> or 1-888-490-6546.

## **Livestock Producers Urged to Enroll in Disaster Assistance Program by Oct. 1**

Producers who have suffered eligible disaster-related losses are encouraged to act to secure assistance by Sept. 30, as congressionally mandated payment reductions will take place for producers who have not acted before that date. Producers should contact their Farm Service Agency (FSA) office as soon as possible.

The Budget Control Act requires USDA to implement reductions of 7.3 percent to the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) in the new fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, 2014, but producers who schedule an appointment with their FSA office by Oct. 1 will not see reductions in the amount of disaster relief they receive.

As an alternative to visiting the FSA office, an online registration has been developed to enable producers to put their names on an electronic list before the deadline to avoid reductions in their disaster assistance. To place a name on the LFP list online, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster-register](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster-register).

The Livestock Indemnity Program, the Tree Assistance Program and the Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program Frost Freeze payments will also be cut by 7.3 percent on Oct. 1, but applications for these programs must be fully completed by Oct. 1.

The Livestock Forage Disaster Program compensates eligible livestock producers who suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire between Oct. 1, 2011 and Dec. 31, 2014. Producers forced to liquidate their livestock may also be eligible for program benefits; however, feedyards are not eligible to participate in the program. View fact sheets for the 2014 Farm Bill and LFP program at [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill) and <http://go.usa.gov/5JTk>.

## **U.S. Surface Transportation Board Urged to Take Immediate Action on Rail Shipments Backlog**

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) held a rare, nine-hour field hearing in Fargo, N.D., on Thursday to provide individuals and groups the opportunity to report on rail service problems and to hear from rail industry executives about their efforts to address the problems. According to *The Hagstrom Report*, a wide range of elected officials and industry leaders urged the STB to make sure the BNSF and Canadian Pacific railroads provide rail cars to ship wheat, corn, soybeans and other commodities from the Upper Plains this fall or risk farmers and agribusiness losing billions of dollars and the U.S. losing its reputation as a reliable supplier of agricultural products. Many of those that testified also called on the STB to require the railroads to provide greater transparency on their shipping service between industries and to order additional reporting through detailed service plans that outline service improvements for this fall.

The STB has already required the railroads to submit weekly reports on car movements and backlogs, and BNSF officials say they are making progress in reducing the grain-car backlogs. For example, in its report dated Aug. 29, BNSF showed past-due cars totaling 2,029, down 22.2 percent from the 2,609 cars reported on Aug. 22. BNSF officials blame much of the backlog on a bad winter and an explosion in rail traffic demand in the region and across the country, but Stevan Bobb, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for BNSF Railway refuted claims that crude oil shipment are somehow favored, stating that “both crude and grain shipments are slower.”

“Nothing is more important than restoring the fluidity of the market,” Bobb said, but he warned against suggestions to institute policies allowing other railroad companies or private cars to use BNSF tracks, or to prefer some regions or commodities over others. “It will not create more capacity. It will reduce capacity, and customer volumes will be negatively impacted.” Bobb went on to say, “Increasing regulatory pressure to target certain commodities or regions will backfire as “the chosen” commodities move at the expense of all others.”

Caution was also expressed by STB Chairman Daniel Elliott, who noted that while the STB has broad powers to act in the case of emergency, he does not want to take actions that could make the situation worse.

While no short term solution to the situation is apparent, BNSF believes that they are taking the necessary steps to improve performance. As of Aug. 31, Bobb said the railroad has added 339 locomotives out of a goal of 500 for the year, and had hired 2,419 employees of the planned 3,000 in its train, yard and engine service, as well as another 2,305 engineering and mechanical staff – exceeding its goal of 2,000 for the year. He went on to say that BNSF has increased year-to-date shipments over 2013 in three categories: crude oil, up 47,157; coal, up 22,183; and agriculture, up 5,303 shipments.

August 2014 velocities compared with 2013 for trains are down for three commodities: oil, 24 percent; agriculture, 22 percent; and coal, 17 percent. However, BNSF shuttle trains have improved in recent weeks. BNSF has exceeded the 2.5 roundtrip goal to the Pacific Northwest ports in the past three weeks. Gulf of Mexico shipments to Texas have increased to 2.1 times per month after falling to 1.5 and 1.7 for much of August. The company plans to increase its shuttle numbers by 15 to 20 percent over five-year averages from October to March.

**The U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation will hold a hearing Sept. 10** on U.S. rail service issues associated with transporting agricultural products titled, “Freight Rail Service – Improving the Performance of America’s Rail System.” The hearing will examine grain-car backlogs in South Dakota and throughout the farming region that have led to service disruptions.

TCFA is working with Senators from our three-state area to ensure that cattle feeders’ concerns about railroad backlogs, grain availability and effects on basis are also considered. TCFA has also been in communication with BNSF and will continue to push for better performance and more transparency out of the railroad.

## **Tell EPA to Ditch the Rule**

States could face upwards of 100,000 added regulated stream miles as a result of the “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) rule proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The proposed federal regulations unlawfully claim the EPA’s Clean Water Act authority extends to stock tanks, small ponds and even dry ditches. Maps finally handed over by the EPA last week clearly illustrate the largest ever land grab by federal government. The maps can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/epa-maps>.

TCFA urges you to help “Ditch the Rule” by submitting comments to EPA and the Corps opposing the proposal. Simply go to [www.tcfa.org](http://www.tcfa.org) and click on the WOTUS banner at the top of the page. Fill in your contact information and click submit to pull up pre-populated comments that can be personalized with your thoughts or sent as is. The last day to submit comments is Oct. 20, 2014.

## **South Korea Lifts Ban on Beef with Zilpaterol**

South Korea has lifted a ban on the use of the animal feed additive zilpaterol in beef, opening the door to imports containing the growth enhancing animal feed additive and domestic sales of the product, according to a report by *Reuters*. Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/south-korea-lifts-ban>.

## **Alliance Releases Reports from 2014 Animal Rights Conferences**

The Animal Agriculture Alliance released on Tuesday a report that discloses observations from the 33rd annual Animal Rights National Conference presented by The Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM) and the Humane Society of the United States' (HSUS) Taking Action for Animals (TAFA) conference.

While speakers noted the "great successes" their groups have achieved, they also discussed discrepancies in the movement noting in-fighting among group leaders and dissention in the ranks. Frustration with the lack of movement coordination was also expressed. FARM Founder Alex Hershaft said, "If our opponents knew how little we communicated, they would be amazed."

All groups, including HSUS, Mercy for Animals and Farm Sanctuary, spoke passionately about promoting veganism using every available channel, using social media to fundraise for the movement, targeting restaurants and retailers with messages about "factory farming" and promoting Meatless Mondays as an incremental tool towards converting consumers to veganism.

"These reports really capture the goals and sentiments held by the leading animal rights organizations," said Animal Agriculture Alliance President and CEO Kay Johnson Smith. "I hope we can utilize these reports to communicate with stakeholders about the true agenda of the activist organizations and recognize the need to actively engage in conversations along the food chain about agriculture's commitment to animal care."

Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/aaa-animal-rights-conf>.

## **Americans' Taste for Beef Continues, Even at High Prices**

Americans continue to have a large appetite for beef, and it maintains its place on their grocery lists, even as prices have soared to record highs this year. According to Kansas State University Agricultural Economist Glynn Tonsor in a *Drovers CattleNetwork* article, the second quarter – April through June – was the best quarter for beef and pork demand in 10 years. "This is better than expected, especially in view of historically high prices," he said. "Prices have been up 10 percent, and people are still buying beef."

Tonsor said beef demand in 2014 was stronger than in 2013, and stronger than most industry watchers expected. The quarterly forecasts by the Livestock Marketing Information Center projected the average 2014 price for slaughter-ready steers in the five primary cattle markets at \$152.00 to \$154.00 per hundredweight, up 21.5 percent from the average of \$125.88 in 2013. The average price in 2015 is projected at \$157.00 to \$161.00, which if realized, would be a 3.9 percent increase from 2014.

Read the full article at <http://tinyurl.com/beef-demand-remains>.

## **Animal Agriculture Sailing Into a Positive Multi Year Outlook**

After facing nearly a decade of adversity in the animal production sector, stemming mainly from widespread drought, producers are offered an optimistic outlook from Dr. Chris Hurt of the Ag Economics Department at Purdue University, provided by *Oklahoma Farm Report*.

If the years from 2007 to 2013 could be described as the "Grain Era" in which crop sector incomes had an extraordinary run, Hurt claims the coming period may be described as the "Animal Era" where producers of animal products have strong returns. During the "Grain Era" some resources like pasture land and forage production were converted to cash crop production, and in the coming "Animal Era" there will be incentive to convert cash crop land back to animal industry use. This will be most predominant for the marginal cash crop lands of the central and western Great Plains.

The animal industries finally have a positive multiple-year outlook. The favorable income prospects will be based on feed prices re-setting to lower levels, continued reductions in drought-affected pastures and strengthening domestic incomes. Hurt said animal industries are expected to be in a mini-boom phase in coming years led by rising per capita consumption, continued small growth in U.S. population and growing export demand. An important determining force of how big the boom will be will depend to what level feed prices re-set. For details on this multi-year outlook, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ofr-multi-year-outlook>.

## **Surveys Reveal Dreary Restaurant Outlooks**

Two recent industry surveys show consumer visits to independent restaurants are trending downward, even as prospects for restaurant operators appear mixed for the months ahead, *Meatingplace* reports.

NPD Group, a consumer market research firm, reports in their latest survey that visits to independent restaurants, those with just one or two outlets, fell by 2 percent in the second quarter while restaurant chains, those with 49 or more units, kept total traffic flat for the three months that ended in June.

Meanwhile, the National Restaurant Association's (NRA) monthly Restaurant Performance Index slipped for the second consecutive month in July, reflecting what the organization calls "a dampened outlook among restaurant operators." The index of 101 (versus 101.3 in June) tracks the health of and outlook for the U.S. restaurant industry, which slipped despite reports of positive same-store sales and customer traffic in July.

Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/restaurant-outlook>.

### **Risk of Persistent Drought May Be Underestimated**

State-of-the-art climate models may be underestimating the risk of drought lasting a decade in the Southwest U.S., according to a new study that suggests the chance of such a prolonged dry spell may be at least 80 percent, reports *Meatingplace*. Climate model projections currently put the risk of a decade-long drought at less than 50 percent, but according to scientists, those models omit certain observational data on hydro-climate fluctuations that may provide a more complete view of prolonged drought risk.

Authors of the study say that when that data is included, the risk of a persistent drought may be higher than 90 percent in some areas, and the likelihood of a drought lasting more than 35 years is between 20 and 50 percent. They say the risk of an unprecedented 50-year mega-drought is between 5 and 10 percent.

"These findings are important to consider as adaptation and mitigation strategies are developed to cope with regional impacts of climate change, where population growth is high and multi-decadal mega-drought would pose unprecedented challenges to water resources in the region," study authors wrote. Find the summary at <http://tinyurl.com/ams-drought-risk>. To read more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/drought-underestimated>.

### **2014 Beef Efficiency & Profitability Contest**

*Beef* magazine, Texas A&M University (TAMU) and Merial present the 2014 Beef Efficiency & Profitability Contest, an interactive educational contest focused on carcass quality and residual feed intake. Enter the contest at <http://tinyurl.com/beef-efficiency-profit-contest>, and you could win \$1,000 cash (individual) or \$5,000 in Merial product (feedyard group). The contest is open until Oct. 20. Get the details at <http://tinyurl.com/profco>.

### **CME Group App Helps Teach Students Agriculture Economics**

The CME Group futures exchange launched an engaging and challenging app with real-life content called *Risk Ranch* for tablets and smartphones. The app is an electronic version of a board game called *Commodity Carnival*, which was first introduced to state fairs in 2013 by CME and the 4-H youth organization. The new app offers a way for children, parents and teachers to utilize the educational game year-round.

The goal of the app, which has been downloaded 2,500 times since its launch this summer, is to teach students agriculture economics through bringing a cartoon steer to market at the best possible price while dodging realistic threats to profit ranging from disease outbreak to rising input costs and even price-depressing news. The game also offers the opportunity to buy futures offering temporary protection from the hazards.

For more details and to download the app, visit <http://tinyurl.com/risk-ranch>.

### **Beckham Transitions to Full-Time Director of Institute for Infectious Animal Diseases**

Dr. Tammy Beckham, who has been serving as director of both the Institute for Infectious Animal Diseases (IIAD) and the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory since 2008, will transition into a full-time role as director of the IIAD, effective immediately.

The Institute, which was founded in 2004 as a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Center of Excellence, is part of Texas A&M AgriLife that focuses on research, education and outreach to prevent, detect, mitigate and recover from transboundary, emerging and/or zoonotic diseases.

Under her direction, the Institute implemented a leadership strategy modeled by other DHS Centers of Excellence. Her guidance has resulted in new partnerships, an increased focus on technology transition and recognition of IIAD as a collaborating center in the specialty of biological threat reduction for the World Organization for Animal Health. Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/beckham-iiad>.

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