



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

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# NEWSLETTER

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5501 I-40 W. • AMARILLO, TEXAS • PHONE (806) 358-3681 • [www.tcfa.org](http://www.tcfa.org) • [info@tcfa.org](mailto:info@tcfa.org)

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## **Forty-Five Cattlemen's Associations Tell USDA: Don't Hijack the Checkoff**

On Tuesday, 45 state cattlemen's associations representing more than 170,000 cattle breeders, producers and feeders sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, urging him not to issue an Order for a supplemental beef checkoff under the 1996 General Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act.

Bob McCan, NCBA president and Victoria, Texas, cattleman says the strong turnout of signatories to this letter demonstrate the concern across the country with the Secretary's stated intention.

"Our state affiliates sent a clear message to the Secretary that they do not want a supplemental checkoff under the 1996 Act," said McCan. "NCBA stands firmly behind our grassroots producer organizations, and we will do everything we can to support their efforts. The checkoff belongs to cattlemen, not to the USDA or any administration."

Grassroots producers have been the cornerstone of the Beef Checkoff Program since it was first enacted in 1985. There is no required element of the 1996 Act that increases grassroots influence in national checkoff efforts. Furthermore, the 1996 Act assures no protection to state beef councils and gives much greater power to the federal government.

"The Beef Checkoff is a non-political, non-partisan structure designed by cattle producers to increase and support beef demand," said McCan. "The Beef Checkoff serves all beef producers, nationwide, and the recent efforts by Secretary Vilsack do not serve the interests of producers; they only serve to politicize and polarize the industry. We are focused on how the Beef Checkoff can do more to support cattlemen and women; the Administration has focused on how they can use the Beef Checkoff for political spoils and to increase the control of the federal government."

More information can be found at [www.beefUSA.org](http://www.beefUSA.org) and producers can sign a petition directing the administration to abandon their efforts to take over the Checkoff by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/dont-hijack-beef-checkoff>. View the letter from cattle organizations at <http://tinyurl.com/letter-to-vilsack>.

## **Don't Forget to Vote – Elections Have Consequences**

Early voting for the 2014 General Elections begins Monday, Oct. 20 and ends Friday, Oct. 31. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 4. Requests for a ballot by mail must be received in the county clerk's office by Oct. 24.

In addition to the executive, judicial and legislative elections, Texas ballots will include a constitutional amendment election that would divert half of the general revenue derived from oil and gas taxes from the Rainy Day Fund to the State Highway Fund for the purpose of providing transportation funding for repairs and maintenance of public roads. It is anticipated that this would result in approximately \$1.7 billion per year going toward transportation funding. If approved, the measure would take effect immediately and apply to transfers the comptroller made after Sept. 1, 2014.

A list of candidates supported by BEEF-PAC of TCFA is available at <http://tinyurl.com/beefpac-supported-candidates>. Please contact Josh Winegarner ([josh@tcfa.org](mailto:josh@tcfa.org)) with any questions.

## **NCBA, PLC and Affiliated Livestock Associations File Comments on Proposed ESA Changes**

NCBA, the Public Lands Council and 26 affiliated livestock associations, including TCFA, collectively filed comments last week regarding three proposed changes to implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The first proposed rule revises the definition of "adverse modification." Under current law, the federal government cannot help fund or take any action that will "adversely modify" habitat of a threatened or endangered species. Under the new definition, the consideration for whether an action constitutes an adverse modification becomes whether it affects the habitat's ability to support the recovery of the listed species, including the quantity and quality of the habitat.

It goes further to deem actions that *may* adversely modify critical habitat as restricted where designations have been made. Often times, critical habitat designations list cattle, or cattle grazing, as detrimental to the habitat of the listed species, including both federal land and private property owned by cattlemen. Read the comments submitted on this proposed rule at <http://tinyurl.com/adverse-modification>.

The second proposed rule dangerously expands what can be designated critical habitat. If this rule were to be implemented, not only can land occupied by a species be designated as critical, but any land that could possibly be occupied by a species could also be designated as critical habitat. This change would essentially unleash FWS regulators to designate land under critical habitat for nearly any reason carrying the full enforcement/penalties of the ESA. Read the comments submitted on this proposed rule at <http://tinyurl.com/critical-habitat-changes>.

According to FWS, the third proposal is a policy to provide greater predictability, transparency and consistency regarding how the Services consider exclusions from critical habitat designations. The policy limits when exclusions will be made, but those decisions will not be based on sound, quantitative data and analysis, but broader qualitative data instead. Read the comments submitted on this proposed rule at <http://tinyurl.com/ch-exclusion>.

These rules could dramatically increase the amount of private and public lands designated for habitat, which in turn could result in blocking or slowing down an array of agriculture, grazing, energy transmission and production, transportation and other activities on the more than 680 current habitat designations and hundreds more slated to be finalized in the next few years. The associations have asked FWS to withdraw the proposed rules and policy as they are beyond the statutory authority provided by congress in the ESA.

### **Five Nations Beef Alliance Meeting Concludes with Statement on Trans-Pacific Partnership**

The Five Nations Beef Alliance (FNBA) concluded a successful meeting and tour in south Texas last week, capped by the unanimous endorsement of a public statement calling for all Trans-Pacific Partnership nations to support 'gold standard outcomes' for beef that do not sacrifice important reforms for political expediency.

NCBA President Bob McCan pointed to the endorsement of the TPP statement as a sign that FNBA is already fulfilling the ambitious goals set out for the group.

"The statement we issued this week, calling for 'gold standard' outcomes for beef, is an indication of the strength of these relationships," he said. "Science-based trade standards are something that benefit the global beef industry, and if we can agree to place that ambition above political expediency, cattlemen and women in each of the five nations will be better served."

The statement also reaffirms FNBA's prior statements on TPP and urges international negotiators to quickly reach agreeable terms that will help further beef trade and a fair and level playing field for producers in member nations.

"The message we are sending to TPP negotiators who are meeting in Australia is that beef producers in the five nations stand united in seeking better trade treatment of the high-quality beef they produce," said NCBA CEO Forrest Roberts, who served as chair of the FNBA meeting. "To that end, the member nations also agreed to increase efforts to keep the Codex Alimentarius, World Organization for Animal Health and other international scientific groups as objective bodies free from political influence."

Read the public statement by FNBA at <http://tinyurl.com/five-nations-beef-statement>.

### **FSIS May Issue Guidance on Salmonella in Beef Cattle Lymph Node**

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) plans to move forward with new ground beef pathogen performance standards, HACCP validation guidance and may issue guidance on controlling salmonella in cattle lymph nodes in 2015, officials said on Wednesday.

According to *Meatingplace*, Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Alfred Almanza addressed the North American Meat Association's Pathogen Control and Regulatory Compliance conference saying the agency hopes to finalize before the end of this year the mechanically tenderized meat labeling requirements that were proposed in 2013. If the rule is finalized by the end of this year, it would go into effect in 2016.

Rachel Edelstein, deputy assistant administrator of FSIS Office of Public Policy and Program Development, cited statistics from the Centers for Disease Control about the rise of illnesses related to shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) and illnesses attributed to ground beef from salmonella to industry members at the conference.

"We are aware that lymph nodes may be a source of salmonella, in particular in ground beef. We are looking at ARS [USDA Agriculture Research Service] research and considering how best to address the

risk,” said Edelstein. “For example, based on the research, we may issue guidance. We also may look at whether we need to change post-mortem inspection for incising lymph nodes. And based on risk assessment and cost benefit analysis, we may consider whether or not to propose a change to the regulations if necessary.”

She said FSIS would first address industry concerns before moving forward on making new rules.

Almanza told the group that HACCP validation guidance is in the final stages of clearance and expected to be published in the *Federal Register* “in the very near future.”

Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/guidance-lymph-node>.

## **TCFA Annual Convention**

Have you made plans to join us Oct. 26-28 at the 2014 TCFA Annual Convention in Oklahoma City? If not, register online at <http://shop.tcfa.org/Convention/>, or call the TCFA office to register by phone.

This year’s Convention features an outstanding speaker lineup, including retired Four-Star and Admiral Navy SEAL Eric Olson, CattleFax CEO Randy Blach, author of “The Big Fat Surprise,” Nina Teicholz, NCBA’s Shalene McNeill on “Beef’s Bad Rap and What We Can Do About It,” as well as an impressive panel of experts from across the board on sustainable beef production.

Much excitement is in store with an appearance by Miss Oklahoma 2014 Alex Eppler, who will join us at the Annual Awards Luncheon to recognize winners of the Fed Beef Challenge, Junior Fed Beef Challenge, Best Safety Practices and Education Foundation Scholarships.

Don’t forget about the good time you will have at the Cattle Feeders Get Together. You won’t want to miss this evening of great food, cold drinks and country music provided by Jake Hooker and the Outsiders at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. You will also have the chance to complete some Christmas shopping at the BEEF-PAC Auction while enjoying the company of your fellow cattle feeders.

We look forward to wrapping up Convention with some friendly competition at our challenging sporting events. Dust off your clubs and practice your chip shot, or polish your gun barrel and take aim at the clay pigeons. Either way, you will have a great time at the Golf Tournament or Sporting Clays Tournament.

TCFA members will be able to stay connected with TCFA staff while we are in Oklahoma City. Reach TCFA staff at the Registration Desk at (405) 228-8041. Stay connected with Jason at the Market Desk by calling (405) 228-8042. Also, for the latest while at Convention, be sure to follow TCFA on Facebook and join the conversation on Twitter at [#tcfaconv14](https://twitter.com/tcfaconv14).

## **U.S. Consumers Still Eating Meat on Monday**

According to Jayson Lusk, Oklahoma State University (OSU) agricultural economist, the international campaign, Meatless Monday, is not as popular as some media outlets have led people to believe.

In the October edition of the OSU Food Demand Survey (FooDS), participants were asked by a team of researchers led by Lusk about Meatless Monday – a campaign that encourages consumers to skip meat one day a week to help the nation’s health and the planet.

Over 80 percent of survey participants have never participated in Meatless Monday. Breaking that figure down further reveals that 51.6 percent have not ever heard of Meatless Monday, and 31 percent of individuals surveyed had heard of it but chose not to participate.

Only 8.4 percent of the participants admitted to regularly making a conscious effort to not eat meat on Mondays, and 4.7 percent of those indicated they were vegan or vegetarian, leaving only 3.7 percent who participate in the Meatless Monday campaign. Find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/consumers-mm>.

## **TCFA Says Goodbye to Bob Bliss**

Past TCFA Chairman Robert “Bob” Bliss, 88, of Amarillo passed away Oct. 11. Bob was a long-time cattleman who managed King Feedyard in Muleshoe for five years in the ‘60s before moving on to build and manage Swisher County Cattle Co., a subsidiary of Friona Industries. He later went to work for Cargill.

In addition to his TCFA involvement, Bob also served the industry as a board member of NCBA, CattleFax and the National Meat Board. Please join us in keeping the Bliss family in your thoughts and prayers. Bob’s obituary can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/obit-bliss>.

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