



SUMMER
2026

The Mountaineer CATTLEMAN

A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST VIRGINIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION



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WEST VIRGINIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

“ *I grew up around cattle. For me, it's always been about the cattle and farming, and it probably always will be. I grew up in 4-H and FFA and knowing about Farm Bureau and the Cattlemen's Association. As I've gotten older, I've decided to become more active and give back to the organizations that have given so much to me.* ”

Nathanael Mason WVCA vice president, Ritchie County

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WVCA MEMBERSHIP TYPE

- STATE DUES **\$40** STRATEGIC PARTNER (GOLD/SILVER/BRONZE) **Contact us.**
 STUDENT DUES (18 & UNDER) **\$10** WV CATTLEWOMEN **\$3**

NCBA MEMBERSHIP TYPE

- 1-100 HEAD **\$160** 251-500 HEAD **\$450**
 101-250 HEAD **\$300** 501-750 HEAD **\$650**

TOTAL AMT
+
TOTAL AMT
=

TOTAL ENCLOSED

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One person alone will have little impact on the future of the cattle business, but cattlemen across the state of West Virginia are standing together to make a difference. To face and conquer these issues head-on, the West Virginia Cattlemen's Association exists, in partnership with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, to protect the business climate for beef.

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Cover photo taken by
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Board of Directors

Region 1 **Allison Tomlinson** (Secretary/Treasurer)

Region 1 **Ty Wickline** (President)

Region 2 **Neil Bumgarner**

Region 2 Open

Region 3 **John Pitsenbarger**

Region 3 **Reese Tuckwiller**

Region 4 **Nathanael Mason** (Vice President)

Region 4 **Eric Cunningham**

Region 5 **Derek Cumpston**

Region 5 **Jamie Kinsey**

Region 6 **Quill Ward**

Region 6 **Ivy Ward**

Region 7 **Kim Getz**

Region 7 **Amy Kile**

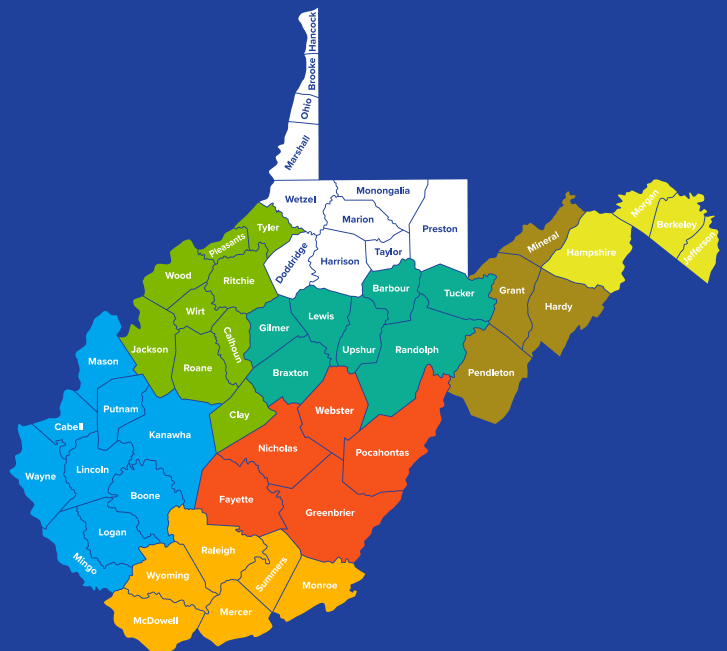
Region 8 **Darren Thorne**

Region 8 **Roy Milleson**

WVDA **Duane Bishoff**

WVDA **Jayne Garrett**

WVU/Extension **Bruce Loyd**



Region 1	Region 3	Region 5	Region 7
Region 2	Region 4	Region 6	Region 8

As summer unfolds across West Virginia, I continue to be encouraged by the momentum, collaboration and engagement taking place throughout the West Virginia Cattlemen's Association. From youth leadership and educational programming to advocacy and statewide partnerships, WVCA continues to grow because of dedicated members willing to invest their time, talents and passion into strengthening our beef community.

In many ways, this season feels fitting for what I'll call, "The Final Drive," of my term as president. Much like the final push gathering cattle before sunset or the last stretch of hay season before a summer storm, this chapter has been filled with purpose, teamwork, long hours and gratitude. Serving this association has been one of the greatest honors of my professional and agricultural life, and as this term comes to a close, I find myself reflecting not only on accomplishments, but on the people who made them possible.

This spring, WVCA was proud to participate in the 2026 West Virginia Beef Expo, where producers, youth and industry supporters gathered to celebrate and advance our state's cattle industry. Thank you to everyone who stopped by the WVCA table to visit, renew memberships and support our mission. Events like the Beef Expo remind us of the importance of staying connected, sharing ideas and continuing to invest in the next generation of cattle producers who will one day lead this industry forward.

We are also excited to announce that the Events Committee has officially confirmed the 3rd Annual West Virginia Cattlemen's Classic at the State Fair of West Virginia for Sunday, Aug.16. We encourage members and families to make plans to attend as we continue building opportunities for fellowship, competition, education and industry promotion across our state.

Another exciting milestone this spring was the successful launch of the 1st Annual WVCA Cattle Working Contest. Congratulations to all seven teams who stepped forward to compete and help establish what we hope becomes a lasting WVCA tradition. Events like these showcase not only skill and stockmanship, but also the camaraderie and teamwork that define West Virginia agriculture. We are equally grateful to WVU Extension, the WVCA board of directors, volunteers, judges and supporters who helped bring this event to life.

WVCA continues to be strengthened by dedicated leaders serving agriculture across our state. During the April 28 Spring Quarterly In-Person Board Meeting, the board of directors confirmed the association's 2026–2028 officer leadership team. We are pleased to welcome Ty Wickline (Region 1), owner and operator alongside his family of Kee Hill Farm, as the incoming president of WVCA. A longtime advocate for Monroe County 4-H and FFA programs, Ty's leadership, commitment to youth development, and experience coaching livestock judging and skill teams position him well to serve the association and continue moving WVCA forward.

We are also pleased to recognize Nathanael Mason (Region 4) of Ritchie County for his continued leadership and service as vice president of the WVCA board of directors while remaining actively involved in numerous agricultural and community organizations supporting producers and youth development throughout the state. Leaders like Nathanael help ensure the future of our industry remains strong, connected and forward-thinking.

Additionally, we extend congratulations to Allison Tomlinson (Region 1) of Gap Mills, West Virginia. The Monroe County native continues multi-generational traditions of cattle production, land stewardship, business leadership and community involvement. Through operations such as Hidden Acres Farm and ACE Livestock, their family exemplifies the dedication, resilience and stewardship that continue to shape the future of agriculture in West Virginia.

Across WVCA, we are excited by the continued momentum Executive Director Kevin Shaffer is helping drive forward. Kevin's keen attention to efficiency, collaboration, organizational unity and board congeniality has strengthened relationships throughout our agricultural community. His leadership has helped

WVCA successfully achieve its membership goal of 600 members while expanding opportunities for youth and adult education, leadership development, advocacy and producer networking across the state. The collaboration among WVCA, the Beef Council, Farm Bureau and partner organizations continues to create meaningful opportunities for our members and strengthen the voice of West Virginia cattle producers.

As my term as president concludes, I want to sincerely thank each of you for the opportunity to serve this association and represent West Virginia cattle producers. While this is not goodbye, I look forward to continuing to support the needs of the board in an ex-officio role and hope to remain both a friend and advocate for the West Virginia cattle industry. This industry is deeply personal to me and forever close to my heart, and I am grateful for the relationships, experiences, lessons and shared purpose this role has provided.

Every cattleman and cattlegirl understands the importance of a strong final drive—not simply finishing the work, but making sure the herd is pointed in the right direction for what lies ahead. As I prepare to pass the torch to new leadership, I do so with full confidence that WVCA's future is bright. Our association is strong because of its people: members willing to work together, support one another, mentor young producers and continue investing in agriculture across our state.

Thank you again for your support, encouragement and dedication to WVCA throughout my presidency. It has truly been an honor to serve alongside you. If I can ever be of assistance, please never hesitate to reach out to me at mjwbeef@gmail.com.

Wishing you a safe and productive summer season, healthy cattle, green pastures and continued success across your operations., 🇺🇸



Dr. Megan J. Webb
President, WV Cattlemen's Association



Showing Up, Staying Engaged and Delivering for Cattle Producers

Gene Copenhaver NCBA President

Every once in a while, Washington, D.C., produces a moment that clearly illustrates why engagement matters — how a strong, unified voice for cattle producers delivers real results back home. For NCBA members, the past several weeks provided exactly that reminder.

Recently, NCBA leaders and producers joined a White House event recognizing the Working Families Tax Cuts included in the One Big Beautiful Bill. While the setting carried historic symbolism, the impact of these policies is anything but abstract. For cattle producers across the country, these tax provisions directly affect whether family farms and ranches can survive, grow and be passed on to the next generation.

For years, NCBA has worked steadily to explain how the Death Tax threatens family-owned operations. When land values rise but cash flow doesn't, heirs are often forced to sell land, livestock or entire operations just to pay a tax bill. That's not theoretical. It's happened to neighbors and friends in every cattle-producing state.

At the White House event, lawmakers heard directly from NCBA members about what these policies mean in real life. A first-generation ranching family from South Dakota described how small-business provisions and Section 179 deductions allowed them to expense equipment and fencing — giving them the opportunity to expand their cow herd and launch a direct-to-consumer beef business. A cattle producer from

Pennsylvania shared how predictable, commonsense tax policy helps his family plan for the long term and bring the next generation home to the operation.

Those stories highlight something cattle producers already understand instinctively: smart tax policy isn't about politics. It's about stability, planning and thinking beyond the next year.

Earlier that same day, NCBA participated in a tax roundtable with U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach, continuing the behind-the-scenes conversations that shape how policy is written and implemented. These meetings don't always grab headlines, but they are where outcomes are decided. Being at the table early, before decisions are locked in, is one of the ways we work to protect your operation.

That same principle was on full display during NCBA's 2026 Legislative Conference, when our nationwide network of state affiliates brought producers from across the country to Washington, D.C. Throughout the week, NCBA members met with policymakers on Capitol Hill and engaged directly with key federal agencies, including USDA, FDA and EPA.

Priority issues were discussed, like passing a Farm Bill, delisting the gray wolf by passing the Pet & Livestock Protection Act, and securing funding to combat the Asian longhorned tick and the diseases it carries.

This is what grassroots advocacy looks like: real producers, from real operations, sharing first-hand experience with

decision-makers who craft policies that affect us every day. Policy decisions made hundreds of miles away can have immediate consequences at the ranch gate. That's why showing up matters.

For cattle producers, NCBA membership may be the cheapest risk management tool you can buy. Think of NCBA membership as catastrophic coverage. One overreaching regulation, one lost market access opportunity or one harmful tax change can cost far more than years of dues. Advocacy doesn't eliminate every challenge, but it dramatically improves the odds that cattle producers aren't blindsided.

These wins don't happen overnight. Legislation like the Working Families Tax Cuts builds on years of persistent effort by NCBA and, most importantly, NCBA members being willing to engage. Credible data, trusted relationships and producer voices who are willing to show up make all the difference. That continuity only exists because thousands of producers invest in NCBA year after year. Outcomes like these happen because producers decide that standing together matters.

As president of NCBA, and as a cattle producer myself, I take that responsibility seriously. Our job is to protect your ability to operate, grow and pass your ranch on to the next generation. Engagement in Washington, backed by the strength of our state affiliates and grassroots members, is one of the most effective tools we have to do exactly that. **T**



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Fertilizer Impacts on Warm-Season Hay Budgets

James Mitchell and Ryan Loy University of Arkansas, Cattle Market Notes Weekly


The United States-Israel conflict with Iran that began on Saturday, Feb. 28, comes at a challenging time for U.S. agriculture, with implications for farm input markets ahead of spring planting and cool- and warm-season forage production. Now in its third week at the time of this writing, the conflict has already disrupted energy markets and shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz. More than 20% of global oil trade moves through the Strait of Hormuz, and Iran is a major exporter of urea fertilizer. These markets are global, and supply shocks of this scale can quickly affect the prices producers pay for key inputs such as fuel and fertilizer.

2026 Warm-Season Hay Budgets

The table above presents a 2026 planning budget for warm-season hay production in Arkansas, based on data from the 2025 Arkansas Hay Verification Program. Each item in the budget reflects the per-acre cost for individual inputs and the per-acre revenue from hay sales, assuming the 2025 national average hay price.

Urea costs rise from \$112 per acre in the baseline to \$123, \$147, and \$168 per acre when prices increase to \$704, \$832, and \$960 per ton, respectively. Total operating costs increase from \$397.97 per acre in the baseline to \$408.47, \$432.97, and \$453.97 per acre under the higher price scenarios. As a result, returns above operating costs fall from \$49.15 per acre in the baseline to \$38.65, \$14.15, and -\$6.85 per acre as urea prices increase.

Most row crop producers likely already booked their inputs before the Iran war began. Hay producers do not forward contract fertilizer and instead purchase it on an as-needed basis. Cool-season forage producers were already applying fertilizer, but if higher prices persist into the fall, they could face significantly higher costs. For warm-season forage producers, it is recommended to contact your input supplier to discuss fertilizer pricing options.

Note the analysis only considers changes to fertilizer prices. The Iran war impacts fuel and fertilizer prices. For example, scenarios such as a 50% increase in fuel and 30% increase in fertilizer should be considered in hay budgets. 

ITEM	UNIT	Baseline	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
		Urea=\$640/Ton	Urea=\$704/Ton	Urea=\$832/Ton	Urea=\$960/Ton
REVENUE					
Warm Season Grass	tons	\$447.12	\$447.12	\$447.12	\$447.12
TOTAL REVENUE		\$447.12	\$447.12	\$447.12	\$447.12
OPERATING COSTS					
<i>CUSTOM APPLICATION</i>					
Ground App Fertilizer	appl	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00
<i>FERTILIZERS</i>					
Urea (46-0-0)	lbs	\$112.00	\$122.50	\$147.00	\$168.00
Potash (0-0-60)	lbs	\$69.26	\$69.26	\$69.26	\$69.26
Nitrogen Stabilizer	oz	\$50.70	\$50.70	\$50.70	\$50.70
<i>HERBICIDES</i>					
Glyphosate (<50%)	oz	\$5.76	\$5.76	\$5.76	\$5.76
2,4-D	oz	\$14.72	\$14.72	\$14.72	\$14.72
metasulfuron-methyl	oz	\$1.76	\$1.76	\$1.76	\$1.76
<i>INSECTICIDES</i>					
Besiege	oz	\$16.65	\$16.65	\$16.65	\$16.65
<i>SUPPLIES</i>					
Net Wrap	bale	\$9.15	\$9.15	\$9.15	\$9.15
Twine	bale	\$10.79	\$10.79	\$10.79	\$10.79
<i>OPERATOR LABOR</i>					
Tractors	hour	\$25.34	\$25.34	\$25.34	\$25.34
Implements	hour	\$0.69	\$0.69	\$0.69	\$0.69
<i>DIESEL FUEL</i>					
Tractors	gal	\$20.24	\$20.24	\$20.24	\$20.24
<i>REPAIR & MAINTENANCE</i>					
Tractors	acre	\$4.29	\$4.29	\$4.29	\$4.29
Implements	acre	\$22.39	\$22.39	\$22.39	\$22.39
INTEREST ON OP. CAP.	acre	\$7.23	\$7.23	\$7.23	\$7.23
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS		\$397.97	\$408.47	\$432.97	\$453.97
RETURNS ABOVE OPERATING COSTS		\$49.15	\$38.65	\$14.15	-\$6.85



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Member Spotlight



Kee Hill Farms

Kee Hill Farms, owned and operated by the Wickline family in Union, West Virginia, is an operation rooted in progress, family involvement and a passion for the cattle industry. As a registered Angus and Charolais program, Kee Hill focuses on developing high-quality bulls designed to meet the needs of both commercial cattlemen and purebred breeders alike.


A true family operation, Kee Hill Farms is supported by three generations of Wicklines who play an active role in the day-to-day management of the farm. Ty Wickline is also the newly elected president of the West Virginia Cattlemen's

Association.

The family's shared commitment to improving genetics and maintaining a strong, functional cow herd continues to drive the operation forward while preserving the values it was built upon. The operation extends beyond seedstock cattle. The Wicklines also own and operate Belle Vue Dairy, an organic Jersey herd, and manage a commercial hair sheep flock. In addition, they produce grass-fed beef that is marketed through Hickory Nut Gap Meats and distributed across the southern United States.

In 2025, the Wicklines launched the Spring Celebration Production Sale in

partnership with other local producers. This event was created with the goal of expanding access to quality genetics and providing southern West Virginia cattlemen with more options close to home. This sale takes place annually on the last Saturday in March.

The Wickline family is deeply committed to the future of agriculture, particularly through youth development. They are actively involved in coaching and mentoring local 4-H livestock judging and cattle working teams, investing their time and knowledge into the next generation of agricultural leaders. 



Beyond Energy: Using Fat Supplementation to Improve Pregnancy Success

Pedro Fontes Assistant Professor – Animal and Dairy Science / University of Georgia

Thoughtful supplementation of fat sources, particularly omega-6 fatty acids, can drastically improve pregnancy rates and overall reproductive efficiency.

Reproductive technologies such as estrus synchronization, artificial insemination (A.I.) and embryo transfer (ET) have significantly improved genetic progress in beef cattle. Yet, one major biological limitation continues to constrain reproductive efficiency across operations: early embryonic mortality. After a single round of A.I., fertilization occurs in over 80% of beef cows, whereas pregnancy rates at 30 days after A.I. typically range from 45% to 65%. This gap reflects substantial embryonic mortality occurring during the first few weeks of pregnancy. From a management standpoint, this represents a major opportunity. Improving embryo survival, not just conception, is an effective way to increase reproductive success and overall herd productivity.

Rethinking Fat Supplementation

Fat supplementation has traditionally been used to increase energy density in cattle diets. However, research indicates that certain fat sources can influence reproduction through specific biological pathways, independent of their caloric value. Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), particularly omega-6 fatty acids, have been shown to play an important role in the uterine environment and early embryo development.

Sources of rumen-protected omega-6 fatty acids, such as calcium salts of soybean oil (CSSO), have been used in research settings to evaluate these effects. Studies have demonstrated that CSSO supplementation increases the concentration of these fatty acids in circulation and within uterine tissues. These fatty acids are subsequently incorporated into the developing embryo, with research showing

that conceptuses recovered from supplemented cows have greater concentrations of omega-6 fatty acids. Moreover, conceptuses recovered from CSSO-supplemented cows are larger and more developed during early pregnancy. Collectively, these findings indicate that targeted fatty acid supplementation can support embryo development during a critical window of pregnancy establishment.

Does it Improve Pregnancy Rates?

These biological changes translate into meaningful improvements in reproductive outcomes. In a large-scale study using postpartum beef cows, animals were supplemented with either 100 grams per day of CSSO or an isolipidic and isocaloric control treatment. Supplementation was provided for a total of 21 days, starting on the same day cows were artificially inseminated in the beginning of the breeding season. Although total fat intake was similar between treatments, the CSSO supplement had a greater concentration of omega-6 fatty acids. Pregnancy rates to A.I. were greater in cows receiving CSSO, reaching 60.2%, compared with 51.7% in control cows.

Because diets were formulated to provide similar energy, these results indicate that the improvement in fertility observed in CSSO-supplemented cows was driven by fatty acid profile rather than caloric intake. This distinction shifts fat supplementation from a strategy focused solely on increasing dietary energy to a targeted nutraceutical approach to improve fertility.


Making it Work in Commercial Settings

Although the controlled studies described above demonstrate clear reproductive benefits, daily supplementation can be difficult to implement in some operations. As a result, delivery method becomes a critical factor when considering adoption of fat supplementation strategies.

Follow-up work has evaluated the use of low-moisture molasses tubs as a means of delivering omega-6 fatty acids during the breeding season. These delivery systems are designed to provide a consistent intake of supplement without the need for daily feeding. Research indicates that cows consuming omega-6 fatty acids through self-fed tubs achieve similar increases in omega-6 concentrations compared with cows receiving hand-fed supplements daily. More importantly, cows supplemented with low-moisture molasses tubs rich in omega-6 fatty acids during the breeding season experienced similar increases in pregnancy rates to A.I. and reduced pregnancy loss. These responses translated into a greater proportion of cows calving earlier in the season, along with an increase of 42 pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed to the breeding season.

From a management standpoint, these results highlight that the benefits of targeted fatty acid supplementation can be achieved using practical delivery systems that fit within the logistical constraints of beef operations.

Take-Home Message

Improving reproductive performance in beef cattle requires more than achieving fertilization. Supporting embryo survival during the early stages of pregnancy is also critical. Supplementation with omega-6 fatty acids represents a practical, research-supported strategy to optimize conceptus development and pregnancy success. By influencing key biological pathways involved in pregnancy establishment, these supplements can improve pregnancy rates to A.I. and enhance overall herd productivity. When implemented within a sound nutritional and reproductive management program, targeted fatty acid supplementation can help producers capture more value from their breeding programs. 



2026 board members are pictured left to right: Quill Ward, Nathanael Mason (Vice President), Jayme Garrett, Darren Thorne, Neil Bumgarner, Roy Milleson, Bruce Loyd, Kim Getz, Eric Cunningham, Amy Kile, Allison Tomlinson (Secretary/Treasurer), John Pitsenbarger, Ty Wickline (President), and Megan Webb (Immediate Past President) Not Pictured: Reese Tuckwiller, Jamie Kinsey, Ivy Ward, Derek Cumpston, Duane Bishoff

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2026 BEEF EXPO REPORT

BREED	LOT #	GROSS	AVERAGE
Charolais	15	\$101,600	\$6,773
Limousin	28	\$142,500	\$5,089
Red Angus	23	\$114,650	\$4,984
Polled Hereford	48	\$245,700	\$5,118
Simmental	28	\$129,675	\$4,631
Angus	11	\$64,550	\$5,868
Total	153	\$798,675	\$5,220

TOP BULL

BREED	LOT #	CONSIGNED BY	PURCHASED BY	PRICE		
Charolais	615	Watson Charolais	Waverly, WV	Paul Miller	Port Washington, OH	\$6,000
Limousin	108	BCV Farms	Somerset, OH	Randy and Janet Moore	Fresno, OH	\$9,750
Red Angus	206	Goose Creek Farm	Whiteford, MD	Charles Lee	Fairmont, WV	\$8,500
Polled Hereford	344	Lantz Farm	Philippi, WV	Crooked Creek Farm	Grafton, WV	\$5,200
Simmental	401	Barna Vista Farm	Ripley, WV	Joseph Kovar	West Milford, WV	\$9,500
Angus	506	Circle R Angus	Alma, WV	Mike Hicks	Buckhannon, WV	\$9,500

TOP COW/CALF PAIR

BREED	LOT #	CONSIGNED BY	PURCHASED BY	PRICE		
Charolais	605	Miller Charolais	Washington, WV	Sherry Buckles	Buckhannon, WV	\$11,000
Limousin	110	TJ Cattle	Staunton, VA	Waitt Farms	Sheridan, IN	\$8,250
Red Angus						
Polled Hereford	332	Lamberts Pink Ribbon Farm	Flemington, WV	Clayton Armstrong	Mercersburg, PA	\$7,000
Polled Hereford	303	McDonald Polled Herefords	Lost Creek, WV	Crooked Creek Farm	Grafton, WV	\$7,000
Simmental	412	Cold Spring Farm	Morgantown, WV	Johnathan Cheslock	Morgantown, WV	\$7,250
Angus	510	Triple C Angus	Bruceon Mills, WV	Charles Otte	Oak Hill, WV	\$8,500

TOP BRED FEMALE

BREED	LOT #	CONSIGNED BY	PURCHASED BY	PRICE		
Charolais	610	C-Squared Cattle Co.	Culpeper, VA	Clayton Armstrong	Mercersburg, PA	\$11,000
Limousin	112	Friend Bros. Limousin	Duck, WV	Clayton Armstrong	Mercersburg, PA	\$5,250
Red Angus	208	Dayton Cattle	Maysville, WV	Robert Shapley	New Matamoras, OH	\$10,000
Red Angus	209	Dayton Cattle	Maysville, WV	Robert Shapley	New Matamoras, OH	\$10,000
Polled Hereford	311	Ralph E. Ullman & Son	Graysville, OH	Robert Shapley	New Matamoras, OH	\$23,000
Simmental	417	CWL Simmentals	Fairmont, WV	Stephanie Knight	West Union, WV	\$6,800
Angus	504	C-Squared Cattle Co.	Culpeper, VA	John White	Weston, WV	\$6,500

TOP OPEN FEMALE

BREED	LOT #	CONSIGNED BY	PURCHASED BY	PRICE		
Charolais	607	Little Em Cattle Co.	Fisher, WV	Randy Imhoff	Powhatan Point, OH	\$5,000
Charolais	612	Watson Charolais	Waverly, WV	Randy Imhoff	Powhatan Point, OH	\$5,000
Charolais	613	Watson Charolais	Waverly, WV	Maddilea Shaffer	Pennsboro, WV	\$5,000
Charolais	601	C-Squared Cattle Co.	Culpeper, VA	Mouser Charolais Farm	Independence, WV	\$5,000
Limousin	127	Ridgeland Cattle Co.	Roncevert, WV	Josie Biser	Kemar, MD	\$7,700
Red Angus	205	Goose Creek Farm	Whiteford, MD	Cripple Creek Farms	Morgantown, WV	\$5,300
Polled Hereford	318	Lucky Lady Farm	Ireland, WV	Scott Hill	Gay, WV	\$4,500
Simmental	422	Longview Land & Cattle	Sugar Land, TX	Stephanie Knight	West Union, WV	\$4,800
Angus	501	White House Cattle	Kingwood, WV	Richard Gorrel	Friendly, WV	\$6,500

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Cattlemen Go to the Capital

Neil Bumgarner Region II WVCA Director, WVCA Policy Committee Member

Over the last dozen or so years serving on the West Virginia Cattlemen's Association board, I've probably asked a few hundred folks to become a member of our dues-supported organization. By far the most common question I've received is, "What do I get out of being a member of West Virginia Cattlemen's?"

It may be hard to see at times, but advocating friendly policy and opposing harmful policy is the most valuable contribution from both West Virginia Cattlemen's and National Cattlemen's Beef associations. The existence and engagement of West Virginia Cattlemen's Association provide the voice of cattle producers to legislators in Charleston and Washington, D.C. There are other voices who at times agree with the priorities of West Virginia cattle producers, but there is no one else in the ear of lawmakers solely on behalf of the cattle business. Conversely, the Humane Society of the United States had a \$180 million budget in 2023 and gave less than 1% to local animal shelters. The rest of that money is free to fight animal agriculture: you and me.

On Feb. 18, the West Virginia Legislature hosted Ag Day at the Capitol. Dozens of agriculture organizations such as local conservation districts and individual farms set up informational tables around the upper Rotunda. Kevin Shaffer, executive director of WVCA, and myself represented the West Virginia Cattlemen's Association. We educated elected representatives, legislative staff, state and federal ag agency folks, and members of the media on the mission of the association and the West Virginia beef cattle business in general. After the event concluded in early afternoon, I attended a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing.

A few things are worth noting about the status of agricultural interests in Charleston. On the house of delegates side, agriculture does not have its own committee anymore. Agriculture is lumped in with commerce and tourism in one committee. The chair of that committee is a real estate broker representing the Huntington area and the vice chair is in commercial interior business in Morgantown. Zero pieces of legislation sponsored by the chair or vice chair were related to agriculture.



On the senate side, we are fortunate enough to still have an agriculture committee. The chair is an agricultural educator from Mingo County, and the vice chair is a cattle and poultry producer who was recently elected to the WVCA board. Approximately 15% of their sponsored legislation related to agriculture, a significant increase vs. the house of delegates. Some of the top priorities are reducing real estate tax valuation on farm structures and preventing unreasonable legislation around animal rights. Overall, we as cattle producers need to have more dialogue with our elected officials and be more visible in Charleston to prevent our voices from being drowned out by the outside interests pouring money into our state to use West Virginia as an example for their causes. We are working on new opportunities to interact with lawmakers later this year so please stay tuned because we need your help.

Nathaneal Mason and I traveled to Washington, D.C. in late April to attend the 2026 National Cattlemen's Beef Association Legislative Conference. This event is a combination of legislative updates from NCBA Policy team and Capitol Hill visits with the West Virginia federal delegation. On Wednesday, April 22, we sat down to discuss West Virginia cattle business priorities with the offices of Congresswoman Carol Miller, Congressman Riley Moore, Senator Shelly Moore Capito and Senator Jim Justice. One of our top priorities was to

secure funding for USDA to research the Asian longhorned tick and the theileriosis disease these ticks have spread around the eastern U.S. in recent years. Other top priorities included removing protection for black vultures, securing passage of a cattlemen-friendly farm bill, and getting permanent protections from recent trucking regulation for livestock haulers.

On Thursday, we heard from USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden along with other top ag agency officials in D.C. They provided a detailed update on USDA reorganization plan, New World screwworm, and other top cattle industry priorities.

Ethan Lane and the rest of his NCBA policy team are an extremely talented group who do an excellent job advocating policy for American cattle producers in D.C. However, our local WV voices in the ear of our federal officials are even more effective. After visiting with WV federal offices last spring, they reached out to us multiple times for input regarding issues such as the Argentine beef import debate.

If you're reading this, you're a dues-paying member of WVCA, so maybe the question is: Why should you recruit your friends and neighbors to join WV Cattlemen's Association? One answer is that we go to Charleston and D.C. to educate and advocate for WV cattle producers so you don't have to! 🐮

Welcome Back to GRASS

Kate Fotos West Virginia University Program Coordinator

West Virginia University Extension is excited to announce the return of the Grazing for Appalachian Sustainability (GRASS) Project. Funded by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) program, the GRASS Project is a unique blend of production and marketing support designed to assist producers with all aspects of continuing and improving pasture management. The project aims to provide 135 beef and sheep farms across West Virginia and Virginia with education, technical assistance, and financial incentives to support the implementation and continuation of soil health-focused conservation practices on working lands.

Supported Practices

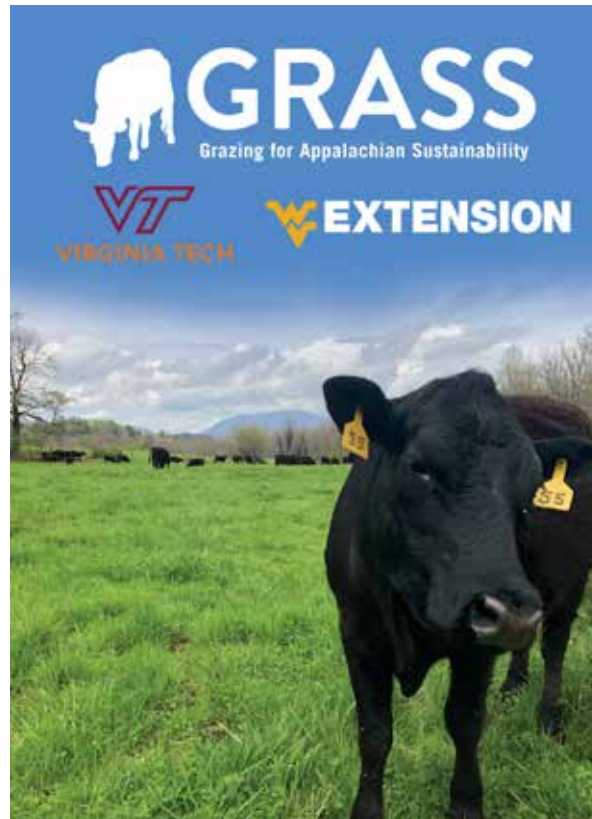
The GRASS Project offers a variety of different conservation practices that support soil health, pasture productivity and forage growth. By increasing forage productivity in pastures, producers can reduce their hay expenses, increase their grazing potential and increase profitability.

The GRASS Project utilizes Natural Resources Conservation Service practice standards and their associated codes, indicated after each practice. The four primary practices are Prescribed Grazing (Code 528), Nutrient Management (Code 590), Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512), and Silvopasture (Code 381). In addition to these four core practices, the GRASS project supports Alley Cropping (Code 311) and Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612).

To assist with the implementation of the core four practices, the project can also support Fencing (Code 382) and Watering Facility (Code 614).

Financial Incentives

The GRASS Project offers accepted cooperators a variety of financial incentives for all aspects of the program. The primary incentive is for implementation, which is a per-acre payment for implementing conservation practices. In addition to the post-implementation incentive, the project has



a grazing management plan incentive to compensate producers for their time and effort during the planning process.

To assist producers with skill development, the GRASS project has both an education incentive and a mentorship incentive. The education incentive is a one-time bonus for attending a grazing school, and it is available to all GRASS cooperators. The mentorship incentive is available to participants who have been implementing good pasture management and are willing to share their knowledge with others through an on-farm field day.

The last category of incentives is for research. All cooperators will be asked to share data regarding practice implementation and pasture utilization with the GRASS project team on a quarterly basis and will be awarded the reporting incentive for their efforts. In addition, all cooperators are eligible for a yearly soil sampling incentive to test their soil. The final research-based incentive is available to cooperators who would like to be interviewed to support the social research performed as part of the GRASS Project.

Research

The GRASS Project's research team is comprised of an interdisciplinary group that will look at how the practices implemented affect soil health and pasture productivity through reported data from producers. Along with grazing research, partner researchers at Virginia Tech are looking at the economic and social sides of the GRASS Project. They will explore how conservation practices impact marketability of beef and sheep as well as what motivation, resources and support farmers need to successfully adopt them.

Marketing Support

Going beyond conservation practices, the GRASS Project strives to help expand market opportunities for participants. The project has partnered with industry leaders to offer alternative market channels to producers and expand the market for beef and sheep. Alongside additional market opportunities, the project is partnering with a marketing agency to provide additional support to participants.

Project Partners

The GRASS Project has brought together leading experts in sustainable grazing and pasture management, marketing and research. This project would not be possible without the dedicated project partners.

- WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design; WVU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources; WVU Extension Small Farm Center
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- West Virginia Conservation Agency
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Hickory Nut Gap
- Farmers United Cattle Company

The GRASS Project is looking for cooperators! If you are interested in learning more or getting involved, please visit the project website at extension.wvu.edu/GRASS, or get in touch by emailing katherine.fotos@mail.wvu.edu. 



West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association Sponsors Youth Cattle Working Contest

Kevin Shaffer WVCA Executive Director

The West Virginia Beef Expo is always a jam-packed event for youth and adults between the meetings, banquet, trade show, shows, sales and grassland and stockman’s contests. In 2026, it became even busier for some youth as the WVCA sponsored a youth cattle working contest for 4-H/FFA youth ages 14-18.

The contest is modeled after a similar program in Virginia, and state champion teams can compete in a national contest. To participate in the state contest, all students and coaches had to be BQA certified and have prior experience handling cattle and using cattle working equipment. Students competed as teams of three and were required to work three head of cattle. Prior to working their group of cattle, teams had to create a cattle processing plan where they were required to read the labels on all the products to be administered and indicate to judges the appropriate dosage and administration. These processing plans were then evaluated and corrected before teams processed cattle.

Teams are evaluated and scored on stockmanship, safety, processing/product administration procedures and time.

Seven teams from six different counties (Braxton, Monongalia, Monroe, Preston, Ritchie and Taylor) participated in the inaugural contest and showed that the future is bright for the beef industry in West Virginia. WVCA extends our appreciation for the coaches and team members that participated and wants to recognize the winning teams.

1st Place: Monroe County A—Caleb Ridgeway, Layton Dudding and Lacy Patriacca

Coach: Emma Wickline

2nd Place: Braxton County—Cole Moss, Kalab Wayne and Gracey Bail

Coach: John Wayne

3rd Place: Taylor County—Dylan Garrison, Madix Mewshaw and Cole Boyles

Coaches: Aaron Garrison and John Murray

WVCA would like to recognize and thank the businesses and organizations that provided the products, facilities, equipment and cattle to make the contest a success.

Merck Animal Health—Zach Bartenslager

Ironsides Animal Health—Oliver Irons

Ag Wholesale—Kevin Britton

C.D. Cole and Melissa Cole Williams


WVU Extension

WVCA would also like to recognize and send special thanks to our judges for donating their time.

Dr. Erika Alt, DVM

Dr. Vanessa Harper, DVM

Jerry Yates

The awards for this year’s contest were sponsored by the West Virginia Beef Industry Council. 



SAVE THE DATE!

AUG 16

4TH ANNUAL WVCA CATTLEMEN'S CLASSIC JUDGING CONTEST

WV State Fairgrounds
Large Stock Arena
Immediately following the conclusion of the market steer show
YOUTH AND ADULT DIVISIONS

OCT 9-10

WVCA FALL TOUR

Southwest Virginia
Highlighted by a stop at NCBA President Gene Copenhaver's operation



WV Refines Animal Disease Emergency Preparedness Plan

Dr. James Maxwell WVDA State Veterinarian

On April 27 at the Guthrie Ag Center outside Charleston, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Animal Health Division hosted a tabletop to exercise a newly developed 3-D plan related to potential incursion of foreign animal diseases such as FMD, ASF, HPAI or novel pathogens impacting animal agriculture. The term 3-D in this context refers to Depopulation, Disposal and Decontamination which can be major challenges for high-index animal disease response actions.


In addition to WVDA, WV Emergency Management Division and WV Department of Environmental Protection officers participated along with key USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services involved for West Virginia. Participation by industry for such workshops is a critical element for plan refinement.

Kevin Shaffer, WV beef industry program

specialist with the West Virginia Cattlemen's Association, participated and provided industry inputs, as well as perspective related to his former role as a West Virginia University extension livestock specialist.

Aviagen Turkeys represented commercial poultry operations with multiple managers participating, including company veterinarian Dr. Rebecca Rink.

Also participating was a WV vendor that provides contracting for decontamination and disinfection services.

An after-action report for the exercise will be assembled and used to modify and strengthen the WV 3-D plan for animal disease response and recovery actions. This exercise was funded through The National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), which was supported in the Farm Bill. 



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