

AG NEWS

USDA Announces BSE Roundtable During Utah Visit

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced May 17, that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will hold a roundtable discussion in Minnesota on June 9 regarding the safety of North American beef and the changing infrastructure of the industry.

Johanns noted that data illustrating the success of USDA's enhanced BSE surveillance program will be part of the roundtable discussion entitled "The Safety of North American Beef and the Economic Effect of BSE on the U.S. Beef Industry."

The Secretary's announcement came during a visit to E.A. Miller beef processing plant in Hyrum, Utah where a large percent of its production was Canadian cattle. During the visit he emphasized the economic hardship that is being done to U.S. cattle ranchers and packers like Miller. Miller cut its workforce by 66 workers because of the lack of production.

The U.S. banned the shipment of Canadian cattle into the US followed the discovery of BSE in Canadian cattle in 2003. "Some refuse to look beyond the short-term economic benefits of keeping the Canadian border closed. They don't see the long-term harm to this industry."

Johanns' visit comes after Utah Cattlemen's Association President, Monty Weston, invited the Secretary to visit a meat packing plant that was suffering because of the ban on Canadian cattle imports. Weston is concerned that if Miller closed, Utah cattle ranchers would incur substantial costs to ship their animals to processing plants farther away.

Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard Blackham supported Secretary Johanns' actions that help protect the Utah cattle and beef packing industries.

"This facility provides important economic benefits to our local economy and to our cattle industry. Without E.A. Miller, Utah cattle producers would have to ship their animals hundreds of miles to other packing plants," Commissioner Blackham said.

The roundtable discussion will be open to the public and held on Thursday, June 9, from 9:30-2:30 at the Andrew Boss Laboratory, University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus, St. Paul, MN. Potential participants will receive invitations.

For more information on Secretary Johanns visit to Utah visit: <http://ag.utah.gov>.



Boyd Chritchfield, US Farm Service Agency, US Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and food, Leonard Blackham, and US Farm Service Agency, Joe Hill at E.A. Miller of Hyrum, Utah.



(above) Secty. Johanns addressing visitors and meeting employees at EA Miller of Hyrum, Utah.(below)



AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER BLACKHAM PITCHES TRADE DURING WATER TALKS WITH GOVERNOR FROM ARGENTINA

Salt Lake City-- Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food (UDAF), Leonard Blackham took the opportunity to pitch expanded agricultural trade with Argentina during talks about water and irrigation issues with one of the country's provincial governors at the State Capitol.

Along with Governor Angel Eduardo Masa, Commissioner Blackham met with nearly a dozen agriculture and other Argentinian officials who traveled to Utah to investigate methods to improve water and irrigation practices.

"Our meeting was beneficial for both countries," said Commissioner Blackham. "Our conversation about water resources opened the way for possible expanded trade relations between Argentina and Utah," he added.

Commissioner Blackham, along with Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stephens and Marketing Director, Jed Christensen, outlined Utah's highly successful partnership between the UDAF, Utah State University Extension Service, the Soil Conservation Districts, and the U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service. The partnership helps Utah farmers and ranchers use water more efficiently, as well as put valuable conservation practices to use.

Commissioner Blackham also outlined the department's ARDL (Agriculture Resource Development Loan) program that makes low-interest loans available to farmers to develop or improve irrigation systems.

Both leaders commented on the possibility of expanding export efforts during future meetings. The meeting was facilitated by the Utah Department of Community and Economic Development.

Angel Masa is governor of the Northern province of La Rioja in Argentina which mainly exports olives and grapes. Argentina's worldwide exports include beef, olives, grapes, soybeans, corn and tobacco. Utah's worldwide exports include livestock, alfalfa hay, dairy products and other items.



(left) Angel Eduardo Masa, Governor of Argentina's La Rioja province, accepts two gifts from Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard Blackham; a book about Utah and a hand made silver and gold belt buckle.



Second from left: Commissioner Leonard Blackham, and Deputy Commissioner, Kyle Stephens discuss water and irrigation issues with 12 members of an agriculture delegation from Argentina.

WEST NILE VIRUS MOSQUITO CONTROL FUNDS AWARDED



The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF), working with local and state health agencies, awarded nearly \$300,000 to 18 counties or agencies to help expand the fight against West Nile Virus in Utah. The funds are to be used to create new, or expand existing, mosquito control districts.

“This is an important program that can help limit the spread of West Nile Virus among people and horses,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard M. Blackham. “Not only do the counties or mosquito abatement districts receive these funds, but they also receive sound technical advice on how best to control mosquito populations,” he added.

This is the second year that the UDAF has awarded such funds. Last year the UDAF granted \$500,000 to the effort.

“This program is especially important this year because of the increased moisture throughout Utah,” said Plant Industry Director, Clair Allen. “The districts need special help to locate and treat areas that could be mosquito breeding grounds,” Allen added.

The UDAF along with representatives from the Utah Department of Health and the Salt Lake Mosquito Abatement District, reviewed numerous applications and identified 18 entities that qualified for funding. They are:

Beaver County	\$4,000	Summit Co. MAD	\$25,000
Bluff City,	2,976	Sanpete County,	12,500
Cache County MAD,	60,000	Sevier County,	17,250
Carbon County,	10,000	Southwest MAD,	21,000
Daggett County MAD,	15,000	Uintah MAD	15,000
Emery County,	9,000	Wasatch County,	35,000
Grand County MAD,	5,000	Wayne County/towns	10,000
Juab County,	30,000	UDAF Division of	
Piute County and towns	9,700	Animal Industry	5,000
Rich County,	10,000		

The listed counties and districts will contribute matching funds to help expand the amount of funds available for mosquito abatement work. The funds are expected to be distributed in the next few weeks, with mosquito control work to begin as soon as possible.

ADVICE FOR UTAH HORSE OWNERS

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) is strongly advising horse owners throughout the state to protect their animals by vaccinating them for the West Nile Virus as soon as possible this year.

If you vaccinated your horse last year with the recommended number of shots, then a single “booster” shot will be sufficient this year. If you have not vaccinated your animal yet, you are advised to get a series of two shots administered three to six weeks apart. You can obtain the vaccine from most local veterinarians.

Horse owners can protect their animals by applying approved repellants to the animals and by controlling mosquitoes and mosquito breeding areas. Horse owners may also protect the animals by putting them in the barn or other enclosed structures.

For more information about the West Nile Virus, please visit the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food’s web page at: www.ag.utah.gov/ or the Utah Department of Health’s web page: www.health.utah.gov/



U.S. SUPREME COURT RULES BEEF CHECKOFF PROGRAM CONSTITUTIONAL

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2005 -- Today, by a vote of 6-3, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985, overturning lower court decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit and the U.S. District Court for South Dakota, which ruled the measure unconstitutional.

As a result of this decision, the Beef Checkoff Program will continue without interruption. USDA is reviewing this decision to determine its implications for other first amendment challenges to checkoff programs.

Under the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985, the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board develops budgets and awards contracts to carry out a coordinated program designed to strengthen the position of beef in the marketplace. One such contract resulted in the highly recognizable "Beef It's What's for Dinner" campaign.

The mandatory program is funded by an assessment of \$1 per head collected each time cattle are sold. All producers owning and marketing cattle, regardless of the size of their operation or the value of their cattle, must pay the assessment. A comparable assessment is collected on all imported cattle, beef and beef products.

Visit www.ag.utah.gov for more information.

UTAH RECEIVES \$175,000 FROM USDA IN EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM FUNDING

Salt Lake City, May 23, 2005 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced that USDA will begin issuing payments of \$175,000 in Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funding to Cache County due to flooding. This funding is provided by the 2005 Emergency Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations Act, signed by President Bush on Oct. 13, 2004, under which \$150 million is authorized for ECP.

"This is one of several conservation programs that provide funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate and strengthen environmental stewardship of their lands," Johanns said. "These new ECP funds will be used to help farmers and ranchers rehabilitate farmland damaged by flood and other natural disasters in recent years." The ECP program gives producers additional resources to remove debris from farmland, restore fences and conservation structures, provide water for livestock in drought situations and grade and shape farmland damaged by a natural disaster. The program is administered by FSA's state and county committees. Locally-elected county committees are authorized to implement ECP for all disasters except drought, which is authorized at the national office of FSA. Eligible producers will receive cost-share assistance of up to 75 percent of the cost of the approved practice, as determined by FSA county committees.

Producers should check with their local FSA offices regarding ECP sign-up periods, which are set by the county FSA committees. For a producer's land to be eligible, the disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would impair or endanger the land and affect its productive capacity. Conservation problems existing prior to the applicable disaster are ineligible for ECP assistance.

USDA offers additional programs to help farmers and ranchers recover from damages caused by natural disasters. These programs include the Emergency Loan Program, Federal Crop Insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.