

AGRICULTURE

Golden Plains Area Newsletter

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July-September 2026

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Guest Author: Salley Jones-Diamond AES Director of Crop Testing

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AG BUSINESS

Cattle on Feed Report, New World Screw Worm and the Meat Demand Monitor- No Dull Days in June

LMIC by Dr. Glynn Tonse, Professor KSU Agriculture Economics

As 2026 proceeds, there is no shortage of issues to monitor in the broader beef-cattle complex. There are three updates on the broader beef-cattle complex worth noting.

First, the latest USDA NASS Cattle on Feed report published last week presented a mixed set of signals to the marketplace that is likely net neutral in impact. While May 1st inventories (+2%) are in line with pre-report expectations, placements in May were down 10% (versus an average expected decline of 6%), and marketings in May were down 12% (versus an average expected decline of 11%). On balance, these estimates align with ongoing efforts by feeders to “stretch in-hand cattle” over more days and make use of what are widely regarded as limited placement prospects. This also warrants a prudent reminder that measuring beef production, not just live animal head count, is critical for supply assessment.

Meanwhile, the official New World Screwworm cases reported by USDA APHIS (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animals/animal-health/livestock-and-poultry-disease/current-status/us-confirmed-cases-new-world>) prior to June 12th. While this situation is bound to evolve, it is nice to see limited reported cases in recent days. What is perhaps comparatively overlooked, but critically important to appreciate, is the lack of a food safety concern and hence the reasonable expectation that NW Screwworm developments will not directly have an impact on consumer beef demand.

This brings us to the third and perhaps most economically important update – consumer frustrations with their finances continue to grow by a larger subset of the U.S. population. Specifically, the latest Meat Demand Monitor (MDM) base report (<https://www.agmanager.info/livestock-meat/meat-demand/monthly-meat-demand-monitor-survey-data/meat-demand-monitor-may-2026>) notes 39% of U.S. residents indicate their household finances are worse than in May of 2025 – the highest on record for May since the MDM series launched in 2020. This corresponds with weaker beef demand per the MDM for the month of May and is a cautionary point regarding the broader risk at hand to beef demand’s historically strong run that truly has been the largest economic force underpinning cattle and beef prices.

Indeed, there is no shortage of issues to continue monitoring this summer. Moving past June, I hope we can be better at appreciate the myriad of forces that impact the industry’s economic viability.

Sheep and Lamb Market Livestock Marketing Information Center

The sheep and lamb market has seen strong prices with the lamb cutout value, slaughter lamb, and feeder lamb prices rising since the start of the year and well above year-ago levels. The lamb cutout value has risen about \$0.86 per cwt (+16%) since the start of the year to \$628 per cwt last week. Compared to a year ago, last week’s price was up \$170 per cwt (+37%) and prices have not been this high since October 2021 when they were over \$635 per cwt. Slaughter lamb prices have also moved higher since the start of the year from about \$220 per cwt to last week’s price of \$288 per cwt, an increase of \$68 per cwt (+31%). Last week’s slaughter lamb price was more than \$116 per cwt (+68%) above the same week last year. In mid-May, the slaughter lamb price reached a record of \$308 per cwt. Feeder lamb prices have moved

seasonally lower from a record high of \$445 per cwt in early February to last week's price of \$358 per cwt, a decline of \$97 per cwt (21%). Last week's feeder lamb price was \$108 per cwt (+43%) above the same week last year. As sheep and lamb prices track well above year-ago levels, year-to-date weekly lamb production is down about 5 million pounds (-8%) from the same period last year. The decline in lamb production is driven mainly by lower weekly dressed weights, which are averaging about 60 pounds through early June compared to 64 pounds during the same period a year ago. Year-to date through early June, the number of sheep and lambs being slaughtered is down about 23,000 head (-3%) from last year. Dressed weights are likely to continue tracking below year-ago levels, and sheep and lamb slaughter are expected to move seasonally lower through the third quarter. This is expected to keep lamb production below year-ago levels through the third quarter and support sheep and lamb prices.

AGRONOMY

Hail Damage and Crop Recovery: Agronomic Considerations **Sally Jones-Diamond, AES Director of Crops Testing**

Hail storms have been prevalent this season and can be a major risk for crop producers from May into October. While the damage can be very disheartening, many times the crops have a good chance of still producing a worthwhile harvest of hay or grain if the damage did not occur at or very near harvest maturity. Some things to consider when assessing damages and during crop recovery are outlined below.

Assessing Hail Damage

It is important when assessing hail damaged crops to not make decisions on the crop immediately after the storm during your first look. Emotions are high, and damage isn't always as bad as it seems. It takes a few days (~5-10) to determine whether the growing point survived, as symptoms of injury and regrowth become more apparent. After that time, you can see if plants are starting to regrow and easily identify damaged or dead tissues that have turned brown. In corn, milo, and forage grasses, the growing point will be below the soil surface until about the 6-leaf stage. To check the viability of the growing point in grasses, you can cut a stalk lengthwise and inspect the tissue color(s) inside – if it is turning brown instead of white or yellow, the growing point (and therefore plant) is likely dead and will start to rot. In beans, if the stem is severed below the cotyledons (the first set of rounded leaves above the ground), it is unlikely the plant will survive.

You can estimate the leaf loss percentage visually and use a leaf loss or defoliation chart based on the growth stage of the plant to determine the estimated yield loss. The [USDA-FCIC Crop Loss Adjustment Standards Handbooks](#) are excellent resources, along with various university factsheets from the High Plains states. Stand losses can be assessed by taking a stand count in a few random parts of the damaged field and seeing how many plants in a row of 10-20 plants are dead/dying, or severely stunted. Stand losses of 50% in irrigated corn at the 10-leaf stage will typically result in a yield reduction in the 20-30% range, due to compensation by surviving plants and uniformity of the damage. The yield reduction due to stand loss increases as you get closer to flowering and grain-fill periods. Plants are most sensitive to leaf

losses at flowering. In grasses, if new leaves are trapped in the whorl, most of the time they will eventually break loose, but stunting or plant death can occur in severe cases. Hot and dry weather usually helps with this issue.

Managing for Crop Recovery or New Crop Seeding

Weed management becomes even more important after a hailstorm as ground shading is usually significantly reduced, and weeds also have fresh moisture for new growth. Be cautious about which herbicides you apply while plants are recovering as this can stress plants further or cause more injury (especially growth regulators and HPPD/pigment inhibitors). Be mindful of annual application rate restrictions if you plan on using the same chemistry again, and of pre-harvest intervals for late-season applications.

Many producers may want to apply fungicides during recovery to help plants resist diseases. Remember that these will not provide any benefit for bacterial diseases (such as Goss's Wilt, blights, or leaf streaks) that typically enter through plant wounds within a day or two of damage. If the storm brought significant rain followed by a period of more rain or cool, wet weather that promotes disease development, then fungicide should be considered if disease pressure is present in the field. Application decisions also depend on the yield potential of the remaining crop and if the disease present could cause further significant yield reductions.

If the crop was a total loss, consider seeding a forage or alternative crop to help with ground cover and weed control if crop insurance allows. Forage options such as oats or sorghum-sudangrass, or a grain/forage millet are options depending on the amount of growing season left. Be aware of herbicide carry-over issues before planting a new crop.

Dealing with the aftermath of hail storms can be overwhelming and stressful. Remember that help is available. Local [Certified Crop Advisers](#), university Extension specialists, your crop insurance company, and FSA offices can provide guidance as you evaluate your options. Many producers find it helpful to lean on neighbors, friends, and trusted colleagues for advice, perspective, or simply a chance to vent. Free and confidential support is also available through resources such as the AgriStress 24/7 Helpline (833-897-2474).

LIVESTOCK





Matching Cattle Water Needs and Tank Size

Scott Stinnett, 4-H Youth and Livestock Specialist

Summer is in full swing and we recently saw our first 100° day and producers should be focusing on water. Water is the most important nutrient in the cattle diet. Not only does it help cattle to regulate body temperature, but water has several functions from providing the proper environment for ruminant microbes, to acting as internal body lubrication, and a catalyst for biochemical reactions.

Ensuring an appropriate amount of clean, fresh water is imperative. Understanding the water requirements of cattle compared to the availability of water will help a producer determine what is required to meet the needs of their herd.

Water intake is variable depending on multiple factors. Animal size, stage of production, ambient air temperature and feed type can affect the daily water needs. Growing cattle such as calves under 600 pounds, could need as little as 10 gallons per day if the temperature stays in the low 80°s but can increase to over 15 gallons per day if temperatures increase into the upper 90°s¹. For bred or lactating cows, water intake is even greater. The minimum is 20 gallons per day when high temperatures are above 90°.

A good rule of thumb for days with highs over 90° is to provide 2 gallons of water per 100 pounds of body weight². Using this rule, producers need to calculate their herds daily needs. For example, a pasture with 100 head of lactating cows weighing an average of 1,200 pounds would need to provide 2,400 gallons of water per day plus enough water for calves.

To determine if a pasture has enough water available, finding the capacity of the stock tanks in the pasture can be done with some quick math. Start by finding the volume of the tank. The formula for a round tank is: $\pi (3.14) \times \text{tank diameter squared} \div 4 \times \text{water depth} = \text{volume (in cubic feet)}$. Using a 12 foot diameter round tank that is 2 feet deep as an example, we can plug in the appropriate numbers: $3.14 \times 12^2 \div 4 \times 2 = 226.08 \text{ cubic feet}$. Each cubic foot of volume equals 7.48 gallons of water. To finish up the calculations, multiply the volume by 7.48 gallons, and the example 12 foot round tank could hold 1,691.08 gallons of water: $226.08 \text{ cubic feet} \times 7.48 \text{ gallons per cubic foot} = 1691.08 \text{ gallons}$.

Round Livestock Tank Size and Water Capacity (Approximations for 24 inch depth)				
Tank Size (Diameter)	Capacity (Gallons)		Tank Size (Diameter)	Capacity (Gallons)
6 ft.	395		12 ft.	1690
8 ft.	718		15 ft.	2640
9 ft.	920		18 ft.	3810
10 ft.	1000		21 ft.	5175
11 ft.	1400		24 ft.	6750

Water is the most important and valuable nutrient. Without it, dehydration and the cascade of problems that can follow can lead to weight loss, health issues and even death. Knowing the amount of water that can be provided and matched to the herd's needs will ensure a healthy, productive herd.

Resources

¹Rasby, R. & Walz, T. (2011). Water requirements for beef cattle. University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension. NebGuide G2060. Lincoln, Nebraska. <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2060.pdf>

²Dyer, T.G. (2017) Water requirements and quality issues for cattle. University of Georgia Extension. Special Bulletin 56. Athens, Georgia. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/SB%2056_5.PDF



Nitrates in Livestock Feeds

Travis Taylor, Area Livestock Specialist

Dry weather has left Colorado crop and livestock producers pondering what to do with failing crops and in search of alternative livestock forages. Plants under optimal growing conditions convert nitrogen from the soil into stored protein. Stressed growing conditions, such as the current dry weather, interfere with a plant's ability to convert nitrogen and it accumulates as stored nitrate. Forage crops, especially grass types (corn, sorghum, barley, wheat and millet) can store excess nitrates in plant tissue when the growing plant is stressed. Other plants like pigweed, wild sunflower and kochia are known to store nitrates. Normally, livestock convert nitrate to nitrite, and it is excreted in the urine. However, excessive levels that animals cannot process are absorbed into the blood stream and block oxygen transport, thus causing the animal to become oxygen deficient. Feed containing extreme nitrates is toxic, but even elevated levels when fed will cause poor performance and aborted pregnancies. Individual animal response to nitrate levels and actual toxic levels can be different for each animal.

When should you worry about nitrate in feedstuff? Conditions such as drought, hail, hot winds and even extended periods of cloudy weather when harvesting can influence forage nitrate levels. Other contributing factors such as high levels of fertilizer or manure application, as well as the timing of herbicide application can compound nitrate problems. In short, if a forage has been significantly stressed during growth, it is important to test for nitrates. A diphenylamine test can be done and returns a quick positive blue or purple color in plant tissue containing higher nitrate levels but cannot determine a feed's actual nitrate level. Forages that test positive should have a more detailed qualitative analysis test done to determine actual nitrate levels. The Colorado State University Extension fact sheet found online at <https://extension.colostate.edu/resource/nitrate-poisoning/> contains guidance for testing and information about what levels are considered safe for different classes of livestock.

It is important to remember that forages that test higher in nitrates can be utilized, but they may require some additional processing and especially mixing to be fed. Standing forages may be sparsely grazed as plants tend to store excess nitrates in the stalk of the plant. If being baled, failed crops might be swathed at a taller height to leave more stalk behind and thus lower the nitrate level in bales or silage. Additionally, non-pregnant livestock can tolerate higher nitrate levels, but such adaptation takes time. In dry years, producers should make sure to test for nitrates particularly when harvesting failing crops or purchasing stressed feeds. For additional information on nitrates in feeds contact your local CSU Extension Office.



Fly Control and Management

Scott Stinnett, 4-H Youth and Livestock Specialist

New World Screwworm (NWS) has been found in the United States earlier this summer and has been found in several counties in Texas and one in New Mexico. This has prompted State and Federal responses including quarantines and movement restrictions of animals in and out of those areas. In areas where NWS has historically appeared in past, producers should be reviewing their fly control and management practices.

The general impact of flies on beef cattle has been studied multiple times over the past 50 years. As fly numbers increase on individual animals, weight gains become reduced compared to animals treated with fly controls. These decreased weight gains equate financially to reduced revenue as animals are lighter weight at sale time. It also affects breeding animals including growing bred heifers and nursing cows trying to maintain or increase body condition.

Flies are not always the easiest to manage but can be managed to a tolerable level. Using multiple products and methods can reduce the fly load on cattle quite significantly. Using insecticides is the primary method of fly control. The goal is to treat cattle prior to fly levels reaching the Economic Injury Level (EIL) and to break the life cycle of the fly species. Insecticides can be applied as liquid spray, powder, oil or on impregnated ear tags (fly tags). Many general parasiticides for cattle include an anthelmintic to control parasitic worms along with an insecticide and can be applied as a liquid pour on product, injectable solution or slow-release bolus.

Insect growth regulators (IGRs) are products meant to prevent flies from reproducing, breaking the fly life cycle. IGRs can be given as a fed supplement or pour-on product. Other management practices can also help to limit flies. Rotation of insecticides helps prevent resistance to the products over generations of flies. Proper management of manure, compost piles and other materials such as decomposing feeds limit places where flies can lay eggs and larvae can live.

NWS has shined a light on wound care. Open wounds are attractive to NWS to lay their eggs which hatch out NWS larvae that do significant harm to the host animal. Managing wounds becomes imperative to prevent NWS infestations. Wounds may be intentional, such as those from castration and de-horning, or caused unintentionally from hazards found in grazing areas, corrals, and handling facilities. They can also include wounds from fly bites of blood feeding species like horn flies and stable flies. Identifying and treating wounds effectively to heal as quickly as possible is key to preventing attracting NWS.

Whether it is reduced weight gain, the possibility of disease, or vigilance against NWS, flies are not only an annoyance to cattle but have a negative impact financially. Proper fly control counters those negatives and has a positive impact on the bottom line of the beef enterprise. If you have questions on which are the most effective products, consult your veterinarian. If you suspect NWS on your cattle or any animals you encounter, contact your veterinarian and report it to the state department of agriculture immediately.

HORTICULTURE

Golden Plains Area Extension Site Visits for July 2026 Linda Langelo, Area Horticulture Specialist

Golden Plains Area Extension Horticulturist, Linda Langelo, will be visiting the following Extension Offices on these dates in July:

Yuma County Office - Wednesday, July 1, 2026
Kit Carson County Office – Wednesday, July 8, 2026
Washington County Office– Wednesday, July 15, 2026
Phillips County Office – Thursday, July 23, 2026

I am continuing to ask for your cooperation in bringing a sample to the office as the first step in diagnosing your plant problem. Other options include virtual conferencing via FaceTime before scheduling a site visit. You may also reach me through Facebook; please message me on the Garden the Plains Facebook page. You are invited to send a photo(s) to the following email addresses: Linda.Langelo@colostate.edu or Jeannie.Lambertson@colostate.edu

When you drop off a sample, please follow these instructions:

For Trees and Shrubs: Take a 6-inch cut and place it into an envelope; avoid using plastic bags.

For Vegetables: Bring in a sample.

For Flowers: Bring in a sample of the flower portion of the flower stalk. before growing into each other.

Succulent Workshop: Learn the Art of Propagation in a Hands-on Workshop Linda Langelo, Area Horticulture Specialist

Come join in on this succulent workshop on September 9 from 10 AM to noon in the conference meeting room in the courthouse annex next to the Extension Office in Washington County. Have you ever wondered how to grow new plants from a single succulent leaf or stem cutting? This interactive workshop will give you an educational, hands-on approach.

You will be introduced to the basic biology of succulent growth and reproduction. Practice propagation techniques using leaves, stem cuttings, offsets, and plantlets. Learn proper soil selection, watering practices, light requirements, and container choices.

You will be introduced to the different types of tropical plants you can grow indoors. Then we can explore the different ways they are propagated. You will get the chance to practice in the workshop and take a succulent home with you.

A variety of succulents will be used to demonstrate four basic propagation techniques. You will learn how to successfully grow succulents. You will be taught to identify mistakes that lead to rot, stretching, and poor plant health.

Every participant will get to take a succulent home with them. Spaces are limited. Please contact Jeannie Lambertson in the Washington County Office to reserve your place. There is a minimal cost for the workshop. Please call (970)345-2287.

Firewise Techniques

Linda Langelo, Area Horticulture Specialist

The best way to mitigate fire on your property is to remove the fuel. The fact of the matter is, according to the Colorado State Forest Service, homes are not ignited by direct contact with flames, but from the firebrands, the embers that precede and follow the passage of the flame front.

Adding 1/8 metal mesh on the outside of your vents can prevent embers from entering. Build resistance to heat transference with double and triple pane windows. Moreover, think of wood fences as a wick attached to the side of your home, which sets the home on fire. Make sure that all flammable materials are cleared away from the home, such as a propane tank on the outdoor grill.

Any property owner needs to think about defensible zones around their property to reduce potential fuel. Within five feet of the home, do not plant any plant material. That first five feet needs to be bare soil, small gravel, or cement. Certainly, no woody plants within zero to five feet. Then, five to 15 feet away, remove trees that interfere with your eaves. Clear trees within 15 feet of your home. This is very conservative in wildfire-prone areas.

Thinning large trees that could carry fire to the structure within five to thirty feet helps mitigate fire. If there are smaller trees that are well-maintained, those may be acceptable. Unless they are close to a larger tree and/or under a larger tree. This creates ladder fuel. Proper spacing is important. In each defensible zone the tree canopy needs to be a certain distance. In zone 2 the 15-30 feet from the house, the trees need to be 15 feet apart, measured from the edge of one crown to the edge of the next. Do not measure trunk to trunk. For more in-depth information go to the following website:

<https://csfs.colostate.edu/csfspublications/#mitigation> .

If you have any tall trees on your property, be sure to remove low hanging branches that are 6-10 feet from the ground. Other ladder fuels under trees are vines, tall grasses, or ground covers. Think of pine needles and leaves as fuel. They create embers that fly to other areas.

Maintaining your lawn by watering and mowing will help mitigate fire. More than just managing your property, get together with neighbors and your community and look for ways to manage and mitigate potential fire damage.

RANCHER'S PEN OF
THREE
LINCOLN COUNTY
FAIR-AUGUST 6TH,
2026

ENTRY DEADLINE IS AUGUST 1ST 2026, BY
3:00 P.M. ADDITIONAL INFO OR QUESTIONS

EMAIL: laraypatton@gmail.com

CHECK IN FROM 7:00AM-9:30AM

Open to Lincoln County
and surrounding county
residents! \$15 entry fee
per pen added to
jackpot.
\$2,000 minimum
jackpot guranteed!

"I do not believe there was ever a life more
attractive than
LIFE ON A CATTLE FARM...."

-Theodore Roosevelt