

2026 IDAHO FIRE SEASON

**Hop acres
rise, 15**

**Beef industry
impact, 18**

**Friends of
Agriculture,
28**



Balancing growth and the future of farmland

For farmers and ranchers, land is more than a place to grow a crop or raise livestock. It is where families build their livelihood and hope to create an opportunity for the next generation.

Across the country, competition for that land is growing. Housing, businesses, solar projects and data centers all demand more space.

At the same time, high land values and a difficult farm economy are making it harder for

farmers to buy or rent the land they need—and harder for families to turn down development offers that may provide more financial certainty than farming does today.

That challenge is compounded by the fact that nearly four out of every five rented acres of farmland are owned by non-operating landlords, leaving decisions about much of the land farmers depend on with people who may have little connection to agriculture.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Matt Dorsey

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Tales from Idaho's 2026 wildfire season

In a previous column this year, I wrote about a University of Idaho ag research station rising from the ashes, like a phoenix.

How could I have known that in the second half of July we would be dealing with devastating fires that have scorched hundreds of thousands of acres that will also need to rise from the ashes.

This year was another bad wildfire season in Idaho, and the entire West for that matter. That's bad news for the ranchers and communities who not only have to deal with the fires

themselves, but the aftermath as well.

When a wildfire rips through an area, the impacts are terrible. Imagine being the person who has to see and deal with the cows destroyed by the fire.

Or, imagine the feeling of someone who sees their home, property or livelihood consumed by flames.

Those are some of the immediate impacts of wildfires in Idaho. Many if not most people probably don't understand the longer-lasting

See **DORSEY**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Fire fighting vs. fire managing

Not every occupation stirs the same feelings in Americans. Nearly all provide value (insert lawyer joke here), but not all move our hearts equally.

As a child, I dreamed of being a cowboy, of course, but also a police officer, a soldier, a doctor, and a firefighter. My toys were guns, tractors, and adventure gear, not calculators and actuarial tables.

Surveys of Americans' admiration for common professions confirm what our children tell us: doctors, nurses, first responders,

farmers, ranchers, scientists, and teachers top the list.

This past summer made me reflect on one profession in particular: our firefighters, especially our rangeland firefighters. We breathed far too much smoke this summer; thank goodness for the brave men and women who worked so hard to protect us.

Here is where it gets controversial. Firefighters rank near the top of those lists; however,

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COVER: This photo shows some of the aftermath of the Tartar Fire near Weiser. See page 4 for a story on Idaho's 2026 wildfire season. Photo by Paul Boehlke

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A LOOK AT THE 2026 WILDFIRE SEASON

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

It was another tough wildfire season in Idaho this year, as about 700,000 acres burned across the state.

The impact from these fires will be felt for several years, especially for ranchers who lost significant amounts of rangeland and will struggle to find feed for their cattle.

The Big Grass Fire, which burned 579,000 acres in Oregon and Owyhee County in Idaho, and the Tartar Fire, which scorched 158,000 acres near Weiser, were two of the mega fires that garnered headlines in 2026. But there were plenty of smaller fires that impacted lots of ranchers and small communities.

"No matter what size a fire is, if it affects your rangeland, it's a major impact for the year, even if it affects just one rancher," said Owyhee County rancher Brenda Richards, who helped organize meetings between landowners and state and federal officials to explore programs and assistance that is available to landowners impacted by the fires.

Richards, coordinator for the Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership, was kept busy this year organizing meetings. "If you start adding up all the smaller fires around the state, this has been a huge fire season," she said.

Amidst the destruction caused by wildfires this year, there have been numerous reports of ranchers joining forces with some neighbors and community mem-

bers to put up heroic fights against the flames.

The Tartar Fire near Weiser is an example.

Washington County ranchers Cody Chandler and Tristan Winegar, who are both Idaho Farm Bureau Federation board members, fought the fire alongside neighbors, professional firefighters, community members and fellow Farm Bureau members from other counties.

Both said they were greatly encouraged by the support they and others received as they spent the better part of five days fighting the flames and even helping save some neighbors' homes.

They, and others, fought on despite the danger, and fatigue, involved. Winegar remembers seeing 50-foot-tall bright red flames coming over a nearby hill, "and they were moving fast. I never was afraid, but it felt overwhelming to see that coming at you."

Chandler and his family fought the fire pretty much for five straight days. "It was kind of a brutal experience," he said.

When the fire started to burn toward some neighbors' homes, he helped protect those structures, even by, at one point, putting himself in-between the flames and homes, furiously battling to keep the fire away.

He got singed hair all over his body for those efforts, but he sees that as a small price to pay for saving the homes. He played down his role in saving the homes, saying that's what any normal person would do.





These photos show some of the aftermath of the Tartar Fire. ABOVE: Photo by Cody Chandler; **LEFT:** Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo

“When you drive by and you see houses about to burn and you know you have the ability to stop them from burning, that’s what you do,” he said. “Yeah, it was hot and it was hard to breathe, but it is what it is.”

After the fire was out and they had time to reflect, both Winegar and Chandler said they were heartened by the way the community came together. Not everyone was able to be on the fire line, but plenty of people did what they could, including keeping those who did fight the flames fed and cared for.

One day after returning for a rest from fighting the fire, Chandler, Winegar and the crew they were with found 40 wrapped cheeseburgers, with all the toppings, waiting for them in a cooler.

“Not one of them went to waste, I can tell you that,” Winegar said. “That didn’t happen just once. Every day when I came home, there was something on my step, from somebody. It meant just as much as somebody being out there on the line with us.”

“The outpouring of love and support from the community has been phenomenal,” he added. “It gives you hope for humanity.”

“People would show up out on the fire and give us hamburgers, snacks, and I had no idea where it was coming from until after the fire I realized there was this thing going on behind the scenes that was just amazing,” Chandler said.

“It was just amazing how people rallied together,” he added. “Family, friends, neighbors; we know that when you need them, they show up.”

Continued from page 2

That raises an important question: How do we make room for growth while ensuring America continues to have the farmland needed to feed our nation?

Since 1982, developed land in the United States has increased by nearly 48 million acres, an area roughly the size of Nebraska. During the same period, cropland declined by 55.7 million acres.

Not every acre that leaves agricultural production is permanently lost. Farmland may shift between crops, pasture, and conservation uses depending on markets and the needs of a farm.

Commercial and real estate development is different: it's much more likely to be permanent. Once farmland is covered by roads, buildings or other infrastructure, it is unlikely to return to agriculture.

Sadly, we can all point to places where farms used to be. The impact is felt most at the local level.

A solar project, data center or new subdivision may represent a small piece of America's total land base, but it's not small to the farmers and ranchers already competing for limited space.

Paving over farmland with expensive development projects can raise nearby land values, splinter off fields, and raise costs for water, power and other infrastructure.

Productive farmland is critical to our nation's economic and food security. When farms disappear, we also risk losing the businesses and rural communities that depend on a strong farm economy.

'There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Farmers and other landowners must be able to make decisions about their own property, and rural communities should have a meaningful voice in projects that will shape them for decades.'

Farmers understand that communities need housing, dependable energy, and new opportunities for economic growth. Data centers and solar projects can bring jobs, investment, and tax revenue to rural communities.

The key is to plan wisely and consider the long-term impact of where development takes place.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Farmers and other landowners must be able to make decisions about their own property, and rural communities should have a meaningful voice in projects that will shape them for decades.

Whenever possible, development should avoid productive farmland, minimize the fragmentation of working farms, and consider whether land could return to agricultural use in the future.

We can support economic development while also recognizing that productive farmland is a limited resource.

The best way to preserve farmland is to make sure farmers and ranchers can afford to keep farming it.

Farm families are dealing with record high costs, tight margins, and land prices that often reflect what a developer can pay rather than what a farmer can earn from a crop.

When farming does not provide a sustainable return, families may have few choices when a development offer arrives.

Farmers need a modernized farm bill, stronger markets, a reliable workforce, and a regulatory environment that allows them to remain competitive.

Young and beginning farmers also need a realistic path to access land. Nearly 40% of U.S. agricultural land is rented, so decisions made by landowners, trusts and heirs play a major role in determining who gets the opportunity to farm.

The decisions we make today will have consequences for generations.

Keeping productive land in agriculture will help rural communities thrive and ensure farmers and ranchers can continue producing the food, fuel and fiber America's families depend on. ■

DORSEY

Continued from page 2

impacts, which include loss of rangeland. For a rancher, and the communities they help support, that's no small thing.

The Big Grass Fire and Tartar Fire were the two biggest wildfires in Idaho this year, but there were plenty of smaller ones and the impacts they had on individual ranches was significant.

These are the two fires I can give first-hand accounts of because

I was there. But the story is the same for all the other fires, even the much smaller ones.

No matter what size a fire is, if it affects your rangeland, it's a major impact for you.

Among the devastation caused by wildfires this year, there have been numerous examples of ranchers and communities coming together to fight the flames and support one another. What happened in the Weiser area is one example.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members joined with other ranchers, neighbors, community members, firefighters and even people from other county Farm Bureaus to put up a monumental fight against the Tartar Fire.

I was there and witnessed it, as was CEO Zak Miller. Words can't do justice to that effort.

Using shovels, weed blowers, rakes and rubber flappers, this unlikely group of 20-30 volunteers fought hard to save their communities. We worked all day and night to put the fire out. For many of us, it was the first time on a fire line.

It wasn't easy and, laboring and breathing slower, we soon realized the sheer magnitude of the fire. But there remained a "Let's get it done" attitude.

In some areas of the fire, there was total destruction of corrals, barns, scales and equipment, but there were also hundreds of other things surrounded by black but still standing. There is a story behind every one of them and it involves volunteers putting up a long, difficult fight.

Weiser rancher and IFBF board member Cody Chandler spent the first 14 hours saving neighbors' houses and infrastructure away from his own ranch. He later realized that his wife and kids had loaded up their pickup with personal effects because his own home was in jeopardy.

They and Cody's brothers ended up stopping the fire literally feet away from his own home, all while he was helping to save dozens of neighbors' homes.

Cody ended up with a lot of singed hair as he helped save the homes of several neighbors. He at times literally put himself between the flames and their homes. He's not the only one that did that.

As an example of what they faced: Imagine spending 36 hours being up and getting the fire put out and after four hours of sleep, waking up with a phone call saying that the fire was going again.

One of the issues that this year's wildfires once again brought to the forefront is the need to actually put the fires out as opposed to just "managing" them, which apparently means drawing lines on a map and deciding where the easy place to fight the fire will be.

As Farm Bureau members, their neighbors, communities and other volunteers proved this fire season, fires can be put out, not "managed," if there is the will and effort to do so.

That involves not only local, coordinated efforts, but getting the locals – they, by the way, know where the best places are to fight a fire and don't have to rely on a map – in charge of resources to get the fire put out.

Once a fire gets to the size that the Tartar and Big Grass fires got, incident command units step in and tie up resources.

Because of what happened this fire season, we're on our way to some very good policy discussions on this issue. We're going to keep plugging away at it and the result, I believe, will be amazing.

We're going to emphasize local decisions and coordination and change from managing fires to putting them out and then working on rehabilitation after they're out. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

I have never found "fire managers" on them, and that matters, because words matter.

An unplanned fire is dangerous, destructive, and unpredictable. It is an uninvited enemy, which is why we use words like "attack" and "fight."

The rules of engagement are simple: first, protect life; second, protect homes and structures. I used to believe the third and fourth were to limit the fire's size and put it out. Sadly, that no longer seems to be the case.

I'm not a fire expert, but I can still question fire management strategies over firefighting. This summer, hundreds of thousands of acres were either allowed to burn or intentionally set ablaze under management plans.

Why reignite fires along lines built and used hours earlier to put out a blaze? Why dismiss the land as "just grass" and burn

it to complete a grid when there was no threat to people or structures?

And what about the rancher who spent hours moving livestock away from a fire to a new pasture, only to have crews light that pasture without warning just to fill in a fire management map?

We shouldn't jeopardize life and limb when fighting fires. But why burn for the sake of burning? Ranchers who lost animals and forage would dispute "it's just grass," and most Idahoans would rather have fewer smoke-filled days than a perfectly burned grid.

Fire belongs in the landscape, but it should be small, seasonal, and controlled. Megafires are neither natural nor planned, and they can be deadly. Grass is valuable too, and rangeland that doesn't burn is a success, not a gap to be filled.

Let me be clear: my criticism is of the policy, not the people. I trust our firefighters and want to see them fighting fire, as

so many of them say they want to. They shouldn't be asked to manage fires to extreme sizes. They should be allowed to put them out.

No one has shown greater heroism this year than the volunteers of our Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs). These ranchers live on the land and understand it.

They train to stay safe and know how to battle fire rather than watch it devour thousands of acres. To every RFPA volunteer: thank you. You are among Idaho's greatest heroes, and we are deeply grateful.

Our lands deserve better. The goal should be empowering local leaders, with state and federal support, to protect our lands and communities.

Idaho is great, and our firefighters, volunteer and professional, are heroes. Now we must update our policies to keep them safe and to let them put out fires. ■

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Idaho Farm Bureau Federation PAC Announces Support for Legislative Candidates

The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has a Political Action Committee named Idaho Farm Bureau Federation PAC. The purpose of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation PAC is to assist state legislative candidates who are philosophically aligned with Farm Bureau policies and positions to win their election. Based upon recommendations from county Farm Bureaus, the following legislative candidates have demonstrated a commitment to Idaho agriculture, limited government, less regulations and lower taxes and have been endorsed by Idaho Farm Bureau Federation PAC.

We encourage you to support them at the polls in November!

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Kootenai County**



**Senate Seat
Doug Okuniewicz**

**District 3
Kootenai County**



**House Seat A
Vito Barbieri**

**District 4
Kootenai County**



**Senate Seat
Ben Toews**

**District 4
Kootenai County**



**House Seat A
Joe Alfieri**

**District 5
Kootenai County**



**Senate Seat
Carl Bjerke**

**District 5
Kootenai County**



**House Seat A
Ron Mendive**

**District 6
Latah, Lewis &
Nez Perce Counties**



**House Seat B
Brandon Mitchell**

**District 7
Adams, Idaho
& Nez Perce Counties**



**Senate Seat
Cindy Carlson**

**District 7
Adams, Idaho
& Nez Perce Counties**



**House Seat B
Charlie Shepherd**

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Valley Counties**



**Senate Seat
Christy Zito**

**District 8
Boise, Custer, Elmore &
Valley Counties**



**House Seat A
Rob Beiswenger**

**District 8
Boise, Custer, Elmore &
Valley Counties**



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Brian Beckley**

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Washington Counties**



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**District 9
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**House Seat A
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**District 9
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Senate Seat
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District 14
Ada County



House Seat A
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District 14
Ada County



House Seat B
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District 15
Ada County



House Seat B
Dori Healey

District 16
Ada County



Senate Seat
Soñia Galaviz

District 16
Ada County



House Seat A
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District 17
Ada County



Senate Seat
Carrie Semmelroth

District 17
Ada County



House Seat B
Megan Egbert

District 18
Ada County



Senate Seat
Janie Ward-Engelking

District 18
Ada County



House Seat B
Brooke Green

District 19
Ada County



House Seat B
Chris Mathias

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Ada County**



**Senat Seat
Josh Keyser**

**District 20
Ada County**



**House Seat A
Joe Palmer**

**District 20
Ada County**



**House Seat B
James Holtzclaw**

**District 21
Ada County**



**Senate Seat
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**District 21
Ada County**



**House Seat A
James Petzke**

**District 21
Ada County**



**House Seat B
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**House Seat B
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Oneida Counties



Senate Seat
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District 27
Cassia, Minidoka &
Oneida Counties



House Seat A
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District 27
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Oneida Counties



House Seat B
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District 28
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Senate Seat
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District 28
Bannock, Franklin &
Power Counties



House Seat A
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District 28
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House Seat B
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District 29
Bannock County



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House Seat A
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District 29
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House Seat B
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District 30
Bingham & Butte
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Senate Seat
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House Seat A
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Idaho hop acres rebound a little

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

WILDER – After plummeting the past two years, Idaho hop acres rebounded 16 percent this year, although the increase may not be as much as reported.

According to USDA's Aug. 12 crop production report, Idaho farmers harvested 5,932 acres of hops this year, a 16 percent increase over last year's 5,102 total.

Idaho Hop Growers Commission Chairwoman Diane Gooding said Idaho hop acres this year may not as high as reported for a variety of factors.

"It's a false positive, really," she said about Idaho's reported hop acres in 2026.

Oliver Schroeder, who serves on the IHGC board and is the past chairman, agreed.

"Acres are pretty steady," he said. "Those numbers are a little bit ambiguous. They're pretty close, but they're not perfect."

Whether or not reported Idaho hop acreage is as high as USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service reported, it seems a lock that Idaho will remain the nation's No. 2 hop-producing state in 2026.

Hops are used as a bittering and flavoring agent in beer production.

According to USDA, Idaho hop farmers will produce 12.64 million pounds of hops this year, up 9 percent over last year. Average yield is estimated at 2,130 pounds per acre, down from 2,281 pounds per acre last year.

NASS estimates Oregon farmers will produce 9.46 million pounds of hops in 2026 off of 5,533 harvested acres. Oregon hop yields are estimated at 1,710 pounds per acre.

Washington is the No. 1 hop state and NASS estimates Washington farmers will produce 61 million pounds of hops in 2026 off of 30,975 acres. Average yield in Washington is estimated at 1,980 pounds per acre.

Virtually all of the hops in the United States are produced in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. Idaho's hop acreage is centered around the Wilder-Homedale-Parma area, although a decent chunk of acres are located near Bonners Ferry at Anheuser-Busch's Elk Mountain Farms.

Even if Idaho hop acres are not quite as high as reported, they are at least not going the other way. After soaring year after year from 2011 to 2021 – they went from 2,265 acres to 9,694 acres during that period – they began plummeting. They fell to 8,645 in 2023 to 5,797 in 2024 and then 5,109 in 2025.

Total hop acres in the Pacific Northwest fell as well, going from



Photo by Sean Ellis

After plummeting the past few years, Idaho hop acres experienced a small rebound in 2026.

60,872 in 2021 to 44,793 in 2024. NASS estimates that total at 42,440 this year.

U.S. hop acres soared along with the craft beer craze. As that craze has slowed, acres have gone the other way.

"The market's terrible," Gooding said. "There's too much over-supply."

As U.S. hop acreage soared year after year from 2012-2021, supply eventually exceeded demand, Schroeder said.

"We went way past that supply and demand balance," he said. "Then the fat kind of ran out."

The PNW hop industry doesn't necessarily need more acres, he said. "We just need to balance what we have."

Adding to the supply-demand challenge, hop prices haven't been great either, Schroeder said. He said a lot of planted hops are on long-term contracts from 10 years ago.

"They might be the same price, but the cost of everything else has gone up dramatically," he said. "It's not the same returns we were realizing 10 years ago."

According to an annual report by Hop Growers of America, "Growers have faced substantial increases in the cost of production, driven by expansion of harvesting and production capacity to handle a doubling of acreage between 2012 and 2021, updating equipment, increased labor costs (including health care and other benefits), and inflation in the cost of production inputs. Administrative and operating costs associated with food safety, best practices compliance and other customer requirements have also increased."

The good news is that Idaho's 2026 hop crop looks pretty good this year, Gooding said. "The crop looks above average. Idaho's crop, I'm told, is a very strong crop this year." ■

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Photo by Kylee Urie

According to a recent University of Idaho study, the beef industry has a tremendous impact on Idaho's overall economy.

Idaho's beef industry accounts for 3% of state's total economic output

By Maggie Malson
Idaho Beef Council

The Idaho beef industry contributes significant economic value to the state and supports the agricultural base and rural economy, according to a recent University of Idaho study.

"In total, the Idaho beef value chain contributes over \$7.2 billion in economic output, supports nearly 22,000 jobs, and accounts for approximately \$2.6 billion in gross state product, or roughly 3 percent of Idaho's total economic output," says Phillip Watson, a U of I professor in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Watson's complete findings can be found in a paper titled, "Economic Contribution of Idaho's Cattle and Beef Industry."

The study was funded by the Idaho Beef Council in an effort to enhance understanding of the economic significance of the beef industry within the state. It analyzed USDA data.

"It is essential to examine these economic variables, as this

knowledge will enable the IBC to allocate research funding more effectively,” says J.W. Wood, chairman of the IBC. “This strategic investment not only supports Idaho producers but also leads to valuable research outcomes that ultimately empower producers to continue delivering high-quality protein for consumers.”

According to the study, direct sales of cattle and processed beef products outside the state totaled \$3.4 billion in new dollars generated, 7,600 direct jobs and \$870 million in direct value added (gross state product) in 2024. An additional \$3.8 billion in indirect and induced output, 14,600 jobs, and \$1.7 billion in additional value-added came through supply-chain and household spending.

The beef industry spans the sectors of cow-calf, backgrounding, feedlots and processors. In addition, the industry is supported by input suppliers, transportation companies and marketing firms, which provide an extensive network to support the beef industry. All these sectors work together to create value for the state’s economy.

According to Watson’s study, the output multiplier for the total beef industry is 2.14, meaning that for every dollar of new output generated by the beef value chain, an additional \$1.14 in economic activity is generated elsewhere in the state through supply-chain purchases and household spending.

“While cattle ranching is the foundation of Idaho’s beef economy and carries strong output and employment linkages of its own, beef processing is the sector where each unit of activity generates the deepest economic returns within the state,” Watson says. “These results suggest that additional processing capacity could generate larger in-state economic effects, provided facilities can operate competitively.”

In the paper, Watson states that as of Jan. 1, Idaho had about 2.5 million head of cattle and calves, including roughly 435,000 beef cows and 355,000 cattle on feed, according to USDA data.

These numbers represent a slight increase from 2025 and show stability in the state’s herd size compared to national cow herd numbers.

Tight cattle supplies nationally have resulted in higher prices for cow-calf producers, which helps operations offset inflation in labor, fuel, veterinary services and machinery expenses. However, high prices create complex incentives to herd rebuilding as producers have to make decisions to give up short-term revenue or retain replacement heifers for future production.

The contribution of dairy-origin cattle to the beef supply chain is particularly important in Idaho due to the state’s large and

highly productive dairy sector, Watson says. Idaho consistently remains one of the top four states in milk production and has a herd size that exceeds its beef cow inventory. Because of that, dairy-origin animals – both cull cows and beef-on-dairy calves – represent a meaningful share of the cattle entering Idaho feedlots and beef processing facilities.

Idaho’s beef industry ranks among the largest sectors in the state’s economy by any measure, according to Watson’s report.

At \$7.2 billion in total economic output and \$2.6 billion in gross state product, beef contributes more than wood and paper products, mining, and tourism and outdoor recreation sectors. It is similar to Idaho’s semiconductor and technology sector that comes in at \$9 billion and 3.6% of the state’s output.

According to Watson’s research, the Idaho beef

industry remains a pillar of the state’s economic base, generating substantial output, employment, and value-added dollars with a broad and interconnected supply chain.

“Overall, the Idaho beef industry functions as a major economic base sector, bringing external revenue into the state and generating substantial multiplier effects throughout the economy,” Watson says. “In the context of tight national cattle supplies, elevated price levels, and evolving supply-chain dynamics, the sector’s scale, interconnectedness, and export orientation position it as both a stabilizing force in Idaho agriculture and a critical contributor to statewide economic performance.” ■



Photo by Alyssa Walton

Idaho’s beef industry contributes \$7.2 billion in economic output to the state, according to a recent University of Idaho study.

Idaho passes Washington in farm receipts for first time

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – For the first time in at least 102 years, Idaho has passed Washington in total farm cash receipts during a calendar year. It was the state's livestock sector that made the difference.

According to USDA data released Sept. 3, Idaho farmers and ranchers in 2025 brought in a total of \$11.949 billion dollars in cash receipts, which is what a farmer or rancher receives for their commodity. It does not reflect net farm income, which is a broad measure of what the farmer or rancher earns after expenses are factored in.

Washington's farm cash receipt total in 2025 was \$11.926 billion.

USDA began collecting this state-level data in 1924 and last year was the first time since then that Idaho has ranked ahead of Washington in total farm cash receipts.

This places Idaho as the No. 2 state in the West in total farm cash receipts, behind California, which easily ranked No. 1 in the United States in that category in 2025 at \$65 billion.

The first state-level estimates for cash receipts in 2025 were released by USDA Sept. 3.

The historical data for both states was provided to Farm Bureau



Photo by James Gallacci

Idaho's livestock industry made the difference as Idaho passed Washington in 2025 for the first time ever in total farm cash receipts.

by University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Brett Wilder. He pointed out that this year's USDA data will likely be revised slightly.

"It won't change significantly, but we are barely past them, so a small revision could matter," Wilder said.

According to the USDA report, Idaho's farm cash receipt total in 2025 increased 1.5 percent from \$11.774 billion in 2024, while Washington's total fell 5 percent from \$12.539 billion in 2024.

It was Idaho's animal industry that pushed the state past Washington in cash receipts last year. In 2020, Idaho trailed Washington by almost \$2 billion in total farm cash receipts and Washington was still almost \$1 billion ahead of the Gem State in 2023.

But total cash receipts for Idaho's cattle and calves sector have increased by 49 percent since 2023, while Washington's total for that sector has shrunk by 2 percent during the same period.

Idaho's cash receipt total for animals and animal products in 2025 came in at \$8.12 billion, while Washington's total in that category was \$4.5 billion.

Idaho cash receipts for animal products came in at \$3.88 billion for cattle and calves, \$3.83 billion for milk and \$192 million for chicken eggs. Washington totaled \$2.1 billion for cattle and calves, \$1.2 billion for milk and \$652 million for chicken eggs.

Washington had \$7.4 billion in crop cash receipts in 2025, while Idaho had \$3.8 billion.

In the crop sector, Idaho totaled \$1.1 billion in cash receipts for potatoes, \$518 million for wheat, \$460 million for sugar beets, \$358 million for hay, \$288 million for barley and \$176 million for onions.

Washington totaled \$926 million for potatoes, \$691 million for wheat, \$407 million for onions and \$337 million for hay. That state's agricultural producers also brought in \$3 billion for fruits and nuts, which included \$1.9 billion for apples, \$431 million for cherries and \$274 million for grapes.

Washington farmers also brought in \$329 million in cash receipts for the state's hops sector (Idaho, \$63 million) and \$172 million for floriculture (Idaho, \$31 million). ■

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Constellation announces \$100 million investment that includes Idaho farmers

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – A \$100 million investment in the American beer supply chain could provide a needed boost to Idaho barley and hop growers.

Constellation Brands, a U.S.-based beverage alcohol company, announced Aug. 19 it would invest the money over the next five years to support farmers in Idaho, Montana and North Dakota.

Idaho is the No. 1 barley-producing state in the nation and ranks No. 2 in hop production. Both are main ingredients used in the beer-brewing process.

Montana and North Dakota rank Nos. 2 and 3 in barley production.

Idaho farmers typically produce about 55 million bushels of barley off of about 500,000 acres annually.

Idaho farmers produced 39 percent of the nation's total barley crop last year.

Like farmers who produce other crops, Idaho barley growers have faced still financial challenges the past few years as farm production costs continue to climb while farm-level barley prices have decreased.

According to a news release by Constellation, the investment reinforces “the company’s long-term commitment to American agriculture and the vital role it plays in sustaining America’s iconic beer industry. The investment includes incremental purchases from American farmers and initiatives designed to help strengthen



Photo by Sean Ellis

Constellation Brands will invest \$100 million in the American beer supply chain, which is expected to help Idaho barley and hop farmers.

the future of these U.S. farming communities.”

“This investment reflects the company’s continued commitment to U.S. farmers as they face sustained pressure from declining acreage, shifting demand, rising input costs, and weather-related challenges that have made it harder for many growers to maintain and expand their businesses,” the news release adds.

Constellation said it will partner with growers in Idaho, Montana and North Dakota “to identify opportunities that help sustain their farming operations for the long term.”

According to the news release, the company will establish a grower-led advisory committee that will consist of farmers, trade groups and community leaders, “to help inform investments intended to strengthen agricultural resilience and the domestic agricultural supply chain.”

According to the news release, Constellation already invests more than \$750 million annually with American farmers and suppliers and purchases about 80 percent of all U.S. barley exports.

“As part of this initiative,” the news release states, “Constellation Brands will partner with growers and agricultural partners to determine how its investment

can help support farm resiliency, market access, sustainability, and the continued economic vitality of farming communities in key producing states.”

“Idaho is proud to be one of the top barley-producing states in the nation, and this investment from Constellation Brands is great news for our farmers and rural communities,” Gov. Brad Little, a rancher and farmer, stated in the news release.

“Our growers work hard every day to supply the barley that fuels a critical American industry. This kind of long-term partnership recognizes their contribution to Idaho and the U.S. economy.”

In a joint statement, the Idaho Barley Commission, Montana Wheat and Barley Committee and the North Dakota Barley Council stated: “Constellation Brands’ current and future support for our agricultural community comes at a critical time. Our sustainable future depends on committed partners, innovative products and new markets for American-farmed barley and wheat, inside and outside of the U.S. We appreciate the continued steadfast support of Constellation Brands in support of our growers and look forward to working with them and other great companies who support our future.” ■

First generation rancher builds legacy operation

What started with some hogs and potato waste is a thriving cow-calf and feedlot operation supporting multiple generations

By Paige Nelson

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

He calls himself a Rigby town kid, but Dennis Lake was truly his grandfather's right-hand man on the ranch just north of town. Anything Grandpa needed help with, Lake was there to do it. He even recalls trailing cattle from Lorenzo to Kilgore, a 62-mile trail drive.

His grandpa had never mentioned to him taking over the ranch someday, so Lake forged ahead and planned to attend BYU. Well, it's possible that grandpa had a plan of his own in mind, but he just hadn't bothered to voice it.

"When he found out that I was going to college, he just kind of got unhappy and said, 'If nobody's going to stay around to run this thing, then it's for sale.' He sold it all," recalls Lake, adding, "It just points out that if you're going to try to do a succession, you've got to be talking."

After a couple of years at BYU, Lake came home to marry his sweetheart, Luann Lee. He completed his college education with a bachelor's degree in accounting from BYU. He had accepted a job with the National CPA firm in Boston when a professor asked him if he'd like a job back in Idaho.

"Would I ever!" he replied.

Before long, Dennis and Luann had moved back to Idaho, and he was working for American Potato Company — now Basic American Foods in Blackfoot.

Dennis and his boss, and soon-to-be business partner, spotted an opportunity to feed leftover potato waste from processing

to livestock. They started feeding hogs. With some trial and error to get the ration right, Lake eventually bought out the other partners in the hog feeding business and transitioned to feeding Holstein steers.

Lake secured a contract with a beef processing plant in Salt Lake City that had a contract with the government to supply meat to soldiers during the Vietnam War. He would buy the steers around 1,000 pounds and take them to 1,500 pounds.

"They wanted big cuts of meat, big steaks. A two-pound steak would be just right," Lake recalls.

He kept feeding Holsteins exclusively into the late 1960s. By then, he and Luann decided it was time to expand into the cow-calf business, and they began looking for a ranch. They found one they liked in the Henry area near the Blackfoot reservoir. They partnered with Delwyn Ellis and bought the ranch, grazing rights and started in the cow-calf business.

"It just grew from there, that's all I can tell you, it just grew from there," Lake explains. He quit his job at Basic American Foods and started ranching and farming full-time.

Luann was no stranger to farm life. She grew up on a farm in Jefferson County and knew the ups and downs that come with agricultural markets. But going from a steady paycheck to a fluctuating income became stressful on both of them.

"She was accustomed to that paycheck, and then all of a sudden, not knowing what money she had to spend just drove her nuts," Dennis recalls. "We ended up setting up an account for her, and we



put into the account every month, so she always knew exactly how much money she had. It didn't matter; she didn't care how much she had. She had to know how much."

Luann tolerates this lifestyle, he jokes.

But Luann is well known for her ability to take care of her farmers and ranchers. She is an excellent cook and has always met her crew at the end of the day with a warm meal on the table.

In 1972, Dennis and Ellis bought into the Blackfoot Livestock Auction with two other men. They eventually bought the other two partners out and operated the livestock auction for nearly 21 years.

Around 1994, Dennis and Ellis sold the auction and bought a ranch that neighbored their current one. This wasn't just a business deal; Dennis was thinking about succession. His oldest son, Rodney, wanted to farm. His second son, Bruce, was grown and filling a critical role on the ranch at the time and had told his father that the auction wasn't his passion. He was a cowboy through and through.

"I knew I wanted to be a cowboy at nine years old," says Bruce. "I got my first cow when I was nine."

Tracy, the Lakes' youngest son, wasn't involved in the business to the same level as Bruce at the time, but was an up-and-coming cowboy in his own right, and



Photo courtesy of Lake family

Dennis Lake's sons Bruce, left, and Tracy gather cattle on the family ranch in Henry, Idaho.

"I didn't sign on, I guess, to get rich. It's a great way of life. And any ag business, especially family ag business, the way it's going to be looked at is a way of life, not necessarily just an occupation."

— Bruce Lake

it wouldn't be long before he wanted in on the cow-calf side of things, as well.

"I was the youngest in our family, and I grew up with adults. I learned to drive tractors and trucks before I could see over a steering wheel," recalls Tracy. "And I liked the company of being with adults, and they always treated me like an adult and expected me to work like an adult."

With his boys' futures in mind, Dennis knew he had to expand. As ground came up for sale, Dennis and Ellis purchased it and tried to expand as much as possible. As their families grew and went different directions, there also came a time to dissolve the partnership and strike out as father and sons. The ranches were divided in a very amicable way, says Dennis. "You take that place. I'll take this place. And we just did it."

Also in 1994, Dennis purchased the "Old Harris of Idaho" feedlot with a feeding capacity of 9,000 head. Between the two feedlots, he was able to feed all the potato byproduct he could get from Basic American.

By the early 2000s, Dennis found himself recruited by his neighbor, Alan Larsen, to run for the state legislature. But it was the Senate Pro Tempore, Jerry Twiggs, that got him on the ballot.

"I told him, I just bought this feedlot, I don't have time to do this," says Dennis, "He told me, 'Just let me tell you, it's never a good time, but you just do it!'"

Dennis had never considered politics before, but something about the way Twiggs said, "just do it," convinced him to throw his hat in the race.

Dennis served as a representative in the Idaho legislature from 1996-2012 and as chairman of the Idaho House Revenue and Taxation committee.

The sacrifices of their parents are not lost on any of the family, but especially sons Bruce and Tracy. They know continuing the family legacy will continue to require sacrifice. But it's important enough to both of them to keep at it.

Bruce says that as ranch managers, they talk every day about decisions and assignments. Quarterly, the family comes together to plan for the next quarter. Those planning meetings, says Tracy, are critical because not everything works perfectly all the time. "Sometimes we pull a crew from chopping corn to help move cattle, for example. That's where quarterly meetings are crucial, so we know who's going to chop and who's putting up hay and who's going to stay and run the feedlot, etc."

At 88, Dennis is still a critical part of the operation. That he can contribute to the everyday work gives him satisfaction, but what gives him fulfillment is that his side hustle hog-feeding business has grown into a full-scale 2,000-head cow-calf operation and a 10,000-plus head feeding and finishing yard that employs both the second and third generations of Lakes. Lake grandchildren are involved in the daily operations, cattle buying and selling, farming, and agriculture advocacy.

Dennis will be the first to say it wasn't easy getting here.

"Succession planning is an ongoing decision. But I started early, and that's made a big difference," he explains. "It's complicated, but just get started and make sure everyone is talking and on the same page."

Dennis and Luann have raised their children to appreciate a lifestyle and approach it with the future in mind. Because of this foresight and their hard work in the industry, they were inducted into the Eastern Idaho Agriculture Hall of Fame Class of 2026 in March.

Tracy attributes his parents' success to their greater concern for the ranch than for the individual.

"My parents worked hard, and I'm sure went without," he says. "And the one thing I always felt about my parents is that they never got too wrapped up in what other people were doing. They did what worked for them."

Bruce says none of them expect to get rich in this business but to enjoy the lifestyle.

"I didn't sign on, I guess, to get rich," he says. "It's a great way of life. And any ag business, especially family ag business, the way it's going to be looked at is a way of life, not necessarily just an occupation." ■

Dressed for success

Personal protective equipment for chainsaw use

By Ryer Becker
University of Idaho

Chainsaws are a highly useful and capable tool for homeowner, farm, ranch, and professional applications.

However, given the inherent risk associated with their operation, it is critical that end users, regardless of skill level, equip themselves with the proper equipment to ensure safe and effective saw use.

Accidents can happen at any time, even when performing familiar tasks that may seem routine or trivial. As such, it is necessary that all users are proactive in their preparation for responsible chainsaw use.

Don't wait for an accident or injury to happen to change habits or invest in the proper equipment. Safety starts with awareness and this article discusses the key pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) that should be considered when running and maintaining chainsaws.

Personal protective equipment is the first line of defense against chainsaw injury, and it should be worn every time the saw is running and, in some instances, when maintenance is being performed.

PPE is not intended to make one impervious to injury or accident. However, acquiring and properly using safety equipment can offer critical bodily protection and greatly reduce the likelihood of significant injury.

Safety gear should be worn from head to toe when handling and operating chainsaws to help mitigate risk and protect life and limb.

Head protection

Hardhats are a key piece of PPE and provide head protection from falling objects and should be worn anytime there are overhead hazards present, especially when falling timber. To ensure proper protection, all hardhats used should be rated to meet or exceed ANSI Z89.1.

This rating should be molded directly into the structure of the hardhat or present in a sticker or label. Even when cutting material on the ground, hardhats can provide protection from upturned or dislodged limbs or material, including offering an added level of protection to the head in case of a chainsaw kickback event.

Plastic hardhats should be replaced 5 years after the date of manufacture to ensure they deliver the expected level of protection. This lifespan may be decreased with daily use, and periodic



Submitted photo

Proper head to toe PPE should be worn whenever operating a chainsaw.

checks should be done to assess for damaged, cracked, or degrading hardhats.

Metal hardhats should be replaced if any dent exceeds the size of a quarter, as they greatly reduce the structural integrity of the hardhat.

Eye protection

Safety glasses meeting or exceeding ANSI Z87.1 should be worn during both saw operation and maintenance. This rating will be molded or printed somewhere on the equipment, often on the arms of glasses.

It should be noted that sunglasses and prescription glasses may not meet these safety ratings and should be supplemented with proper eye protection such as over-the-glasses safety glasses.

For bright/sunny working environments, ANSI-rated sunglasses are available on the market. A properly rated mesh face shield mounted to a helmet can also be worn and provides additional protection to one's face against twigs, branches, or other debris.

However, it is recommended that mesh face shields be paired with safety glasses to provide a tighter "seal" around eyes to protect them from smaller debris that may pass through or around the mesh shield.

Hearing protection

Exposure to sound levels over 85 decibels are shown to lead to permanent hearing loss, especially during repeated and prolonged exposure. It is recommended that hearing protection be worn anytime sound exceeds that level.

Gas chainsaws routinely produce noise exceeding 110 decibels, well past the threshold for permanent hearing damage. Even battery saws can produce sounds level high enough to damage hearing.

Therefore, ear plugs or muffs should be worn when operating chainsaws, regardless of whether the saw is gas- or battery-powered.

Ear plugs or muffs come in numerous styles and will be given a noise reduction rating (NRR) describing the level of sound attenuation they provide the user. Given gas saws can reach or exceed 110 decibels, it is recommended that hearing protection provide a minimum NRR of 25.

This will take a decibel rating of 110dB down to 85dB. Doubling up on hearing protection (wearing both muffs and plugs) can provide additional noise reduction when properly worn.

Wearing both muffs and plugs adds 5dB of NRR to the higher of the two NRR's of the PPE used. Note that most foam ear plugs are single use items and should be replaced after each use to reduce the risk of ear infection.

Leg protection

Chainsaw chaps are a critical piece of PPE that should be worn every time a chainsaw is operated, regardless of use case or level of operator skill.

These cut-resistant leg coverings protect the operator's legs in case the saw accidentally contacts the extremity, reducing the risk of serious cut injury. Chaps are constructed of woven Kevlar or similar synthetic fibers designed to bind in the chain and stop it rapidly on contact.

Legwear, whether chaps or chainsaw pants, should meet USFS 6170-4 or ASTM F-1897 standards and carry a UL label. These standards meet OSHA regulation 1910.266 which requires chainsaw operators to wear cut-resistant leg protection. Any chaps missing this UL label should not be worn.

It is worth noting that the newer ASTM F1897-25 standard explicitly verifies protection against battery-powered saws, but it didn't change the core performance requirements used in the F1897-20 rating. Therefore, chaps rated to the older ASTM F1897-20 standard don't need to be replaced to provide adequate cut protection for battery chainsaws.

Proper sizing of chaps is important, as they should extend over the top of the user's boots but not be excessively long, which can cause a tripping or snagging hazard.

Chaps can be purchased at various lengths. Be sure to check manufacturer recommendations for care, replacement, and laundering of chaps and other cut protective apparel.

Footwear

As defined by OSHA regulation 1910.266, professional users are required to wear cut-resistant, heavy-duty boots with ankle support and good traction. Please refer to the OSHA 1910.266 for additional specifications for professional applications.

For personal use, these same specifications are highly recommended. At minimum, users should wear sturdy, ankle-high leather boots. Boots with integrated cut-resistant panels can also be purchased from various manufacturers if desired.

Further, composite or steel-toed boots can provide additional protection for users. Sneakers and open toed shoes are not recommended to be worn at any time when operating a chainsaw.

Gloves and clothing

Well-fitting leather or utility gloves protect hands from vibration, abrasion, and minor cuts and are recommended but not required when operating saws. Gloves are also recommended to be worn when servicing chainsaws or other power equipment to protect hands and fingers from cuts, abrasion or potentially hot equipment components (mufflers, etc.).

Clothing should be close-fitting to avoid snagging on branches or the saw itself and long hair and jewelry should be secured to avoid getting caught in equipment or other items in the workplace.

Bottom line

Proper personal protective equipment should always be worn when operating and maintaining chainsaws. Purchasing proper PPE alone is not enough. It also needs to be used, as it is not useful if it is sitting on a shelf in your garage or in a vehicle while a saw is operated.

A small financial investment and a couple minutes of time to properly don the safety equipment can help prevent or mitigate permanent, life-altering injuries or even death in the most severe situations.

As this equipment gets use, it is important to properly maintain and replace PPE as needed. Damaged or expired PPE can lead to failure or insufficient protection and should be taken out of service immediately.

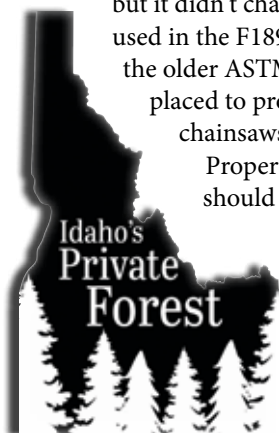
Chainsaw safety cannot be overlooked, and intentional steps should be taken to protect yourself and others. The acquisition and use of personal protective equipment is a great place to start for new and experienced users alike.

Do not wait until an accident happens to make a change.

If you have any questions regarding proper chainsaw PPE, please feel free to reach out to me at rbecker@uidaho.edu. Also, please reach out if you or your organization would be interested in a Chainsaw Basics workshop focused on introductory chainsaw safety, operations and maintenance.

This program is offered across Idaho through University of Idaho Extension and the College of Natural Resources. ■

(Ryer Becker is a forestry specialist with University of Idaho Extension. She can be reached at (208) 874-2698 or rbecker@uidaho.edu.)



New health coverage options for Idaho farmers and ranchers.

[illegible][illegible]

WILDFIRE

Continued from page 5

Of course, the fires left a trail of destruction, some of it almost too difficult to recount. That includes the hundreds of dead cattle that were not able to be moved out of the way of fast-moving flames.

Winegar lost 90 head of cattle, while Chandler lost about a dozen. All of their neighboring ranches also lost cattle. Winegar said seeing those dead cattle was difficult for him to handle. He said the fire burned 20 miles in two hours and there was no way to save them.

“The hardest part for me when you see the burnt cattle is not the money that we lost – that is difficult; I’m not going to say that that’s not going to be a trial – but the hardest part is when you see the cattle,” he said. “Seeing that aftermath hits you pretty hard. That is something that I’ll never forget.”

The Tartar Fire, and other fires, destroyed a lot of rangeland and now ranchers will struggle for up to a few years to find places and ways to feed their cattle.

Richards’ operation lost access to all of its rangeland in the 2015 Soda Fire and had to lease rangeland out of state for all its cattle.

“It’s extensive expenses you’re not used to having,” Richards said about dealing with the loss of rangeland. “Some people might have to sell their herds down. Those are tough decisions for folks.”

Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrony said the loss of rangeland can have multiple impacts on a cattle operation. For example, some ranches may have to liquidate part of their herd, which affects the genetics they can best utilize on their rangeland.

“The impact of that ... will last three generations, in my opinion,” he said. That’s 15 years.

“This fire’s going to affect our feed clear into the middle of next summer probably,” Chandler said. “The loss of rangeland is huge. Without the grass, we have to purchase hay or we’re trying to lease pasture other places. And with all the fires in the West ... everybody is looking for feed, they’re looking for hay. It’s definitely elevated the price of everything. It’s going to be a couple of years to get back to normal when it comes to the feed.”

He said that a lot of rangeland burned so hot that it will need to be re-seeded with grass seed.

But, he added, because of the millions of acres now that have burned across the West, everybody’s competing against everybody else for that grass seed and the biggest buyer of grass seed is the federal government.

“They’re going to be going out and contracting for as much of that seed as they can, so we’ll be competing with them for that seed,” Chandler said.

After a wildfire, there is also a lot of fence to replace. Winegar said about 400 miles of fence needs to be fixed after the Tartar Fire. “That’s a lot of fence and it’s a daunting task and it’s overwhelming. But it can be done – it can be overcome – and we just have to take it one day at a time.”



Photo by Sean Ellis

Washington County rancher Cody Chandler points to an area scorched by the Tartar Fire.

“It’s going to be a long time to get those fences back up, and a lot of expense,” Chandler said.

All those things aside, he added, “we can get the fences fixed, the grass will grow back and we’re just grateful that everybody was safe. We got through it without any harm and that’s (a) miracle.”

Winegar said the damage from the Tartar Fire is only one example of what happened in Idaho this year.

“We’re also not the only ones that burned. I don’t want to take away anything from any of the other fires,” he said. “The Big Grass Fire ... is (many) times bigger than this fire and I can’t even imagine the damage that it’s caused.”

One thing that is clear in the aftermath of the Tartar Fire, both Chandler and Winegar said, is that proper grazing management is a great tool to help limit the size of wildfires.

Chandler pointed to several areas in the midst of otherwise scorched hillsides that were still yellow because they were recently grazed and the fire passed around them.

“As you can see back here, we grazed all that country this spring,” he said. “We didn’t have to do anything there. The fire just put itself out and that’s the power of grazing a lot of this ground. The fire just doesn’t have the fuel to carry. Everywhere you can see that is yellow still is that way because it was grazed.”

Winegar said he can only imagine what the fire would have been like if cattle in the area hadn’t grazed where they grazed.

“To me, that’s an overwhelming thought: Could the fire have been hotter and bigger and faster?” he said. “Cattle are by far the No. 1 grazing management tool and they need to be utilized to do that.”

Mulrony said it’s been proven definitively that grazing helps minimize fire size.

“Fuels will be consumed,” he said. “They will either be consumed by time, cattle or fire. The more we let fuels build, the more fire is going to win in that trifecta.” ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

FRIEND OF AGRICULTURE

Award Recipients

The following legislators have earned the Idaho Farm Bureau Friend of Agriculture Award.

The Friend of Agriculture Award recognizes legislators who have consistently supported or opposed bills in harmony with Farm Bureau member positions over the 2025 and 2026 legislative sessions. The following individuals voted in alignment with Farm Bureau positions at least 95% of the time on the 20 selected bills over the past two legislative sessions.



**District 1
Senator
Jim Woodward**



**District 6
Representative
Lori McCann**



**District 9
Senator
Brandon Shippy**



**District 10
Senator
Tammy Nichols**



**District 12
Senator
Ben Adams**



**District 12
Representative
Jeff Cornilles**
Also earned in 24



**District 14
Senator
C. Scott Grow**
also earned in 24



**District 15
Senator
Codi Galloway**
Retiring

FRIEND OF AG CONTINUED



District 18
Senator
Janie Ward-Engelking



District 21
Senator
Treg Bernt



District 22
Senator
Lori Den Hartog
also earned in
16,18,22,24



District 22
Representative
John Vander Woude
also earned in
14,16,18,20,24
Retiring



District 24
Representative
Steve Miller
also received in 18



District 26
Representative
Jack Nelson
Retiring



District 27
Senator
Kelly Anthon
also earned in
20,24



District 27
Representative
Doug Pickett



District 27
Representative
Clay Handy



District 28
Senator
Jim Guthrie
also earned in
14, 18, 22



District 28
Representative
Dan Garner



District 30
Senator
Julie VanOrden
also earned in
14,16,18,24

FRIEND OF AG CONTINUED



Earned Every
Time Eligible
3 TERMS!

**District 30
Representative
David Cannon**
also earned in
22, 24



**District 30
Representative
Ben Fuhrman**



**District 31
Senator
Van Burtenshaw**
also earned in
18, 24



**District 31
Representative
Jerald Raymond**



**District 31
Representative
Rod Furniss**
also earned in
24

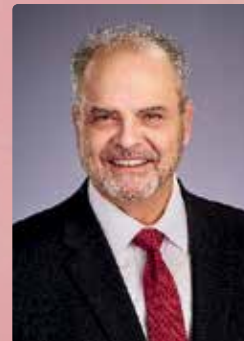


Earned Every
Time Eligible
3 TERMS!

**District 32
Senator
Kevin Cook**
also earned in
22, 24



**District 32
Representative
Stephanie Mickelsen**



**District 33
Senator
Dave Lent**
also earned in
24



**District 34
Senator
Doug Ricks**
also earned in
22



**District 34
Representative
Jon Weber**



Earned Every
Time Eligible
5 TERMS!

**District 35
Senator
Mark Harris**
also earned in
18, 20, 22, 24



**District 35
Representative
Josh Wheeler**

We encourage you to support these legislators who are running for re-election!

20 bills were used for our Legislative scorecard during the 2025 and 2026 sessions. Bill subjects included property rights, immigration, wolf hunting and trapping, direct-to-consumer food sales, cloud seeding, industrial hemp, large energy loads, and other important issues.

“We sincerely appreciate those Legislators who take the time to learn about the issues and make informed decisions, especially when it concerns agriculture. We express our gratitude to each of these Legislators for their outstanding support of Idaho agriculture and Idaho Farm Bureau Federation policies.”

- Matt Dorsey, President of the Idaho Farm Bureau

U of I, USDA launch crop nitrogen calculator

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

MOSCOW, Idaho – University of Idaho and U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers have developed a free online calculator to help Idaho barley and sugar beet growers determine how much nitrogen fertilizer to apply for the greatest profit.

The researchers plan to expand the tool in the future to provide customized nitrogen recommendations for additional Idaho crops. Using data collected during the project, the team has also updated Idaho's nitrogen application guidelines for malt barley.

The calculator and updated guidelines are available at idahocro-pnitrogen.org.

Jared Spackman, a U of I associate professor and Extension specialist and the Idaho Barley Commission Endowed Barley Agronomist, and Christopher Rogers, a research soil scientist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Kimberly, led the crop research. UI Extension agricultural economist Patrick Hatzenbuehler led the project's economic analysis.

Users enter information about their crop variety, existing soil nitrogen levels, yield goals, commodity prices, fertilizer type and fertilizer costs.

The calculator then estimates both the nitrogen rate needed to achieve maximum yield and the rate likely to produce the greatest profit. Applying more fertilizer can eventually cost more than the additional crop yield is worth.

"It's really helping farmers make better on-farm decisions for their bottom line," Rogers said. "Just achieving the maximum yield may not be the most profitable for them."

The team launched the calculator in early July and plans to refine it by February, in time to help growers plan their fertilizer purchases.

The calculator's estimates for irrigated spring barley and the recently updated nitrogen guidelines for malt barley are based on field trials conducted at research plots spanning from Twin Falls to Teton.

The tool currently includes barley data from 2015 through 2023 and will be updated regularly. The team plans to add data from trials conducted through 2026 by February 2027.

Idaho is the nation's No. 1 barley-producing state and accounts for a third of U.S. barley production.

Idaho's nitrogen guidelines for malt barley were last updated in 2003.

Rogers led barley nitrogen trials while working at U of I from 2015-18 and in 2019 while with ARS. Spackman has spearheaded the trials since 2020.

Several stakeholders have helped support the work. ARS contributed \$176,000 toward salary and travel expenses of Hatzenbuehler's postdoctoral researcher, Chanchal Pramanik, who developed underlying economic equations and a prototype of the calculator.



University of Idaho photo

Jared Spackman, right, a University of Idaho associate professor and Extension specialist who serves as the Idaho Barley Commission Endowed Barley Agronomist, speaks about barley research alongside Chad Jackson, operations manager of U of I's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, during an industry tour of the facility.

UI Extension contributed approximately \$5,000 through an Innovative Projects grant for U of I Research Computing and Data Services to build a public-facing website that hosts the tool. The Idaho Barley Commission (IBC) contributed \$17,000 to refine the tool based on user feedback during the next year. IBC also provided funding for barley nitrogen trials.

David Tarkalson, an ARS research soil scientist based in Kimberly, conducted the trials that supplied the sugar beet data used in the calculator. The researchers also have extensive data from Idaho nitrogen trials of mustard, forage grasses, winter barley and several classes of wheat.

"The best thing about this tool is that it allows all of the field trial data to be accessed easily through the website," Hatzenbuehler said.

U of I and USDA have shared the tool with IBC and promoted it at recent cereal research field days. They plan to promote it during upcoming industry conventions and meetings.

"There has been a fair bit of interest from growers as they hear about the project and what we're doing," Spackman said.

Among those interested is Idaho Falls farmer Mar Thiel, who has hosted university cereal trials on his farm for 27 years. Thiel plans to test the calculator's recommendations on limited acreage before expanding its use.

Although he routinely uses soil and in-season petiole testing to guide nitrogen applications for higher-value crops such as potatoes, he has generally applied a standard nitrogen rate across his barley acres.

"I think it would be great to have some updated data, especially when you can access it online," Thiel said. "The more information, the better." ■

Extension assessment sparks statewide equine learning initiative

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

MOSCOW, Idaho – University of Idaho Extension is using results from an equine knowledge assessment to tailor its most comprehensive statewide educational programming in recent memory for horse owners and enthusiasts.

UI Extension offices in counties throughout the state emailed the assessment to mailing lists of adult horse owners and enthusiasts, in addition to promoting it at equine events, posting flyers with QR codes linking to it and advertising it on social media. Over four months in 2025, Extension received 140 responses.

Based on knowledge voids uncovered by the assessment, Extension educators Sawyer Foncesbeck, Oneida County, and Selena Davila, Lincoln County, created a workshop covering equine first aid and what to include in a first aid kit, biosecurity and nutrition basics. Biosecurity is an especially timely topic, given that several rodeos and horse events were canceled throughout the past year due to the risk of equine herpes virus.

Foncesbeck and Davila presented the workshop in Burley and Rexburg in February, with a guest presentation by former Extension educator Brandon Brackenbury, who is a licensed veterinarian. The same workshop was also presented in Malad and Shoshone in June 2026. Horse enthusiasts in Butte and Franklin counties have also expressed interest in a future workshop.

Foncesbeck and Davila anticipate reaching out to northern Idaho counties to offer the workshop in the fall, following fair season. They also plan to eventually develop a second workshop emphasizing dentistry, horse handling and tack fitting.

“When Selena and I got started on this we asked Extension educators throughout the state, and a lot of them said there may have been a sporadic equine class here and there, but there’s been nothing statewide like what we’re doing in many, many years,” Foncesbeck said. “We’re seeing some good responses from individuals who have gone to the classes, and we’re excited to keep them going and make them bigger.”

Findings of the assessment were published in the June edition of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents journal.

Twenty-five assessment questions and answers were drawn from Extension publications and other reputable resources, covering key areas such as equine health, nutrition, vaccination, hoof and dental care and safe handling practices.

For example, one question asked about the six essential nutrients horses require and another asked about a horse’s normal



University of Idaho photo

University of Idaho Extension educator Selena Davila, Lincoln County, teaches the biosecurity section of the equine workshop in Burley in late February.

body temperature. Partial credit was awarded for incorrect answers that demonstrated basic knowledge of the subject matter.

Scores ranged from 30-32% among new horse owners and parents of children involved in UI Extension 4-H Youth Development equine activities to 51-56% among those who identified as experienced horse owners. Participants’ greatest deficiencies were in equine health, nutrition and handling practices — the same topics they demanded most when asked about their educational programming preferences.

“There are a lot of traditions that get passed down, and sometimes those get adjusted and misunderstood over time,” Foncesbeck said.

Extension educators from other states have also contacted Foncesbeck and Davila, hoping to use their methodology to guide their own equine surveys. Results from this survey and workshops were also shared at a recent national conference via a poster presentation. ■

Classifieds

FOR SALE

Grand Designs Imagine 2670 MK - 32' travel trailer. Bought new in 2022. Basically never used it - ZERO mileage. We bought it for the purpose of living on ranch land while building a house, BUT never did. The dealer towed it 30 miles to our climate-controlled cement-floored barn. Where it sits (inside under-cover) - for an occasional overnight visiting guest. So it looks brand new - as it kind of is. Come get it, as I'm not equipped to tow it. Ola, Idaho \$40,000 firm.

Four Cooper Evolution Winter studded tires. 235-55R-17 M+S. Like new, less than 50 miles driven. Sandpoint area. \$400 All 4 only, no partials. holysmokes@sonic.net

FARMING

82 Acre cattle feed lot for sale. Reduced price of \$679,000 from the original price of \$851,000. This feed lot has a CAFO permit for up to 4,875 Head. This feed lot is located between American Falls and Pocatello Idaho. This Property is listed with Premier Properties Eal Estate MLS#583278. Contact

associate broker Dean Funk at (208) 221-9011, or idreal-tor43@gmail.com.

100 acre irrigated alfalfa farm @ 8711 Upper Ave Emmett ID. Covered Hay Storage 60x100 - enclosed equipment storage or horse arena 60x100 - 3 bay heated shop 40x60 - 3 car garage 3960 sq ft luxury home. \$4.1m. 208-891-9242 or 208-208-484-9641.

WANTED

Wanted: old Idaho Patches! Farm Bureau, Farming, Hunting, Idaho Cattlemen Assoc, Idaho Fish and Game. Top Dollar Paid! Call, email, or text pics. Rusty Kramer idahotrap-guy@hotmail.com 208-870-3217

I pay top dollar for any type antique advertising signs or promotional items. Will also buy complete estates or complete collections. Buying and appraising all types of antiques. Currently looking for Spool Cabinets, pre 1930 Idaho License plates or?? Let me know what you have. I also do Classic Car appraisals. Call or Text Tom 208-867-9357 I'm in Southern Idaho

Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well as other vintage and antique items. Call Randy. Payette, Id. 208-740-0178.

Wanted: WWI, WWII, and Vietnam war souvenirs (medals, daggers, flags, uniforms, etc.) Located in SE Idaho. Call or text 208-201-3351.

Paying cash for German & Japanese war relics/souvenirs! Pistols, rifles, swords, daggers, flags, scopes, optical equipment, uniforms, helmets, machine guns (ATF rules apply) medals, flags, etc. 208-405-9338.

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FREE CLASSIFIEDS

Non-commercial classified ads are free to Idaho Farm Bureau members. Must include membership number for free ad. Forty (40) words maximum. Non-member cost is 50 cents per word. You may advertise your own crops, livestock, used machinery, household items, vehicles, etc. Ads will not be accepted by phone. Ads run one time only and must be re-submitted in each subsequent issue. We reserve the right to refuse to run any ad. Please type or print clearly. Proofread your ad. Ads must be received by October 19 for the November Quarterly.

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LOOKING FOR A NEW PODCAST?

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DIRT ROAD DISCUSSIONS PODCAST

Episode 118 - Spud Daddy

Thomas Watson, owner of Spud Daddy and founder of Potato Days, sits down with us to talk all things potato:

- From a crowdfunded card game to his viral baked-potato restaurant
- Why a potato only has a 90-minute window of perfection
- The ice cream potato, butter squishies, and other Spud Daddy quirks
- Potato Days' growth from 500 people to 30,000 — and what's next