

A Newsletter about Livestock, Pastures and Rangeland
Edited by John M. Harper, Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor, Mendocino & Lake Counties

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John Harper's Livestock & Natural Resources Blog Updates May 21, 2010— July 30, 2010

*From time to time **The Grazer's Gazette** will reprint articles from John Harper's on-line blogs and postings to Facebook and Twitter. If you are not already on John's email distribution list and would like to get this information when it is posted, please contact the UC Cooperative Extension at 707-463-4495 or email cemendocino@ucdavis.edu with your current email address. Also, be sure to notify us of email or address changes so that you continue to receive timely information.*

USDA Maps Show Dearth of Processing Plants May 21, 2010

In a press release on Thursday, May 21, USDA said that it wants to help increase the availability of slaughterhouses to serve small livestock and poultry producers. The effort is part of the agency's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative, which partly seeks to rebuild rural economies and bridge a gap between food producers and consumers.

In a prepared presentation, the USDA shows national maps of livestock production by small farms and the availability of federal inspection slaughter plants. Maps for cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry are shown. USDA defines a small farm as having sales of \$250 thousand or less per year. The maps also show the proximity of rendering plants that take offal and deceased livestock — another problem for north coast ranchers. ([See map: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/KYF_maps-050410_FOR_RELEASE.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/KYF_maps-050410_FOR_RELEASE.pdf))

Not surprising is the dearth of USDA inspected plants close to Mendocino and Lake Counties. Our meat capacity and feasibility study of the North Coast Region of California already demonstrated this need for our livestock industry to revitalize.

More Information on Lack of USDA Harvest & Processing Facilities

May 28, 2010



The following is from Marion Nestle's blog on food politics and has several links you might be interested in. Her blog is at www.foodpolitics.com.

May 25, 2010

The Slaughterhouse Problem: Is a Resolution in Sight?

After years of hearing sad tales about the slaughterhouse problem, it looks like many people are trying to get it resolved. A fix no longer seems impossible.

The slaughterhouse problem is what small, local meat producers have to contend with when their animals are ready to be killed. The USDA licenses so few slaughterhouses, and the rules for establishing them are so onerous, that humanely raised (if that is the correct term) animals have to be trucked hundreds of miles to considerably less humane commercial facilities to be killed (*see added note below*). Furthermore, appointments for slaughter must be made many months or years in advance — whether the animals are ready or not.

Perhaps because the USDA has just announced guidelines for mobile slaughter units (www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Compliance_Guide_Mobile_Slaughter.pdf), lots of people are writing about this problem. Here, for example, is what I ran across just last week:

- Joe Cloud, who works with Joel Salatin, writes about the need for small-scale slaughterhouses in [The Atlantic](http://www.theatlantic.com/food/archive/2010/05/the-fight-to-save-small-scale-slaughterhouses/57114/) (www.theatlantic.com/food/archive/2010/05/the-fight-to-save-small-scale-slaughterhouses/57114/)
- The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports [Joe Cloud's](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/05/23/MNH51DIGB4.DTL) (www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/05/23/MNH51DIGB4.DTL) concerns that USDA regulations will put small slaughterhouses out of business.

- Carolyn Lockwood has a front page story in the [San Francisco Chronicle](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/05/23/MNQ41DEQK8.DTL&type=printable) (www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/05/23/MNQ41DEQK8.DTL&type=printable) about the worries of operators of small slaughterhouses about safety requirements for microbial testing.
- Christine Muhlke writes in the [New York Times Magazine](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/23/magazine/23food-t-000.html?_r=1) (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/23/magazine/23food-t-000.html?_r=1) about her experience observing a mobile slaughterhouse developed by Glynwood's Mobile Harvest System.
- Marissa Guggiana, president of Sonoma Direct Meats in Petaluma, CA, says in [Edible Marin & Wine Country](http://onlinedigeditions.com/display_article.php?id=336212) (http://onlinedigeditions.com/display_article.php?id=336212) that “in Northern California, the lack of local slaughtering options is at a crisis point.”

If enough people complain about this problem, the USDA might get moving on it. The guidelines are a good first step.

The guidelines, by the way, are up for public comment. For comments (or attached files with lengthier comments), go to the [Federal Rulemaking Portal](http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#home). (www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#home) Be sure to include the agency's name, USDA, and docket number FSIS-2010-0004. Comments must be filed within 60 days.

Added note: the USDA has a new study of [“Slaughter availability to small livestock and poultry producers — maps”](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/KYF_maps-050410_FOR_RELEASE.pdf) (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/KYF_maps-050410_FOR_RELEASE.pdf) that tells the story at a glance. Many large regions of the country have limited or no access to slaughterhouses small enough to handle animals from small producers.

2010 U.S. Meat Industry at a Glance

May 28, 2010

The American Meat Institute (AMI) released an updated version of its *U.S. Meat Industry at a Glance* document and pocket guide to reflect the most recent data available for 2010. It provides the most up-to-date information, facts and figures about U.S. meat and poultry in four areas: production, economic impact, nutrition and trade.

The U.S. Meat Industry at a Glance, 2010 is available electronically on AMI's Web site and can be folded into a pocket-sized guide for ease of use and convenience. The document is available at www.meatami.com/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/47508 Highlights include: Dietary guidelines for meat consumption, beneficial nutrients found in meat, statistics on the value of meat to the US economy, and average US male and female consumption trends. Really neat graph shows that the US spends less on food than any other country in the world.

Where's Your Meat Processed?

June 11, 2010

In all the news about recalls in the food industry, have you ever wondered how USDA tracks a meat item back to the plant where it was produced? Do your consumer friends want to know where the meat you sell them was harvested and/or cut and wrapped? The answer is quite simple, although you'll need to know about the USDA Establishment (EST) Number on food packaging and have access to the USDA web site pdf file that lists all of the harvest and processing plants.

All containers of meat, poultry, and egg products must be labeled with a USDA mark of inspection and establishment (EST) number, which is assigned to the plant where the product was produced. The pictures in the next column show a typical meat product "EST" number, a poultry product "EST" number and an egg products "EST" number, respectively.



The "EST" number may appear on the package within the USDA mark of inspection like the pictures shown, but it may also appear elsewhere on the exterior of the package container or package labeling (for example on the lid of a can) if shown in a prominent and legible manner. It must also be in a size that is large enough to insure easy visibility and recognition.

Once you find the "EST" number you can go to the USDA web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&Policies/Meat_Poultry_Egg_Inspection_Directory/index.asp where both an alphabetical and numerical directory pdf files are located. Since the "EST" number is usually the only information on the package, you'll want to pull up the numerical directory. Using Adobe Acrobat's Find in document command you can type in the "EST" number. (Note: I wouldn't attempt to print out the entire directory as it is several reams of paper.) The direct link to the numerical pdf is: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/MPI_Directory_by_Est_No_Pgs_1_200.pdf. It is also handy to know the legend for EST numbers.

- G = Egg Product (Example: G1632 or 01632 G)
- I = Import (Example: I271 or 00271 I_)
- M = Meat (Example: 19924 or 19924 M – notice that the first example has no letter)
- P = Poultry (Example: P9002 or 09002 P)
- Multiple numbers: Some establishments have more than one "EST" number because they may process more than one type of meat or product. (Example: 13375 M and 13375 P)

Once in the directory you'll learn not only that several companies do business under several names but you'll be able to tell what kind of operations they do. For example:

- Slaughter
- Processing
- Import
- ID warehouse.

So now you know how USDA can track that meat back to the plant where it was produced and you also know how to tell how "local" at least in terms of harvest and processing your meat is.

Beef Checkoff — New Interactive Tool on Meat

July 12, 2010

The following is reprinted from the Meating Place and is a good example of the Beef Checkoff dollars at work. Producers who sell direct to the consumer will find the web site described below useful for educating the public. In an effort to help shoppers learn more about beef cuts, the Beef Checkoff has launched the [Interactive Meat Case](http://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/meatcase.aspx), (www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/meatcase.aspx) a new online tool available on www.BeeffItsWhatsForDinner.com.

The tool features sections including steaks, roasts and ribs, ground beef and prepared cuts; or visitors can search by cut. It highlights cut descriptions, recipes, cooking tips and more.

The checkoff, in conjunction with the market research team, conducted beta testing with foodies, moms, dads, bloggers, media representatives and others to get their feedback before launching the Interactive Meat Case.



“We wanted to help consumers with their cooking and meal-planning process,” said Meredith Stevens, manager of digital media for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. “We know that consumers, more and more, are looking for the best value for their dollar; they’re looking for meals for their family and friends; and they want something that has easy recipes to follow and that doesn’t take a lot of time. So we wanted to make sure that this was a tool that they could see complementing their existing cooking and meal-planning process.”

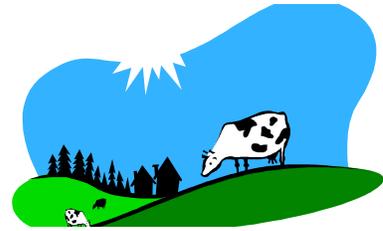
— *By Ann Bagel Storck on 7/12/2010*

Mendo/Lake Hay, Pasture, Cereal Grains & Custom Farming Services Directory

July 14, 2010

As a service to our hay, pasture, new cereal grain and custom farming providers, we are creating a directory so those

seeking to buy hay, cereal grains, rent pasture, custom graze or get custom tillage or harvesting done will know where to make contacts. This is similar to our sheep, goat and cattle directories and, like those, will be posted to our web site.



To get listed you'll need to fill out the brief questionnaire located at: <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=5129> The survey should only take about 10 minutes to do, yet it will be a great advertising and services resource. If you know others that should be listed pass this on, or have them contact me. Thanks in advance!

USDA Launches Cattle Dashboard– Market Price Information

July 21, 2010

USDA Marketing Service has just launched a new cattle tool called Cattle Dashboard. According to USDA, Dashboard allows users to see weekly volume and price information presented in graphs and tables that can be

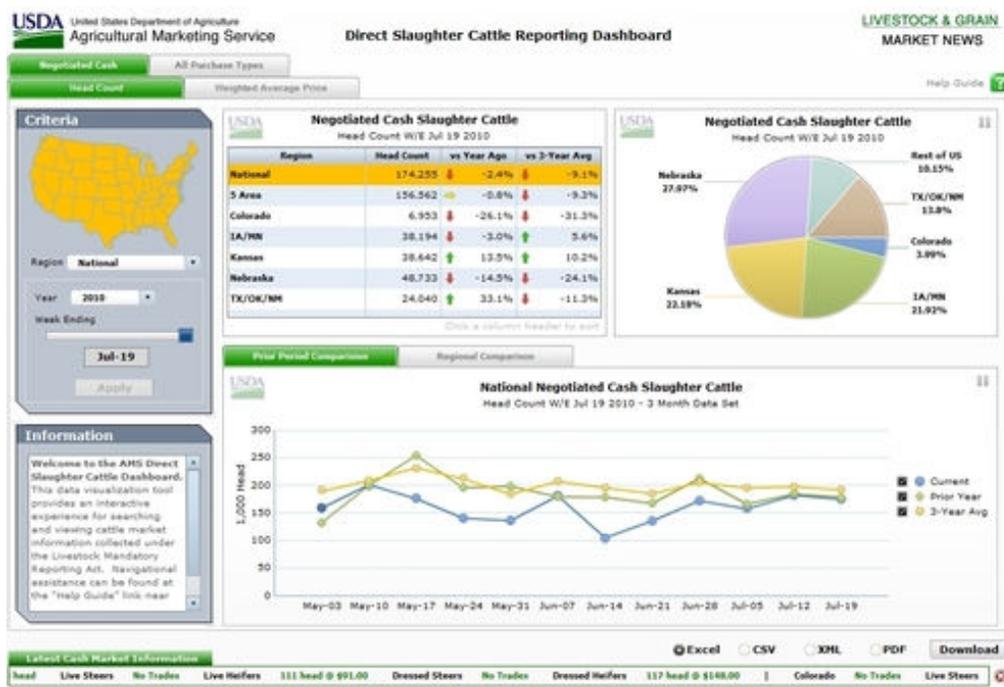
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customized for viewing and downloaded for use in reports and presentations. The Dashboard offers a friendly format that can be readily understood by producers, packers and other market participants.

To see an overview of Dashboard in pdf, click on this link: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5085698>.

To go directly to Dashboard and start using it click on this link: <http://mpr.datamart.ams.usda.gov/amdashboard/>.



Information on Certification and Labeling for Agricultural Producers

July 22, 2010

I received an interesting question regarding geographical certification today, and so I thought I'd pass on some resources. In 2005 the Western Extension Marketing Committee produced a small book on the subject that many will find useful. You can download a free copy in pdf format from: <http://cals.arizona.edu/arec/wemc/certification.html>. Geographical certification comes up when Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is discussed.

The 2002 Farm Bill included a provision mandating that retailers provide country-of-origin information (in the form of a label or placard) at the point of purchase for specific fresh food items. Whole muscle and ground cuts of beef, pork, and lamb; seafood; peanuts; and fruits and vegetables sold through retailers were all included in the mandatory COOL provision.

The 2002 COOL Act was scheduled to become mandatory in September of 2004. However, due to

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industry concerns about a mandatory COOL program, in January 2004, legislation was signed postponing implementation of a mandatory COOL program for all food products except wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish. There continues to be a debate regarding whether or not a mandatory COOL should be implemented.

A discussion of several of the issues surrounding the COOL debate can be found in the fourth quarter 2004 issue of Choices Magazine (online at <http://www.choicesmagazine.org/2004-4/index.htm>).

It finally became a mandatory measure and was implemented March 16, 2009, by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. In the case of imported products, the food label indicates where it started, was grown/raised and processed. For example, a meat label for pork might read, "From hogs born in Canada, raised and slaughtered in the United States."

The law establishes four general meat product categories: (1) Product of the United States in which the animal was born, raised and slaughtered in the United States; (2) Multiple countries of origin. The animal was born and/or raised in

another country and then slaughtered in the United States; (3) Animals imported for immediate slaughter; and (4) Imported finished products to be sold at retail. These products are labeled as products of the given originating country.

There are exemptions to the rule. Food operations such as restaurants, cafeterias, food stands, butcher shops and fish markets do not have to label their foods. Grocery stores that sell less than \$230,000 a year also do not need to provide this labeling. To read more about COOL go to: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/cool>.

So there is geographical labeling from a country standpoint but not a "local" as the interesting question was posed. Given that the wine industry seeks out and receives appellation labels, it might be worth pursuing their path with regard to geographical labeling or certification of meat products.



American Sheep Industry Mastitis Survey

July 30, 2010

Mastitis Survey Participation Requested

The greatest cause for death in the first two weeks of a lambs' life is STARVATION!

Mastitis, an infection or inflammation of the mammary gland in the ewe, is a major cause of this undesirable result. There are a variety of causes of mastitis, e.g. staph, strep, mycoplasma, ovine progressive pneumonia or trauma.

Most lambs from mothers with mastitis weaken and die from starvation or become "milk thieves" in a passionate effort to survive. The little robbers then become the world's best transmitter of

mastitis organisms to any of the ewes from whom they rob milk. The ewe may survive the effects of mastitis but will likely be culled prior to the next breeding season due to a bad bag.

How many lambs starve to death due to lack of milk production from either acute bacterial mastitis or hard bag? Whether it is the loss of the ewe or the lamb(s) or costly treatments, it translates into a loss in profits. Is your flock affected by this malady? To what extent? Producers are being asked to participate in a survey being conducted by Optimal Ag and Optimal Livestock Services to determine the magnitude of the economic loss to the sheep

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industry attributed to mastitis. The data collected will support requests for funding to conduct further research on diminishing the negative impact of mastitis on the sheep industry and develop educational materials to disseminate important information relevant to producers.

To participate in this survey, go to <https://optimalag.justsurvey.me/536823607265>. The link is also posted to the American Sheep Industry Association home page at www.sheepusa.org.

Source: ASI Weekly



Sustainable Beef Resource Center Formed

July 30, 2010

The Sustainable Beef Resource Center (SBRC) was formed at the suggestion of beef producers and branded-beef marketers who recognized the need for a centralized source of facts about technologies used in sustainable beef production. SBRC members include marketing and technical representatives from leading U.S. animal-health companies. SBRC works with third-party experts to develop factual, science-based information about the important role of technologies in producing safe, wholesome, affordable beef sustainably.

The Sustainable Beef Resource Center (SBRC) has a single purpose — to provide useful, science-based information to the entire food chain. Their focus is on filling information gaps about how beef technologies and sustainable beef-raising practices help produce safe, wholesome, affordable food while using fewer natural resources.

The organization's website at [http://www.sustainablebeef.org/](http://www.sustainablebeef.org) features beef-production facts, and talking points about the environmental and economic benefits of beef technologies. You can also follow them on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/SustainableBeef> and on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/sustainablebeef>.



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Also check out John's Blog on our office
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