

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 October 20, 2010 — February 28, 2011

*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](mailto: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.*

## Understanding Some Market Cattle Terms October 20, 2010

Market reports, like those provided by USDA, the Livestock Marketing Service (LMS), or the more local weekly Shasta cattle auction are very useful for selling or buying cattle. Most folks understand that prices are given for different weights for steers and heifers. These prices are usually quoted on dollars per hundred pounds of weight basis. The abbreviation for hundred pounds of weight is cwt. There are some terms used, especially in describing cull cows, that not everyone understands. Such terms include Breakers, Boners, Leans, Lights, Canner, and Cutter. Sometimes cull cows are pregnant and they have special terms too. To help you get more out of these market reports, some of the terms are explained below.

The USDA's Market News Service reports on four classes of cull cows, which are divided primarily on fatness. The highest conditioned cull cows are reported as "Breakers." These are quite fleshy and generally have excellent dressing percentages. Body condition score 7 and above is required to be "Breakers." Note: If you don't know about Body Condition Scoring (BCS) in cattle check out the following web site for good definitions and pictures of the various BCS's: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/ansci/beef/as1026w.htm>.



Continued from Page 1

The next class is a more moderate conditioned group of cows called "Boners" or "Boning Utility." These cows usually fall in the body condition score grades of 5-7. Many well-nourished commercial beef cows would be graded "Boners."

The last two grades are the "Leans" and "Lights." These cows are very thin (body condition scores 1-4). In general, these are expected to be lower in dressing percentage than fleshier cows and more easily bruised in transport than cows in better body condition. "Lights" are thin cows that are very small and would have very low hot carcass weights.

Leans and Lights are nearly always lower in price per pound than are the Boners and the Breakers. "Lights" often bring the lowest price per pound because the amount of saleable product is small, even though the overhead costs of slaughtering and processing are about the same as larger, fleshier cows. Also, thin cows are more susceptible to bruising while in transit to market and to the harvest plant. Therefore, more trim loss is likely to occur with thin cull cows than with those in better body condition.

From a producer standpoint, when selling cull cows, it is generally more profitable to feed the Leans and Lights up to get to Boners. It is generally not economical for a producer to feed a cull cow up to the Breakers class as the price differential between them and Boners is usually small.

To make it more confusing, you'll also see the prices reported for cull cows based on their USDA carcass grade or their expected carcass grade. The most common grades in order of the least amount of marbling to the greatest amount of marbling are: Canner, Cutter, Utility, and Commercial. Younger aged cows (30 months or less) may also reach the Standard, Select or Choice grade.

Full mouth and broken mouth are relative terms for cull cows that describe the age of the animal. Check out the following web page on aging cattle from their teeth to see some photos: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OFO/TSC/bse\\_information.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OFO/TSC/bse_information.htm). Another age term, which you might encounter, is smooth mouth. Sometimes, you'll see reports that only use abbreviations like FM = full mouth; SM = smooth mouth; and BM=broken mouth.

Other terms are used when Calvy or pregnant cows

are marketed, and the most common seen is Close-up. Close-up means the cows are 21 days or less prepartum (before calving). You might also see Far-off which means 60 to 21 days prepartum. Interestingly, these terms come from the dairy industry and are used for grouping cows on the dairy. These prepartum terms are often used to describe heifers too.

#### References Used and for Further Reading:

*Marketing Cull Cows How and When?*

<http://beef.unl.edu/beefreports/symp-1995-19-XIV.shtml>

*United States Standard for Grades of Slaughter Cattle*

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3062519>

*Know USDA Cull Cow Grades Before Marketing Culls*

<http://beefmagazine.com/cowalfweekly/1030-know-usda-cull-cow-grades-market/>

## Fish Friendly Farming Now Offers Programs for Rangeland

November 10, 2010

Fish Friendly Farming provides for voluntary, self-directed compliance with the rigorous standards of state and federal water quality laws (Clean Water Act), the federal Endangered Species Act, the state pesticide laws as well as local regulations.



It was developed by Laurel Marcus in 1999 and sponsored for its first five years by the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District. Much of it was patterned after the UCCE Rangeland Water Quality

Planning short courses. It focused initially on grape growers and will now expand to grazed rangelands in the North Bay counties. A colleague of mine, Dr. Larry Ford, is a scientific advisor for development and implementation of the new program. For more information, go to <http://www.fishfriendlyfarming.org/index.html>.

# Food Safety Modernization Act Approved

December 2, 2010

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Senate approved the Food Safety Modernization Act by a vote of 73 to 25.

**The following information was prepared by Dani Friedland and appeared on the MeatingPlace.com web site.** I think it is important information for livestock producers and others involved in the food industry, and that's why I've reposted here.

*The legislation gives the Food and Drug Administration more authority, including the power to compel the mandatory recall of a contaminated food product and suspend a facility's registration if a reasonable probability exists that the food it produces could cause serious health consequences or death.*

*It also increases the number of FDA inspections at food facilities and enhances surveillance systems for food-borne illness outbreaks. The bill also calls for the creation of a pilot project to test methods for quickly tracking and tracing food during food-borne illness outbreaks.*

*The bill also increases funding for the FDA, requires importers to verify the safety of imported food and calls for a national strategy to protect the food supply from terrorism.*

*Producers who sell directly to consumers and have less than \$500,000 in annual sales will be exempted from some of the new regulations. These producers would still be subject to local and state food safety regulation, and the FDA would be able to withdraw the exemption if the farm or facility was associated with an outbreak of food-borne illness.*

*"For too long, we've allowed trips to the grocery store to be a gamble for American families," Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and one of the bill's sponsors, said in a statement. "The bipartisan bill passed by the Senate today will give our citizens some long-overdue peace of mind in the supermarket aisles,*

*establishing tough new protections against contaminated food."*

*Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) said in debate earlier this month that the last substantial change to FDA food law was made in 1938.*

*Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) introduced the legislation on March 3, 2009. The House of Representatives passed similar legislation in July 2009. (See "House passes food safety bill" on Meatingplace, July 31, 2009.)*

*Now the Senate and House must reconcile their versions of the food safety reforms by the end of the session. Some Democrats in the House would consider passing the Senate version to speed up the process, according to The New York Times.*

*The meat industry has been watching this legislation with great interest. Even though most of its regulation comes from USDA, some meat industry lobbyists believe the passage of these sweeping changes to FDA regulation could spawn calls for similar reforms at USDA.*

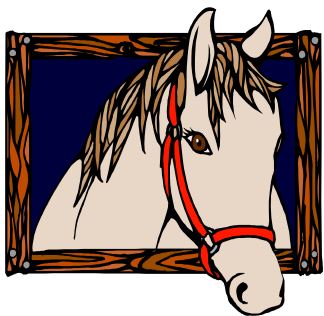


*Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack praised the Senate action, saying, "As a co-chair of President Obama's Food Safety Working Group, I commend the Senate on today's passage of the food safety bill. There is no more fundamental function of government than protecting consumers from harm, which is why food safety is one of USDA's top priorities. The bill addresses longstanding challenges in the food safety and defense system by promoting a prevention-oriented approach and providing the Federal Government with appropriate tools to prevent foodborne illness."*

## Attention Horse Owners! Feed Recall

February 1, 2011

### Attention Horse Owners!



Manna Pro Products, LLC is voluntarily recalling a single lot (1006) of Family Farm Complete Horse 10 horse feed, UPC 0 95668 90151 6, packaged in 40 lb. bags because it may contain monensin sodium (Rumensin). Monensin

sodium is a medication approved for use in some livestock and poultry species, but can be fatal to horses if fed at sufficiently high levels.

- **Product:** Family Farm Complete Horse 10 horse feed
- **Distributed:** To retailers in California, Nevada, and Oregon
- **Why:** It may contain monensin sodium (Rumensin), which can be fatal to horses if fed at sufficiently high levels

**Illnesses reported:** None

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## Animal Disease Traceability Proposal

February 1, 2011

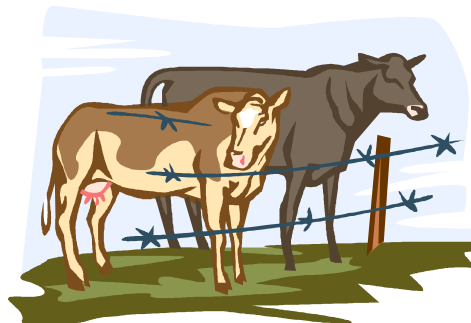
APHIS outlined its forthcoming animal disease traceability proposal to Secretary Tom Vilsack's Advisory Committee on Animal Health. The animal traceability proposal is scheduled for publication in the *Federal Register* in April 2011. A Final Rule is expected in April of 2012. According to the draft proposal, cattle and bison traceability would be implemented in three stages:

**Stage 1** – to take effect next year, would require official identification of all sexually intact cattle and bison 18 months of age or older moved in interstate commerce; dairy cattle of any age; cattle and bison of any age used for rodeo or recreational events; and cattle and bison of any aged used for shows or exhibitions.

Beef cattle under 18 months would be temporarily exempted from the requirement.

**Stage 2** – scheduled for 2014, would access Stage 1 in order to determine implementation plan in Stage 3 for cattle under 18 months of age. APHIS expects a 70 percent compliance rate with the official identification requirements for all cattle eligible under Stage 1.

**Stage 3** – at a future date to be arranged, would require identification of all cattle, including feeder cattle under 18 months old. The draft animal traceability proposal and a transcript of the advisory committee meeting are expected to be posted on the APHIS website at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov), as reported by *Food Chemical News*.



## Agritourism and Range Livestock

February 1, 2011

Have you ever thought of adding agritourism to your livestock operation? Agricultural tourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment or education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner.

Traditionally agritourism has included efforts like farm stands or shops, U-pick, farm stays, tours, on-farm classes, fairs, festivals, pumpkin patches, Christmas tree farms, winery weddings, orchard dinners, youth camps, barn dances, hunting or fishing, or guest ranches. Heritage ranch tours like was done last year at the Ford and Schmidbauer ranches are other examples.

The UC Small Farm program offers quite a bit of information on getting started in agritourism. Check out the website at: <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/>. In addition, there is statewide site

that will help you promote either a one-time event or list your agritourism effort in a statewide directory that is sorted by county. The link for the free directory and the event listing is: <http://ucanr.org/sites/CalAgTour/>. This is a very cool resource for anyone interested in agritourism, be they producer or the general public.



## New Labeling Laws Will Impact Meat

February 3, 2011

For those livestock producers who are selling locally, there are some new labeling laws coming that will impact your retail sales. The following information came via NMPAN E-update.

### **New Nutritional Labeling Rules: Will they affect you?**



USDA-FSIS has created new nutritional labeling regulations that require single-ingredient items — retail "major cuts" and ground meat — to have nutritional labeling. Until now only multi-ingredient products required nutritional labels.

This will affect you if you operate under inspection or have retail sales (even if your retail products are

produced under retail-exemption). Meat processed under custom exemption is not affected by these new regulations.

The new rules will affect retail sales and inspected processing in two ways:

1) Retail Cuts: Forty "major" whole-muscle cuts of meat and poultry will now require nutritional labeling (as defined in [9 CFR 317.344](#) and [381.444](#)). Processors with retail sales can provide point-of-sale material with nutritional information in place of putting nutritional information on the product label. Producers who direct market meat can also use such point-of-sale material. FSIS will be offering posters for free download over the internet that you can print and put up at your retail counter. NMPAN will provide information as soon as these become available.

*Continued on next page*



2) Ground: If you produce more than 100,000 lbs. of a specific ground item during the calendar year under inspection (such as ground beef), you must now put nutritional labeling on this product. Likely only processors who average ~10 or more head of inspected beef a week will be affected by this part of the new rules. Be sure to check your annual processing volume if you think you're close.

If you do process over 100,000 lbs. per year of a specific ground item, small plants can use a statement of BOTH percent fat AND percent lean (such as "85% lean / 15% fat ground beef") instead of adding a nutritional label.

Again, custom-exempt processing will NOT be affected by these new requirements. For more information, see the notice in the Federal Register: [www.federalregister.gov/a/2010-32485](http://www.federalregister.gov/a/2010-32485)

Rules go into effect January 1, 2012. So you have almost a year to get your labeling in order.

## 2010 Dietary Guidelines Released February 4, 2011

As producers of meat protein, it's important to understand the nutrient needs of the end consumer. To that end, understanding the problems US citizens are having with obesity and planning your marketing accordingly will benefit everyone's health and hopefully your sales. The announcement below will provide you with the science on human diet recommendations that will help you to continue to provide an excellent source of protein, iron and B vitamins.

The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* was released this week, emphasizing the importance of consuming a balanced diet, eating less sodium and more nutrient-dense foods and carefully monitoring what Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack characterized as "calories in, calories out."

The guidelines include 23 key recommendations for the general public and six for specific groups like

pregnant women. Key recommendations include:

- increase in vegetable and fruit intake;
- increase whole grain consumption;
- eat a variety of protein foods;
- eat more fish; and
- replace protein foods higher in solid fats with choices that are lower in solid fats and calories and/or are sources of oil.

The guidelines are available at [www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm). To download the full pdf file go to <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf>



## Information on GE Alfalfa February 15, 2011

Since the USDA, on January 28<sup>th</sup>, approved the use of genetically engineered (GE) Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa there's been quite a bit of discussion going on in the media.

In Mendocino and Lake Counties we grow very little alfalfa as it is much easier to grow clover/grass hay over a monoculture crop. Also, nutritionally, our livestock producers that feed hay generally can do well with our clover/grass version as it provides all that's needed for range livestock production. That said, with the irrigation systems in place on some of our former pear acreages, alfalfa production is possible and could certainly be profitable. Certainly, weed-free organic alfalfa would be even more

*Continued on next page*



profitable to a hay producer as very little is produced.

Of course, many believe that because alfalfa is insect pollinated, cross-pollination and contamination of non-GE alfalfa could result — some say “inevitable.” Since most of Mendocino County is GMO-

free (city limits, Rancherias and State lands are exempt), there is still fear that potential alfalfa producers outside the county boundaries or in adjoining counties could start growing RR alfalfa and impact those potential alfalfa producers who want to grow conventional alfalfa, organic or otherwise.

In response to some to these concerns, UCCE Agronomy Specialist, Dr. Dan Putnam, has written several publications that will assist those interested to understand the risks and science. They are available for free in pdf format. The first entitled *Methods to Enable Coexistence of Diverse Production Systems Involving Genetically Engineered Alfalfa* can be downloaded at <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8193.pdf>. In addition to explaining the risks of cross-pollination, Dan provides information for testing hay to determine if it is genetically engineered. Livestock producers targeting our local or niche markets should download this publication just for that information alone. A second publication co-authored by Dan and several other UC scientists is entitled *Roundup Ready Alfalfa: An Emerging Technology*. It can be downloaded at <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8153.pdf> and it discusses further pros and cons. The third publication is entitled *Avoiding Weed Shifts and Weed Resistance in Roundup Ready Alfalfa Systems*. It can be downloaded at <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8362.pdf> and provides a thorough explanation of the risks of weed resistance.

## Bison in Your Future? Update

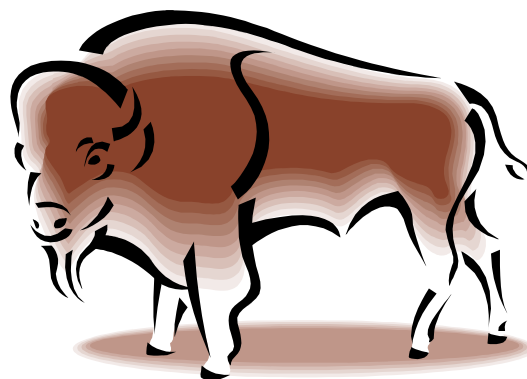
February 28, 2011

Several blog posts back I had one entitled "Bison in Your Future?" It talked about the nutritional aspects of Bison and mentioned a new text book on Bison production. The following information suggests that Bison meat demand will soon pass the supply. Give it a read, and check out more information from the Bison web site.

### **BISON INDUSTRY STRUGGLES TO MEET MARKET DEMANDS**

*Five years ago, bison meat was considered a specialty item. Now diners can order it any day of the week. Bison buffs say the meat's lean quality and the bison burger have helped popularized the meat, along with a better understanding of how to cook it.*

*Montana Bison Association vice president Dot Gallager raises about thirty head of bison at the Shane Creek Ranch. She reported to the Associated Press that bison ranchers are “running out of animals” and are at risk of losing their market if they can’t meet the demands for their products. Ranchers have responded to this problem by convincing more people to start raising bison as well as growing their own herds in hopes of growing the industry along with the demand. The National Bison Association welcomes those interested in raising bison to visit their website at <http://www.bisoncentral.com/>.*



**Cooperative Extension—Mendocino County**  
890 N. Bush Street  
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Also check out John's Blog on our office  
website: <http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>

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890 N. Bush Street, Ukiah, CA 95482  
Phone (707) 453-4495  
FAX (707) 463-4477  
<http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>

**John M. Harper**  
County Director,  
Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor  
[jmharper@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jmharper@ucdavis.edu)

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