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Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



Mid-March dairy prices heading lower

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Cash block Cheddar cheese closed Friday in Chicago at \$1.54 per pound, down 3 cents on the week and a whopping 88 3/4-cents below a year ago, when it reached the second highest peak of 2014, \$2.4275. You recall it peaked at a record high \$2.45 in mid-September. The blocks slipped a penny Monday but were unchanged Tuesday, holding at \$1.53 per pound.

The barrel Cheddar closed Friday at \$1.52, down 2 1/2-cents on the week and 79 cents below a year ago. They dropped 3 cents Monday but regained two cents Tuesday, to close at \$1.51. Fourteen cars of block were sold last week in the cash market and only one of barrel.

Cash butter finished Friday at \$1.68 per pound, down 1 1/2-cents on the week and 24 cents below a year ago. It was unchanged Monday and Tuesday. Only three cars were sold last week in the spot market.

Cash Grade A nonfat dry milk continued its decline, closing Friday at 97 1/2-cents per pound, down 1 3/4-cents and the lowest spot price since Jan. 22. The powder was unchanged Monday and Tuesday. Seven carloads were sold last week at the CME.

Milk production up 1.7 percent

U.S. milk production topped that of a year ago for the 14th consecutive month, according to preliminary data in March 19's February Milk Production report. The Agriculture Department estimates output in the top 23 producing states at 15.1 billion pounds, up 1.7 percent from February 2014. The 50-state total, at 16.2 billion pounds, was also up 1.7 percent from a year ago.

Revisions raised the original January 23-state estimate by 17 million pounds, now reported at 16.5 billion pounds, up 2.2 percent from a year ago.

February cow numbers in the 23 states, at 8.62 million head, were up 2,000 head from January and 106,000 more than a year ago. The 50-state count, at 9.3 million head, is up 3,000 from January and 100,000 more than a year ago.

February output per cow in the 23 states averaged 1,757 pounds, up 8 pounds from February 2014, and the highest production per cow for the month of February since the 23-state series began in 2003.



File photo/Associated Press

Two sage grouse roosters challenge each other for hens. A coalition of Western counties and ranching, mining and energy associations is challenging reports government agencies are using to make public lands and endangered species listing decisions for greater sage grouse.

Coalition challenges agencies' science on sage grouse

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

A coalition of Western counties and ranching, mining and energy associations filed three formal challenges this week against the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey over the reports the agencies are using to make public lands and endangered species listing decisions for greater sage grouse.

The "Challenges for Correction of Information" were filed under the Data Quality Act.

The coalition contends the agencies are using selective and flawed science to justify top-down restrictive measures that will damage Western communities in sage grouse habitat while

discouraging more effective state and local conservation efforts.

The agencies are justifying their approach with faulty information that ignores a large body of scientific literature on the species, while not being transparent about their actions, said Kathleen Sgamma, vice president of government and public affairs for the Western Energy Alliance.

The coalition had to file lawsuits under the Freedom of Information Act against each of the three agencies to get the agencies' reports, which should have been publicly available, she said.

Kent Holsinger of Holsinger Law, Denver, attorney for the coalition, said in a press release the coalition's scientific and legal team analyzed that data and

found extensive flaws in the agencies' science as well as exaggerated impacts from human activities and an ignoring of real threats like predation and natural fluctuations.

"We have repeatedly pointed out the flaws in their science. But rather than taking that input constructively, they have persisted with incomplete and erroneous information," Sgamma said.

The coalition is not sure if the Fish and Wildlife Service is leaning toward listing sage grouse — which would affect private, state and federal land — but the land use restrictions coming down the pike would be at least as onerous as an endangered species listing, Sgamma said.

"It's an enormous threat to the West," she said.

BLM and the U.S. For-

est Service plan to finalize their land use plans for sage grouse habitat in a June time frame, she said.

Sgamma said the Fish and Wildlife Service's report in particular fits in with BLM's restrictions on public lands that push toward uniform restrictions in the West. But states in the West are quite different from one another, requiring different management practices, she said.

"One size fits all supercedes actual on-the-ground work states are doing," she said.

In an emailed response, Department of Interior stated: "We are engaged in an unprecedented, collaborative partnership across 11 states to put in place smart and effective conservation measures that will not only benefit the greater sage-grouse,

but will also preserve the Western way of life.

"We are working hand in hand with states, local communities, ranchers, sportsmen and other stakeholders. It's worth noting that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and its partners in the Sage-Grouse Initiative have worked with private landowners to restore 4.4 million acres of habitat for sage-grouse while maintaining working landscapes across the West.

"Science is at the heart of this effort, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will make a final decision based on the best available science to review the status of the species and the ability of the plans and other conservation efforts to address threats to the greater sage-grouse habitat."



Capital Press file

USDA officials are considering a federal milk marketing order for California. A series of meetings on the topic is planned for May.

USDA plans federal milk order

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

USDA has set three outreach meetings in California in May to review proposals it has received to establish a federal milk marketing order in the state, according to a notice from the agency.

The meetings will give

USDA officials an opportunity to explain the federal order rulemaking process and allow proposal sponsors the opportunity to explain the technical details of their submissions.

Agendas for the meetings will be released after the April 10 deadline for submitting additional

proposals.

Attendees are encouraged to pre-register at www.ams.usda.gov under dairy programs.

The meetings will begin at 9 a.m. and are set for:

- May 5: California State University-Chico, Bell Memorial Student Union, Room 203.
- May 6: Picadilly Inn airport, Fresno.
- May 7: Los Angeles County Farm Bureau, Palmdale.

For more information, call (202) 720-4392.

S. Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame to honor inductees

Capital Press

The Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame will honor its newest inductees on April 14 in Twin Falls.

This year's inductees are: dairy producers Hill and Ann Brandsma, Wendell; cow-calf producers DeVern and Barbara Fuller, Twin Falls; sheep producer John W. "Bill" Jones, Hagerman; feedlot operators Arnold and Cecilia Patterson, Declo; cow-calf producers Allen and

Kim Thompson, King Hill; and cattle trader Carole Stennett, Buhl.

The honorees will be inducted April 14 during the organization's 56th annual banquet at the Turf Club in Twin Falls. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m.

Tickets for the prime rib dinner are \$25 and available at Northwest Farm Credit Services, 815 N. College Road, Twin Falls, or by calling Eric Bennett at (208) 732-1077.

'Obamacow' bill to help Missouri's dairy industry heads to governor

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Lawmakers on Thursday sent a bill aimed at spurring growth in Missouri's dairy industry to Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon's desk, one of the first bills to make it that far this session.

Touted by sponsor Rep. Bill Reiboldt, R-Neosho, as the Dairy Revitalization Act, the measure earned a second nickname Thursday: "Obamacow." The name stems from a provision of the bill that would subsidize federal dairy

insurance for up to 70 percent of farmers' premium payments.

Before voting in favor of the bill, Republican Sen. Ryan Silvey of Kansas City questioned helping provide dairy insurance while the majority party has resisted growing a federal health care program for low-income adults. Silvey is one of the few GOP members who this session has joined Democrats in calling to expand eligibility for Medicaid.

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