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# Dairy/Livestock

## Photo monitoring gains momentum on rangelands

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

ISDA rangeland monitoring specialists Brooke Jacobson and Tyler Hamilton discuss a cooperative program with the Bureau of Land Management to help ranchers monitor their grazing allotments. They spoke during the Idaho Range Livestock Symposium in Twin Falls on April 20.

"We've got more work than we can handle," he said.

The program is addressing the rangeland data gap at BLM, which has grown through a lack of funding and changing priorities.

Limited data has resulted in reductions in grazing and a backlog in permit renewals, said Brooke Jacobson, ISDA range monitoring specialist.

ISDA provides one-on-one training to ranchers to

get them started.

The program allows for both the collection of data and a collaborative review of the data by BLM, ISDA and the rancher, Jacobson said.

ISDA helps request information from BLM on where monitoring is needed and walks ranchers through the process of documenting their data, she said.

"Photo monitoring is easy to do. It only requires one photo a year, but you can take more," she said.

Monitoring is helpful in showing long-term trends and equips BLM with data to help producers and help natural resources. It also allows ranchers to make more adaptive management decisions and provides visual evidence that will stand up to potential litigation, she said.

Getting started can be fairly intimidating, Hamilton said.

## Cattle on feed, placements, marketing, and other disappearances, March

(Feedlots with 1,000-head capacity or more)

Item	(1,000 head) 2015	2016	Percent change
On feed April 1	10,797	10,853	1
Placed on feed, March	1,809	1,892	5
Fed cattle marketed, March	1,631	1,747	7
Other disappearance, March*	69	62	-10

\*Includes death loss, movement from feedlots to pasture, and shipments to other feedlots for further feeding.

Source: USDA NASS

Capital Press graphic

## Analysts: Higher placements into feedlots to continue

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

Cattle on feed for slaughter increased about 1 percent year over year on April 1, and although placements into feedlots were lower than market analysts expected, they represent the second consecutive month of a year-over-year increase.

At 10.85 million head in feedlots with a capacity of at least 1,000 head, cattle on feed were up 56,000 head over a year earlier, according to USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

March placements, at 1.89 million, increased 83,000 head and 5 percent, although analysts were expecting a 7 percent increase.

Fewer placements might have been influenced by a 20 percent decrease in imported feeder cattle in March and a sharp decline in fed cattle futures in the second half of March, which might have affected the outlook for feedlot profitability in the late summer and early spring, Steve Meyer and Lee Steiner stated in their Daily Livestock Report.

While placements were at the low end of expectations, the second consecutive month of year-over-year increases is a trend that will likely continue as feeder supplies continue to grow in coming months, said Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension livestock specialist, in this week's Cow/Calf Corner Newsletter.

The report also shows the first increase in quarterly heifers on feed in 14 quarters, up 4.5 percent year over year. The increase likely reflects a growing heifer supply and some slowdown in heifer retention, Peel said.

"Herd expansion is likely still occurring but at a slower pace in 2016," he said.

One thing that stands out in the latest cattle on feed report is that feedlots

are quickly becoming more current, with the supply of cattle on feed more than 120 days down 6.3 percent from last year, Meyer and Steiner said.

"Currentness is something that feedlots struggled with last year, and it may be what finally helps set a more stable floor under prices going forward," they stated.

In addition, the report shows the number of steers in feedlots was down 1.3 percent year over year, the first decrease in quarterly steer inventory in feedlots since July 2014, Peel said.

"Though the current steer inventory in feedlots is still large, the decrease in quarterly supplies is a good sign that feedlots are moving steers at a more timely pace this year," he said.

The decrease follows a dramatic increase in steers on feed last year that coincided with delayed marketings and a sharp increase in carcass weights, he said.

All the increase in March placements were feeders over 700 pounds, with the largest increase in feeders 700 pounds to 800 pounds — up more than 10 percent.

"This trend for placing heavier cattle and the subsequent lower number of days on feed will likely continue for another couple of months due to the sharp decrease in cattle prices and the discount structure in far-deferred contracts," Brenda Boetel, ag economist with the University of Wisconsin, stated in a market update.

March marketings of finished cattle from feedlots, at 1.75 million, increased 7 percent. That increase was in line with market expectations and reflects an additional marketing day this March. Adjusted for the additional marketing day, the increase was less than 2 percent year over year, Meyer and Steiner reported.

## Nationwide milk production pushes ahead

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press



Capital Press file

Per-cow milk production increased to a record level in March, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Service.

Nationwide, milk cows numbered 9.3 million, the largest

since December 2008 — 14,000 head more than March 2015 and up 10,000 head from February.

The increase in the national herd and year-over-year increase in milk production might seem counterintuitive, given milk prices that more than challenge producer margins. But dairymen are trying to weather the downturn by spreading their fixed costs over a greater volume of milk, Dairy Market Analyst reported.

Declining dairy cow

slaughter since mid-March has hinted that dairy producers aren't heeding market signals to reduce output, DMA analysts Jerry Dryer and Matt Gould commented.

While production was down in five of the 23 major states, including a 2.4 percent decrease in top-producing California, it was up significantly in some Midwest and Northeast states.

Major producer Wisconsin posted a 5.3 percent year-over-year increase on 4,000 additional cows and an impressive 85-pound increase in per-cow production.

New York and Michigan were also up in per-cow output — 85 pounds and 90 pounds, respectively. Michigan increased total production 7.7 percent on 13,000 additional cows, and New York was up 5.3 percent on 3,000 additional cows.

South Dakota posted the largest year-over-year increase, up 10.9 percent on 11,000 additional cows and no increase in per-cow production.

California's production fell for the 15th consecutive month on 5,000 fewer head and a loss of 45 pounds per cow. Other states showing lost product were Florida, down 5.7 percent; New Mexico, down 2.9 percent; Utah, down 1.6 percent; and Virginia, down 0.6 percent.

In the Pacific Northwest, Idaho increased milk production 2.4 percent on 8,000 additional cows and a 20-pound increase in per-cow production year over year. Oregon was up 0.9 percent, up 1,000 head with no change in per-cow production. Washington was up 0.5 percent in milk production, with the same number of cows and a 10-pound per-cow increase.

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## Cash prices weaken; butter battles to stay above \$2

By LEE MIELKE  
For the Capital Press

Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



Cash dairy prices weakened more the last week of April, with CME block Cheddar closing the week and the month at \$1.37 per pound, down 5 1/4-cents on the week, and 27 cents above a year ago, with five cars sold last week.

The barrels finished at \$1.4125, down 1 1/4-cents on the week and 20 1/2-cents below a year ago. Thirty-nine cars of block traded hands last week and 13 of barrel.

The blocks lost a penny Monday and another 2 cents Tuesday and dipped to \$1.34 per pound, lowest price since Dec. 29, 2010. The barrels were down 1 1/4-cents Monday and lost 3 cents Tuesday, dipping to \$1.37, 3 cents above the blocks.

Midwest cheese vats remain full as manufacturers work hard to manage high fluid milk intakes, according to Dairy Market News. "Storage facilities continue to fill and inventories are long. Central producers report steady to moderate increases in orders. As grilling season takes off, demand for American and Cheddar varieties is increasing, while pizza varieties may start to experience some decrease in demand."

Western vats also remain full and a steady supply of milk is available.

Cash butter ended Friday at \$2.12 per pound, up 9 cents on the week, up 16 1/2-cents on the month, and 27 cents above a year ago, with five cars sold last week.

The spot gave back the 6 cents it gained Friday on Monday and shed 3 1/2-cents Tuesday, closing at \$2.0250.

Cream is available within the Central region as well as Western and Eastern sellers, according to DMN, and inventories are "steady to building."

"Some manufacturers indicate they are purposely growing stocks to help cover late summer/early fall demand. Although current cream availability is ample, producers expect upcoming warmer weather will diminish butterfat solids in milk intakes in the near future."

Western butter makers also report cream is readily available and inventories "steady to building."

Spot Grade A nonfat dry milk climbed to 77 1/2-cents per pound Tuesday, highest level since March 3, 2016, but lost 2 cents Friday, and closed at 75 1/2-cents per pound, up a half-cent on the week but 17 3/4-cents below a year ago. Eleven carloads were sold on the week.