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Dairy/Livestock

U.S. meat exports sluggish but improving

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. meat exports, January through April

Item	Volume (U.S. tons)			Value (\$ millions)		
	2015	2016	Percent change	2015	2016	Percent change
Beef	376,910	378,287	0.4	2,121	1,839	-13.3
Pork	800,390	796,580	-0.5	1,933	1,766	-8.6
Lamb	3,062	3,654	19.3	6.6	6.1	-7.6

Source: USDA; USMEF

Capital Press graphic

Many challenges in international markets continue to weigh down U.S. meat exports, but the beef and pork industries are also making inroads to new markets, according to officials of the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

Exports of beef and pork January through April held steady in volume but were down 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively, in value year over year.

Lamb exports were 19 percent higher in volume but 8 percent lower in value.

Lower values reflect generally lower prices.

Those comparisons follow tough times for U.S. meat exports in 2015 — beef was down 12 percent in volume and 14 percent in value, pork was up 3 percent in volume but down 15 percent in value and lamb was down 9 percent in volume and 30 percent in value, according to USDA statistics compiled by USMEF.

"We face many, many challenges. The export landscape is always changing, it's always becoming more complex," USMEF President and CEO Philip Seng said in a conference call with the media from the USMEF board of directors meeting and product showcase in St. Louis.

Russian impact

The closure of the Russian market has had a major impact in recent years, but markets have also been affected by a strong U.S. dollar, trade agreements and growing competition, he said.

"Our prices have trended a little bit lower recently, and so I think that's reflected in these export numbers, but I think the encouraging thing is our numbers are up," he said.

Some milestones have been reached, with U.S. beef gaining access to Israel and U.S. lamb gaining access to Taiwan in the last six months and U.S. beef and pork being shipped to South Africa in the last 60

days, he said.

"So I think we're encouraged by those moves," he said.

Asia returning

U.S. exports faced several headwinds in Asian markets last year, including currency issues, mountains of available pork from the EU and an abundance of low-priced Australian beef, said Joel Haggard, USMEF senior vice president for the Asia Pacific region.

"It looks a little brighter this year in Asia for the United States. In overall trade, I think we're going to see some positive developments," he said.

Rising domestic beef prices in Japan (up 15 percent to 20 percent) and South Korea (up 30 percent), two big markets for the U.S., should lead to U.S. beef being substituted for both domestic beef and Australian beef, he said.

In addition the difficulties that have faced U.S. beef in South Korea related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy have largely faded, he said.

And while U.S. pork exports to Japan are down, it's a high-value market for the U.S. and its first quarter pork imports hit a record pace — despite higher domestic pork production, he said.

While China's beef imports don't directly affect U.S. exports, which are still denied access, the country is the fastest growing beef market in the world — with direct imports of beef rising 85 percent in the first quarter, he said.

On the pork side, China's pork shortage has it buying pork all over the world, about 10,000 containers a month. China's pork imports are going to be massive this year. Even for the U.S., with a limited

number of plants exporting, USMEF is forecasting an additional 200,000 tons of U.S. pork will be exported to China, he said.

Mexico's potential

The largest buyer of U.S. beef, Mexico decreased its year-over-year imports of U.S. beef 7 percent last year and 14 percent in the first quarter of this year. The country's economy hasn't yet fully recovered from a recession and the devaluation of the peso has put U.S. beef out of reach for too many consumers, said Chad Russell, USMEF regional director for Mexico, Central America and the Dominican Republic.

"But there is reason to be optimistic," he said.

Mexican producers shipped a record amount of feeder cattle to the U.S., due to a severe drought a couple of years ago. There are not many cattle in Mexico and not as much domestic beef for sale. In addition, Mexican packers are under considerable pressure due to high prices for feeder cattle and imported grain.

But Mexico is a beef-centric culture. Once prices align, Mexican consumers should start consuming more beef, he said.

"We think there's pent-up demand that won't be able to be met by the domestic industry," he said.

Mexico is also the largest buyer of U.S. pork, although shipments were down 11 percent in the first quarter following four years of record shipments. But the market is turning and U.S. pork exports to Mexico should be up for the remainder of the year, Russell said.

Soap sales help 4-H member raise money for her projects

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

ANDERSON, Calif. — Twelve-year-old Madeline Evans was raising dairy goats as a 4-H project for the local fair and had to figure out what to do with all of the milk.

Food-safety rules make it difficult to use dairy products unless the milk is produced at a Grade A or Grade B dairy, but you can use it to make cosmetics, said Madeline's mother, Heather Evans.

Madeline started making soap out of goat's milk last year, and she's already earned more than \$1,000 from sales at an area children's store to put back into her projects.

"We found ourselves throwing away a lot of milk, and I thought it would be fun to make soap," Madeline said as she showed her goats at the Shasta District Fair in Anderson. Her family lives on 3 acres in Redding, Calif.

"It's really nice," she said of the soap. "Goat's milk has similar pH to humans so it really absorbs. It's rich in vitamins A, B, C and E. It has zinc, alpha hydroxy acid and amino acids."

Madeline Evans has been raising dairy goats for six years and has been in 4-H four years. She learned how to make soap at a "goat day"



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

4-H member Madeline Evans, in front, 12, of Redding, Calif., shows one of her dairy goats June 17 at the Shasta District Fair in Anderson, Calif. She uses milk from her goats to make soap, for which she's earned more than \$1,000 to put toward her projects.

at the University of California-Davis, and she's sold more than 300 bars of soap.

The proceeds helped her replenish her herd after a dog got into the pen last year and killed four goats, her mother said.

"Livestock trauma is difficult," said Heather Evans, a small-animal veterinarian. However, it's sometimes a part of raising animals, and Madeline used it as a learning experience, her mother said.

Madeline brought seven goats and two bunnies to the Shasta fair. She had the junior champion dairy goat and her

Polish buck rabbit was best of show. Her 7-year-old sister, Charlotte, is also in 4-H and has started raising dairy goats and bunnies.

Madeline has shown animals at two other shows this year and plans to go to the state fair in Sacramento in July.

"She works really hard at this," Heather Evans said.

When she's older, Madeline plans to get a university degree in veterinary medicine with a major in nutrition, then go to work as a veterinary technician with an emphasis on nutrition, she said.

Proper management of riparian areas benefits all

By DOUG WARNOCK
For the Capital Press

A main concern for managers of rangelands, both public and private, is to protect the streams from damage by animals and humans.

More streams are being fenced off from the rest of the property than ever before. Whether the riparian area is fenced or not, the more important factor is how it is managed.

If livestock are totally excluded from the stream, the manager loses grazing as a tool in management. Grazing, used properly, is very effective in restoring downgraded range areas and stimulating ecosystem resilience.

When grazed properly and monitored, the forage plants and browse in riparian areas can be stimulated to regrow and be vigorous, helping to hold surface soil and provide healthy habitat for fish and wildlife. Plants are stimulated by the periodic removal of a portion of their stems and leaves.

This requires getting the

Greener Pastures
Doug Warnock



to higher ground away from the riparian zone.

Over time, this can be done with one or more riders. To be successful, the riders must be persistent and consistent. Also, there needs to be positive consequences for the livestock. Getting animals to stay in a different place works best when low-stress handling techniques are used.

It is important to take time to make sure that cows and calves are paired up before moving them and to keep social groups together during the move.

Otherwise, the moves can be much more stressful for both animals and riders. The timing of the moves needs to coincide with the animals' normal routines in order to have the most success. Having good feed, available salt and water at the new site also helps to foster positive results when changing grazing patterns.

Livestock managers can play a major role in protecting waterways and improving riparian ecosystem health. The results can be healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and greater forage production.

The key element to successful management is knowing what your actions are producing in terms of animal behavior and plant response. This means spending time to plan, to monitor and to adjust in order to keep plants vigorous and productive, while promoting the health of the riparian zone.

Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley, where he consults and writes on grazing management.

Butter rising star in the 'Milky Way'

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Cash butter ended Friday at \$2.3675 per pound, 16 3/4-cents above the previous week and 45 1/4-cents above the previous year, with 25 cars exchanging hands at the CME. It has gained 30 1/4-cents in three weeks.

However, the spot inched back a half-cent both Monday and Tuesday, slipping to \$2.36.

Dairy Market News says Central region butter production was mixed. Cream is tightening and cannot be found at discounts as in re-

Dairy Markets
Lee Mielke



cent weeks. End users report actively searching for bulk butter, but are not finding sellers with ease.

Western butter output is at seasonal levels with churn schedules running below plant capacity. Spot cream loads are less available as butterfat components trend lower.

CME cash block Cheddar cheese hit the highest price since Dec. 3, 2015, on Wednesday but then retreat-

ed on offers and closed Friday at \$1.5150 per pound, up 4 cents on the week and the fifth consecutive week of gain, but 18 1/2-cents below a year ago.

The barrels climbed to \$1.5550 Wednesday, then eased back to \$1.5450 Friday, up 3 1/2-cents on the week but 11 1/2-cents below a year ago. Four cars of block traded hands on the week and 13 of barrel.

Cheese was unchanged Monday with no activity, as traders awaited Tuesday afternoon's May Milk Production report and kept an eye on the thermometer in California and the Southwest.

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