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Inside This Edition:

Ag Producers Feeling The Impact of COVID-19

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Ag Producers Feeling The Impact Of COVID-19



By Anna Dragseth

COVID-19 continues to impact activity around the world, with the agriculture industry being no exception.

The pandemic has hampered exports of American agricultural products, disrupted processing and marketing channels by shutting down restaurant sales, and many meatpackers have slowed production at meat plants, and some have even temporarily closed. Prices of agricultural commodities are dropping, and low prices are expected to persist for months.

According to an updated economics report published in April by the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, U.S. farmers, who have already been hurt by U.S. trade disputes, are projected to lose up to \$20 billion in net income for 2020.

"Probably the biggest sector of agriculture that is feeling the hit from COVID-19 is the livestock industry. I am sure that most everyone has seen or heard of reports of milk being dumped, pigs being disposed of, and chicken eggs being broken. Although we don't have any large producers of milk, poultry, or pigs in our area, this and other factors are still taking a toll on the cattle and sheep markets," explained Richland County Extension Agent Tim Fine.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, producers are facing uncertain times. So in order to help alleviate the financial crisis farmers and ranchers are experiencing, President Donald Trump announced a new \$19 billion Coronavirus Food Assis-

tance Program on Friday, April 17. This relief package will entail \$16 billion in direct payments to farmers and ranchers and \$3 billion in agriculture spending.

According to a statement released on April 17, by Senator John Hoeven, (ND), chairman of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee, \$9.6 billion will go to the livestock industry – with \$5.1 billion for cattle, \$2.9 billion for dairy, and \$1.6 billion for hogs. On top of that, \$3.9 billion will be paid to row crop producers, \$2.1 billion for specialty crop farmers, and \$500 million for other crops.

According to the statement, producers will receive a single payment determined using two calculations which includes price losses that occurred Jan. 1-April 15, (producers will be compensated for 85% of price losses during this time period) and expected losses from April 15 through the next two quarters (which will cover 30% of expected losses).

The payment limit is \$125,000 per commodity, with an overall limit of \$250,000 per producer or entity. Qualified commodities must have experienced a 5% price decrease between January and April.

In addition to this, the United States Department of Agriculture will also be spending \$3 billion in purchases of agriculture products, including meat, dairy and produce to support producers and provide food to those in need. The USDA will work with local and regional food distributors, to provide food to food banks, as well as community and faith-based organizations.

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NDSU Extension Helps Farmers And Ranchers Cope With Stress

By NDSU Ag Communication

The first step in dealing with stress is to recognize the early symptoms.

Poor growing and harvesting conditions, low commodity prices, trade wars and a shortage of livestock feed for winter all have been stressful for North Dakota farmers and ranchers.

North Dakota State University Extension has developed a number of resources to help farmers and ranchers cope with the stress resulting from the uncertainties in their profession.

The first step is to recognize the early symptoms of stress, according to Sean Brotherson, Extension family science specialist.

"Before farm/ranch families can do much about managing stress, they have to know when they are experiencing it," he says. "Much of the time, people do not know or give attention to what is going on in their bodies and in their relationships with others."

Those early signs include rising blood pressure, a rapidly beating heart, clenched teeth, aching neck and shoulders, sweating hands and feet, and churning stomach.

"Early warning signs are like a flashing red light on the dashboard of your car when the engine is overheating," Brotherson says. "If you ignore it long enough, the engine will get damaged."

To help farmers and ranchers recognize the warning signs and do something about them, Brotherson has developed fact sheets with tips on how to control events that cause stress, control their attitudes about those events and control their responses.

To control events, he suggests farmers and ranchers plan ahead and replace worn machinery parts during the off-season, for example, rather than waiting until they break down at a crucial time. Controlling events also includes setting priorities about what has to be done today and what can wait until tomorrow; discussing before the harvest who can be available to run for parts, care for livestock, etc.; and saying no to extra commitments that you do not have time to do.

One way to control attitudes is listing all of your stresses, then identifying those you can change and accepting the ones you cannot change. Other ways to control attitudes are to set realistic goals and expectations daily, notice what you have accomplished rather than what you failed to do, and shift your focus from worrying to problem solving.

Controlling your responses includes focusing on relaxing your body and mind, taking care of your body by exercising regularly and eating well-balanced meals, not smoking cigarettes or using alcohol or other drugs, taking regular breaks to get rid of tension as you work, finding someone with whom you can talk about your worries and frustrations, and seeking help when you need it. For a complete list, visit <https://tinyurl.com/FarmStressFactSheet>.

Brotherson also has developed several podcasts and videos and a PowerPoint presentation on the warning signs of stress and how to deal with them. They are available on NDSU Extension's Farm and Ranch Stress website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/farmranchstress.

In addition, the website has a recording of a videoconference training hosted by NDSU Extension and Prairie St. John's, a facility in Fargo, ND that cares for children, adolescents and adults with mental illness and/or substance use issues. During the videoconference, Monica McConkey, director of business development

NDSU Extension agriculture and natural resources agent Paige Brummund checks out a Ward County wheat field that couldn't be harvested because of an early snowfall. (NDSU photo)



at Prairie St. John's, talked about stressors related to the farm crisis, warning signs related to a behavioral health crisis, skills to communicate, support and resources to access help.

Other resources on the Farm and Ranch Stress website include Brotherson's publication, "12 Tools for Your Wellness Toolbox in Times of Farm Stress." It provides advice for dealing with stress physically, mentally, emotionally/spiritually, personally, professionally and financially.

His other publications include "My Coping Strategies Plan - At Home and on the Farm," "My Farming Resource Network," "Farming and Ranching in Tough Times" and "Farming/Ranching: Stressful Occupations."

Throughout the state, Extension agents are available to listen to stressed farmers and ranchers and direct them to get the help they need.

"People must understand it is OK not to be OK, and help is available," says Craig Askim, the Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Mercer County.

"The worst option on this subject is silence," he adds. "Things may look grim,

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With Beef Backlogged And The Market In Flux, Montana Cattle Ranchers Face Tough Choices

By Johnathan Hettinger

The beef supply chain in the United States typically starts on a ranch like Marty Malone's, in Paradise Valley, with the birth of calves. After a summer of grazing, a cow reaches about 500 to 700 pounds. Then the cow is sold to a feedlot in the Midwest or Great Plains, where it eats feed like corn and barley to fatten up. At about 1,200 pounds and 18 months of age, it's slaughtered at a nearby packing plant. Then it's shipped to a wholesaler, who sells the meat to a restaurant or grocery store, where an end customer purchases it.



NDSU Extension Helps With Stress...

(continued on from page 4)

but you are not alone and help is available, so please ask."

Farming and ranching is unlike other occupations, notes Cindy Klapperich, Extension's family and community wellness agent in Sargent County.

"Because they are self-employed, farmers and ranchers often have no separation between home and work," she says. "Failure to be successful affects not only their business, but their whole lifestyle. As stress builds, it can take a heavy toll on the farmer, and on the farm family."

Another way Extension has helped farmers and ranchers is through a one-day workshop that covered financial, marketing and management topics, especially the impacts of risk in production and marketing. About two dozen farmers, ranchers and agricultural professionals attended.

"The program was delivered by economics specialists from four states in a more in-depth, yet more personal manner than traditional Extension economics programs," says Extension bioproducts and bioenergy economics specialist David Ripplinger, who helped organize the event.

Extension also partnered with Eyes on the Horizon Consulting in Fargo and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to hold a workshop focusing on helping youth from farm and ranch families cope with stress. The workshop was held at 17 Interactive Video Network sites across North Dakota. People also could access the workshop through their computer.

"The stressed farm economy is impacting entire families," says Kim Bushaw, NDSU Extension family science specialist. "Farm and ranch youth already can feel isolated from their peers and social connections. They are often expected to help with farm chores in addition to school and perhaps other jobs for pay. The workshop was designed to help parents, family members, teachers and other school staff, faith community leaders, social workers, public health professionals, 4-H leaders and any community member watch for signs and provide help for adolescents who are struggling."

One month into nationwide stay-at-home orders related to COVID-19, that supply chain has been disrupted in the middle, with many of the nation's largest packing plants shutting down due to COVID-19 outbreaks at their facilities. That means fewer cattle are being slaughtered, which means fewer are being taken off feedlots, which means fewer are being purchased from ranchers like Malone. On Friday, April 24, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported 23% fewer cattle were put on feed in March 2020 than in March 2019.

Regardless, Malone and other ranchers still have the same amount of cattle. And in what was anticipated to be a record year for beef producers, prices are now down about 30% since the beginning of the year.

"It depresses the market, and there's a backlog all the way back to the cow-calf guy," Malone said

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Field Peas Possible Alternative to Distillers Grains

Field Peas May Be An Alternative To Distillers Grains As A Protein Source In Cattle Feed

By NDSU Ag Communication

Field peas may be an alternative to distillers grains as a protein source in cattle feed if the field peas are at a low enough cost, according to a North Dakota State University Extension livestock systems specialist.

Distillers grains are a coproduct of producing ethanol from corn.

“Distillers grains are a very palatable feed that usually has a feed test of 30% crude protein dry-matter (DM) basis,” says Karl Hoppe, who is based at NDSU’s Carrington Research Extension Center. “Typically, dried distillers grains are priced at 110% to 120% of the price of corn grain per ton. When priced on cost per pound of crude protein, distillers grains traditionally have been a very low-cost protein source. Also, distillers grains have a high energy value, making them both a protein and an energy feed.”

However, ethanol plants have reduced production or closed temporarily, so the price of distillers grains has risen from \$130 to \$180 per ton, and modified dried distillers grains (50% moisture) have risen from \$65 to \$90 per ton.

“The higher moisture content of modified and wet distillers grains blends well into a total mixed ration and nicely conditions the feed,” Hoppe notes. “It’s a popular choice in cattle rations. But when price increases and/or availability is limited, cattle producers look for options.”

One such option is field peas. Pulse crops such as field peas are suited to cooler climates and not usually planted where corn is prevalent. However, North Dakota raises corn and field peas, and field peas are an excellent feed for cattle, Hoppe says.

Field peas are 25% to 27% crude protein and contain a high amount of starch. The energy content of field peas is similar to corn grain.

Field peas are very palatable once cattle become accustomed to the grain. Getting cattle accustomed to field peas usually takes three days if cattle have not had previous experience with field peas.

Field peas can be fed in amounts similar to corn. If producers want to include field peas in cattle diets at high rates, the amount of field peas should be increased slowly, similar to corn.

“If field peas are priced competitively with corn grain, field peas can be a replacement for corn energy,” Hoppe says.

Typically, field peas are priced for the human food or pet food markets. These prices are considerably higher than feed grain prices. However, recently the demand in the pet food market has been reduced and some field pea producers are looking for other markets.

If field pea prices are \$5 per 60-pound bushel, that calculates to \$167 per ton

Field peas are very palatable once cattle become accustomed to the grain. (NDSU photo)



for a 25% to 27% (DM basis) crude protein feed.

“If dried distiller grains are \$180 per ton for 30% (DM basis) crude protein, then field peas are a competitive protein source,” Hoppe says. “If freight needs to be added to distillers grains, then field peas are even more cost competitive if the field peas are already binned on-farm.”

Field peas are not a direct substitution for distiller grains, though. Distillers grains have been through a fermentation process to remove most of the starch and sugars. Field peas are high in starch, and including them in livestock diets at high rates may cause acidosis, a nutritional issue caused by cattle consuming too much starch.

“As with all grains, using ‘step up’ rations, or slowly increasing the grain concentration into the ration, will reduce acidosis issues,” Hoppe says.

Field peas have yellow and green seeds, and difference may exist in protein content. A feed analysis will determine crude protein concentration in the field peas.

“Field peas are a beneficial addition to a cattle ration,” Hoppe says. “Providing both protein and energy, field peas are a viable supplement for beef cow rations. With recent pricing and demand changes for feed, reconsider using field peas as a feed source for cattle.”

He notes that North Dakota also produces other protein sources that producers might consider feeding their cattle. Those protein sources are canola, sunflower and soybean meal. Whole soybeans can be used as a protein source when limited to less than 4 pounds in a cow diet. Wheat midds and alfalfa hay can be considered as protein sources as well.

Sheep Producers Need To Keep Marketing Options Open

By NDSU Ag Communication

Sheep producers need to keep their marketing options open during the COVID-19 outbreak, says Travis Hoffman, North Dakota State University Extension sheep specialist.

"We are undoubtedly in a different time than expected for livestock producers in today's COVID-19 situation," he says. "Breeding decisions were made, we put in the effort to get calves, piglets, lambs and/or kids on the ground and growing well. However, we are facing an unprecedented challenge for harvesting the fruition of our efforts for livestock production."

The harvest slaughter lamb volume was down 38% for the week ending April 17 and is down 12% for 2020.

"Our current lambs on feed inventory are up 8% over last year, and we are on a full path to industry challenges of too much supply as we come through the summer months of sheep and lamb production," Hoffman says.

The lamb industry is highly dependent on the currently non-existent restaurant trade. Thus, retail is sheep producers' primary market. During the weeks of March 15 and March 22, lamb purchases in the retail sector had growth of 55% over yearly expectations, but this has not been sustained as people load their refrigerators and freezers.

"There is greater demand than ever from the consuming sector to know the producer, and I hope that we can mitigate current challenges via providing a direct market for our consumers of high-quality protein for the family meals," Hoffman says. "Local food is not new, but the chances to learn more about production practices and building relationships with producers may be at a heightened priority for our consumers."

One option is for a producer to sell a live animal (prior to slaughter) directly to a consumer. The animal then goes through a custom-exempt plant. That plant is exempt from continuous inspection and only can slaughter and process livestock for the exclusive use of the owners, the owners' family and nonpaying guests. The packages of meat must be labeled "not for sale."

However, if an individual wants to merchandise meat products, a limiting factor is the need for a state or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection of the processing plant. Meat originating from state-inspected facilities can be sold only within the state's boundaries, and USDA-inspected meat can be sold in-state or via interstate commerce.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture has a website at <https://tinyurl.com/NDMeatProcessors> with information for producers who want to harvest their animals and/or merchandise the meat. For information in Minnesota, go to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture site at <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/minnesota-state-equal-plants>.

"Working with meat processors can provide proactive options with depressed live animal markets for producers to develop alternatives for marketing throughout the spring and summer with challenges that we have never faced," Hoffman says. "Keep your options open."



The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing sheep producers to look for new ways to market their lambs. (NDSU photo) NDSUSheepMarket-TSLN-050220



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Governor Bullock Presses USDA To Allow Locally Produced Meat To Go To Montanans Hardest Hit By COVID-19 Pandemic

Monday, April 27 - Montana - Governor Steve Bullock sent a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to allow some local processing in order to avoid food waste and get local meat to Montana food banks for Montanans hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19.

The USDA recently denied a request by the Montana Department of Livestock to consider modified protocols that would allow selected processors to process some local demand from Montana producers and farmers, instead of continuing to require that product be processed at facilities that are increasingly reaching capacity.

"I believe the request by our state meat inspection authorities is a reasonable step that should be approved," Governor Bullock wrote in the letter. "Our proposed protocols would enforce the intent of our food safety regulations and ensure that food is not wasted at a time when many Montanans need access to food during this crisis."

Allowing custom processing under USDA modified guidance would cut down on food waste and allow Montana-produced food to go to local food banks, getting local meat and food to families hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19.

Governor Bullock also asked the USDA to encourage new ideas to reduce barriers for Montana meat processing capacity and improve markets for rural producers in Montana over the long term.

USDA Announces \$15 Million For Conservation Innovation Grants

Submitted by Tasha Gibby

Bozeman, MT - April 29 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today a \$15 million investment to help support the adoption of innovative conservation approaches on agricultural lands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting proposals through June 29, 2020, for national Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). CIG projects inspire creative problem-solving solutions that boost production on farms, ranches and private forests and improve natural resources.

This year's priorities are water reuse, water quality, air quality, energy, and wildlife habitat.

"Through Conservation Innovation Grants, we're able to co-invest with partners on the next generation of agricultural conservation solutions," said Tom Watson, State Conservationist in Montana. "Conservation Innovation Grants have helped spur new tools and technologies to conserve natural resources, build resilience in producers' operations and improve their bottom lines. This year will be the first time we are offering water reuse as a priority, and we're excited to see how these projects play a role in USDA's broader strategy for water reuse on agricultural land."

National CIG: CIG is a competitive grants program that supports development, testing and research of conservation technologies, practices, systems and approaches on private lands. Grantees must match the CIG investment at least one to one.

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities and individuals are eligible to apply. Complete funding announcement information can be accessed through the Conservation Innovation Grants webpage.

The National CIG program supports early pilot projects or demonstrations of promising conservation approaches and is distinct from the \$25 million announced on March 12 for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials. On-Farm Trials is a separate CIG component created by the 2018 Farm Bill. It includes a Soil Health Demonstration Trial.


More Information: NRCS's CIG program is identified in the federal government's National Water Reuse Action Plan as an opportunity to support development of innovative projects that focus on water reuse on private lands. Read then April 28 post on the USDA Blog for how USDA is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Interior, Department of Energy and others to promote water reuse across sectors.

CIG applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. EDT on June 29, 2020. A webinar for potential applicants is scheduled for 3 p.m. EDT on May 13, 2020. Information on how to participate in the webinar is posted on the CIG website.

CIG also contributes to the Agriculture Innovation Agenda: a USDA initiative to align resources, programs, and research to position American

agriculture to better meet future global demands. Specifically, USDA is working to stimulate innovation so that American agriculture can achieve the goal of increasing production by 40 percent while cutting the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture in half by 2050.

For more information on CIG, visit nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS field office.



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Resources Available To Help Consumers, Food Producers In COVID-19 Struggle

Submitted by Rebecca Colnar, Ag News Wire

The Senate has passed by unanimous consent H.R. 266, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. The House is scheduled to vote Thursday, April 23 and President Trump announced he would sign the bill into law.

The American Farm Bureau, along with the Montana Farm Bureau, supports passage of H.R. 266 and has sent a letter to the House. This bill expands farmer and rancher eligibility for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, providing additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and includes necessary funding for hospitals and rural health clinics.

Since the Coronavirus was detected in the United States and Montana, information has been rampant as agriculture, small businesses, restaurants, entertainment venues, schools and many more try to find ways to stay solvent in this disruptive time.

For farmers and ranchers, trying to determine where to go for help and information on COVID-19 as it affects the productivity and finances on your farm or ranch can be daunting. Following are links to help navigate these difficult times, keep in mind that programs and the available government relief funds available are ever-changing.

National Assistance

U.S. Department of Agriculture

The USDA has a dedicated COVID-19 link on its website that provides updated information on all USDA programs. For complete information visit: usda.gov/coronavirus.

Funding Resource Matrix organizes funding opportunities identified in the CARES Act and other federal resources that can help support rural America. Opportunities are categorized by customer and assistance type. Look for the Agricultural Producers and Ranchers category. This matrix provides a link to each of the programs available. rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA_COVID-19_Fed_Rural_Resource_Guide.pdf

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), announced on April 17, is a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that will take several actions to assist farmers, ranchers, and consumers in response to the COVID-19 national emergency. President Trump directed the USDA to craft \$16 billion for direct payments and \$3 billion for product purchase to be given to food banks. This immediate relief program will provide critical support to our farmers and ranchers, maintain the integrity of our food supply chain, and ensure every American continues to receive and have access to the food they need.

usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/04/17/usda-announces-coronavirus-food-assistance-program

Immigration: Regulations surrounding immigration continue to evolve as President Trump orders a temporary suspension of all immigration; agriculture is working hard for an exemption due to the necessity of immigrant labor.

usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/04/15/dhs-and-usda-move-protect-american-farmers-and-ensure-continued

U.S. Treasury and Small Business Administration (SBA)

The Treasury and SBA are administering government programs designed to assist American workers and small businesses, including agriculture producers. These include the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program (EIDL) as expanded by Congress under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. EIDL was formerly not available to farmers and ranchers but the Senate-passed version of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act expands coverage to agriculture.

Access the link below for an overview of the PPP, including loan eligibility, application information and deadlines. Interested producers should consult their bankers/ag lenders now to start the application process. Although the program is open until June 30, 2020, the Administration encourages persons to apply quickly because there is a funding cap, and lenders need time to process loans.

sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program-ppp

Montana

Although the number of COVID-19 cases are low in Montana, it's important to know the rules and recommendations to prevent the spread of the disease. On April 22, Governor Bullock announced a phased approach to re-opening Montana.

General information on the Coronavirus in Montana can continue to be found at: dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt.

The Montana Department of Livestock has addressed the COVID-19 concerns by adding information that ranchers, livestock markets and horse owners can follow.

liv.mt.gov/Newsroom/covid-19-guidance-and-recommendations-to-ranchers

liv.mt.gov/Newsroom/covid-19-guidance-to-livestock-markets-and-related-businesses

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[http://liv.mt.gov/Newsroom/covid-19-guidance-to-horse-owners](https://liv.mt.gov/Newsroom/covid-19-guidance-to-horse-owners)

The Montana Food Bank Network distributes food directly to food banks and food pantries across the state. It is committed to ensuring everyone in Montana, no matter what community they live in, has access to the food they need to thrive. Their outreach during COVID-19 includes an extensive list of food banks and pantries with an explanation of how those entities are distributing food.

Find out more at www.mfbn.org.

For additional information on COVID-19, visit the Montana Farm Bureau website, www.mfbf.org.



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NDSU, SDSU Extension Holding Cattle Mineral Program

The Program Will Focus On Beef Cattle Mineral Nutrition To Assist Producers In Developing Effective And Cost-Efficient Mineral Programs



Minerals are a small but critical component of beef cow diets. (NDSU photo)

By NDSU Ag Communication

“Providing the correct mineral supplement is necessary to ensure optimal health, performance and reproduction,” says Janna Block, Extension livestock systems specialist at North Dakota State University’s Hettinger Research Extension Center.

The costs of mineral supplementation vary widely, but most estimates are from \$20 to \$50 per cow per year.

“Due to the importance of minerals and the investment required, it is imperative for producers to develop a good understanding of mineral supplement options to choose the best products for an individual ranch,” Block says.

“However, mineral supplementation can be a confusing and complex issue,” she adds. “For example, supplementation is complicated by factors such as interactions among certain minerals that can affect requirements and the ability of the animal to utilize available minerals.”

Extension professionals in North Dakota and South Dakota are offering an educational program focused on beef cattle mineral nutrition to assist producers in developing effective and cost-efficient mineral programs based on individual production situations.

The core components of this program include workshops, ranch visits, individual follow-up consultations and tools to help producers critically evaluate their mineral program and modify it if necessary.

The program typically consists of a one-day workshop in May, followed by sample collection and ranch visits during the summer and a final one-day training in October. This year, due to social distancing restrictions, content that typically would be presented at the initial meeting in May will be split into four sessions that will be delivered to participants via live webinar.

Dates and topics for the webinar series and the presenters are:

- May 19, 6-7:30 p.m. MDT/7-8:30 p.m. CDT - Diagnostics of mineral issues in North and South Dakota, Jeffery Hall, Utah State University, licensed veterinarian and board certified in veterinary toxicology

- May 21, 6-7:30 p.m. MDT/7-8:30 p.m. CDT - Mineral program options and basic mineral nutrition

- May 26, 6-7:30 p.m. MDT/7-8:30 p.m. CDT - Reading mineral tags and monitoring consumption, Adele Harty, South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension cow-calf field specialist

- May 28, 6-7:30 p.m. MDT/7-8:30 p.m. CDT - How animal grazing behavior impacts mineral intake, Ken Olson, SDSU Extension beef specialist

One of the most important components of this program is collection and analysis of forage, other feedstuffs and water samples for mineral content. Forage is one of the main mineral sources for the majority of beef cattle herds; however, few producers have used mineral analysis in grazed or harvested forages or other feeds. Instructors will discuss proper sampling methods and help producers interpret and utilize their information when evaluating mineral programs.

Tools will be provided to monitor mineral consumption throughout the summer to determine whether cattle are consuming minerals at the appropriate level. Presenters will provide tips and tricks to troubleshoot consumption challenges. During the summer, SDSU and NDSU Extension personnel plan to conduct ranch visits to focus on specific needs of each producer.

The final workshop session in the fall may be presented via webinar or in a face-to-face format. That session will include additional information about applied mineral nutrition, including suggestions for managing mineral consumption problems.

Sponsors of the program are Micronutrients, a Nutreco company, and Ward Laboratories Inc.

The registration fee for this program is \$130 per operation. This helps cover costs for materials, mileage and ranch consultations. Program participants will receive one free forage analysis and one free water analysis, with all subsequent samples at a discounted rate for being part of the program. This discount is good for a 12-month period to allow for analysis of a year-round feeding program.

To register, go to <https://extension.sdstate.edu/event/beef-cattle-mineral-nutrition-program>. Registration will be open until May 18.

For more information, North Dakota producers should contact their local NDSU Extension agent or, Block at 701-567-4323 or janna.block@ndsu.edu. South Dakota producers should contact Harty at 605-441-5870 or adele.harty@sdstate.edu.

Montana Pork Producers Council Encouraged by Resources Provided in Defense Production Act for Meat and Poultry

Montana Pork Producers Council (MPPC) recognizes the importance of evoking the Defense Production Act for Meat and Poultry. Providing federal guidance to packing plants to ensure they can remain open, the Executive Order signed by President Trump on Tuesday evening is an unprecedented action for unprecedented times in the agricultural industry.

MPPC looks forward to seeing additional details of a plan to ensure workers remain in a safe environment while providing these essential food processing services. "We expect our processors to continue following the guidance issued by CDC and OSHA to ensure worker safety," says Anne Miller, Executive Director of MPPC. "This recent announcement provides a clear path for the Secretary of Agriculture to take a leadership role in keeping our packing plants open through this time period and we urge this leadership to provide vital resources to our meat processing infrastructure, such as masks and accelerated testing capabilities."

This is progress in bridging the gap between hungry communities and the pork producers working to get their animals to market. However, farmers across the nation still face agonizing decisions to euthanize and dispose of pigs they are unable to sell. MPPC would like to see further steps to support these farms in both the actual process and to address the mental health needs after the process has occurred. "I am receiving calls from Montana producers that I consider friends, worried about what they will be forced to do if their hogs are unable to go into the food supply and they are out of space," Miller explains. "They are going to need help."

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