

Midwest Messenger LIVESTOCK

ROUNDUP

Agriculture secretary, in Grand Island stop, announces 5-step program to help ranchers

By Jeff Bahr
Grand Island Independent

In a visit to the Nebraska State Fair on Monday, Aug. 31 Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins acknowledged the “heartbreak and concern” ranchers have felt since President Trump recently lifted tariffs on up to 300,000 metric tons of imported beef.

At the Federal Issues Forum, Rollins said Trump feels he needs to make some foods more affordable for consumers in the short term.

Over the past week, Rollins said she has talked to hundreds of ranchers, including some at the State Fair.

During her talk, Rollins announced five steps the U.S. Department of Agriculture is taking. The administration is taking those actions “very, very quickly to protect domestic production and encourage producer/rancher confidence as we continue to carry out the most pro-farmer, pro-rancher agenda in American history,” she said.

The first step is a fast-tracked new retention heifer endorsement, which will be moved through the traditional livestock risk protection program.

“The policy will allow producers to ensure the economic value of retaining a heifer for breeding over a two-year period,” Rollins said. “That endorsement will be a permanent tool that puts American ranchers in a position to rebuild your herd rather than forcing you to choose between today’s cattle prices and tomorrow’s beef supply.”

The new program will be called BRAND, for Beef Retention and National Development Endorsement.

Secondly, Rollins announced that producers may use the emergency conservation program on grassland CRP acres, “which will provide greater stability during times of hardship.”

Referring to this year’s Nebraska wildfires, Rollins said the administration wants to make sure “that our ranchers in this state have the added flexibility for a direct investment into rebuilding the great American beef herd by providing the ranchers the ability to rebuild quickly” with support from USDA programs.

The third step involves meatpackers. A number of beef plants have closed recently. But Rollins says those closures provide an opportunity for American cattle



World-Herald photo by Nikos Frazier

U.S. Sens. Pete Ricketts and Deb Fischer and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins speak with reporters after a “Federal Issues Forum” at the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island on Monday, Aug. 31.

producers.

“We are going to need this processing capacity as our herds continue to rebuild,” she said. “We are going to make sure that as the herd continues back toward its full strength that we will not simply sit by and watch closures continue. We will make sure that idle plants, whether here in Nebraska, in the panhandle of Texas or up in the West, that those will not either sit there idly or even, potentially worse, be sold to foreign interests.”

“With the recent closure announcements, the silver lining is that nearly 20% of the beef processing capacity will be up for grabs as the herd bounces back,” she

added.

Four companies, two of them foreign-owned, control 85% of the American beef market. The administration is aware of what “that has potentially done to our cattle ranchers over many years, not just recently,” she said.

“The fact that 20% of that processing is coming back on the market will allow us to shift for the first time in decades back to regionally owned mid-sized and smaller processors and capacity,” she said.

The president of Tyson Foods recently assured Rollins that his company will not sell its closed beef plants to foreign-owned companies, she said.

The fourth step involves efforts to supply American beef and produce to schools, the military, veterans and prisons. “Talk to Secretary Hegseth,” she said, referring to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

“He’s ready to prioritize great American beef for our incredible military men and women.”

The fifth program will help new farmers and ranchers with no-interest and low-interest loans.

Rollins noted that under President Biden, no international trade deals were signed. But the Trump administration has passed 20 new trade deals in 19 months.

Not only did the Biden administration do nothing to address those issues, but it “actively waged a war on our ranchers,” Rollins said.

Before Trump returned to office, the cost of inputting

LIVESTOCK CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 1 North Platte Stockyards, Regular Sale w/ Special Bred Stockcow Sale; North Platte, NE
- 2 Bassett Livestock Auction, Special Feeder Cattle Auction; Bassett, NE
- 3 Broken Bow Livestock Market, Special Weighup Auction; Broken Bow, NE
- 3 Denison Livestock Auction, Special Calf & Yearling Sale; Denison, IA
- 4 Lexington Livestock Market, LLC, All Class Cattle Auction; Lexington, NE

- 8 North Platte Stockyards, Regular Sale; North Platte, NE
- 10 Broken Bow Livestock, Special Calf & Feeder Auction; Broken Bow, NE
- 11 Burwell Livestock Market, Special Spring Calf & Feeder Auction; Burwell, NE
- 17 Broken Bow Livestock, Special Weighup Auction; Broken Bow, NE
- 22 North Platte Stockyards, Regular Sale w/ Special Stocker & Feeder Sale; North Platte, NE
- 24 Broken Bow Livestock, Special Calf & Feeder Auction; Broken Bow, NE
- 29 North Platte Stockyards, Regular Sale w/ Horse Sale; North Platte, NE



World-Herald photo by Nikos Frazier

Attendees watch on during the Federal Issues Forum at the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island on Monday, Aug. 31.

skyrocketed, "and annual net cash farm income was \$85 billion lower in 2024 than it was just a few years earlier," Rollins said.

The Biden administration, she said, imposed a mountain of red tape "under the guise of radical climate mandates, including limiting our grazing on public lands" and trying to regulate "every puddle on farms and ranches with their misguided Waters of the U.S. policy."

The Federal Issues Forum, hosted by Sen. Pete Ricketts, took place in the Aurora Cooperative Pavilion. He was joined at the event by Sen. Deb Fischer.

Both talked about steps they've taken to protect America and American agriculture.

Both said they've worked hard to make E-15 available year-round. The two senators expressed confidence that it will soon become a reality when the new Farm Bill passes.

Fischer said she has met with a lot of ranchers and ag producers in central Nebraska and the panhandle over the past couple of weeks.

It's no secret, she said, that "people are rightfully concerned" about importing beef.

Those who know Fischer say she can be blunt in sharing her concerns, she said.

"We have to have long-term solutions," she said. "We must grow our nation's cattle herd to meet that demand, and we owe it to the American producers to enact policies promoting certainty, promoting stability and promoting markets to sell products."

That's why Nebraska's relationship with Rollins is so important, she said.

"I keep those thoughts front and center as a member of the Senate ag committee," Fischer said.

All Republicans on the committee voted in favor of the Farm Bill. As of yet, Democrats have not, she said.

"But I will stress that in committee, we worked in a bipartisan manner. The committee worked hard," she said. Both Republicans and Democrats put in a lot of effort, expressing bipartisan support for year-round E-15.

"We compromised on a lot of issues," she said. Republicans offered a fair compromise on SNAP funding, she said.

She vowed that she will "keep pushing and fighting until we get this Farm Bill over the finish line."



BLACK HILLS ANGUS TOUR

Tour Schedule

TUES., SEPT. 15, 2026

- 2026 South Dakota Angus Annual Meeting & Banquet
 - Social 6 PM., Banquet 6:30 PM, at Ramkota in Rapid City
 - RSVP for Banquet by Sept. 8 to Lee Kopriva call or text 605-450-1546

WED., SEPT. 16, 2026

- Grandview Angus
- Lehrkamp Livestock
- Fortune Triangle S Ranch
- Schaack Ranch & Eisenbraun Cattle Co.
- Trask Angus
- Mt. Rushmore Angus Ranch

****Auction after supper on Wednesday**

THURS., SEPT. 17, 2026

- Kammerer Livestock & Hillsview Ranch
- Amdahl Angus
- Millar Angus & Bar 69 Angus
- Bakers LEMAR ANGUS, Smith's Saddle Butte Ranch & Steinbrecher Livestock, LLC
- Frederickson Ranch

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