AG ISSUES AND CURRENT EVENT BRIEFS

2016 Senior FFA Quiz LDE
2016-17 Texas FFA Officer Candidate Testing
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Unit 1 – Agriculture In The Legislative Process
The U.S. government is made up of the executive branch, the judicial branch and the legislative branch. The executive branch, led by the President and the Vice President, enforces our laws. The judicial branch, led by the Supreme Court, interprets our laws. The legislative branch, which makes our laws, is congress.

Congress is bicameral, or has two parts: the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Each state has two U.S. Senators and at least one U.S. Representative. The more residents a state has, the more U.S. Representatives it is allowed (Texas has 36 U.S. Representatives). There are 100 U.S. Senators and 435 U.S. Representatives.

Congress has the power to make federal laws and only the House can introduce tax legislation. The Senate has the power to confirm or deny the President’s appointments to the Cabinet, the Supreme Court, and other key positions. The Senate is also to ratify treaties.

The key to deciphering the legislative process is in understanding that legislation is grouped into three main categories:

- **Authorizing legislation:** A bill that creates a new federal program, extends the life of an existing program, or repeals existing law. Authorizing bills usually set a limit on the amount of funds that can be spent annually by a program over a period of three to five years. But it’s important to remember that an authorizing bill only establishes the framework for a federal program - it does not provide funds to operate the program.
- **Appropriations bill:** A bill that allocates funding for specific federal programs. Unlike authorizing legislation, which remains in effect for three or more years, an appropriations bill must be enacted into law every year. Each year, in fact, Congress must pass a series of 13 appropriations bills to keep federal departments and agencies operating.
- **Entitlement legislation:** A measure that guarantees a certain level of benefits to persons who meet eligibility requirements set by law, such as Medicare, Medicaid and college student loan programs. Entitlement programs typically do not need to be reauthorized, nor do they require annual appropriations.

Congress’ s primary duty is to pass laws. The legislative process is often slow, just as the framers of the Constitution intended. The framers believed that a slow-moving legislature would be less able to infringe on citizens’ rights and liberties.

**U.S. Senate - Leadership Structure**
*Source: Aacom.org*

**President Pro Tempore**
Elected by the majority party, and presides over the Senate in the absence of the Vice President.
**Majority Party (Currently Republican)**
• **Majority Leader**  
  Elected by majority party. Serves as the principal “voice” of the majority party and sets the legislative agenda for the Senate.

• **Assistant Majority Leader**  
  Mobilizes support for the majority party position on key votes, and works to maintain lines of communications between the majority leadership and rank-and-file Members.

• **Republican Policy Committee Chairman**  
  Leads the Policy Committee in developing policy positions. Serves as the party’s communicator and educator on key policy issues.

• **Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee**  
  Principal fundraising vehicle for Senate Republicans. Provides financial assistance to promising candidates for the Senate.

**Minority Party (Currently Democrats)**

• **Minority Leader**  
  Elected by minority party. Serves as the principal “voice” for the legislative priorities of the minority party.

• **Assistant Minority Leader, Democratic Whip**  
  Mobilizes support for the minority party position on key votes, and works to maintain lines of communications between the minority leadership and rank-and-file Members.

• **Democratic Conference Chairman**  
  Leads the Republican Conference, which is used to organize and communicate with members of the Republican Party.

• **Democratic Policy Committee Chairman**  
  Leads the Policy Committee in developing minority policy positions. Serves as the party’s communicator and educator on key policy issues.

• **National Democratic Senatorial Committee**  
  Principal fundraising vehicle for Senate Democrats. Provides financial assistance to promising candidates for the Senate.

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**U.S. House of Representatives - Leadership Structure**

*Source: Aacom.org*

**Speaker of the House**  
Elected by the full House. The Speaker has several formal duties including, but not limited to, calling the House to order, referring bills to committees, recognizing Members for speaking purposes, and signing bills passed by the House.

**Democrats**

• **Democratic Leader**  
  Elected by Democratic Caucus, and serves as primary advocate for the party’s agenda.

• **Democratic Whip**  
  Mobilizes support for party’s positions on key votes and works to maintain lines of communication between party leadership and rank-and-file Members.
• **Chair of the Democratic Caucus**
  Vehicle used by Democrats to organize and communicate with their members. Caucus Chairman presides over meetings of all House Democrats.

• **Assistant Democratic Leader**
  Works with the caucuses and as a liaison to the Appropriations Committee.

• **Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee**
  Principal fundraising vehicle for House Democrats. Provides financial assistance to promising candidates for the House.

**Republicans**

• **Majority Leader**
  Speaker’s likely successor should that position become vacant. Serves as an advocate for the legislative priorities of the majority party and sets the legislative agenda.

• **Majority Whip**
  Mobilizes support for party positions on key votes and works to maintain lines of communication between minority leadership and rank-and-file Members.

• **Chair of the Republican Conference**
  Leads the Republican Conference, which is used to organize and communicate with members of the Republican Party.

• **Chair of the Republican Policy Committee**
  Leads the Republican Conference forum for policy development.

• **National Republican Congressional Committee**
  Principal fundraising vehicle for House Republicans. Provides financial assistance to promising candidates for the House.

**Bills and Laws**

Most **bills** that Congress considers are public bills, meaning that they affect the public as a whole. A **private bill** grants some relief or benefit to a single person, named in the bill.

The process through which a bill becomes law occurs in several stages in both houses:

1. **Introduction:** Only a member of Congress may introduce a bill. After a bill is introduced, it is assigned a designation number. Only members of the House of Representatives may introduce bills concerning taxes.

2. **Referral to committee:** The leader of the house in which the bill was introduced then refers the bill to an appropriate committee or committees.

3. **Committee action:** The committees can refer the bill to subcommittees for action, hearings, markup sessions, and votes. The committee can also kill the bill by doing nothing at all, a process known as **pigeonholing**.

4. **Referral to the full body:** If a committee approves a bill, the bill is sent on to the full House or Senate.

5. **Floor debate and vote:** The full body debates the bill and then votes. The two houses differ significantly in how they handle debate:
• In the House, the Rules Committee has the power to limit debate and the number of amendments offered during debate. A vote in which every member’s vote is recorded is called a roll-call vote.
• In the Senate, members are allowed to speak as much as they wish and to propose as many amendments as they wish. There is no Senate Rules Committee.

6. **Conference committee:** Often, the two houses produce different versions of a single bill. When this happens, both houses appoint members to a conference committee, which works to combine the versions. After the conference committee’s report, both houses must vote on the new bill.

7. **The President:** The president’s only official legislative duty is to sign or **veto** bills passed by Congress. If the president signs the bill, it becomes law. If the bill is vetoed, it goes back to Congress, which can override the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses. Veto overrides are rare—it is extremely difficult to get two-thirds of each house of Congress to agree to override. Instead, presidential vetoes usually kill bills.

Sometimes the president chooses to do nothing with bills that Congress sends. If the president still has not signed or vetoed the bill after ten days, the bill becomes law if Congress is in session. If Congress has since adjourned, the bill does not become law. This is called a **pocket veto.**

**The Budget**
Congress must also pass the federal **budget.** According to the Constitution, Congress must approve all government spending. In other words, Congress has the power of the purse. Many congressional activities are related to spending and generating revenue. The U.S. government runs on a **fiscal year,** a twelve-month period used for accounting purposes. Currently, the fiscal years starts on the first day of October, but Congress has the power to change the start date. Congress must pass a budget for every fiscal year.

Because the budget is so complex, the president and Congress begin work on it as much as eighteen months before the start of a fiscal year. The president submits a budget proposal to Congress every January for the upcoming fiscal year. Congress then acts on the proposal, usually granting much of what the president wants. To prevent a government shutdown, Congress must pass the budget by the end of the fiscal year.

**Authorization and Appropriation**
Spending money is a two-step process:
1. Congress must **authorize** the money being spent. Authorization is a declaration by a committee that a specific amount of money will be made available to an agency or department.
2. After authorizing expenditures, Congress must **appropriate** the money by declaring how much of the authorized money an agency or department will spend. Sometimes **appropriation bills** come with strict guidelines for spending the money.

Congress usually ends up creating an appropriation bill for each government department, although sometimes departments are combined into a single bill. Each bill must be passed for
that department to receive funding. Some appropriation bills are easily passed, but others are very controversial.

Continuing Resolutions
Congress must pass a budget every year by the start of the new fiscal year, which means that appropriation bills must be passed for every part of the government. If an appropriation bill does not pass, then the department whose budget is being discussed will shut down, and all nonessential employees will be temporarily out of work. Sometimes Congress passes a continuing resolution, which provides funding for a limited period (usually a week or two). Congress then uses the extra time to reach an agreement on the budget.

The Importance of The Committee System
Source: ushistory.org

Bills begin and end their lives in committees, whether they are passed into law or not. Hearings from interest groups and agency bureaucrats are held at the committee and subcommittee level, and committee members play key roles in floor debate about the bills that they foster.

Committees help to organize the most important work of Congress — considering, shaping, and passing laws to govern the nation. 8,000 or so bills go to committee annually. Fewer than 10% of those bills make it out for consideration on the floor.

Types of Committees
There are four types of congressional committees:

1. **STANDING COMMITTEES**, which continue from one Congress to the next, are probably the most important type because they consider and shape the vast majority of proposed laws. Standing committees can be combined or discontinued but most of them have been around for many years. Standing committees also conduct investigations, such as the Senate Banking Committee's investigation of President Bill Clinton's Whitewater investments.

2. **SELECT COMMITTEES** are temporarily formed for specific purposes, often to study a particular issue. They usually do not draft legislation. Some, like the select committees to investigate the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, are obviously intended to have limited lives. Others, like the Select Committee on Aging and the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, have existed for a number of years actually produce legislation. Sometimes long-standing select committees eventually become standing committees.

3. **JOINT COMMITTEES** have similar purposes as select committees, but they are made up of members from both the House and the Senate. They are set up to conduct business between the houses and to help focus public attention on major issues. Some joint committees handle routine matters, such as supervising the Library of Congress.

4. **CONFERENCE COMMITTEES** are specially created when the House and the Senate need to reconcile different versions of the same bill. A conference committee is made up of members from the House and Senate committees that originally considered the bill. Once the
committee agrees on a compromise, the revised bill is returned to both houses of Congress for their approval.

Committee Assignments
After each congressional election, political parties assign newly elected Representatives and Senators to standing committees. They consider a member's own wishes in making the assignments, but they also assess the needs of the committees, in terms of region of the country, personalities, and party connections.

Since the House has 435 members, most Representatives only serve on one or two committees. On the other hand, Senators often serve on several committees and subcommittees. Committee assignment is one of the most important decisions for a new member's future work in Congress. Usually, members seek appointment on committees that will allow them to serve their districts or states the most directly. However, a member from a "safe" district — where his or her reelection is not in jeopardy — and who wants to be a leader in Congress, may want to be named to a powerful committee, such as Foreign Relations, Judiciary, or the House Ways and Means. There they are more likely to come into contact with current leaders and perhaps even gain some media attention.

Standing Committees of Congress

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Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Source: agriculture.senate.gov

Since its creation on December 9, 1825, this Committee has helped establish, guide, and examine agricultural policies here and abroad. It has had a hand in fashioning the research and teaching of the 1860’s, the price and income support controls of the 1930’s, and the international trade of the 1990’s. The Committee has been active in times of prosperity and peace, as well as in times of depression and war. Present Committee members face many of the same challenges and concerns as past members: commodity price and income supports, trade, research, food safety, nutrition, and conservation.

Important topics the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee is facing during the 114th Congress, 2nd Session include:

- **Revision of SNAP Rule** (Formerly Food Stamps), August 2, 2016
  “Enhancing Retailer Standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).” The proposed rule raises concern about unintended consequences that may limit food access for the more than 45 million families, seniors and children currently participating in SNAP.

  “The proposed rule raises significant concerns regarding the impact on current organic poultry and egg producers as well as access and price for organic consumers,” the Senators said. “Further, proposed changes to outdoor access standards could have a detrimental impact to both animal health and food safety.”

- **National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard**, June 23, 2016. Key provisions of the bipartisan proposal include:
  - **Pre-emption**: immediately prohibits states or other entities from mandating labels of food or seed that is genetically engineered.
  - **National Uniform Standard**: the U.S. Department of Agriculture establishes a uniform national disclosure standard for human food that is or may be bioengineered through rulemaking.
  - **Disclosure**: requires mandatory disclosure with several options, including text on package, a symbol, or a link to a website (QR code or similar technology); small food manufacturers will be allowed to use websites or telephone numbers to satisfy disclosure requirements; very small manufacturers and restaurants are exempted.
  - **Meat**: foods where meat, poultry, and egg products are the main ingredient are exempted. The legislation prohibits the Secretary of Agriculture from considering any food product derived from an animal to be bioengineered solely because the animal may have eaten bioengineered feed.
The House Committee on Agriculture was created on May 3, 1820. The population of the country was about 9 million and there were 213 Representatives in the House. Seven of these Representatives, under the chairmanship of Thomas Forrest, of Pennsylvania, were assigned to the new committee. Six other States were represented in this group: Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee conducts hearings, some public and some in executive session, to consider various legislative proposals. It affords the general public the opportunity to express its views. Among the witnesses are representatives of farm organizations, consumer groups, and ordinary citizens. The sessions are held to perfect the details of the legislation. As the role of the farmer becomes more technical and industrialized, so will the role of this committee become more complex.

Important topics the **House Committee on Agriculture** is facing during the 114th Congress, 2nd Session include:

- **House Agriculture Committee Examines CFTC’s Reg AT, July 13, 2016**
  
  "We recognize the harm to consumers of fraud and market manipulation in electricity markets, and value the U.S. commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) vigorous work to police these shared markets. However, to uphold the Congressional intent expressed in Section 720(a) of the Dodd-Frank Act, and to ensure that FERC and the CFTC are able to continue their effective and cooperative monitoring of the energy markets, we urge you to consider the possibility that the proposals will result in widespread, inconsistent judicial interpretations of the Commodity Exchange Act."

- **Chairman Conaway Statement on Senate’s Biotechnology Labeling Bill, July 8, 2016**
  
  "After spending the past week and a half studying the legislation and meeting with agricultural producers, along with a variety of other stakeholders, I have come to the conclusion that the Senate bill is riddled with ambiguity and affords the Secretary a concerning level of discretion. I have sought written assurances from USDA on the more problematic provisions, and I appreciate the efforts of the Department to provide some level of clarity. While I will never fully support federally mandating the disclosure of information that has absolutely nothing to do with nutrition, health, or safety, it is my expectation that this legislation will be considered on the House floor next week, and it is my intention to support this bill."

- **Former Military Leaders Highlight the Importance of Agriculture and National Security July 7, 2016**
  
  "Strong military and sound agricultural policies are pillars of our national security. The men and women of America’s armed services regularly witness food insecurity around the world, and today we heard from former military leaders who shared their accounts of the tremendous instability that occurs in countries where agriculture development is not a priority. The United States is consistently ranked as one of the most food secure nations in"
the world, which is why it’s important we understand the factors that threaten national and global markets. Sound farm policy is, and continues to be, an integral piece of our ability to prevent food insecurity in this country. I want to thank our panel for sharing their on-the-ground experiences and giving us an enhanced global perspective of the importance of maintaining and protecting a safe food supply,” said Chairman K. Michael Conaway.

Texas Legislature

*Source: Citizen’s Handbook, How the Texas Legislature Works*

There are 150 members of the Texas House of Representatives. They are elected for two-year terms and run for reelection in even-numbered years. As established by the Texas Constitution, members must be at least 21 years of age, a citizen of Texas for two years prior to election, and a resident of the district from which elected one year prior to election.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer, elected by a majority of House members. The speaker appoints chairs and members of all House committees and refers all bills to a committee. Bills are scheduled for consideration on the House floor by the Calendars Committee. All legislation raising revenue must originate in the House.

As presiding officer of the Senate, the lieutenant governor is also referred to as the President of the Senate. The lieutenant governor is elected by a statewide popular vote to serve a four-year term of office. The lieutenant governor is not a member of the Senate, and votes only in case of a tie. The lieutenant governor appoints all chairs and members of Senate committees, and refers all bills to committee. The lieutenant governor also schedules most bills for consideration on the Senate floor. Bills that are local or uncontested are scheduled by the Senate Administration Committee. The Senate holds the power of advice and consent on gubernatorial appointments to state boards and commissions.

The House of Representatives, together with the Senate, constitute the Texas Legislature. The duties of the legislature include consideration of proposed laws and resolutions, consideration of proposed constitutional amendments for submission to the voters, and appropriation of all funds for the operation of state government. All bills for raising revenue considered by the legislature must originate in the House of Representatives. The house alone can bring impeachment charges against a statewide officer, which charges must be tried by the senate.

In Texas, as in the Congress and most other states, the lawmaking process involves four major stages: introduction, committee action, floor action, and enrollment. In a *bicameral* (or two-part) legislature like Texas', with both a house and a senate, the first three stages must occur in each of the houses consecutively. After the house in which the bill is introduced completes action on the measure, the bill is sent to the second house, where the process is repeated through the three stages. The fourth stage, enrollment, occurs in the originating house after both houses have agreed on the final form of the proposal.
The Legislature of the State of Texas, operating under the biennial (every other year) system, convenes its regular sessions at noon on the second Tuesday in January of odd-numbered years. The maximum duration of a regular session is 140 days. The governor is given authority under the state constitution to convene the legislature at other times during the biennium. Such sessions are known as called or special sessions and are reserved for legislation that the governor deems critically important in the conduct of state affairs. Called sessions are limited to a period of 30 days, during which the legislature is permitted to pass laws only on subjects submitted by the governor in calling for the session.

**Important Senate topics in 84th Session Interim are:**

- Study and make recommendations regarding the ownership, production, and transfer of surface water and groundwater in the state of Texas.
- Study and make recommendations on improving the process of developing and executing the State Water Plan.
- Study and make recommendations on improving the law in this state regarding agricultural liens under Chapter 70, Agricultural Code. The study should include whether sufficient safeguards exist to protect the financial interest agricultural producers have in their product.
- Study and make recommendations on the effects of windblown and waterborne litter. The study should include an analysis of the economic effects of litter, any necessary methods to prevent and remediate litter, and an assessment of state and local programs to reduce litter.
- Study and make recommendations on improving the laws regarding the management of game animals, production of domestic fowl, and development of agricultural products in the State to reduce the occurrence and spread of disease and harmful pests.
- Study the economic benefits the Texas Department of Agriculture's Market Development Services provide to the state through promoting Texas Agricultural products. Review the current marketing services and strategies available to Texas producers and determine additional resources necessary to increase the Market Development Services capabilities. Make recommendations for legislative action, if needed.
- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs during the 84th Legislature, Regular Session, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically monitor the Texas Water Development Board's process in the identification and designation of brackish groundwater zones.

**UNIT 2 WOTUS – What’s the Status?**

WOTUS is defined in the Clean Water Act (CWA) which says the federal government has control over “navigable waters,” also known as “the waters of the United States.” That federal control prohibits pollutants from being put into “the waters of the United States” without a permit.
The EPA’s New Clean Water Rule And Why Agribusiness Wants To Over Run It

Source: Modern Farmer July 13, 2015

On May 27, the EPA issued a final ruling on how to interpret a part of the Clean Water Act that has troubled farmers and ranchers ever since the landmark environmental legislation went into effect in 1972. The rule affirms the power of the EPA to regulate agricultural pollution in the nation’s waterways, but it brushes up against longstanding battles over the rights of the federal government to regulate the use of private land. It is a step forward in improving the quality of the nation’s water supply, but the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and a slew of other agricultural lobbyist groups have filed a legal complaint in hopes that the rule will never be implemented.

The rule, which went into effect on August 28, is aimed at clarifying exactly which bodies of water the EPA has jurisdiction to regulate, a question that has produced a long series of court cases ever since the Clean Water Act (CWA) was adopted 43 years ago. Understanding the legal nuances involved in these ongoing battles requires first understanding the legal umbrella under which the water resources of the United States are held. “Waters of the United States” is a legal term that goes back to the U.S. Constitution and underlies the ideological battle being waged today.

The Commerce Clause in Article 1 of the Constitution says that the federal government has the right to govern interstate commerce, which, at the time of the drafting of the Constitution, took place primarily by way of rivers and lakes, since these were the original highways of the country. Thus all “navigable waters” were under the jurisdiction of the federal government in the same way that interstate highways are under federal jurisdiction today, rather than under state authority.

Over time, commerce along waterways has diminished, but the concept of navigable waters has remained and is now broadly referred to as “Waters of the United States.” The implication is that the federal government controls what happens to those waters—not private landowners and not the states—whether it has to do with commerce or not. That precedence formed the legal basis of the Clean Water Act, which empowered the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to regulate how much pollution any property owner, business owner or government entity could discharge into the US waters. It’s important to note that pollution is tolerated under the CWA, but it must be within certain limits.

The fact that the Clean Water Act was based on the navigable waters provision of the Commerce Clause has always been problematic. There is a lot of grey area in determining which waters are navigable and which are not. It’s counterintuitive, but legally speaking, “navigable waters” means almost any trickle of a stream or tiny wetland. Two centuries of legal wrangling have led to this expanded concept, but it is still tough for farmers, ranchers, loggers, mining companies, industrialists and real estate developers to digest. The logic behind the expanded definition
flows from a basic, common sense fact: water flows downhill. The Clean Water Act is predicated on the need to assure the health of the entire watershed, which includes many smaller bodies of water—otherwise there is no way to keep larger bodies of water clean.

The problem, of course, is that all those smaller bodies of water cross private land, especially farmland. Try telling a farmer that they can’t till their soil because it’s going to wash off and cause sedimentation in a tiny stream on their land or that they can’t graze cattle next to a brook running through their pasture because the manure is going to pollute the water. Many will say that it’s unfair—how can they be expected to make a living? That’s a valid point, which is why for many years the Clean Water Act focused on the most egregious polluters, such as wastewater treatment plants and heavy industries. After several decades of enforcement, however, the lowest hanging fruit in the world of polluters has been nabbed and the EPA has become more focused on applying the law to farmland. It’s not that the consequences of agricultural pollution are minor—the infamous Gulf of Mexico dead zone and the toxic algae blooms of Lake Erie are two blatant examples of the havoc that farms can wreak—but it originates from many smaller bodies of water rather than from one source.

This brings us back to the current debate. The rule that the EPA recently established is not an addition to the Clean Water Act, it’s a clarification of the original intent. It provides a scientific basis for assessing exactly which tributaries are waters of the United States based on the existing precedent that any body of water with a “significant nexus,” or connection, to a navigable waterway is within their authority. This includes some ephemeral streams that only flow when it rains, as well as manmade ditches that divert the flow of perennial or ephemeral streams. In some cases it also extends to wetlands that are in the floodplain of other waterways. However, farmers have always been entitled to certain exemptions for the Clean Water Act for “normal” farming activities like tilling, grazing and mowing in the vicinity of waterways, even if those activities degrade water quality. In practice, the only farming activities that have been regulated under the Clean Water Act on a routine basis have been confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). These exemptions will continue under the new rule, but farmers are worried that the door is now open to regulating other activities.

A media war has been waged between the EPA and the AFBF and their respective allies over the last year since the new rule was first proposed. Each side has directly contradicted the word of the other. The AFBF published a “Ditch the Rule” website attacking the illegality of the new rule, including a document that outlined what the rule “really” means, even though it “says” something completely different. The EPA countered with a document of its own, Ditch the Myth, which debunks the claims of the AFBF document, point by point.

The EPA says that some bodies of water have actually been removed from their jurisdiction by the wording of the new rule and others have been added, for a net gain of 3 percent. AFBF and other like-minded groups contend that the new rule expands the CWA far beyond its original intent and have supported legislation to repeal it before it goes into effect—which President Obama has vowed to veto. In reality, the substance of the CWA has not been changed, it has just been clarified so the EPA will have more solid footing to prevent agricultural pollution in the
future. The rhetoric of some agribusiness groups implies that they are being punished purely for the normal work of farming. The truth is that the CWA only applies to polluters, not farmers that effectively steward their land. This has not been changed, it has only been affirmed.

Congress Poised To Strike Down EPA’s Massive ‘Waters Of The US’ Rule
*Source: The Daily Caller Online News Foundation, 1/13/16*

House lawmakers are poised to pass legislation repealing what is probably the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) most hotly contested regulation: an attempt to expand its authority over bodies of water across the country.

The House will vote Wednesday on a bill that would repeal the EPA’s so-called Clean Water Rule under the Congressional Review Act — a law that allows Congress to vote down executive branch regulations. EPA’s water rule has been heavily criticized by lawmakers who see it as a huge expansion of government power and could mean more regulations for private landowners. “We want them to go back and do a new rule,” Ohio Republican Rep. Bob Gibbs told The Daily Caller New Foundation in an interview. Gibbs sent a letter to House leadership last year asking them to defund EPA’s water rule in the 2016 budget bill.

The Senate passed a bill repealing EPA’s water rule in November, sparking huge outcry from environmentalists who support more federal control over bodies of water. The House is likely to pass the repeal with bipartisan support, sending it to President Barack Obama.

Obama, however, has already promised to veto any bill repealing the Clean Water Rule, arguing it would “deny businesses and communities the regulatory certainty needed to invest in projects that rely on clean water.”

“We’re trying to show the American people what some of our solutions are,” Gibbs said. “We just need to bring all these issues up to the surface.”

In May, the EPA finalized its water rule redefining the meaning of “waters of the United States” under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The agency argued the redefining was necessary to clear up uncertainty caused by two past Supreme Court decisions on EPA’s CWA authority.

EPA officials went to great lengths to try and convince lawmakers their new definition of “waters of the United States” didn’t expand the agency’s powers or create any new permitting requirements for farmers and others most affected by the rule.

“The final rule doesn’t create any new permitting requirements for agriculture, maintains all previous exemptions and exclusions, and even adds exclusions for features like artificial lakes and ponds, water-filled depressions from construction, and grass swales—all to make clear our
goal is to stay out of agriculture’s way,” EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy wrote in a May blog post.

But Congress and dozens of states didn’t buy EPA’s arguments. After the rule was finalized, 32 states sued the agency to have the rule struck down, and federal lawmakers on both sides of the aisle began looking at ways to dismantle the rule.

Lawmakers argued EPA’s water rule vastly expanded agency power over bodies of water from public lakes to ponds on private property. EPA control would only hamper development as landowners were saddled with more permits and compliance costs when trying to make any improvements to their property.

Likewise, states worried the rule would erode their own authority to regulate waters and open residents to massive fines from EPA — indeed there were already news stories floating around about private landowners facing huge fines for digging in their backyards.

“The results of this rule will carry a tremendous cost to our state, our economy, and our families,” South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said in a statement announcing the state’s intention to sue the agency. “Road project mitigation costs alone could range from $180,000 to $2.8 million or fines of $37,000 per day.”

States opposing EPA’s rule have had huge success in legal challenges. In October, a federal judge put a stay on the rule, preventing bureaucrats of implementing it.

“A stay temporarily silences the whirlwind of confusion that springs from uncertainty about the requirements of the new Rule and whether they will survive legal testing,” federal Judge David McKeague wrote in the court’s decision to stay the rule.

**Senate Panel Oks EPA bill to block WOTUS rule, species listings**

*Source: Agri-pulse.com*

WASHINGTON, June 16, 2016 - The Senate Appropriations Committee advanced a fiscal 2017 spending bill that would block the Obama administration’s “Waters of the United States” rule, curb work on greenhouse gas regulations and bar some endangered species protections. The WOTUS provision, which mirrors riders in two House spending bills, seeks to block the Obama administration from enforcing the rule in case court stays are lifted.

A senior Democrat on the committee, Minority Whip Richard Durbin of Illinois, warned that Democrats would probably block the Interior-Environment bill from moving on the Senate floor. Republicans control 54 seats in the Senate, but 60 would be needed to bring it up for debate. The Senate committee approved the bill on a party-line vote, 16-14.
“I think it's quite likely this bill will never be considered on the floor because of these riders. It's sad because there are many parts of the bill that are very good,” said Durbin. The bill funds the Interior Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Forest Service, which is part of the Agriculture Department.

The committee separately approved a Financial Services bill that includes an amendment to allow private banks and companies to offer credit for agricultural exports to Cuba. That amendment, approved 22-8, was sponsored by John Boozman, R-Ark., and Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D.

"We've had good intentions behind our isolation policy toward Cuba, but the results have not changed. It's time to try a new approach,” said Boozman.

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who chairs the Interior-Environment Subcommittee, said some of the environmental provisions in the bill that Democrats oppose have bipartisan support while others have been enacted previously.

“This bill strikes a critical balance -- directing federal resources where they are needed, while blocking excessive regulations that are causing harm and burying us in red tape,” Murkowski said.

But the subcommittee's ranking member, Tom Udall of New Mexico, singled out the WOTUS rider for criticism, noting that previous efforts in this Congress to kill or block implementation of the rule had failed. “Many of us are confident the rule will prevail (in the courts) on its merits. We should not be intervening in the judicial process,” he said.

A similar WOTUS rider was dropped from the fiscal 2016 spending legislation because of strong resistance from the White House.

The Senate bill, unlike the House version, wouldn't block implementation of the administration's plan for reducing carbon emissions from electric utilities, but it would restrict EPA's funding to continue work on the rule.

Other provisions in the bill, which Democrats said were “poison pills,” included one that would prevent the Fish and Wildlife Service from further study on whether the lesser prairie chicken should be listed under the Endangered Species Act. Another rider would override court rulings that require gray wolves in Wyoming and the Great Lakes to remain protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Udall did manage to get the full committee to increase funding for fighting wildfires. The draft bill would have funded firefighting at the 10-year rolling average cost, or $1.6 billion, but the panel agreed to add $661 million, the level the Interior Department and the Forest said they would need for 2017.
The bill would cut funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by $50 million to $400 million for fiscal 2017. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, which compensates local governments for revenue they lose because of federal land holdings, would be increased by $28 million in 2017 to $480 million.

The bill also includes a provision, sought by Western ranchers, that would allow the carryover of grazing fee credits from year to year to pay for improvements on federal lands.

**Wotus In Congress: Hearings & Appropriations**
*Source: National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association May 26, 2016*

Even though the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule is currently under a judicial stay preventing implementations, NSSGA continues to keep pressure on Congress to fight this regulation that would extend the Environmental Protection Agency’s jurisdiction over many areas previously not considered waters and increase costs permitting costs for aggregates operations and their customers.

Fiscal 2017 appropriations bills working through the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate include measures to prevent the EPA from enforcing the rule. These policy “riders” were dropped from two previous appropriations bills in FY 2015 and FY 2016 shortly before passage due to a presidential veto threat. Although, NSSGA was told that that Western House members met with House leadership to emphasize how essential stopping this rule is for their region and hopefully their efforts, along with grassroots advocacy, will help keep the riders intact.

WOTUS was also in focus during congressional hearings in recent days. “Erosion of Exemptions and Expansion of Federal Control – Implementation of the Definition of Waters of the United States,” was a hearing held on May 24 and included testimony from several members of the Waters Advocacy Coalition, of which NSSGA is an active member. During a Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee hearing last week, Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb., said that “every taxpayer has to pay more because of these rules in order to construct or maintain a road.”

In a House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry hearing held the week of May 16, witnesses discussed impacts of WOTUS on small family farms. While the focus was on agriculture and not aggregates, the rule’s uncertainty and lack of clarity are themes that are universal to many industry sectors.

“NSSGA supports inclusion of a policy rider that would stop or defund the WOTUS rule,” said Pam Whitted, NSSGA senior vice president of government and regulatory affairs. “Our industry believes that this rule does not provide clarity and only increases EPA’s jurisdiction over waters that have little or no connection to flowing streams or rivers. Congress continues to show interest
due to the grassroots advocacy from the aggregates industry about the disastrous effects this rule will have on our businesses and public works projects. “Rocks build America, but when rocks cost more because of WOTUS, then America’s infrastructure will become harder and more expensive to build.

**Wotus Block Included In Appropriations Bill**  
*Source: National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association June 21, 2016*

A bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 16 would block the implementation of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule as it funds the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at $32 billion. The 2017 Interior and Environment bill would cut $125 million from current fiscal 2016 levels and is $1.1 billion less than the White House sought. The House Appropriations committee also marked up its Interior and Environment bill that includes a rider against WOTUS. The House bill is funded at $32.1 billion and would cut $64 million from current spending levels, including a $164 million cut to EPA.

“NSSGA is pleased to see that Senate and House appropriators recognize the importance of stopping the WOTUS regulation,” said Pam Whitted, NSSGA senior vice president of government and regulatory affairs. “We hope that Congress will keep this important rider attached as the appropriations process moves forward. Our industry believes that Congress needs to intervene to stop EPA’s rule that would unlawfully increase federal jurisdiction and costs for aggregates operations and their customers.”

The WOTUS rule is currently under a judicial stay preventing implementation. Although the appropriate venue for pending lawsuits against the EPA to be heard has not been finally determined, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the most likely court of jurisdiction, has published a briefing schedule on the merits of the case that will begin in the fall and extend into early 2017.

**UNIT 3 – FDA GUIDANCE 209 & 213**  
*Source: Michigan Department of Agriculture*

Basic information about the Veterinary Feed Directive:  
Historically, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), who regulates the use of medicine in animals, has allowed select antibiotics used in or on animal feeds to be available to producers over-the-counter and without the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. In 1999, the Animal Drug Availability Act (ADAA) of 1996 implemented a new category of drugs called veterinary feed directive (VFD). The VFD category is a part of the FDA’s overall directive to ensure the judicious use of human medically important antibiotics. Recently, the VFD category was expanded to include medically important antibiotics fed to animals and is defined in FDA
Guidance Document #213. The revised VFD policy puts into place important control factors that dictate the appropriate use of feed-grade antibiotics.

In the past they have allowed antibiotics to have label claims for therapeutic (prevention, control, treatment) reasons, growth promotant and feed efficiency. As a part of judicious use strategy, the FDA has aligned with drug sponsors to voluntarily revise label claims, removing growth promotant and feed efficiency. Since these products cannot be used extra-label, and the removal of label claims will discontinue their use for non-therapeutic purposes. This action will result in some feed products being withdrawn from retail.

**What is a VFD drug?**
Drug classifications and methods of distribution are determined by the FDA. A VFD drug is a medically important (determined by the FDA) antibiotic that has been approved for use in or on animal feed. To use feed containing a VFD drug, a written order by a licensed veterinarian is required.

**What is a VFD order?**
A VFD order is a written statement issued by a licensed veterinarian that gives producers permission to use feed that contains antibiotics, as it is written by the licensed veterinarian. A requirement of the VFD policy is that a Veterinarian Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) must be in place.

All VFD orders must be kept in their original form (either written record or electronic copy) by the issuing veterinarian and a copy must be retained by the producer and feed distribution company. Both original and copies must be retained for two years.

**What is a VCPR?**
A veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) is a working relationship between a veterinarian and a producer. The veterinarian’s primary role is to advise and guide the producer (the client) in determining which medications are appropriate for their animals (the patients).

**When will this take effect?**
The expansion of the order went into effect on October 1, 2015, however, only a small number of antibiotics (tilmicosin, florfenicol, and avilamycin) were affected. Full implementation of FDA Guidance #213 including phasing numerous over-the-counter feed-grade antibiotics to VFD status will take place on January 1, 2017.

**Are all antibiotics now considered VFD drugs?**
Not all antibiotics will be considered VFD drugs. The use of Injectable antibiotics will not be affected. At this time, the FDA has only moved antibiotics that are essential to human medicine and being fed to animals, to VFD status.
According to FDA Guidance Document #213, water soluble antibiotics, which are important to human medicine now require a prescription from a veterinarian. A list of drugs transitioning from over-the-counter to prescription status can be found on the FDA’s website.

**What products does the VFD cover?**
Medically important antibiotics, which are essential to human medicine as outlined in Guidance Document 213, are being added to the list of drugs being moved to VFD status. This includes products that contain: tetracyclines, lincosamides, macrolides, penicillin, streptogramins, aminoglycosides, aminopenicillins and sulfonamides. The FDA maintains and updates a list of drugs transitioning from over-the-counter to VFD status on their website.

**Where can I find a list of VFD drug distributors?**
You can fill a VFD order at any mill, retailer or other establishment who is listed as a distributor with the FDA, find the list of companies on their website listed alphabetically or listed by state.

**The Veterinary Feed Directive Q&A**
*Source: F.T. McCollum III, PhD, PAS Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Amarillo*

Veterinary oversight, prescriptions and a documented veterinary-client-patient relationship highlight changes farmers and ranchers will soon experience when handling medicated feed for livestock or poultry.

Starting Jan. 1, 2017, all feed-grade or water-soluble medically important drugs for human health will be listed under the newly-expanded Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD). Pharmaceutical companies also have voluntarily changed label indications for antibiotics. Products that were approved to increase weight gain or performance will no longer be available for those purposes. Those same products can still be used, but only if prescribed by a veterinarian to treat or prevent infection.

**What does the VFD rule do?**
The VFD rule:
(1) ends the use of medically-important antimicrobials to enhance livestock performance;
(2) transitions many of the feed medications that are currently available “over-the-counter” into the VFD drug category;
(3) places the use of VFD antimicrobials in or on animal feed under the professional supervision of a licensed veterinarian;
(4) requires producers to obtain written VFD orders from a licensed veterinarian to purchase and utilize the VFD antimicrobials on or in feed.

**When does the VFD rule become effective?**
This rule became effective in October 2015 and must be fully implemented by Jan. 1, 2017.

**What are VFD drugs?**
VFD drugs are medically-important antimicrobials that are FDA-approved for use in animal feeds under veterinarian supervision and underwritten VFD orders. Currently (September 2015) there are three VFD drugs: florfenical (Nuflor, swine; Aquaflor, aquaculture); avilamycin (Kavault, swine); and tilmicosin (Pulmotil– swine, beef, dairy). Any new animal drug applications for feed delivery will automatically fall into the VFD category.
By Jan. 1, 2017, all medically-important antimicrobials intended for use in feed that are currently available “over-the-counter” will become VFD drugs. Additives such as lasalocid (Bovatec, cattle; Avatec, poultry), monensin (Rumensin, cattle; Coban, poultry), bacitracin, bambermycins (Flavomycin, swine; Gainpro, cattle), and amprolium are not “medically-important” and will not fall under the VFD unless they are used in combination with a VFD drug.

The label for the antimicrobial additive, or the label for the medicated feed item containing the antimicrobial, will state whether the antimicrobial is a VFD drug or not.

Do producers need written authorization from a licensed veterinarian?

Use of VFD drugs now falls under the supervision of licensed veterinarians. Producers must receive signed and written (not verbal) authorization from a licensed veterinarian to purchase and utilize VFD antimicrobials on and in feed. This authorization is referred to as a VFD order.

Is an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) required?
To write the VFD order, the licensed veterinarian must have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with the producer. Based on the Texas Veterinary Licensing Act, a valid VCPR is present if:
(1) The veterinarian assumes responsibility for medical judgments regarding the health of the livestock, and the client (the owner or caretaker of the livestock) agrees to follow the veterinarian’s instructions.
(2) The veterinarian possesses sufficient knowledge of the livestock to initiate a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the livestock. Sufficient knowledge exists if the veterinarian has recently seen, or is personally acquainted with, the keeping and care of the livestock as a result of (a) examining the animal or (b) making medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the livestock are kept. A veterinarian-client-patient relationship may not be established solely by telephone or electronic means.
(3) The veterinarian is readily available to provide follow-up medical care in the event of an adverse reaction, or failure of the regimen of therapy.

What are the steps to obtain a VFD order?
(1) Contact your veterinarian with whom you have a valid VCPR. If a producer does not have a valid VCPR with an appropriate veterinarian, then the preliminary step is to establish a VCPR.
(2) The veterinarian determines whether conditions warrant use of a VFD drug or feed.
(3) If warranted, the veterinarian issues a written and signed VFD order containing information specified by regulations. Verbal orders are not allowed. Incomplete and unsigned orders are invalid and cannot be filled.
(4) The veterinarian retains a copy of the VFD order and gives the completed, signed original and a copy to the client.
(5) The client keeps the copy and gives the original signed VFD to the feed mill/feed distributor supplying the VFD feed. The VFD order allows the feed to be released to the client.
(6) Depending on the specific VFD drug, and the conditions outlined by the veterinarian, separate VFD orders may be required for different groups of livestock and new VFD orders may be required to extend the treatment duration (depends on “refill” specifications).

What information is required on a lawful VFD order?
- Veterinarian’s name, address, and telephone number
• Client’s name, business or home address and telephone number
• Premises where the livestock specified in the VFD are located
• Date the VFD was issued
• Expiration date of the VFD (This is the date the VFD is no longer valid and use of the VFD feed is illegal.)
• Name of the VFD drug(s) in the order
• Species and production class of livestock to receive the VFD feed
• Approximate number of livestock to receive the VFD feed by the expiration date
• Health indication for which the VFD was issued
• Concentration of VFD drug in the feed
• Duration of use (length of time the livestock will receive the treatment)
• Withdrawal time, special instructions and cautionary statements necessary for use of the drug to conform with the approval
• Number of reorders (refills) authorized, if permitted
• Statement: “Use of feed containing this veterinary feed directive drug in a manner other than as directed on the labeling (extralabel use) is not permitted”
• Veterinarian’s electronic or written signature

The following information is optional:
• More specific description of the location (i.e. pen, barn, pasture or other)
• Approximate age range of the animals
• Approximate weight range of the animals
• Any other information the veterinarian deems appropriate to identify the animals involved

Basic producer responsibilities:
• Establish a VCPR with an appropriate veterinarian.
• Contact your veterinarian for consultation and guidance.
• Follow your veterinarian’s recommendations.
• Administer the VFD medicated feed according to the directions on the VFD order.
• Keep copies of your VFD orders for at least two years.
• Provide your VFD order copies for FDA inspectors to copy and review, if requested.

**New Antibiotic Rules For 2017**

*By Beth Ferry, Madonna Benjamin and Megan Sprague, Michigan State University Extension*

*March 30, 2016*

The use and distribution of antibiotics in animal agriculture is changing and producers of all sizes need to begin preparing to adapt in the coming year. Focusing on the one-health concept of combating antibiotic resistance, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working to ensure the judicious use of humanly medically important antibiotics. Changes include eliminating the growth promotion use of human medically important antibiotics and expanding the list of feed-grade antibiotics classified as Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) drugs. Historically, a majority of feed-grade antibiotics used in or on animal feeds have been available to producers over-the-counter, without approval from a veterinarian.
By Jan. 1, 2017 the FDA will move all human medically important feed-grade antibiotics to the VFD drug process.

In addition, the FDA has aligned with drug companies to voluntarily revise label claims for antibiotics falling under the VFD regulation. Sponsors are removing growth promotion and feed efficiency as allowable uses, effectively preventing veterinarians from writing VFD orders for these purposes.

**What does this mean for animal agriculture?**

Farmers must work with a licensed veterinarian with whom they have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) in order to receive permission to order and use feed containing a VFD drug. The veterinarian’s primary role is to advise and guide the producer (the client) in determining which medications are appropriate for their animals (the patients). This relationship must be established and recognized by the veterinarian prior to any VFD order being written. Feed distributors will require a valid VFD, provided by the veterinarian, prior to supplying customers with the regulated feed product. VFDs will need to be renewed every 6 months, based on renewal guidelines set by FDA.

So far, only a small number of antibiotics (tilmicosin, florfenicol, and avilamycin) have been restricted in feed-grade use under a VFD. While some industries, like swine, are very familiar with the VFD process because of the common use of Pulmotil® (tilmicosin), many producers have never had to use the VFD process to acquire antibiotics. With the expansion, this will soon change as nearly all sectors of animal agriculture will be affected, including honey bees and other “minor-use” species.

**Are all antibiotics affected?**

It is important to note not all antibiotics will be considered VFD drugs (Figure 1). The use of injectable antibiotics will not be affected. At this time, FDA has only moved antibiotics essential to human medicine and being fed to animals to VFD status. Also, as a part of the new FDA changes, water soluble antibiotics, which are important to human medicine, will now require a prescription from a veterinarian. This transition of water soluble drugs will include Aureomycin® Water Soluble Concentrate (Chlortetracycline).

**Some other key components of the VFD process for the producer are:**
- You can fill a VFD order at any mill, retailer or other establishment listed as a distributor with the FDA.
- In order for feed mills to fill requests for feed with VFD drugs, a current VFD order must be on file.
- A Veterinarian can write a VFD order that may only apply for up to six months. The FDA will publish a list of specific products that are allowed VFD renewal.
- The expiration date on the VFD order is the last date the VFD feed can be fed.
- A copy of the VFD order must be kept by the producer for two years from the date of writing. If the farm is inspected by the FDA, producers must be able to provide VFD orders, when requested.
• Labels of VFD drugs must have the following statement: “Caution: Federal law restricts medicated feed containing this VFD drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.”
• The FDA is also maintaining a list of VFD drugs on their website. The most up-to-date version is available online.

As the limitations on animal health products increase, such as requiring veterinary feed directives and less feed-grade antibiotics are available through retail outlets, producers will find themselves seeking veterinary guidance either for a VFD, alternative medications or appropriate vaccine protocols. Increased emphasis on improvements to management practices such as biosecurity, housing and animal flow to reduce the need for antibiotic use while maintaining a profit are excellent opportunities for livestock producers. Please do your part to understand the VFD requirements. As a producer, you play a vital role in treating animals and protecting food safety.

**FDA: Marketing, Labeling Of Animal Antibiotics To Change In 2017**
*Source: Food Safety News | By News Desk | July 5, 2016*

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is tightening up regulations on the marketing and labeling of so-called “medically important antimicrobials” used on food animals. Such a move has long been sought by those concerned about how overuse of such drugs can lead to antibiotic resistance and threaten public health.

In recent weeks, the antibiotic-resistant “superbug” known as mcr-1 has been detected in two people and two pigs in the U.S., causing renewed alarm about resistance in general and ways to combat it.

In a letter to animal drug distributors, FDA’s Center for Veterinary Medicine reminded retailers that the marketing status of such drugs will change on Jan. 1, 2017, from over-the-counter to requiring either a prescription (Rx) or a veterinary feed directive (VFD).

The agency signaled this move in December 2013 with the publication of Guidance #213. The document called on sponsors of approved medically important antimicrobials administered to animals through medicated feed or water to voluntarily remove from their product labels any indications for use related to growth promotion.

FDA noted that all affected drug sponsors committed to making the changes the agency requested within the suggested timeframe.
“In some cases, drug sponsors may choose to withdraw a product approval completely. Drugs that have either an Rx or VFD marketing status can only be prescribed or authorized for use in animals by a licensed veterinarian,” the letter continued.

“Distributors that are unable to meet the applicable State and Federal requirements for selling and distributing Rx and VFD animal drugs may no longer be able to sell these products once they have transitioned to their new marketing status. If this is the situation, distributors may need to return their unsold inventory to the manufacturer or wholesaler.”

These changes comes on the heels of news that U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have twice this year detected antibiotic-resistant E. coli in pig intestines. The first sample was from a slaughterhouse in South Carolina and the second was from a slaughterhouse in Illinois.

Government officials recently said the first human and animal cases of the same gene, mcr-1, was identified in May in an E. coli strain from a woman in Pennsylvania who had not recently been outside the country. In a May 26 report, the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) detailed the actions of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

“Beginning this fall, the CDC’s antibiotic resistance lab network will provide the infrastructure and lab capacity for seven to eight regional labs, as well as labs in all states and seven major cities and territories, to detect and respond to resistant organisms recovered from human samples,” CIDRAP reported.

The Pennsylvania woman appears to be recovering, but a second human case and the second case in a pig confirmed in recent days have health officials concerned about transmission routes. The second swine case turned up in a pig at an Illinois slaughterhouse, USDA reported in mid-June.

The second human case was detected in a person in New York a month after the case in Pennsylvania was diagnosed, according to Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, a journal of the American Society for Microbiology.

According to the journal, the finding in New York was part of a global effort called the SENTRY Antimicrobial Surveillance Program, which tested more than 20,000 patients from around the world with E. coli or Klebsiella pneumoniae strains.

Of those 20,000 patients, 390, or about 1.9 percent, were resistant to colistin and 19 of those 390 tested positive for the mcr-1 gene.

In both U.S. cases, while the individuals carried the superbug gene that is resistant to colistin, they were susceptible to other antibiotics, which made the infections treatable.
Between 1 and 3 million migrant farm workers leave their homes every year to plant, cultivate, harvest, and pack fruits, vegetables and nuts in the U.S. Although invisible to most people, the presence of migrant farm workers in many rural communities throughout the nation is undeniable, since hand labor is still necessary for the production of the blemish-free fruits and vegetables that consumers demand.

**Who are Migrant Farm workers?**

Migrant farm workers are predominantly Mexican-born sons, husbands, and fathers who leave what is familiar and comfortable with the hopes and dreams of making enough money to support their families back home; feed themselves; purchase land and a home; and – like many immigrants who came before them – ultimately return to their homeland. While others come from countries such as Jamaica, Haiti, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other states in the United States their aspirations remain the same. They are young, averaging about 31 years of age. Some arrive as single men, while others leave their families behind while they seek work and others travel and work with their families. For those who travel without their families, once they realize that they will need to maintain their U.S. earning capacity, they would much rather have their families settle with them in the U.S. More than half of all farm workers – 52 of every 100 – are unauthorized workers with no legal status in the United States.

Many farm workers arrive with solid agricultural skills firmly grounded in practical experience and working knowledge of agriculture. This expertise is complemented by a strong work ethic, deeply rooted in their commitment to provide for their families or make it on their own. This is
reflected in their willingness to make considerable sacrifices in order to guarantee a more prosperous future for their extended families, their children and/or their siblings. These sacrifices range from separation from their countries of origins, families, and what is familiar to learning to navigate a foreign land where little is known about them and whose customs, language, foods, and ways of life are different from what they know. In many instances this new place brings about feelings of alienation and isolation. No longer is La Plaza – a central gathering place in town for community interaction and fellowship in their countries of origin – available to them. Instead loneliness creeps in for many as they are limited to the boundaries of the farm due in part to limited access to transportation and also to their lack of legal status which reduce their access to neighborhood businesses, services and community activities in general. Fear of being picked up by Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) due to their undocumented status causes many farm workers to go into hiding in the communities that they work and live in and further contributes to the isolation that farm workers routinely experience. So in many ways, Migrant farm workers work in settings that do not mirror those of the majority of the nation’s working populace.

In spite of these challenges, for many the hopes and dreams of making more money in the U.S than in their countries of origin is enough to drive them to make this enormous sacrifice. Many experience great pride in the contribution that they make to society through their labor for they realize their work feeds the world. For these farm workers there is also a sense of accomplishment in their ability to support their families in purchasing homes or going to school in their home country. For others, their hopes and dreams do not always materialize to the degree envisioned and promised with 61 percent of U.S. farm workers’ income falling below the poverty level. A median income of less than $7500 a year leave many feeling trapped with no other viable options outside of formwork and with the shame and indignity of returning to their homelands with less than what they came.

**Why Do They Come**

A host of push-pull factors contribute to the overwhelmingly immigrant farm worker labor pool. Some push factors in farm workers’ countries of origin are economic instability, political unrest, population growth, land reform shortcomings in rural areas, and scarce employment opportunities. Push factors that impact immigration patterns vary from country to country and from individual to individual. This is to say that the circumstances that cause an individual to emigrate from Colombia, South America may be different from those that cause an indigenous person from the states of Michoacán, Oaxaca, or Guanajuato in Mexico to come to the United States. A Colombian immigrant fleeing political persecution and civil unrest seeks asylum as a political refugee, while the indigenous Mexican treks across the desert into the US in search of work and income to support their family back home or just to be able to eat.

Pull factors within the United States include the ongoing desire for a low cost labor force to fill jobs no longer attractive to US citizens due to low pay, limited or no benefits and/or substandard work conditions. Other more direct pull factors have included federally enacted and administered farm labor programs such as the Bracero contract labor program that recruited workers from Mexico to harvest crops in the Southwestern United States from 1942 - 1964.
Today, larger numbers of Mexican farm workers have moved into other regions of the country, including the Northeast, through a similar farm labor contract program known as the H-2A agricultural guest worker program enacted by Congress in 1952 and more widely used when the Bracero program ended in 1964.

**Immigration Status**
One of the key dynamics that detrimentally impacts the lives of migrant farm workers is their lack of legal status within the U.S. Unlike other immigrant groups that came before them these workers have not been granted legal status to live in the U.S. The undocumented status of an overwhelming number of farm workers has given way to increasing injustice and abuse against them. While not always making headlines, reports of injustice and abuse against farm workers abound including those of opportunistic crew leaders, substandard housing, violence against farm workers by community members of the dominant culture, exclusion from labor laws, inadequate housing, pesticide violations, and the inferior education of children of farm workers.

Out of fear of displacement and deportation, farm workers often remain unable to protest inadequate conditions or report employer’s violation of labor, health or safety laws to state authorities. Furthermore, despite their overwhelming representation and contribution to the agricultural community, farm workers lack political leverage, therefore remaining a disenfranchised population. This lack of legal status sets the stage for farm workers’ lack of voice, agency and advocacy – in essence it creates their invisibility.

**The Changing Face of Immigrants**
As we continue to grow as a nation of immigrants, we need to make an extraordinary effort to understand farm workers in their full context. The legacy and lingering effects of living in a divided society have left us with incomplete, inaccurate and distorted information as to the history, triumphs and contributions of different groups within our society. As a nation built on the sacrifices of many different immigrant groups we must bear in mind that while the faces of immigrants have changed, their pioneering spirit, courage, determination, ability to thrive, and dreams of securing a better future for their children remain the same.

**Without Immigrant Labor, the Economy Would Crumble**
*Source: nytimes.com, Tamar Jacoby*

If only it were that easy — that the only consequence of driving unauthorized farm workers out of the U.S. would be a few more pennies on the price of lettuce or an extra nickel for an avocado. In fact, the likely upshot would be far worse and would cut far deeper into our economic well-being.

*No one in America is going to benefit from expelling immigrant farm workers. And the cost won’t be pennies: it will run to billions of dollars.*
Why? Immigrant workers aren't a "cheap labor" alternative, as so many Americans think. They are the only labor available to do many unskilled jobs, and if they were eliminated, most would not be replaced. Instead, whole sectors of the economy would shrivel, and with them, many other jobs often filled by more skilled Americans.

In 1960, half of all the native-born men in the U.S. labor force were high school dropouts eager to take unskilled outdoor jobs in agriculture and construction. Today, fewer than 10 percent of the native-born men in the work force lack high school diplomas. But the economy still generates plenty of unskilled jobs, and most unskilled immigrants don't displace American workers. They fill niches — not just farmhand, but also chambermaid, busboy and others — that would otherwise go empty. And they support more skilled, more desirable jobs — foremen, accountants, waiters, chefs and more — at the businesses where they work and others in the surrounding community.

Just raise the wage, you say, and an American would take the job? Not necessarily, and very unlikely if it's a farm job. Farmers have been trying that — for decades. They raise the wage. They recruit in inner cities. They offer housing and transport and countless other benefits. Still, no one shows — or stays on the job, which is outdoors and grueling and must get done, no matter how hot or cold or otherwise unpleasant the weather. And of course, at some point, there are limits to how high a wage a grower or dairy farmer can pay before he is forced out of business by a farmer who produces the same commodity in another country, where the labor actually is cheap.

That's exactly what will happen if unauthorized farm workers are expelled from the U.S. — not just more expensive produce, but the collapse of American labor-intensive agriculture. Instead of milk from a nearby dairy, the only kind available would come from abroad, and it would be irradiated or powdered. Meat would come from Brazil, shellfish from Thailand, fruits and vegetables from New Zealand — and that's the good, expensive stuff. There would be plenty of inferior products too, and much less of anything would be fresh.

But worst of all would be the jobs lost for Americans. According to economists, every farm job supports three to four others up and downstream in the local economy: from the people who make and sell fertilizer and farm machinery to those who work in trucking, food processing, grocery stores and restaurants. Do we really want to lose those jobs too? No one in America is going to benefit from expelling immigrant farm workers. And the cost won't be pennies: it will run to billions of dollars.
AFBF Joins Nationwide Immigration Reform Campaign

Source: Texas Agriculture Daily – Texas Farm Bureau 8/8/2016

Business and agricultural groups that have struggled to push congressional action on immigration reform for years are hoping there will be a change in 2017.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) has joined the nationwide immigration reform campaign Reason for Reform. The pro-immigration advocacy campaign is led by former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, according to POLITICO.

The campaign is focused on emphasizing the economic benefits of immigration reform and to persuade GOP lawmakers on the issue before a new president is elected in November. AFBF Farm Labor Specialist Kristi Boswell says immigration reform will ensure the success of America’s farmers and ranchers.

“The American Farm Bureau and farmers and ranchers are calling on Congress to pass responsible immigration reform in order to ensure that our cows get tended, our fruits and vegetables get harvested, and to provide that fresh, local food that consumers demand in their grocery stores,” Boswell told AFBF’s Newsline.

“We need a new, more flexible visa program that meets the needs of farmers and workers,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said during a conference call last week.

Duvall noted that any reforms must guarantee that the agricultural workforce is not subjected to mass deportation.

“We need adjustment of status so we can maintain that experienced workforce,” he said. Duvall added, according to POLITICO, that immigration enforcement shouldn’t focus solely on
enforcement, because that would cost U.S. agriculture billions in production and thousands of jobs.

“It’s important we continue to work our grassroots and put pressure on the local level,” Duvall said. “We’re coming to the point where the American people have to make up their minds if they want to import their food or import their labor. And I think the American people want their food grown in America. We need to be able to grow it and harvest it.”

Partnership for a New American Economy is the Bloomberg-led group that is spearheading the initiative.

**Supreme Court Deadlocked On Immigration Case**

*Source Texas Agriculture Daily – Texas Farm Bureau 6/23/2016*

President Obama’s immigration plan is put on hold following a deadlocked Supreme Court decision announced this morning.

According to *POLITICO*, the decision upholds a lower court ruling that forbids the president’s plan to launch an immigration program that would make five million immigrants in the U.S. eligible for quasi-legal status and work permits.

The program would have also granted deferred action status to illegal immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens or green card holders.
SCOTUS’ ruling raises questions about the validity of the deferred action status and work permits issued during the last four years through President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, according to POLITICO.

The court’s liberals and conservatives deadlocked on the issue in a 4-4 vote.

**Agriculture’s Need For Immigration Reform**  
*Source: American Farm Bureau*

**Issue:**  
Farmers and ranchers have long experienced difficulty in obtaining workers who are willing and able to work on farms in fields. U.S. agriculture faces a critical shortage of workers every year, as domestic workers are largely unwilling to engage in these rigorous activities, and guest worker programs are unable to respond to the marketplace. It is critical Congress pass responsible immigration reform that addresses agriculture’s current experience workforce and creates a new flexible guest worker program is critical to provide access to a legal and stable workforce for our nation’s farms and ranches.

Agriculture needs and our consumers deserve access to a legal workforce to provide short and long-term stability in the industry.

**Key Points:**
- *American workers are unwilling to do work in agriculture:* Jobs in agriculture are physically demanding, conducted in all seasons and are often transitory. To most U.S. residents seeking employment, these conditions are not attractive. A number of studies document this fact and farm worker representatives also acknowledged this in recent congressional testimony.
- *Either we import our labor or we import our food:* Agriculture relies on an immigrant labor force. Today, approximately 50-70 percent of the agricultural labor force is unauthorized – providing fraudulent documents to farmers and ranchers. The H-2A program accounts for only 6-7 percent of the total ag labor force. Immigration reform is critical for the agricultural industry and without reform farmers are forced to plant less labor intensive commodities or go off-shore.
- *Our members have lost confidence in the H-2A structure as a framework for future success.* The H-2A visa program is a costly, bureaucratic nightmare that is used only out of necessity. Rather than easing the process of hiring labor, the H-2A program has created obstacles for farm and ranch families. As it is a seasonal program, it is not an option to fill the needs of dairies, nurseries, mushrooms and varied other year-round operations.
- *Growers are constantly faced with instability.* Farmers are constantly looking over their shoulder fearing their workers are unauthorized, even though I-9 verified. Even in the H-2A program there are looming DOL audits and delays as 72 percent of growers reported that workers arrived on average 22 days after the “date of need”.
• **Enforcement-only is not an option for agriculture:** If agriculture were to lose access to all undocumented workers, agricultural output would fall by $30 to $60 billion. Without an adequate solution to the agriculture labor crisis, AFBF will oppose any attempt to pass E-verify.

**American Farm Bureau Federation Supports:**
- The creation of a new flexible guest worker program administered by USDA that provides flexibility for employers and portability for workers by allowing contract and at-will employment options and addresses both seasonal and year-round needs; AND
- A work authorization and adjustment of status for current experienced, but unauthorized, agricultural workers.

**Myth vs. Reality: The Truth About Agriculture’s Workforce Needs & Immigration Reform**

**Source:** American Farm Bureau

**Myth 1:** Farmers just want cheap labor. If they just paid their workers more, they’d be able to hire Americans to do these jobs.

Reality: According to a USDA-NASS farm labor survey conducted in 2013, the national average field and livestock workers wage was $11.27 an hour. Experience from the H-2A visa program, where farmers are required to recruit American workers before turning to guest workers, demonstrates year-after-year that very few Americans apply for, accept and perform these jobs.

Work in agriculture requires skill and intense physical effort. Additionally, it is often seasonal and migrant in nature. Most Americans do not want to pursue this type of work. Labor-intensive agriculture must have workers and will take place where there are workers. So long as the workforce willing to do this work exists in other countries, we will either eat imported food or food produced by those same workers here. Without workers from other countries, we lose the jobs and economic benefits that domestic production supports in rural agricultural communities.

**Myth 2:** The solution to agriculture’s labor shortage is to use mechanization and technology to replace the need for workers.

Reality: For many farmers in labor intensive sectors, the technology to mechanize a substantial part of their farm work does not yet exist. There reasons for this this is as varied as the crops they grow. For some, machines may damage produce making it unsaleable to consumers, leading to food waste. Others need people, not machines, to judge which fruit on the trees are ready to pick and which need to be left to ripen. And ensuring good animal welfare means that dairy and other livestock producers will always need humans to tend to the animals.
**Myth 3:** When you talk about dealing with the current workforce that is undocumented, you’re really talking about is amnesty, that people will be rewarded for breaking the law.

Reality: The Oxford dictionary defines amnesty as “a general overlooking or pardon of past offenses”—in effect, giving those who have broken the law something for nothing. The AWC believes that any action to deal with the current workforce should be an earned pathway to legalization, with stringent requirements that need to be met. These might include requiring agricultural workers to prove that they worked in the agricultural sector for some time and requiring them to commit to working in agriculture for a period going forward. Before they receive legal status they should also have to prove that they are paying taxes and that they are not in trouble with the law for non-immigration related offenses. They will also need to pay a fine.

**Myth 4:** If American farmers can’t afford to grow these crops, it doesn’t matter to me. Our country can just get our food from more competitive farmers in foreign countries.

Reality: The American economy has ensured major challenges in job creation over the past five years. The activities that occur on domestic farms support not only farmworkers, but also an entire supply chain of transportation providers, input suppliers, processors and consumer retail functions. Many of those jobs would be severely compromised or permanently lost if we choose to unnecessarily outsource our agricultural productivity.

Most Americans realize that fully outsourcing some sectors of our economy would cause unacceptable threats to our national security. If a Chinese company could build jet fighters or battle tanks for less money than an American one, should we still outsource that production? If a country can’t feed itself, it can’t defend itself.

**Myth 5:** There are just some minor tweaks that can be made to the existing ag worker visa program that can fix the problem; it could even be tacked on as an amendment or rider to another bill.

Reality: The current H-2A program is broken, which is why the AWC has advocated a new guest worker program as part of immigration reform. The current program supplies less than four percent of hired, on-farm workers and is limited to seasonal work, which excludes farmers with year round needs, such as dairy.

**Myth 6:** We really just need tighter border security instead of immigration reform.

Reality: The best way to help secure the border is to create legal avenues for sufficient numbers of agricultural workers to enter and leave the country each year and to make sure that current undocumented workers come out of the shadows. Our government does not need to spend resources locking up farm workers when it should be focusing on keeping bad actors out of the country. As long as there is demand in the United
States for farm workers, hard-working people will continue seeking these opportunities to make a better life for themselves and their families back home.

**Myth 7: If farm workers are legalized, they will leave agriculture.**

Reality: A look at historical experience suggests a more nuanced result. It is true that many farm workers who were legalized pursuant to the Reagan-era Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) left agriculture within a few years. Because reforms to legal visa programs never materialized, these departing workers were mostly replaced by new arrivals who lacked proper work authorization. On the other hand, significant numbers of farm workers have remained in agriculture, and many acquired skills and experience which allowed them to advance to supervisory, equipment operation, and other skilled roles. Some obtained legal permanent residency and chose to reside outside the U.S. but commuted to daily employment opportunities in southern Arizona, California, and even Texas. However, these workers are aging out of the farm workforce.

The lessons are two-fold. First, for Congress to solve agriculture’s workforce dilemma wisely, there should be special incentives for current, experienced farm workers to remain working in the agricultural sector for a period of years. Such incentives would stabilize the workforce responsible for American food production and food security, and would be a tradeoff for these workers committing to remain in the sector. Secondly, Congress must establish a better agricultural visa program to ensure access to legally authorized workers in the future.

**Myth 8: The agricultural labor crisis can be solved without legalization.**

Reality: An estimated 1.1 to 1.5 million of the roughly 2 million farm workers hired each year in the U.S. lack proper immigration status. It is logistically unrealistic to think that these workers could be removed and replaced. Moreover, many have developed special skills over years of work, skills that are vital and virtually irreplaceable. Many have families legally present. Finally, Demographic changes and improving economic conditions in places like Mexico, from which most farm workers have historically arrived, suggest that there may not be enough willing and available talent to replace that now laboring to sustain American agriculture.

**Immigration Reform In 2017? Good Luck After This Campaign...**

*Source: Politico.com, By SEUNG MIN KIM 07/23/16*

CLEVELAND — Three years after legislation to overhaul the nation's immigration laws passed the Senate, Democrats and Republicans could hardly be farther apart on the issue — a chasm
brought into sharp relief by the parties' competing presidential platforms and by the rhetoric at the GOP convention here this week.

Donald Trump took pains to spotlight the parents of children killed by immigrants in the country illegally, who were given coveted speaking time before a national audience. The candidate's signature border wall permeated the GOP platform. And in his formal convention address, Trump's tough, security-focused approach was punctuated by rowdy crowd chants of "Build the wall!"

"My plan is the exact opposite of the radical and dangerous immigration policy of Hillary Clinton. Americans want relief from uncontrolled immigration, which is what we have now. Communities want relief," Trump bellowed. "Yet Hillary Clinton is proposing mass amnesty, mass immigration, and mass lawlessness."

A few hours before Trump took the stage, the GOP convention gave a megaphone to Joe Arpaio, the controversial sheriff of Maricopa County, Ariz., who has been accused of racially profiling Latinos and is known for harsh immigration enforcement policies. Democrats are more concerned with "the rights of illegal aliens and criminals than we are with protecting our own country," Arpaio charged.

The Republican platform endorses an impenetrable wall along the Mexico border, calls for curbing green cards for future immigrants and opposes "any form of amnesty" for those who crossed into the United States illegally.

Democrats are sprinting in the other direction. At Clinton's convention next week in Philadelphia, they will give full-throated support for President Barack Obama's executive actions on immigration that have already been blocked by the courts, while subtly rebuking the administration's efforts to curb the recent spikes of immigrants arriving illegally on the Southern border.

The deep partisan split over immigration casts heavy doubt that Congress could pass a comprehensive immigration overhaul early next year with a new occupant at the White House and a newly-minted Congress.

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**UNIT 5 – USFRA Food Dialogues Questions and Answers**

Source: fooodialogues.com

U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance (USFRA) consists of more than 80 farmer and rancher-led organizations and agricultural partners* representing virtually all aspects of agriculture, working to engage in dialogue with consumers who have questions about how today’s food is grown and raised. USFRA is committed to continuous improvement and supporting U.S. farmers and
ranchers efforts to increase confidence and trust in today’s agriculture. The complete list of organizations and partners can be found at the end of this document.

The information below comes from the U.S. Farmers & Rancher’s Alliance *Food Dialogues* website. All information is presented in a question and answer format, followed by the USFRA point of view on each topic as well as definitions for words that are bolded throughout the dialogues.

**Topic 1: Food Safety**

**Question:** *Are animals raised indoors more likely to carry foodborne illnesses like salmonella?*

**Answer:** Animals raised in controlled environments, like pigs, actually carry less foodborne *pathogens* than those raised outside. Why? In controlled environments, farmers and ranchers can provide livestock with safe, clean food and controlled water systems that are not exposed to the elements. Additionally, livestock are less likely to lie in their own manure and urine in a controlled environment.

Recent studies have shown that exposure to *Salmonella, Toxoplasma* and *Trichinella* in pigs raised outdoors and in antibiotic-free systems were higher than in pigs raised in indoor production systems.

Today less than one percent of foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. involve pasteurized dairy products. The dairy industry is often cited by other industries as a model for food safety and much of this is contributed to cows’ clean environment and milking conditions. Farms carefully follow government protocols to ensure food safety.

**Question:** *How can animals contract and carry foodborne pathogens?*

**Answer:** Animals can contract and carry foodborne pathogens a number of ways, which includes:

- Drinking contaminated water
- Parasites
- Improper animal nutrition
- Stressed animals
- Naturally occurring pathogens in the environment (like *E. coli*)
- Cross-contamination with other animals of a different species

**Question:** *What are the most common ways produce becomes contaminated, and what are farmers doing to reduce those pathogens?*

**Answer:** Produce such as spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, sprouts and melons can become contaminated with *Salmonella, Shigella,* or *E. coli O157:H7*. Contamination can occur during growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping or final preparation. Sources of produce contamination are varied as these foods are grown in soil and can become contaminated during growth or through processing and distribution.
Farmers work diligently to apply organic matter (manure used for fertilizer) during early stages of growth to reduce the potential for contamination.

Question: What types of safety measures do farmers and ranchers take to keep consumers safe? Do the packers have to follow best practices, too?

Answer: Farmers and ranchers take a number of safety measures. Here are some examples of practices that keep animals free from foodborne pathogens:

- Maintaining animals on slatted or mesh floors is common in modern swine production and some poultry systems, which decreases animal contact with manure and thus with fecal borne pathogens.
- Modern production practices have virtually eliminated some former common causes of human foodborne illnesses. Pathogens, such as *Trichinella spiralis*, formally one of the most prominent pathogens, have largely disappeared with the movement of pigs to indoor production.
- Keeping water systems clean of manure reduces pathogens.
- Farmers adhere to strict food safety regulations and provide their animals with safe, comfortable housing, nutritious feed and regular veterinary care.
- Dairy farms and plants must meet stringent federal and local regulations, including those developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and state regulatory agencies.
- USDA has conditionally approved an E. coli vaccine for use in cattle on-farm and cattle farmers and ranchers continue to invest in research and convening meetings that have resulted in a variety of safety measures in place throughout the entire food chain from farm to fork. And In 2013, a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences suggests that using E. coli vaccines on cattle could prevent up to 83 percent of human infections.
- Mandatory processes, inspections and tests based on decades of experience and research are in place in packing plants across the country.

Packers are also heavily inspected by USDA to ensure consumer safety while also held accountable by strict regulations. The animals are evaluated before harvest and the carcass after harvest to control for any animal health concerns and foodborne pathogens. If inspectors notice any internal abnormalities (lesions in animals’ lungs or abnormalities in their intestines for example), further testing and evaluation occurs. If an animal shows any signs of illness, they are condemned by inspectors and do not enter the food supply.

When it comes to milk, pasteurization destroys harmful bacteria that may be present, including *Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria, Campylobacter* (*cause of most food poisonings*), and *Yersinia*. Standard heat-based pasteurization is a process whereby milk is quickly heated to a temperature of at least 161° Fahrenheit for at least 15 seconds, and is then rapidly cooled. Strict quality control and regulatory oversight start at the farm, and continue at the manufacturing plant with thorough protocols and product safety measures. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines,
people should avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk. Bacteria in raw milk can cause a number of illnesses including tuberculosis, brucellosis, salmonellosis, listeriosis (spontaneous abortions in pregnant women) and food poisoning-like symptoms, some of which have the ability to cause longer-term negative health impacts.

Today, less than 1 percent of foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. involve dairy products; in 1938, approximately 25 percent of foodborne illness outbreaks were attributed to milk and dairy products. This is contributed to pasteurization and food safety protocols set forth by farmers and milk processing facilities.

**USFRA’S Point of View on Food Safety**

First and foremost, farmers and ranchers are committed to providing safe food and healthy choices for everyone. During the past several decades, farmers and ranchers have continuously improved their processes so Americans can have one of the safest food supplies in the world. And farmers and ranchers continue to look for ways to make this system even better.

The safety of our food system starts with farmers and ranchers and includes U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspection and regulations, and the overall care from those who work in the many food stages of the food chain from farm to fork. USFRA believes that farmers and ranchers carefully follow guidelines and regulations set forth by the government.

U.S. farmers and ranchers diligently contribute to the safety of food by following a number of guidelines and best management practices. For example, modern production practices have virtually eliminated some formerly common causes of human foodborne illness. Pathogens, such as *Trichinella spiralis*, once one of the most prominent pathogens, have largely disappeared with the movement of pigs to indoor housing. Other common foodborne pathogens, such as *Salmonella*, and *Toxoplasma* also have been greatly reduced because of indoor management, especially when raising pigs. When raising cattle for beef, *E coli* illnesses have greatly decreased due to farmer and rancher investments in research and convening collaborate (vs. competitive) industry meetings, which have resulted in post-harvest safety and interventions and advancements in vaccines to eliminate the pathogen.

- Adequate and proper animal nutrition clearly plays an important role in ensuring animal health.
- Livestock farmers and ranchers use a variety of husbandry practices, housing strategies and biosecurity measures to decrease disease risk and promote animal health.
- As an example, maintaining animals on slatted or mesh floors, as is common in modern swine production and some poultry systems, decreases animal contact with manure and thus with fecal borne pathogens.
- Animal drinking water is kept clean to avoid contamination from potential disease carriers. In many situations, because of today’s watering systems, pathogens can be avoided.
- Housing certain farm animals indoors can also provide advantages in managing many foodborne organisms.
• Other common practices used to prevent livestock disease include limiting contact between groups of animals having varying degrees of pathogen exposure.
• In 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conditionally approved the first vaccine to reduce E. coliO157:H7 in cattle, opening up its use for larger trials. Cattle farmers and ranchers invest in research to develop and validate safety interventions like the vaccine and consider any additional tools beneficial to their overall goal of improving safety.
• Cattle farmers and ranchers have been combating E. coliO157:H7 since the early 1990s. Mandatory processes, inspections and tests based on decades of experience and farmer- and rancher-funded research are in place in packing plants across the country. These post-harvest interventions, like lactic acid washes for cattle hides and carcasses, help ensure the safety of beef.
• Dairy farms and plants must meet stringent federal and local regulations, including those developed by the USDA, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and state regulatory agencies.
• Dairy plants are inspected multiple times a year by state agencies, the FDA and USDA.

Meat and poultry are rigorously monitored by law. Meat and poultry for human consumption must pass inspection and monitoring by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). FSIS has more than 7,600 inspectors and veterinarians working in plants with meat, poultry and egg products and at ports-of-entry every day to prevent, detect and respond to food safety issues. FSIS also has more than 100 employees across the U.S. who monitors meat, poultry and egg products at ports of entry, including docks, loading areas and refrigeration and storage areas.

According to Richard Raymond, the former undersecretary of agriculture for food safety, in an article on MeatingPlace.com, during the past 10 years, “foodborne illnesses numbers are down 20 percent even though the U.S. population increased by 10 percent. This makes the 20 percent reduction an even more significant accomplishment.” As a result U.S. consumer risk of contracting a fatal foodborne illness is .001 percent – a number that farmers and rancher, in partnership with the entire food chain from farm to work, continually work to decrease. While some bacteria may be present on food at the time of purchasing, the most common vehicle of foodborne illness is raw food. Contamination can occur during growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping or final preparation. Sources of produce contamination are varied as these foods are grown in soil and can become contaminated during growth or through processing and distribution. Contamination may also occur during food preparation in a restaurant or a home kitchen. The most common form of contamination from handled foods is the calicivirus, also called the Norwalk-like virus. Some keys to reducing contamination at home:

• Wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after preparing food and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
• Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
• Cook foods properly and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.
• Refrigerate foods within two hours or less after cooking because cold temperatures will help keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying.
• Clean surfaces well before and after using them to prepare food.

**FOOD SAFETY DEFINITIONS**

**Campylobacter** - Campylobacter is found most often in food, particularly in chicken. Food is contaminated when it comes into contact with animal feces. Any raw poultry may contain Campylobacter, including organic and “free range” products. In fact, studies have found Campylobacter contamination on up to 88 percent of chicken carcasses. Despite the commonness of Campylobacter, however, infections are usually isolated events, and widespread outbreaks are rare.

**Contamination (of food)** - the presence of harmful chemicals and microorganisms in food which can cause consumer illness.

**E. coli** - Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria normally live in the intestines of healthy people and animals. Most varieties of E. coli are harmless or cause relatively brief diarrhea. But a few particularly nasty strains, such as E. coli O157:H7, can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and vomiting. E. coli O157:H7 is most commonly found in cows, although chickens, deer, sheep, and pigs have also been known to carry it. Meat becomes contaminated during slaughter, when infected animal intestines or feces come in contact with the carcass. Ground or mechanically tenderized meats are considered riskier than intact cuts of meat because E. coli bacteria, can be mixed throughout the meat in the grinding process or during tenderization. Other foods that sometimes become contaminated with E. coli bacteria include unpasteurized milk and cheese, unpasteurized juices, alfalfa and radish sprouts, lettuce, spinach, and water. However, any food is at risk of becoming contaminated with E. coli through cross-contamination. One can also get E. coli bacteria from contact with feces of infected animals or people.

**Listeria** - Listeria is a bacterium that causes a serious infection called listeriosis. Around 300 deaths are caused by Listeria infection each year, according to estimates from a 2011 CDC report. Listeria bacteria are most commonly found in raw foods. Vegetables can be contaminated by soil and water carrying bacteria. Listeria is also found in raw animal products, such as meat and cheese.

**Pathogen** - bacterium, virus or other microorganism that can cause disease.

**Salmonella** - Salmonella infection usually occurs when a person eats food contaminated with the feces of animals or humans carrying the bacteria. Salmonella outbreaks are commonly associated with eggs, meat and poultry, but these bacteria can also contaminate other foods such as fruits and vegetables. Foods that are most likely to contain Salmonella include raw or undercooked eggs, raw milk, contaminated water, and raw or undercooked meats.

**Shingela** - Shigella infection (shigellosis) is an intestinal disease caused by a family of bacteria known as shigella. The main sign of shigella infection is diarrhea, which often is bloody. Shigella bacteria are generally transmitted through a fecal-oral route. Foods that come into contact with human or animal waste can transmit Shigella. Thus, handling toddlers’ diapers, eating vegetables from a field contaminated with sewage, or drinking pool water are all activities that can lead to shigellosis.

**Toxoplasma** - The most common sources of toxoplasmosis, the disease caused by Toxoplasma, are undercooked meat, animal feces, and transmission from mother to unborn child. Toxoplasma from animal feces can contaminate soil or water. Cats commonly contribute to the spread of Toxoplasma infection by eating small animals carrying the parasite and passing it on.
through their feces. While most people infected with Toxoplasma experience no symptoms, unborn children (who contract it from their mothers) and adults with compromised immune systems risk serious side effects.

**Trichinella** - *Trichinella spiralis* is a parasitic nematode (roundworm) which is found in many warm-blooded carnivores and omnivores, including pigs. *Trichinella* has a direct life cycle, which means it completes all stages of development in one host. Transmission from one host to another host can only occur by ingestion of muscle tissue which is infected with the encysted larval stage of the parasite. When ingested, muscle larvae enter tissues of the small intestine, where they undergo development to the adult stage. Male and female adult parasites mate and produce newborn larvae which leave the intestine and migrate, through the circulatory system, to striated muscle tissue. There, they penetrate a muscle cell, modify it to become a unique cyst, and mature to become infective for another host. The total time required for this development is from 17 to 21 days. Adult worms continue to produce larvae in pigs for several weeks before they are expelled. Once adult worms are expelled and larvae reach and encyst in musculature, no further contamination can occur. An animal that is infected with *Trichinella* is at least partially resistant to a subsequent infection due to a strong and persistent immunity.

**Yersinia** - Yersiniosis is an infection caused most often by eating raw or undercooked pork contaminated with *Yersinia enterocolitica* bacteria. CDC estimates *Y. enterocolitica* causes almost 117,000 illnesses, 640 hospitalizations, and 35 deaths in the United States every year.

**Topic 2: Pesticides, Fertilizers and Herbicides**

Question: Are farmers overusing chemicals on their farms?

Answer: Farmers carefully evaluate crop conditions before applying any type of crop production measures. Such applications are expensive and labels are carefully followed to avoid adverse consequences. Farmers also look to their local crop extension service or crop consultants for recommendations before applying crop protection or fertilizer. In some cases, over applying can do more harm than good (i.e. applying too much fertilizer to corn post emergence can cause leaf damage).

If farmers overuse these tools and hurt their own land, their businesses would suffer and eventually fail. Bad, toxic or depleted soil doesn’t grow good crops. Also, these tools cost a lot of money – farmers try to use as little as possible to save costs. Farmers are stewards of the environment, considering factors like ground water, runoff and pollution. They continually think about the consequences to avoid pollution. They strive to savor the land’s quality for future farming generations.

Farmers and spray operators follow regulations put forth by the EPA. The EPA and the states (usually that state's agriculture office) register or license pesticides for use in the United States. EPA receives its authority to register pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Farmers document everything they use.

Over the past few decades, farmers have been able to use fewer inputs while increasing yields.
• In 2008, roughly 516 million pounds of active ingredients were applied to U.S. cropland at a cost of roughly $12 billion. In comparison, in 1980, roughly 632 million pounds of active ingredients were applied. Usage went down – while yields went up.
• Since its peak in 1981, the use of pesticides by the US agricultural market sector decreased from 632 million pounds, to 516 million pounds in 2008.

Question: Are organic crops pesticide and fungicide free?
Answer: Organic farmers have the opportunity to use pesticides and fungicides on their crops, just like conventional farmers. Organic farmers choose from organic certified pesticides and fungicides, which are outlined by the USDA Certified Organic program. According to Scientific America, there are more than 20 options that qualify for U.S. Organic Standards. Some of these options include copper and sulfur anti-fumigants and the naturally occurring Bt toxin. Even in the case of organic and natural pesticides, you should always be safe, take the proper precautions and follow application directions before use.

Question: What impact do crop protection and fertilizers have on water quality?
Answer: Changes of nitrate concentrations were evaluated in groundwater samples collected from 1,225 wells in 56 well networks across the United States (Lindsey and Rupert, 2012). Of the 56 well networks that were analyzed for changes in nitrate concentrations using the Wilcoxon-Pratt signed-rank test (1959), 13 had statistically significant increases in concentrations of nitrate. Five well networks had statistically significant decreases in concentrations of nitrate.

Question: Are herbicides contributing to ‘Super Weeds’?
Answer: Research is underway to determine the cause of super weeds. There are several hypotheses regarding the development of super weeds. Most recently, researchers looked at soil microbes as a cause for super weeds when it comes to resistance to glyphosate. To date, the cause cannot be determined, but researchers are evaluating this issue. Farmers, especially in the southern-growing regions, have encountered increased challenges due to weeds in their fields.

Additionally, farmers employ management practices to reduce the chance or slow the movement of super weeds. They rotate crops from year to year. They also use multiple modes of action, which means farmers use several different types of herbicides to avoid or reduce the chance of creating weed resistance.

Question: What innovations are improving pesticide use?
Answer: Several innovations in recent years have improved the efficiency of using herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers.

Buffer strips and trees between crops and waterways can filter nitrogen and prevent it from seeping into groundwater or rivers and streams.
Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies allow farmers to vary the rate of fertilizer application across a given field precisely, tailoring the amount applied to a particular portion of a field to the amount needed by the plants growing there. Most growers involved have learned ways to reduce nitrogen use by 50 lbs. per acre or more without reducing profits.

Dairy farmers in California’s Central Valley are using a new tool that helps them improve groundwater quality and reduce chemical fertilizer use. The project includes installing flow meters in dairy lagoons to allow the controlled application of nitrogen-rich wastewater at beneficial levels, and using an in-field nitrogen test that tells farmers how much of this key nutrient they are applying to avoid water quality impacts. They then time applications to maximize crop uptake of nitrogen and prevent nitrate and salt migration into surface water or groundwater.

The use of seed treatments protects a plant during its germination and formative weeks from the damaging impact of pests and diseases without having to use pesticide sprays. (NCGA)

Fertilizer application rates and timing, as well as conservation practices such as cover crops, are also utilized to allow farmers to conserve nitrogen.

**USFRA’s Point of View on Pesticides, Fertilizers and Herbicides**

Insects, weeds and plant diseases are serious threats that can devastate crops. Throughout history, farmers have found ways to manage these threats or see their livelihood – and a lot of food – destroyed.

Each year farmers face tough management decisions, especially when it comes to the best route to raise a good crop while managing environmental impact and costs. They face this reality from the time the seed goes into the soil through harvest. USFRA supports farmers who employ many different methods for crop protection – from conventional to organic – to enhance yields and avoid crop losses. In addition, USFRA’s Industry Partners include companies that produce some of these products.

Farmers closely monitor pests, weeds and plant diseases by walking fields, digging into the soil and looking at the plant’s overall health. Insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and seed treatments are all tools to help manage these challenges and provide healthy choices. Furthermore, all farmers want to protect their land and keep their soil healthy because, without good soil, their businesses would be in jeopardy. Precise management of these tools – based on science, education and a commitment to the environment – is essential to a healthy farm.

Proper use of these tools should not be underestimated. For example, if U.S. farmers did not use pesticides supplies of corn, wheat, and soybeans would decrease 73 percent, trigger price instability, slow U.S. food aid programs to poor countries, and increase worldwide hunger.
During the 2012 drought, without proper pesticide use, the insect population would swell, like during the Dust Bowl, and destroy even more crops.

A key component to raising good crops is available nutrients in the soil, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, lime (calcium) and potassium, and farmers closely monitor soil health. Through extensive research, farmers have a better understanding of how to best replenish soil nutrients and increase yields, even now to micronutrients like zinc and manganese. Additionally, there has been extensive university research regarding timing of fertilizer applications for optimum plant uptake and reduced leaching.

Farmers use fertilizers to grow high-yielding crops and to take care of the soil, rather than stripping the land of its natural resources. Often man-made fertilizers or manure applications are used to increase nitrogen fertility in the soil, which is a key component for growing corn. To avoid over-applying and efficiently using their resources, nutrient levels are tested.

Farmers use all components – herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers – with respect to the environment. They carefully follow labels and consider weather patterns that may impact the efficacy or leaching of an application. Further, farmers are incentivized to properly manage these tools because of the cost. Most strive to reduce the “inputs” they use to be more profitable. According to a University of Illinois Extension ag economist, to raise a corn crop in 2011, the average cost per acre was estimated at $832/acre. That number includes land costs, labor, crop protection, fertilizer and seed.

Due to genetic advancements developed within the plant, like biotech traits, many of these tools are used more efficiently. In many cases, crop protection and fertility applications are used so precisely that application amounts are often reduced. Because of Bt developments in corn, a study assessing the global economic and environmental impacts of biotech crops for the first nine years (1996-2004) of adoption showed that the technology has reduced pesticide spraying by 172 million kg and has reduced environmental footprints associated with pesticide use by 14%.

Additionally, because of conventional breeding and overall plant health, many crops can withstand plant diseases better than crops in the past. Other innovations, like Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in tractors and spray machines, have greatly increased precision by applying only where needed rather than widespread field applications. Most farmers involved have learned ways to reduce nitrogen use by 50 lbs. per acre or more by using this technology.

**Fertilizer** - A chemical or natural substance added to soil to increase its fertility

**Herbicide** - A substance that is toxic to plants and is used to destroy unwanted vegetation and weeds.

**Fungicide** - A chemical that destroys fungus.

**Organic** - Organic Produce and other ingredients are grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation.
Animals that produce meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products do not take antibiotics or growth hormones.

**Seed treatments** - The term "treated" means given an application (seed coating) of a pesticide or fungicide that’s designed to reduce, control or repel disease organisms, insects, or other pests that attack seed or seedlings grown from treated seed. Treated seeds can reduce the amount of pesticide of fungicide that has to be applied to the land.

**Super weed** - A wild plant that has accidentally been pollinated by a genetically-modified plant and now contains the plant’s abilities to resist herbicides and insects.

**Topic 3 – Animal Welfare**

**Question:** *Why are some animals raised outdoors and others indoors?*

**Answer:** When it comes to animal housing, farmers and ranchers have a choice. Their decisions to use indoor or outdoor housing are impacted by many factors ranging from the animal’s needs and resources available, to climate and consumer preference. Some farmers and ranchers choose indoor housing to protect their animals from diseases, inclement weather and even predators. Additionally, many barns today have highly technical ventilation systems that keep them cool during the hot summer months and warm in the winter, thus providing animals with the utmost comfort. Others raise their animals outdoors in order to control insects or to add organic matter back to the soil. There are options for housing, diet and management practices when raising animals for food. USFRA supports the choice that each farmer and rancher makes to raise their animals in the best way, based on their farm or ranch and resources available. Animal care is a continuously improving process, and farmers and ranchers look for new ways to improve the methods they use to care for their animals.

**Question:** *Is raising animals outdoors more humane? Are animals raised indoors crowded together?*

**Answer:** There are many reasons some animals are housed indoors, including protection from inclement weather, bacteria and diseases, and predators. Due to technological advances in indoor farming facilities farmers and ranchers are easily able to keep the environment clean, safe and temperature-controlled.

During critical developmental stages, pigs and poultry prefer different temperatures and conditions. Since indoor facilities can be regulated through sophisticated temperature control systems, farmers are able to provide this comfort to them during key stages of growth.

One management practice that continually makes headlines is the use of individual stalls for pigs or egg-laying cages for poultry. When looking at peer-reviewed research, science says that these management styles are not only efficient for the farmer, but also provide optimum safety and health for the animal.

Gestation stalls or individual stalls were first introduced in the 1960s as a way to help protect and nurture all sows (female pigs) during pregnancy, a time when they are
particularly vulnerable. For example, when sows are in groups, dominant sows tend to act aggressively (e.g. biting), causing serious injuries to less-dominant sows. Submissive sows also may have difficulty getting access to enough food, which can lead to poor weight gain and pregnancy complications.

Question: Are animals kept indoors force-fed to grow quickly?
Answer: No. This is not the reason why a farmer or rancher would choose to raise animals indoors. Indoor housing is beneficial to protecting animals from weather, bacteria and predators. It also helps to ensure that animals are receiving a proper, nutritious and balanced diet.

It is not true that cattle in feedyards, where beef cattle are finished on a diet of grass, grains and other feedstuffs, are force fed. Feedyards do not force cattle to eat. Feedyard cattle have ample space to roam and the ability to eat from the feed bunk at their own pace and leisure.

Many indoor facilities have surveillance equipment that not only allows farmers and ranchers to keep watch on their animals, but also ensures they are adhering to humane feeding practices.

Question: Why are there so many undercover videos showing abuse of farm animals?
Answer: We wish we could say that animals were never mistreated. It’s an issue that upsets farmers and ranchers, as most give their animals optimum care to ensure safety and health. It is in the best interest of farmers and ranchers to take care of their animals, but when a single bad actor is caught on camera, it gains attention and saddens the rest of the agriculture community.

USFRA does not tolerate animal abuse, and anyone performing these acts towards animals is subject prosecution under the law. USFRA supports quality assurance programs, created to help farmers and ranchers stay up to date with the best management practices for the wellbeing of their farm animals. Some examples include:

- Beef Quality Assurance® (cattle farmer and rancher funded) program outlines recommendations, training and a code of ethics for raising beef cattle. The program provides ranchers with the latest management techniques and promotes a commitment to quality within every segment of the beef industry.
- Pork Quality Assurance® program, created by the National Pork Board more than 20 years ago, provides the latest knowledge on animal care and the use of animal health products. We Care® initiative also helps farmers who are involved in the care of pigs learn how to conduct themselves and to make sure they are doing the right thing every day.
- The National Dairy FARM Program® created by the National Milk Producer’s Federation, assists dairy farmers with committing to the highest standards of animal care and quality assurance.
National Chicken Council provides standards for their farmers and ranchers and also trains third-party auditors on their standards.

Question: How do I know animals are slaughtered humanely?
Answer: USFRA supports and continues to uphold The Humane Slaughter Act, which became law in 1958. The act requires that animals are completely sedated and insensible to pain before slaughter. The methods of sedation may differ depending on the size of the animal. To ensure farmers and ranchers are complying with The Humane Slaughter Act, veterinarians are assigned to routinely monitor specific districts for slaughter and handling procedures. The Farm Bill, put into law in 2002, also requires that a compliance report is submitted by farmers and ranchers annually.

Additionally, the agriculture community is making great strides with new methods like progressive slaughter plants to ensure animals are comfortable and slaughter is painless. Many farmers and ranchers work with animal welfare advocate and professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University Temple Grandin, who designs livestock handling facilities that use devices to hold animals in comfortable, upright positions.

Question: What is the difference between “Grass-fed” and “Grain-fed” beef? Is one better for an animal than the other?
Answer: “Grass-fed” and “grain-fed” can be misleading. The terms “grass-finished” and “grain-finished” are technically accurate and paint a clearer picture of how cattle are raised.

- The majority of beef cattle raised in the U.S. graze on grass pasture. After several months to a year, they are “finished” (meaning they reach desired weight) in an operation called a feedyard, where they receive a diet of grasses, grains and other feedstuffs.
- Some cattle spend their entire lives on a pasture, meaning they are finished on grass as well.

The USDA specifies that, to qualify as “grass-fed,” the animal must eat grass and forage exclusively after being weaned from their mothers and must have continuous access to pasture during the growing season.

Grain-fed cattle finished at a feedyard receive a carefully planned, balanced and nutritious diet. Due to their unique digestive system, cattle can turn a variety of feedstuffs into nutrients they need to grow and be healthy. This includes grains and grasses, and in some cases, regional renewable feeds like distillers’ grains, cornstalks, wheat stubble, citrus pulp and almond hulls. These are products leftover from a primary harvest that would otherwise go to waste, but can now be used as part of a balanced diet for cattle.

Cattle diets can modestly affect beef’s fatty acid profile. For example, extended grain feeding can result in beef with increased levels of monounsaturated fat (the same heart-healthy kind found in olive oil), while feeding on grass longer (depending on the
type of grass) can influence the amount of omega-3 fatty acids in beef. Experts and studies agree that there is no significant difference between grass-fed or grain-fed beef when it comes to safety or nutritional content. While the majority of beef in the U.S. is finished on grain, beef farmers and ranchers choose to raise cattle in a variety of ways to ensure consumers have a choice.

Question: How do farmers transport animals to housing? How are animals transported from one farm to another?
Answer: Over the decades, and through extensive research, farmers and ranchers have continued to improve handling practices.

There are many reasons why farm animals might need to be moved, such as restocking, moving from drought areas to better grazing, change of ownership, or slaughter. Historically, livestock were moved on foot, but with increasing urbanization of population and commercialization of animal production, livestock is commonly transported by road and rail vehicles.

University research on best management practices is a priority to the industry. Some new practices can be attributed to animal welfare advocate and professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, Temple Grandin. She works with farmers, ranchers and animal experts to develop techniques to move animals on the farm or ranch, and also during transportation to, and inside of, packing facilities. Grandin provides her expertise in designing structures for herd animals that reduce flight and increase comfort while keeping herds manageable.

Farmers and ranchers must adhere to the 28-Hour Law to ensure animals safety. This law requires that animals transported across state lines, by means other than water or air, be unloaded every 28 hours for rest, food and water to ensure transportation is as low stress and safe of a way as possible.

USFRA’s Point of View on Animal Welfare
Animal safety, health and comfort are top priorities for farmers and ranchers. They care deeply about their animals and take pride in how they provide for them.

There are many different types of housing, diet and overall management practices when it comes to raising animals for food. USFRA supports farmers’ and ranchers’ choices about the best way to raise their animals; personal experience and available resources are important variables to consider.

Well-cared-for animals are an important part of a safe and healthy food supply for everyone. That is why farmers and ranchers rely on the guidance of veterinarians and nutritionists when they make decisions about a variety of animal care practices, including housing strategies and the use of healthcare products to decrease disease risk and promote animal health. For example, the decisions farmers and ranchers make to use indoor or free-range methods of
housing for their pigs, cattle or poultry, are based on a variety of factors, including the animal’s needs, climate, resources available, and consumer preference.

However, one thing remains the same no matter what: farmers and ranchers are committed to continuously looking for new ways to improve the methods they use to care for their animals.

Today, farm animals live healthier lives than ever before. Farmers and ranchers have virtually eliminated many former common causes of human foodborne illnesses. For example, pigs raised indoors, a practice that sometimes elevates concerns, has greatly improved safety for the animals, the farmers who raise them and for the end consumer. Bottom line: animal welfare is the best it has ever been.

Just like with any industry, there are always ways to improve. Farmers and ranchers are making great strides to ensure their practices are not only the best for their animals’ well-being, but that they are also contributing to a food supply that is as safe and healthy as possible. This means basing practices on peer-reviewed studies as well as implementing generations of practical experience. Additionally, partnerships with veterinarians and nutritionists are critical and a key part of animal care on America’s farms and ranches.

USFRA believes everyone who works with animals on a farm or ranch should be properly trained in best care practices for raising animals. There are animal-specific programs, often funded by farmers and ranchers themselves and endorsed by veterinarians, that offer training to help farmers and ranchers implement these management practices.

USFRA is confident that farmers and ranchers work toward this goal every day and often go above and beyond to care for their animals – whether that’s helping a sow (female pig) through a difficult birth, bringing a newborn calf indoors during a cold winter night or providing medical attention and treatment when an animal is sick.

While opinions regarding management techniques for animal safety and health can differ, it’s important that all farmers and ranchers work together to communicate to consumers why they have chosen a specific management style for their animals.
USFRA Supporting Organizations and Partners

- Alabama Farmers Federation
- American Farm Bureau Federation*
- American Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee
- American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers
- American Sheep Industry Association
- American Soybean Association
- American Sugar Alliance
- Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
- Association of Agricultural Production Executives
- California Farm Bureau Federation
- California Pork Producers Association
- Cattlemen’s Beef Board/Beef Checkoff*
- Dairy Business Milk Marketing Cooperative
- Delaware Soybean Board
- Federation of State Beef Councils*
- Georgia Farm Bureau
- Illinois Corn Marketing Board
- Illinois Farm Bureau
- Illinois Soybean Association
- Indiana Corn Marketing Council
- Indiana Farm Bureau Federation
- Indiana Soybean Alliance*
- International Dairy Foods Association
- Iowa Corn Growers Association
- Iowa Pork Producers Association
- Kansas Corn Commission
- Kansas Farm Bureau
- Kansas Soybean Commission
- Kentucky Corn Growers
- Kentucky Farm Bureau
- Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board
- Maryland Soybean Board
- Michigan Corn Growers Association
- Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies
- Minnesota Corn Growers Association
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council*
- Missouri Corn Growers Association
- Missouri Farmers Care
- Montana Farm Bureau Federation
- National Association of Wheat Growers
- National Cattlemen’s Beef Association*
- National Corn Growers Association*
- National Milk Producers Federation*
- National Pork Board*
- National Pork Producers Council*
- Nebraska Corn Board
- Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
- Nebraska Soybean Board*
- New York Farm Bureau Federation
- North Carolina Animal Agriculture Coalition
- North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
- North Dakota Corn Growers Association
- North Dakota Soybean Council
- Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
- Ohio Farm Bureau
- Ohio Soybean Council
- Oregon Farm Bureau
- Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
- South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
- South Dakota Soybean Research & Promotion Council
- Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
- Tennessee Soybean Promotion Council
- Texas Farm Bureau
- United Soybean Board*
- USA Rice Federation
- U.S. Grains Council
- U.S. Poultry & Egg Association*
- Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- Washington Association of Wheat Growers
- Washington Farm Bureau
- West Virginia Farm Bureau
- Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
- Wisconsin Farm Bureau
- Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board