# IDAHO DAIRY FOCUS

IDAHO DAIRYMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Q3

2025

Protecting Idaho's dairy industry through environmental, legal, and legislative efforts since 1924

# Table of **Contents**

# Federal Policy **Update**

Charlie Garrison | Idaho Dairymen's Association

### Political Divisions Over Spending Force Federal Government Shutdown

October 1 marks the beginning of a new federal government Fiscal Year and so this is often the time for political drama as the members of Congress jockey for leverage for their positions on spending. This year has proven no different as Republicans in the majority in both the House and the Senate are in control of the agenda but still need 60 votes to pass even a short-term extension of last year's Appropriations. With only a handful of Democrats in support of the Republican plan so far, the federal government has shut down.

With the two parties in Congress still divided over the spending bill fight last March and then the budget reconciliation bill that passed with only Republican votes in July, Democrats are showing little inclination to be helpful to the majority now. The Speaker of the House of Representatives chose to pass what is known as a "continuing resolution" to fund the federal government at last year's spending levels for a few weeks and then send the members home until the Senate passes a bill. The Senate attempts to pass a Democratic alternative and then the Republican House bill have both failed on votes taken almost daily since Friday September 19th.

The short-term bill passed by the House extends federal agency funding at current levels through November 21st. It also provides an additional $30 million for increased security for members of Congress through the Capitol Hill Police and $58 million additional funding for enhanced security for the administrative and judicial branches of the federal government. The bill also allows USDA to continue providing food assistance to low-income women, infants, and children and beefs up Department of Homeland Security efforts to neutralize national security threats from the use of drones by adversaries. Reimbursements to rural hospitals for healthcare would also continue for the duration of the short-term bill.

The full U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Act for 2026. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) has named his members that would serve on a conference committee once the Senate passes a bill for the full fiscal year through next September 30th.

### Work Continues on Ag Labor Reform

After a rocky period earlier in the year with both dairy farmers and their workers stressed by increased interior enforcement on immigration, tensions across all of agriculture have calmed at least somewhat. President Trump has said that he wants farmers and employers in the hospitality industry to be able to retain their workers. IDA has been communicating with officials at the White House and the federal agencies responsible for making sure farmers have the workers they need to suggest solutions that would be minimally disruptive to dairy farm operations. In addition to legislation by Congress, there are a number of steps the Trump Administration could take by executive action that would be very helpful to dairy producers and their workers.

IDA also continues working with the members of the Idaho congressional delegation to try to pass legislation to solve the farm labor crisis. The Farm Workforce Modernization Act (FWMA), negotiated in 2019 with the leadership of Congressman Mike Simpson, has been updated and reintroduced with bipartisan support in the current Congress. Six years have passed since that will was written, however, and other options are needed if a bill is to gain the support of employers all across agriculture in order to create the critical mass that would be needed for a bill to be successful in the House and Senate and be signed into law by the President.

One option is known as the "DIGNITY Act" that was introduced with bipartisan support. That bill would offer properly vetted current workers all across the economy who have been here for five years or more, including dairy farm workers, the opportunity to remain in their job with the payment of a $1,000 fine in each of seven years going forward. The worker would have a permit going forward but would not be eligible for any federal benefits, permanent residency or citizenship in the future. This bill also does not address updates to the H-2A program advocated by farmers who use it to access temporary and seasonal labor.

Another bill that has been introduced to date would offer current agricultural workers who have worked in the U.S. during the past five years the opportunity to become temporary agricultural workers if they leave the country for 30 days and pay a fine in an amount to be determined by the Secretary of Labor. The employer petitioning for the worker to return would also be subject to a fine determined by regulators. The voluntary self-deportation by the workers can be staggered by the employer to minimize disruption to the farming operation.

The House Agriculture Committee staff continues working on bill language based on proposed changes to the H-2A program agreed to last year by the Ag Labor Working Group. Their bill will focus on changes to the H-2A program including removing the seasonality requirement of the job, a simpler and less costly application process and a more competitive wage structure. However, the Agriculture Committee Working Group did not include adjustment of status for current workers in its recommendations.

Other bills addressing Ag labor are in the works as well. IDA will continue to monitor those bills and provide information and guidance on workable solutions for the labor needs of Idaho dairy farmers.

## New Farm Bill and an Emerging Pest Threat

Several additional issues are also on the radar screen. Those include the need to finish the provisions of a new Farm Bill that weren't included in the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" passed last summer and monitoring USDA's plans for trying to prevent the New World Screwworm (NWS) from entering the U.S. The urgency on NWS was amped up several notches with the announcement of a case in a bovine in Mexico last month just 70 miles from the U.S. border. ■

**Charlie Garrison**
cgarrison@thegarrisongroupllc.com

# Federal and State Officials Discuss **Dairy Priorities with IDA**

Riley Barney| Idaho Dairymen's Association

In July, IDA Board President Pete Wiersma and CEO Rick Naerebout were invited by Governor Brad Little to meet with HHS Secretary Kennedy, Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Chanel Tewalt, and Idaho Senate Pro Tem Kelly Anthon to discuss several key priorities impacting Idaho's dairy industry.

A central topic of conversation was the ongoing revision of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. IDA appreciates the work being done by both the Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure these guidelines reflect the full nutritional value of dairy products. Full-fat dairy items such as whole milk, butter, and cheese have long been an important part of a balanced diet, yet they've been unfairly stigmatized for years. We're hopeful that, with continued leadership, the updated guidelines will more accurately represent the science and benefits behind these products.

IDA also expressed support for the dairy industry's voluntary efforts to eliminate the use of certified artificial colors in dairy foods. This proactive step reflects a broader commitment to transparency and quality that today's consumers expect while allowing producers to maintain flexibility and innovation in the marketplace.

This conversation is part of a broader industry-wide dialogue that's been taking place. Daragh Maccabee, CEO of Idaho Milk Products and Chair of the International Dairy Foods Association, recently met with Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins and HHS Secretary Kennedy in Washington, D.C., to discuss these same topics.

We appreciate the willingness of Secretary Kennedy and other leaders to listen and engage in meaningful dialogue. It is through these conversations that we can continue advocating for sound policies and ensure Idaho's dairy families are represented in national decision-making. We remain optimistic that the efforts of our state and federal partners will help bring much-needed clarity to these issues and continue to support a thriving future for Idaho's dairy producers. ■

**Riley Barney**
riley@idahodairymens.org

# White Harvest Farms Highlights
# CAFO Improvement Fund Project

Megan Satterwhite | Idaho Dairymen's Association

When it comes to stewardship, there's no group more committed to caring for the land and natural resources than farmers. From 2022-2024 Idaho's Department of Environmental Quality, in partnership with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, funded grants for a cost share opportunity. Projects funded through this program improved air, water, or soil quality, with an emphasis on manure and nutrient management. Over the course of three years, 36 projects were selected for funding, totaling nearly $12 million in grants awarded and $44.3 million in total project costs.

These efforts demonstrate that Idaho dairymen are willing and eager to incorporate new practices into their operations. Some projects funded on dairies include new or additional lagoon capacity, lagoon pipelines to additional acres, centrifuges, reverse osmosis systems, and more. Idaho dairymen are actively engaging in these projects that improve efficiencies in their operations and ensure their farms long-term viability.

One example is White Harvest Farms in Buhl, Idaho, which applied for the CAFO Improvement Grant Fund in 2023. After consulting with other dairymen about their settling basins, they partnered with their engineer to design a system that fit their operation and were selected for funding.

In June, they completed the project. For Don Gaalswyk and Deb Easterday Reeves with White Harvest Farms, it was a no-brainer: a simple system that works well for their needs. "So far, we are really happy with the system," said Deb Easterday Reeves. "This project is something we have wanted to do for a while, and through the CAFO Improvement Fund it made sense to move forward." Since implementation, they have seen improved water quality for irrigation and reduced costs for lagoon management.

One of the requirements of the CAFO Improvement Fund is an educational outreach component once the project is completed. One of the easiest ways to check off that requirement is to be featured in the Idaho Dairy Focus newsletter. If you would like to fulfill that requirement for your project, please email riley@idahodairymens.org to get started. ■

**Megan Satterwhite**
megan@idahodairymens.org

# From Boise to Washington: Advancing the Case for **Immigration Reform**

Riley Barney | Idaho Dairymen's Association

Immigration reform has continuously been in the headlines this year, and through it all, IDA's position has remained the same. The Idaho Dairymen's Association has long supported and advocated for responsible immigration reform. Our position is rooted in the belief that immigration policies must be fiscally and morally sound for Idaho and our country, and include support of the following:

- Legal status for existing agricultural workers and their immediate family
- Access to a worker visa program for year-round agricultural employers
- Verification of legal status of workers is the responsibility of the US government, not employers

To continue advancing the conversation surrounding immigration reform, the IDA, in partnership with Chobani, Idaho Associated General Contractors, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, Idaho Home Builders Association, and the J.R. Simplot Company, recently hosted a Washington, D.C. fly-in. Nine legislators attended, including House Majority Caucus Chair Jaron Crane (D12), Chairman John Vander Woude (D22), Chairman Bruce Skaug (D10), Chair Wendy Horman (D32), Representative Jordan Redman (D3), Representative Clint Hostetler (D24), Senate Majority Caucus Chair Ben Toews (D4), Chairman Jim Guthrie (D28), and Chairman Todd Lakey (D23).

The purpose of this trip was two-fold:

1. Educate attendees on the current immigration system while highlighting policy and economic implications

2. Urge Idaho's federal delegation to act on immigration reform for the greater good of Idaho

The day began with speakers and panel discussions on the topic, including sessions on law enforcement, immigration policy, and economic impacts. After a full day of discussions, the trip concluded with a dinner with Idaho's federal delegation. Businesses and organizations present, alongside Idaho legislators, emphasized that the federal government holds the

clear authority on immigration reform. The group as whole recognized the importance of securing the boarder and removing dangerous criminals from our communities, critical steps for reducing risk to public safety. At the same time, Idaho needs a workable and legal pathway for foreign-born workers to ensure that our economy can continue to prosper and grow.

Senator Risch reassured the group that this issue is top of mind for all four of Idaho's delegation members. He noted that with the border now being more secure, the environment is more favorable for reform than at any point in the past four years. While some challenges remain, this progress gives reason for cautious optimism that immigration solutions may be within reach.

Immigration reform is not a simple issue, but it is a critical one for Idaho's economy and the dairy industry in particular. The Idaho Dairymen's Association remains committed to working alongside policymakers and industry partners to advocate for solutions that are both practical and principled.

By ensuring a legal and reliable workforce, we can secure the future of Idaho dairies, strengthen our communities, and keep our state's number one agricultural industry moving forward. ■

**Riley Barney**
riley@idahodairymens.org

# Shaping the Next Idaho Beef Council **Five-Year Strategic Plan**

Idaho Beef Council

A strong industry needs a strong plan. **It is time for the Idaho Beef Council (IBC) to build its next five-year strategic plan—and why your input as a producer is essential.**

A strategic plan is more than just words on paper. It is the roadmap that ensures Beef Checkoff dollars—your dollars—are invested wisely, cost-effectively, and with measurable results. By setting clear priorities, the plan keeps IBC focused on the most important opportunities to grow beef demand, build consumer trust, and strengthen Idaho's beef industry for the future.

The plan is grounded in the mission and vision that guides the national beef industry:

- **Mission:** Ensure the long-term prosperity of the U.S. beef industry by sustainably producing the most trusted, highest quality, and consistently satisfying protein for consumers around the world.
- **Vision:** To be the protein of choice around the world, trusted and respected for our commitment to quality, safety, and sustainability.

These statements underscore the long-term direction for our industry and reflect the values that Idaho producers practice every day. IBC's strategic plan is designed to bring that mission and vision to life at the state and regional level, ensuring that Idaho's cattle industry thrives in a changing marketplace.

## The Four Idaho Beef Industry Strategic Priorities

The draft plan centers on four high-level strategies that reflect both producer priorities and consumer needs.

- **Drive growth in beef exports from the Pacific Northwest to benefit Idaho:** Beef exports are one of the fastest-growing areas of opportunity for our industry. Customers around the globe value the quality, taste, and safety of U.S. beef, and Idaho stands to benefit directly from growing those markets. By working with partners across the Pacific Northwest and through the U.S. Meat Export Federation, IBC helps create stronger demand abroad that ultimately increases overall carcass value.
- **Promote and drive demand for Idaho beef:** At the retail counter and in restaurants, competition for the consumer dollar is intense. IBC invests in programs that keep beef top of mind for families looking for quick and easy meals, for chefs crafting new dishes, and for retailers showcasing protein options. Promotions, advertising, and education all work together to reinforce beef's unmatched taste, nutrition, and versatility. The goal is simple: when consumers choose what to buy, we want to keep beef top of mind so they choose beef.
- **Grow consumer trust in Idaho beef production:** Idaho's consumers are asking more questions than ever about where their food comes from. They want to know how animals are raised, how land is cared for, and whether farmers and ranchers are good stewards of the resources. IBC provides Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training to ensure that Idaho producers have that competitive edge. IBC also highlights the real stories of Idaho producers—stories of multi-generational family heritage, sustainability, and animal care—to build consumer trust and strengthen the bond between producers and the public. Trust is the foundation of long-term demand.
- **Enhance awareness of the Idaho Beef Council and its checkoff investments:** The checkoff program is only as strong as the confidence producers have in it. IBC is committed to strengthening engagement with Idaho's agricultural organizations and improving industry communication so producers clearly understand how their dollars are being put to work. Transparency and accountability are key. When producers know the value of their investment, the entire industry benefits.

## Why Producer Input Matters

The Beef Checkoff was built by producers, for producers. Every dollar is your investment, and the strategic plan is the tool that directs how those dollars will be used over the next five years. Your insights are essential to shaping a strategic direction that addresses the real challenges and opportunities facing Idaho's beef industry—whether that means addressing consumer misconceptions or seizing growth in new markets. Producers have firsthand insight into what matters most to the industry. By weighing in now, you help keep Beef Checkoff investments targeted, impactful, and responsive to industry realities—maximizing their return.

### Call to Action: Share Your Voice

This is your opportunity to help shape the future direction of beef promotion, education and research investments in Idaho. The IBC is inviting producers across the state to review these strategies and provide feedback through a short input survey.

"Input and feedback from small beef producers to large, from Northern Idaho to Southern Idaho and East to West, is extremely important. The Idaho beef industry is complex and differs throughout the state. All dairy producers are beef producers. The IBC Board of Directors needs to hear from all sectors of the industry to build the best strategy possible," says T.K. Kuwahara, CEO of the Idaho Beef Council.

For additional information visit IDBeef.org or contact us at BeefCouncil@IDBeef.org. ■

## Your Voice Matters!

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and ensure that the Idaho Beef Council's next five-year strategic plan reflects the priorities of the producers it serves. Together, we can build demand, grow trust, and invest in the future of Idaho beef.


Scan the QR code or visit https://bit.ly/4gC4gS7 to provide your input on Idaho's next five-year strategic plan! Share your input by October 27th and be entered to win a *Beef. It's What's For Dinner.* Carhartt vest!

# One Big Beautiful Bill: Key **Takeaways for Producers**

Eide Bailly

The One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) Act has introduced major changes that affect farmers across the country. With wide-ranging updates to commodity programs, conservation incentives, and eligibility rules, producers are faced with both new opportunities and complex compliance requirements.

The latest updates in Subtitle C of H.R. 1 aim to strengthen support for producers and build a more resilient food system — but navigating these changes can be complicated. That's why clear, practical guidance is more important than ever.

Here are the key takeaways from the OBBB that all producers need to know:

## Updated Reference Prices

The bill increases the "reference prices" used to calculate support payments for key crops under the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) programs. These adjustments reflect rising input costs and market volatility, providing a stronger safety net for producers. The bill provides a formula for annual inflation adjustments starting in 2031.

## Base Acres Expansion

Up to 30 million additional base acres may be allocated to eligible farms based on recent planting history using a 5-year average from 2019-2023.

## Producer Election Flexibility

Farmers can now elect between PLC and ARC programs for the 2026 crop year, with automatic continuation of that choice through 2031 unless changed. This provides greater predictability and planning flexibility. Producers will automatically receive the higher of PLC or ARC for the 2025 cropping year.

## Equitable Treatment of Certain Entities

The bill introduces the term "qualified pass-through entities," which includes LLCs, Partnerships, and S-corporations. Previously, only general partnerships and joint ventures qualified for multiple payment limits. C-corporations are not included in this definition.

## Payment Limitation

Payment limits are increased from $125,000 to $155,000 per person, with annual inflation adjustments.

## Adjusted Gross Income Limitation

Provides clarifications of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), with exceptions for operations deriving 75% or more of income from farming, ranching, or silviculture. The definition of farming now includes the "sale of agricultural equipment."

## Marketing Loans and Loan Rates

Loan rates for marketing assistance loans are updated for the 2026–2031 crop years, which better aligns with current market conditions.
At Eide Bailly, we recognize the challenges that come with navigating evolving farm policy. Our experienced tax team — supported by our National Tax Office — is here to help you assess how legislative reforms may affect your operations, optimize your program participation, and stay ahead in an ever-changing industry.

For more guidance on recent tax legislation, join one of our upcoming webinars. ■

**Tyler Carringer**
tcarringer@eidebailly.com

# Steer-A-Year Success: IDA Steers Earn **Best Overall Merit**

Riley Barney | Idaho Dairymen's Association

The Idaho Dairymen's Association was proud to support the University of Idaho's annual Steer-A-Year contest by donating two steers, both of which ended up bringing home awards. Getting to that point, however, was no small task. The decision on what type of beef-on-dairy crosses to donate sparked one of the liveliest debates at our board meetings this year. Motions were made, amended, rescinded under protest, and defeated before a final decision was reached. In the end, a motion was passed to donate a Angus-Holstein cross and a Charolais-Jersey cross.

The two steers went to the University of Idaho Beef Center in Moscow in November, where they were raised to market weight. They were part of a larger group of 70 steers donated to the program, which collectively raised more than $160,000. Those funds go toward student scholarships, Vandal athletics, and beef research at the University of Idaho. Beyond the financial impact, the program provides hands-on experience for student employees and serves as a learning tool for many Animal, Veterinary, and Food Science classes.

IDA's steers held their own in the carcass contest. Both graded Prime and tied for the award of Best Overall Merit, which is the highest final dollars per hundred weight. On September 11, Hank Hafliger and Lael Schoessler represented IDA at the Steer-A-Year banquet to receive the awards.

Our donated steers not only earned top honors but also contributed to a program that raises funds, supports hands-on learning, and strengthens ties with the University of Idaho. Sometimes a little healthy debate leads to prime results. The success of our steers also highlights the progress of beef-on-dairy, with genetic improvements allowing crossbred animals to grade well and produce high-quality cuts of meat, providing a boost to dairymen's bottom lines. IDA is proud to support the mission of the Steer-A-Year contest, and we look forward to continuing our support of future programs. ■

**Riley Barney**
riley@idahodairymens.org

# Optimizing Dairy Cow Nutrition for **Efficiency and Sustainable Nutrient Management**

Izabelle Teixeira | University of Idaho

When considering cow nutrition, the emphasis often falls on what the animal consumes and how the feed ration affects milk production. But it's just as important to look at what comes out the other end. Manure is more than just a by-product, it's a mirror of how well cows are utilizing the feed provided. If nutrients pass through the cow unused, they don't contribute to milk, health, or growth, and end up in the lagoon or the field instead. This creates a financial burden for producers, as it increases expenses due to underutilized feed and adds to the costs of managing manure nutrients on the backend.

This connection between feed and manure highlights an opportunity. By making a few straightforward adjustments to diets, we can help cows utilize more of what they eat and therefore improve nutrient management.  These adjustments do not require a major overhaul of dairy operations, yet they can enhance efficiency, improve whole-farm nutrient balances, and support the farm's sustainability goals.

One of the first things to consider is matching diets to cows' nutrient requirements. Feeding the right amount of energy, protein, and minerals ensures cows produce more efficiently. Protein is a clear example. Cows need enough protein to support milk and body functions, but feeding more than they can use doesn't translate into extra milk. Instead, the excess nitrogen ends up excreted. Fine-tuning protein levels helps cows perform at their best while saving feed costs and improving how nutrients cycle on the farm. A recent study showed that cows fed diets meeting their true protein requirements generated, on average, $0.48/cow/day more income over feed costs (the difference between milk income and feed costs) compared to

cows that were either under- or overfed. Looking at each case, cows receiving the right amount of protein earned $0.22/cow/day more than underfed cows and $0.74/cow/day more than overfed cows. In other words, the most profitable approach was also the one where protein was used efficiently by the cow, with less ending up in manure.

There are some concerns that reducing dietary protein may lower milk production. Still, nutritionists have tools to meet cows' requirements without exceeding dietary nitrogen, for instance, balancing diets for amino acids (AA). A recent survey of practicing nutritionists showed a growing preference for AA-balancing strategies rather than simply chasing crude protein benchmarks. Monitoring income over feed costs in low-protein diets supplemented with AA helps ensure cows remain productive, with more of the nitrogen directed into milk production rather than lost.

Forage quality is another area where small changes yield significant benefits. Every bite of well-grown, harvested, and conserved forage not only improves intake and fiber digestion but also reduces nutrient losses that would otherwise appear in manure. That means more energy captured from feeds grown on-farm means less reliance on imported feed and subsequent nutrients. High-quality forage production begins with appropriate fertility, pest management, and irrigation. Harvesting at the right stage, testing silage for nutrient content, and managing storage to reduce spoilage can all translate to improved production. Even details like chop length and packing density can tip the balance between forage that ferments well and forage that loses nutrients. With so much of the ration built on forages, getting this piece right is one of the most effective ways to improve overall efficiency.

Another critical area is minimizing feed losses and regularly monitoring cow performance. Wasted feed is costly. Properly mixing TMRs, delivering feed consistently, and avoiding overfeeding are straightforward ways to ensure more of the nutrients you feed end up in milk, not the manure. Feed bunk management, whether adjusting push-up frequency or matching deliveries to cow demand, can also reduce shrink. Regularly monitoring milk yield, feed intake, and herd health helps identify minor problems before they escalate into significant issues. Often, a minor adjustment in formulation or management pays off more than broad, unfocused changes.

Taken together, these nutrition "low-hanging fruits" remind us that every farm has room to adjust without turning things upside down. Optimizing feed rations, producing and using high-quality forages, and maintaining consistent feed management are powerful strategies to boost on-farm efficiency, improve nutrient management, and strengthen the overall sustainability of the dairy operation. ■

**Izabelle Teixeira**
izabelle@uidaho.edu

# Beef Flavored Gold – **The Value of Cattle on a Dairy**

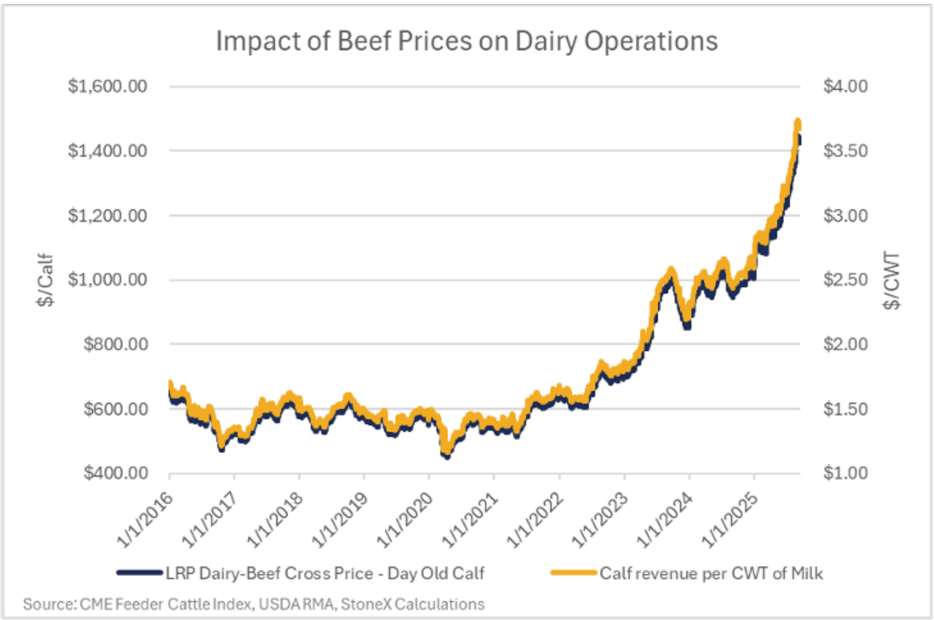
Dustin Winston | StoneX Group

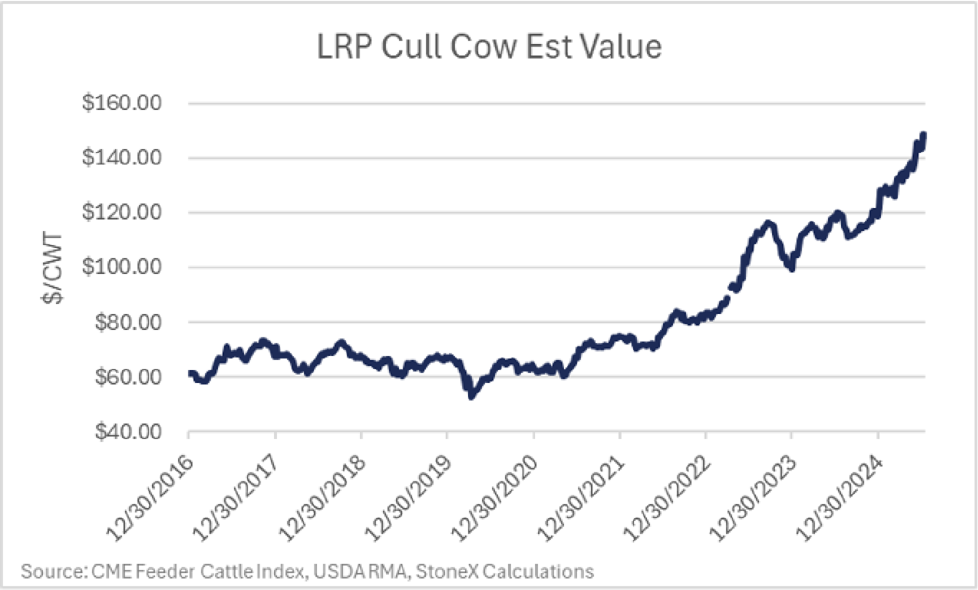
Many participants in the dairy industry have heard of Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP) which supports dairy producers across the U.S. in being able to manage their price risk and receive reduced premiums from the USDA. There is another program that is becoming even more of a conversation factor – Livestock Risk Protection (LRP). This tool operates in a similar manner to DRP in allowing producers to manage the price risk of the livestock on their operation.

Why do we bring this up? In July of 2025 the USDA RMA made two changes to LRP that provides a significant enhancement to dairymen and their ability to benefit from LRP.

The first change was the addition of a dairy-beef cross endorsement which was created to give the industry a more up-to-date tool to manage the price risk of a growing factor on dairy operations. This contract is available to protect the value of unborn calves up to 52 weeks away. This is very timely for the dairy industry given the record high beef prices that we are experiencing. If we assume a dairy operation is breeding 60-65% of cows to beef annually the current impact of revenue from calves is approximately $3.60/(Per CWT of milk) added to the operation. This number is even higher if the breeding program is pushing 70% of cows. Just 3 years ago the value of dairy-beef cross calves had never offered higher than $1.60/CWT. This $2/CWT increase in the value of dairy-beef cross calves is even more imperative in situations like we are experiencing currently, with dairy prices falling and margins facing pressure. Currently this LRP dairy-beef cross contract is offering the opportunity to establish a floor price of more than $1300 out through July of 2026.

The second change that was made to LRP that is a significant benefit to dairy producers is the addition of a cull cow contract. This contract is only available 13 weeks away, but still provides significant value and security to an operation. Currently the market is offering nearly $150/CWT for cull cows and offers a fantastic support to the value of a dairy operation. This is more than a 200% increase to the value that cull cows were offering in 2021.






Beef has become a significant factor in the operation of any dairy and with these additional tools the ability to manage volatility and protect against risk is vastly improved. We strongly recommend you discuss these tools with a licensed insurance agent – like StoneX about how these two new endorsements can support your business.

If you are interested in further information about this topic or any other factors impacting the dairy industry here in the U.S. – we can help, please reach out. ■



**Dustin Winston**
dustin.winston@stonex.com

# Join Us for the 2025 Dairy West & IDA **Annual Meeting**

Lacey Papageorge & Riley Barney | Dairy West & IDA

The 2025 Dairy West and Idaho Dairymen's Association Annual Meeting is quickly approaching! This year's Annual Meeting is scheduled for November 5–6 at the Boise Centre. The event will feature inspiring speakers, in-depth discussions and opportunities to connect with peers from across Idaho and Utah. If you are interested in registering, please visit https://www.dairywestannualmeeting.com/2025. Register by October 15 to receive the Grand Champion reimbursement of $300. Registrations submitted between October 16 and October 31 will qualify for the Reserve Champion reimbursement of $150.

At this year's conference attendees will hear from an exciting lineup of guest speakers and panelists. Michael Dykes, president and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), will deliver the opening keynote session, Creating More Powerful Partnerships. Krysta Harden is president and CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council, she will deliver the second-day keynote address, building on Michael's presentation with Dairy Across Borders. Michael and Krysta will also lead a joint breakout session after both of their keynotes, entitled Bringing it Together.

Panel discussions will cover a wide range of topics including, markets, margins and managing risk, farm safety, beef-on-dairy, and more. In addition to these sessions, attendees may join IDA's business meeting for updates on the association's work on your behalf. Dairy West will also provide organizational updates at their meeting and throughout "Dairy Town" Finally, attendees are invited to award luncheons and banquet honoring fellow dairymen who have made an impact on the industry.

If you are interested in attending or have any questions, feel free to reach out to Riley Barney with IDA or Lacey Papageorge with Dairy West. We are happy to answer any questions and help get you registered for the conference. We look forward to seeing you there! ■

**Lacey Papageorge**
lpapageorge@dairywest.com

**Riley Barney**
riley@idahodairymens.org

# How to Prepare for the Winter - From a **Nutrient Management Perspective**

Valene Cauhourn, Miguel Mena, and Brian Scarrow | AGPROfessionals

As fall turns to winter, dairy farmers face a critical transition period. While attention often goes toward keeping cows comfortable, maintaining equipment, and managing feed supplies, nutrient management is just as important. How a dairy farm prepares its nutrient plan for winter has long-term implications for herd health, soil fertility, and water quality.

Winter conditions create unique challenges. Frozen soils, snow cover, and spring thaws all increase the risk of nutrient losses if manure and fertilizers aren't managed carefully. With good planning, however, dairy producers can protect their investment in nutrients, meet regulatory requirements, and set their farms up for success when spring arrives.

## Evaluate Manure Storage Capacity

Manure storage is a crucial factor to consider before winter. Dairy operations must ensure that lagoons have enough capacity to hold manure during the cold months when land application cannot take place.

- Measure current storage levels and ensure that there is sufficient storage for the winter months, including manure, parlor process water, and winter run-off.
- Inspect storage structures for leaks, cracks, animal burrows, vegetation, or signs of wear, especially liners and agitation points.
- Plan for emergencies by identifying backup storage options and/or neighboring farms willing to take excess manure if needed.

A full lagoon in January leaves little room for error, especially if winter storms or extended freezing conditions delay application windows in the spring months.

## Time Fall Applications Carefully

Some dairies choose to apply a portion of manure in early fall before the ground freezes, leaving winter storage capacity more manageable. If manure or nutrients are applied in the fall, timing and placement are everything.

- Avoid applying manure or nutrients on frozen or snow-covered soils. Nutrients applied in these conditions are highly prone to runoff during thaws. Please note that the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) prohibits the application of wastewater after November 15th.
- Incorporate manure when possible. Injection or

light tillage helps keep nutrients in place and available for spring crop utilization.
- Follow setbacks and buffer requirements. Keeping applications away from waterways reduces runoff risk.

## Leverage Double Cropping

Double cropping is a valuable tool for dairies looking to retain and capture nutrients through winter. When farms utilize fall manure applications, double cropping is especially effective at scavenging residual nutrients and keeping them out of waterways.

- Double-cropping grasses like rye or triticale after a corn crop offers several benefits: the crop can establish quickly, it helps hold soil in place, reduces erosion, and increases nutrient uptake. This method can be used to manage soil nutrients by drawing extra nutrients from the soil when the field has been previously over-applied.
- Legume mixes can add nitrogen-fixing benefits while still protecting water quality.
- Grazing potential may exist in fall or spring, providing an additional feed source or revenue stream.

## Review Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs)

Winter preparation is a good time to review and update your farm's Nutrient Management Plan. Accurate records meet compliance standards and also provide valuable insights into long-term soil fertility trends and planning.

- Check manure test results to ensure nutrient values reflect current conditions. Manure testing is to be completed every year on all manure streams that are land applied.
- Align field application records with crop removal rates and regulatory requirements.
- Evaluate land availability for application and plan accordingly. Soil sampling before application is recommended to determine if soils are nutrient deficient or if soil phosphorus content limits the application of manure. (ISDA does not allow applications to soils measuring greater than 300 ppm of phosphorus.)

## Prepare for Spring Thaw Risks

Runoff during snowmelt is one of the highest-risk times for nutrient loss. Proactive work now helps protect nutrients from being lost just as fields begin

to warm. Steps to prepare include:

- Maintaining grassed waterways and buffers to filter runoff.
- Stockpiling bedding or absorbents for areas prone to heavy manure accumulation (such as winter lots or feeding areas).
- Inspecting drainage systems and tile outlets to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Ensure that berms are in place to prevent runoff from leaving the facility or stockpiled manure areas. This prevents runoff from leaving the site and potentially entering any waterways.

## Keep the Herd in Mind

Nutrient management doesn't stop at the field's edge; it begins in the barn. Efficient feeding and barn management directly reduce pressure on storage and nutrient handling systems.

- Balance rations carefully to avoid overfeeding nutrients like phosphorus, which increases manure nutrient load.
- Maintain clean lots and barns to reduce the buildup of manure in areas exposed to runoff.
- Plan winter bedding strategies that help keep manure manageable and storage consistent.
- Make sure that water trough or water line leaks are resolved quickly, as they can quickly fill up lagoons that might already be tight on space.

## Final Thoughts

For dairy producers, preparing for winter from a nutrient management perspective is about more than compliance; it's about protecting investments in feed, soil, and herd health. By ensuring manure storage capacity, applying nutrients responsibly, leveraging cover crops, and planning ahead for spring runoff, dairies can safeguard their resources and position themselves for a strong growing season ahead. ■

**Valene Cauhorn**
vcauhorn@agpros.com

**Miguel Mena**
mmena@agpros.com

**Brian Scarrow**
bscarrow@agpros.com

# High Milk Production Might Bring Low Prices, But **Idaho May Fare Better Than Many**

Colin Kadis | Ever.Ag

It has been a while since the United States dairy herd reached more than 9.52 million cows. This is the largest dairy herd since 1998 – a time when we were using dial-up modems, video rental stores and film cameras. Social media platforms wouldn't emerge for another six years, and iPhones would have to wait another nine years. Needless to say, it's been a while since we had this many cows – and the cows we have today are far more productive than the cows we had in 1998.

It's easy to see why we have so many cattle. Dairy replacements have been tricky to find, beef calves are worth record-high prices and milk margins have been great for a little while now. As Kenny Rogers said, "You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em." For most dairymen, the profitable move has been to hold on to cows and breed them to beef semen, as I discussed in last quarter's article ("It's Not That the Cows are Coming – It's That They Aren't Leaving").

The question I am hearing more often is, "What will the milk price landscape look like if milk production continues to see tremendous gains as a result of all these extra dairy cattle?"

We anticipate increased milk production will more negatively impact Class IV prices than Class III prices. For Idaho dairymen who ship their milk to cheese processors, this is good news. In recent years, Class IV prices have been extremely high, driving profitability in many of the major dairy regions with more exposure to fluid milk, soft products, butter and nonfat dry milk – pretty much any place besides Idaho and Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, Class III has seen great times (with milk more than $20 per hundredweight during Summer 2024) and terrible times (like $14 per hundredweight milk in Spring 2023). Class III milk is most heavily impacted by the price of cheddar cheese blocks and dry whey powder. Given that cheese is a commodity the United States is adept at exporting, when our price gets cheap, we can often send excess product around the globe, clearing our market and renewing the cycle. Dry whey is an even easier commodity to export – we sell about half of our production internationally – and is currently well supported by demand for protein.

Class IV prices are slightly different. While nonfat dry milk is also heavily exported like dry whey, butter can't quite keep up with cheese, although butter exports have been surging lately. Typically, international butter buyers require different specifications than we do in the United States, and it's tough to move the needle on butter price through exports. That can make it harder for Class IV prices to respond to international price discrepancies.

Adding to the problem is the fact that many of the cheese plants in the United States are huge, capital-intensive facilities that like to run full of milk all the time to justify the sizeable investment required to get them off the ground. Class IV plants, on the other hand, are often called "balancing plants" – they only run full when they can strategically buy extra milk, often at a discount.

If Class III plants are already running full of milk, it's unlikely that we will see huge differences in cheese production or inventories outside of the expected ramp up of new cheese plants. But, if Class IV plants start to take on the new milk from increased milk production, watch out – excess butter and nonfat dry milk could push Class IV prices down, putting pressure on dairy margins and possibly forcing milk contraction in affected regions.

What does that mean for Idaho? For those dairymen that ship to cheese plants, you may finally have your day in the sun again. It's likely Class III prices will be higher than Class IV, meaning you could see profitability at a time other dairymen are in a different financial situation.



**Colin Kadis**
clk@ever.ag

Idaho Dairymen's Association 2025

# Associate Members

The Idaho Dairymen's Association offers associate memberships for organizations who are interested in a unique way to reach and support Idaho's dairymen. The organizations listed below comprise this year's cohort.

SAWTOOTH LAW
OFFICES, PLLC

EideBailly

StoneX®

Ever.Ag

McALVAIN
COMPANIES INC.
A BIG-D COMPANY

ESI

COOPER
NORMAN

LF Bioenergy

AGPROfessionals
DEVELOPERS OF AGRICULTURE

FRAZER, LLP
Certified Public Accountants and Consultants

# As ICE Raids Farms, Who Cares for the Animals?

Dr. Meggan Hain | National Milk Producers Federation

Dairy farming requires long hours of working with animals that need regular feeding, clean, comfortable housing and sometimes medical treatment. It's a job few seek to do; the reality is that the knowledgeable, caring and hard-working farm staff who do this work are largely foreign-born.

ICE raids on agricultural operations are garnering headlines, with a focus on the human toll. As a dairy welfare veterinarian with twenty years of experience working with farms, I watch with a different concern: for the animals these workers are tending.

Law-enforcement interventions on dairy farms represent a real and immediate threat to animal welfare on U.S. dairies, as workers who understand how to properly take care of dairy cattle are taken away, with no immediate replacements. We can debate why immigrants became America's primary animal caregivers or who else could fill that role; the immediate impact of their disappearance is loss for the farms, the farmers, their cattle, and ultimately, every consumer of dairy products.

We've already seen disruptions. In early July, a South Dakota dairy farm lost 40 staff members; the family that owns the farm now must figure out how to care for 7,000 cattle without help. A New Mexico farm in June that lost 11 staff members scrambled to care for their cattle with half their staff.

Losing livestock caretakers harms animals. Mature cattle who in a day will consume up to 100 pounds of feed and 50 gallons of water feel the ill effects of hunger and thirst within 24 hours, sooner in hot summer months. For young calves, going beyond 12 hours without feeding can result in dehydration and illness; going beyond 24 hours can result in death. Staff shortages also makes illness more likely to go undetected or treated, causing unnecessary suffering and death.

Meanwhile, an unmilked dairy cow is an impaired cow. Without milking at least twice a day, pressure in the cow's udder shuts down normal udder functions and can cause great pain for the cow. Cows that go beyond 24 hours without milking have an increased susceptibility to mastitis or a mammary infection. Losing an animal caretaker not only hurts the cows, but also the farm's ability to produce the milk it needs to sell to stay in business.

These are only immediate impacts: They don't even take into account the need for cleaning, building maintenance and all the work involved in keeping cows and their calves healthy.  Nor does it factor in the potential impact to the dairy's next generation due to the lack of knowledgeable caretakers for the most vulnerable populations, the expectant cows and the newborn calves, resulting in higher birth mortality and calves dying from untreated diseases.

Suggested alternatives to immigrant labor pose near-term problems. Replacement native-born workers are scarce and would take years to gain the same herd knowledge and caregiving expertise. Robotic milkers, another suggested solution, takes intense capital investment — and robots won't care for a suffering calf on a cold winter night. Livestock care is a specialized job that requires knowledgeable and caring people: In America today, and for the foreseeable future, the people who have stepped up to care for the animals that provide Americans with safe, affordable nutrition are foreign-born.

President Donald Trump has made several encouraging statements acknowledging the need for foreign-born farm workers. But those words don't seem to have gotten through to the border security apparatus. A truly effective enforcement approach will take on-the-ground realities into account as it protects the border, food supplies — and defenseless animals. The administration should work with the agricultural community and find practical solutions as it pursues a secure border and a stronger America.

It's not just the farmers and consumers who need this. The animals do too. ■

**Dr. Meggan Hain**
nationaldairyfarm.com

# Raising Dairy Heifers, **Developing Leaders**

John O'Connell | University of Idaho

Nayeli and Priscilla Garcia have been following in the footsteps of their grandfather — former Kuna dairy worker Efren Garcia — since they turned 8, routinely seeking his insights on hay market and milk price trends to guide their budgeting.

For several consecutive years, Nayeli, 13, and Priscilla, 16, of Nampa, have raised dairy cows in their grandpa's pasture as participants in an intensive, year-and-a-half-long program open to University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development and Idaho FFA members in the state's southwest region.

Since 1994, Idaho dairymen and other state dairy service providers have collaborated in running the Treasure Valley Dairy Heifer Replacement Program — one of two 4-H programs, along with a program in Magic Valley, teaching youth to raise dairy heifers while educating them about the Idaho dairy industry. Dairy is the largest sector of Idaho's agricultural economy, with a production value of nearly $4 billion in 2024, ranking fourth among U.S. states.

Local dairies involved in the Treasure Valley program sell heifer calves from their herds into a pool. Youth participation is capped at the number of available dairy calves — the 2025 pool includes 19 calves — and interested youth offer their preference of breed and get to choose a calf based on a lottery system. Throughout the process, veterinarians, Extension educators, genetics company workers, hoof trimmers, dairymen and other industry professionals teach the youth relevant skills. The dairy heifers are bred through the program, and most of them are ultimately sold back to local dairies, where they typically remain in milk production for years to come.

## A Family's Dairy Legacy

Nobody has taught the Garcia girls more about caring for dairy animals than their grandpa, Efren.

"Sometimes we don't make any money, but it's OK because you make a lot of memories," Efren said. "I never miss a show because it's important for me to see the kids showing these animals. They know I'm in the bleachers watching."

Based on the knowledge she's gained about dairy cow health, Priscilla, who is president of the Kaveman Kritters 4-H club in Nampa, plans to pursue a career as a large-animal veterinarian, after serving in the military. She's currently taking high school zoology and agriculture classes for college credit.

"I've always just had a heart for dairy heifers because of how nice they are and how calm they are," Priscilla said. "I love these animals. All the heifers I've gotten, they've just been such sweethearts to me."

As a novice in the Dairy Heifer Replacement Program, Priscilla beat out much older youth to win grand champion. She's earned the award several times in the ensuing years, often facing the stiffest competition from her younger sister.

The girls' mother, Maricela Garcia, serves on a 14-member Dairy Heifer Replacement Program steering committee, comprising 4-H leaders, Extension educators, FFA advisors, dairymen, parents, agricultural teachers and others.

Maricela has watched her daughters grow in confidence, become more responsible, improve financial management skills and learn good sportsmanship through the 4-H program.

"I also grew up showing 4-H animals since I was 8 years old," Maricela said. "I'm grateful my dad has the land so they can have the same opportunity."

## Raising a Dairy Heifer

Prior to being accepted into the program, a steering committee member visits the site where each youth applicant plans to raise his or her animal to make sure the accommodations are adequate.

"Last year, we had two kids whose heifers were housed at a 4-H advisor's property," said Cheyanne Fisher, a UI Extension 4-H educator based in Canyon County, who serves on the program committee.

The heifer calves are born in September or October.



Youth pick their calf at a selection-day event, hosted in April at the Treasure Valley Auction facility in Caldwell. The selection event also includes presentations on animal nutrition, the ideal shape of a dairy cow, halter breaking, proper feeding techniques and breeding for desirable traits.

In November, participants bring their heifers — now over a year old — to M&M Feedlot in Parma for Reproduction Day. Each animal is weighed and vaccinated and left in the facility's care for a couple of months to be artificially inseminated under a veterinarian's care. Select Sires donates bull semen, and the youth get to pick a good bull to match with their heifer from a catalog. Dairies planning to buy their heifer back during the program's concluding sale, hosted in late August at the Western Idaho Fair in Boise, often aid the youth in choosing a bull.

If a heifer is not pregnant following three attempts at artificial insemination, she is paired with a live bull to be naturally inseminated.

In May, participants with pregnant cows have the status of their bred heifer's pregnancy evaluated. For participants who just chose their calf in April, the clinic offers lessons on calf care such as hoof trimming.

At this stage — a few months before the sale of the prior year's projects — the Garcia girls typically own two heifers each.

Youth are required to show their heifer in June at Meridian Dairy Days, as well as at their local county fair and at the Western Idaho Fair.

Dairy Days, a century-old tradition, awards tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships to 4-H and FFA youth entering agricultural fields and supports 4-H groups attending national conferences. Furthermore, Dairy Days adds $100 onto the sale price of each Replacement Program heifer sold at the Western Idaho Fair.

Hans Bruijn, a former dairyman who serves on the heifer replacement program committee, manages the premium office for the Western Idaho Fair and serves on the Meridian Dairy Board.

"Without the Heifer Replacement Program, I don't think Meridian Dairy Days would have a dairy show," Bruijn said. "About 85% to 90% of the cattle in the show at Dairy Days are part of the Heifer Replacement Program."

Without the Idaho dairy industry's support, Fisher believes the Heifer Replacement Program wouldn't be possible. Fisher intends to invite Idaho dairymen, state agricultural entities and officials involved in Idaho agriculture to an advisory meeting in January to gather feedback on how to improve and grow the program into the future.

"Your dairy projects are being raised to go into a production system, where hopefully they can last for seven, eight or nine years," Fisher said. "This program gives kids the opportunity to be a part of agriculture and know there is so much to it. I don't think kids truly know the career opportunities unless they are raised in agriculture."

For more information about the program or how to apply, email inquiries to Canyon@uidaho.edu. ■

**John O'Connell**
joconnell@uidaho.edu

IDAHO IDA dairymen's association
195 River Vista Place
Suite #308
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**NOVEMBER 4** DAIRY WEST/ IDPC/ IDA BOARD MEETINGS - *Boise, ID*
**NOVEMBER 5-6** DAIRY WEST/ IDA ANNUAL MEETING - *Boise, ID*
**NOVEMBER 10-12** DMI/ NMPF ANNUAL MEETING - *Arlington, TX*