

Idaho Dairy Focus

Idaho Dairymen's
Association - Spring 2026





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

Contents

- 4 **A Message From Rick Naerebout**
Rick Naerebout | Idaho Dairywomen's Association
- 5 **State Legislative Update**
Bob Naerebout & Jamie Neill | Idaho Dairywomen's Association
- 7 **Idaho Dairy Industry PAC Update**
Jamie Neill & David Claiborne | Idaho Dairy Industry PAC
- 9 **Federal Policy Update**
Charlie Garrison | Idaho Dairywomen's Association
- 11 **PNWDRC Awards Research Grant**
Megan Satterwhite & April Leytem | Pacific Northwest Dairy Research Consortium
- 12 **Idaho Beef Council Launches BQA Continuing Education Program**
Tatum Sitz | Idaho Beef Council
- 13 **FARM Shares Animal Care Program Progress**
Beverly Hampton Phifer | FARM Animal Care
- 15 **The Middle East - Missiles and Milk**
Dustin Winston | StoneX Group
- 16 **Unlocking the Potential of Small Grain Forage in Your Rotation**
Tanya Hibler | HD Forage
- 18 **We've Probably Hit Peak Cheese, but Everything Feels Okay**
Colin Kadis | Ever.Ag
- 20 **Margin Management Topics for Idaho Dairy Producers**
Chip Whalen | Commodity & Ingredient Hedging
- 23 **Palmer Amaranth in the Pacific Northwest and How the Industry Can Help**
Albert Adjesiwor & Nora Olsen | University of Idaho
- 26 **Dairywomen at the Capitol: Legislative Banquet and Leadership Meetings**
Riley Barney | Idaho Dairywomen's Association

A Message from Rick Naerebout

Idaho Dairymen,

We are just coming out of the most contentious and difficult legislative session Bob and I have experienced in the 24 years we have represented you in Boise. Bills targeting our foreign-born workforce were the top issues of the session. IDA stood steadfast in our defense of your businesses, your workers and their families, resulting in dairymen being referred to as ‘slave owners’, ‘evil’, and countless other derogatory terms by sitting Republican legislators.

First, hats off to Bob Naerebout, Jamie Neill, and David Claiborne for their efforts in representing IDA and our members so masterfully during the 2026 legislative session. None of the hardline bills intended to harm dairymen, our workers and their families made it through to law. A special thank-you to all the fellow aggies and business-oriented organizations that joined our efforts. IDA is also grateful for the dairy producers who took time to engage with legislators throughout the session. Hearing from a constituent is always valuable. The last week of session was intense, but our coalition stood together to withstand an onslaught from the far right.

Second, please pay close attention to the State Legislative Update and IDI PAC articles in this edition. What happened in Boise this year demonstrates that the Idaho we all know and love is in danger. Idaho’s primary is May 19th. Idaho’s House has demonstrated, with its votes, that it no longer has a majority that supports agriculture. Idaho’s Senate holds a majority, by only 1-2 senators, that demonstrate with their votes that they support agriculture. Your vote on May 19th matters more than ever on who represents you in Idaho’s Legislature and if they will be someone that truly understands and appreciates Idaho agriculture. Take the time to vote and make sure all those around you vote, because the success of your ag business quite literally depends on it!



Rick Naerebout
CEO, Idaho Dairymen’s Association





State Legislative Update

Bob Naerebout & Jamie Neill | Idaho Dairymen's Association

The Idaho Legislature adjourned Sine Die on April 2, 2026 marking an end to one of the most politically charged sessions in recent history.

Fending of Attacks on the Agriculture Workforce

For those that subscribed to the weekly updates, you know that attacks on the foreign-born workforce were a hot issue in the Idaho Legislature. The primary threat came from immigration hardliners pushing a series of aggressive proposals. These included mandating E-Verify for private employers, revoking business licenses for noncompliance, and imposing jail time on employers for not using E-verify. Additional proposals sought to require nationality screening in healthcare, public education, and law enforcement interactions, exert state-level control over local law enforcement practices, and even criminalize charitable efforts by churches and food banks.

In response, IDA worked alongside a broad coalition of industry partners, including law enforcement, charities and churches, hospitality, construction, and other commodity groups to successfully push back. Ultimately, not a single hardline proposal was adopted into law. This outcome came despite significant pressure to pursue a dairy-specific carveout at the expense of other industry partners. Instead, dairy held the line and stood alongside its partners.

This issue is certainly not going away, but IDA will remain committed to protecting the people who help you maintain and build your family run businesses.

Milk Quality Testing Legislation – Signed into Law

IDA was successful in advancing legislation to improve the process for milk quality testing related to all

analyses. The legislation passed unanimously in both chambers and the Governor signed the bill into law. IDA is grateful to Rep. John VanderWoude for carrying the legislation on the House side and Sen. Lori Den Hartog and Sen. Julie Van Orden for moving the bill on the Senate side.

The next step will be to follow the rulemaking process through the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. You can read more about the bill here: [Analysis-H662-Milk-and-Cream-Testing.pdf](#)

Protein Bar Legislation Stalls

One of the IDA priorities this session was to help a coalition of food groups clarify what is allowed to be purchased in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Specifically related to dairy, protein bars were unintentionally excluded from the program after legislation passed in 2025 that banned candy and soda products from SNAP. Two bills were introduced to correct this oversight. Unfortunately, both stalled on the House floor and the legislation did not advance.

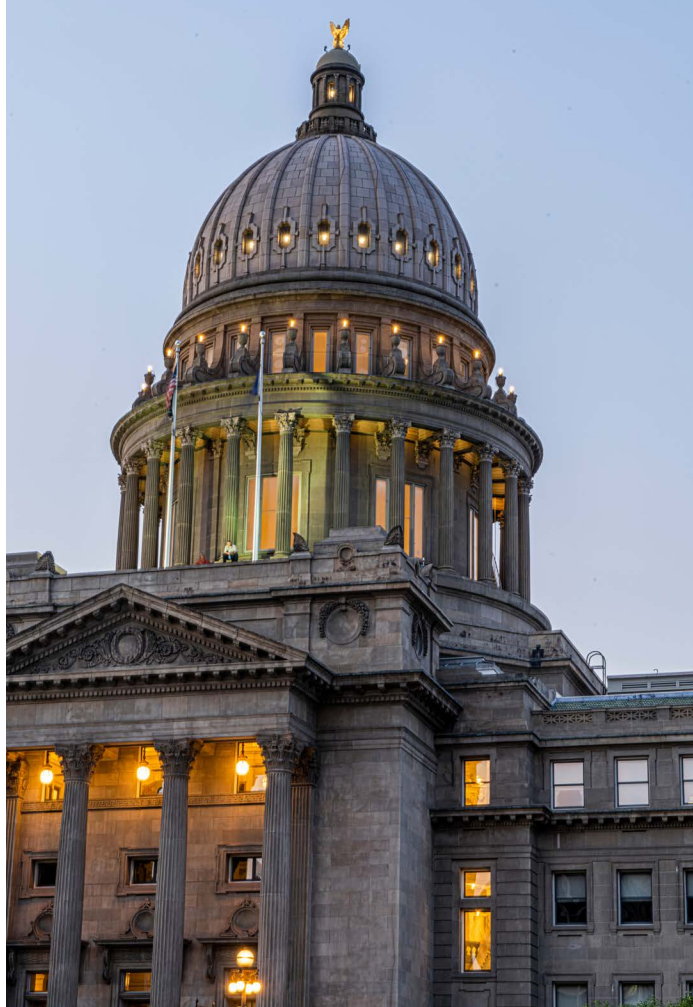
IDA appreciates the work done by other interested groups such as the Idaho Retailers Association, National Grocers Association, International Dairy Foods Association, and the Intermountain Milk Processors Association. IDA looks forward to addressing this issue in 2027.

Water Funding

An issue that is normally hotly debated in the Idaho Legislature is water policy and water funding. In dry years like 2026, we know that our investments in water infrastructure projects are needed now more than ever.

However, the ongoing \$30 million for water funding went largely unnoticed this year as the Department of Water Resources maintenance budget became law without much of a fight. This is due in large part to the 2025 legislative session which worked hard to pass this policy into effect via HB 445. This funding is critical to build more storage capacity through aquifer recharge, raising dams, and more.

Nevertheless, legislators in the Magic Valley continue to oppose funding for water infrastructure as seen in their votes (HB 445, SCR 118). The Idaho Dairymen's Association continues to be frustrated by Senators Glenneda Zuiderveld and Josh Kohl, and Representatives Clint Hostetler and David Leavitt for their hardline stance against funding for water projects.



Betty's Bill!

As many of you have followed this session, a bright spot has been Cedar Ridge Dairy's very own Betty Grandy who carried H 652 into law. The legislation (now a law!) creates an official state sport for Idaho, which is now hunting.

A special thanks goes to Governor Brad Little, Representatives Don Hall and Grayson Stone, and Senator Treg Bernt for all their help to make this a reality.

Thanks to Betty Grandy for showing us all that our future is so bright! You can see Betty in action here: [Hunting could become Idaho's state sport thanks to a fourth grade girl](#) ■

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Idaho Dairy Industry PAC Update

Jamie Neill and David Claiborne | Idaho Dairy Industry PAC

As we draw closer to May 19th (don't forget to vote!) – the playing field is set for the primary election. The Idaho Dairy Industry PAC has been very engaged in supporting candidates who support agriculture. You can view that list on page 8.

This election is perhaps the most critical election we have had in Idaho as it relates to agriculture. Particularly in the Magic Valley, we have current legislators who are not supportive of water infrastructure, funding for law enforcement, and continually place attacks on our workforce.

Perhaps most startling, this session there was a coordinated attack on agriculture and specifically the dairy industry. A big government federal e-verify mandate came too close to comfort from passing both House and Senate. We need a better a Legislature.

If you want to get in the fight – please consider contributing to the IDI PAC. You can mail a check to the address below or donate online with the QR code or by the following link: <https://bit.ly/IDI-PAC>

Idaho Dairy Industry PAC
1101 W. River Street, Suite 110
Boise, ID 83702



Meet the Candidates

If you are interested in attending any upcoming fundraisers or meet and greets, please see the details below:

April 16 | 4:00-6:00 PM | The Arid Club - Boise
Gov. Brad Little, Gov. Butch Otter, and Gov. Dirk Kempthorne are hosting a fundraiser for **Senator Jim Guthrie**. Senator Mike Crapo and Congressman Mike Simpson will also be in attendance. If you plan on attending or have questions, please RSVP to brad@bradlittleforidaho.com. There is a suggested contribution of \$1,000 made out to Guthrie for Idaho.

April 25 | 12:00-5:00 PM | Mountain View Event Center – Pocatello

Local farmers and ranchers are hosting an appreciation BBQ for district 28 legislators running for reelection, including **Senator Jim Guthrie, Rep. Rick Cheatum, and Rep. Dan Garner**. Come meet the candidates and hear their priorities and if you live in the area, consider grabbing a yard sign. If you have questions about this event, please contact idahoforagricutlre@gmail.com.

April 30 | 4:00-6:00 PM | 1956 E 3500 N Filer, ID

The Idaho Dairy Industry PAC and the Idaho Potato PAC invite you to a fundraising reception for **Governor Brad Little** with District 24 and 25 legislative candidates, including **Brent Reinke, Alexandra Caval, Casey Swensen, and Cherie Vollmer, and Grayson Stone**. There is a suggested contribution of \$250 made out to Brad Little for Governor. If you have questions about this event, please contact Idairypac@gmail.com. ■

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David Claiborne
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IDI PAC Endorsements

(Current as of April 2026)

Statewide Officials

Brad Little | R | Governor
Scott Bedke | R | Lieutenant Governor
Phil McGrane | R | Secretary of State
Debbie Critchfield | R | Superintendent of Public Instruction
Brandon Woolf | R | State Controller

District 1

Jim Woodward | R | Senator
Mark Sauter | R | Representative
Chuck Lowman | R | Representative*

District 4

Christa Hazel | R | Representative*

District 6

Lori McCann | R | Senator*
Cindy Agidius | R | Representative*

District 7

Michael Collins | R | Representative*

District 8

Megan Blanksma | R | Senator
Brian Beckley | R | Representative*

District 9

John C. Shirts | R | Representative
Judy Boyle | R | Representative

District 10

Mike Moyle | R | Representative

District 11

Camille Blaylock | R | Senator
Debbie Geyer | R | Representative*
Carlos Hernandez | R | Representative*

District 12

Ben Adams | R | Senator
Jeff Cornilles | R | Representative

District 13

Kody Daffer | R | Representative*

District 14

Scott Grow | R | Senator

District 19

Sonia Galaviz | D | Senator

District 20

Russ Spencer | R | Senator
James Holtzclar | R | Representative

District 21

Treg A. Bernt | R | Senator
James Petzke | R | Representative

District 22

Lori Den Hartog | R | Senator
Jason Monks | R | Representative
Kelly Walton | R | Representative*

District 23

Todd Lakey | R | Senator
Shawn R. Dygert | R | Representative
Melissa Durrant | R | Representative*

District 24

Brent Reinke | R | Senator*
Alex Caval | R | Representative*
Steve Miller | R | Representative

District 25

Casey Swensen | R | Senator*
Grayson Stone | R | Representative*
Cherie Vollmer | R | Representative*

District 26

Mike Pohanka | R | Representative

District 27

Kelly Anthon | R | Senator
Douglas T. Pickett | R | Representative
Clay Handy | R | Representative

District 28

Jim Guthrie | R | Senator
Richard Cheatum | R | Representative
Dan Garner | R | Representative

District 29

Dustin W. Manwaring | R | Representative

District 30

Julie VanOrden | R | Senator
Ben G. Fuhriman | R | Representative

District 31

Van T. Burtenshaw | R | Senator
Jerald Raymond | R | Representative
Rod Furniss | R | Representative

District 32

Kevin J. Cook | R | Senator
Stephanie Mickelsen | R | Representative
Erin Bingham | R | Representative

District 33

Dave Lent | R | Senator
Marco Erickson | R | Representative

District 34

Jon O. Weber | R | Representative
Britt Raybould | R | Representative

District 35

Mark Harris | R | Senator
Mike Veile | R | Representative
Joshua Wheeler | R | Representative

Twin Falls County Assessor

Brad Wills | R |

Twin Falls County Clerk

Kristina Glascock | R |

* Indicates a new candidate rather than an incumbent

Federal Policy Update

Charlie Garrison | Idaho Dairymen's Association

Farm Bill Takes a Step Forward

The Agriculture Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives passed its Farm Bill with a bipartisan vote of 34-17. Seven of the Democrats on the committee voted in favor of the bill along with all 27 Republicans.

The bill includes expansion of the dairy nutrition incentives in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that rewards program participants with the ability to buy extra dairy products when they also purchase fresh fruit and vegetables. The bill would also add yogurt and other cultured dairy products to go along with cheese and full-fat milk in the proposed Dairy Nutrition Incentive Projects. The bill also reauthorizes the Dairy Promotion and Research Program and the Dairy Indemnity Program and would move the Food for Peace Program to the USDA. Federal milk market order changes for regulated areas of the country include permanent

authorization of mandatory cost surveys to ensure make allowances reflect current dairy product manufacturing costs and permanent reauthorization of the Dairy Forward Pricing Program.

The House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill also includes significant new funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The bill also maintains the percentage of EQIP funds dedicated to livestock operations. On international trade issues, the committee's bill includes investments in critical ag export promotion programs and international food aid initiatives that include U.S. dairy in the products they supply to program participants. The bill also weighs in on protecting our ability to use common food names when marketing products internationally. It encourages U.S. trade negotiators to emphasize protections for common food names in all agreements with our trading partners.



The timing for the Farm Bill to go to the floor of the full House of Representatives is still being worked out. There are partisan differences over SNAP restrictions that Republicans included in the “Working Families Tax Cuts Act” aka “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” from last summer. Corn growers and ethanol interests are also still looking for year-round E15 to be mandated. Committee Chairman Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (R-PA) is also reportedly considering about \$15 billion in additional emergency financial assistance for farmers struggling with high input costs and low commodity prices.

USDA Rolls Out “One Farmer, One File”

In a major move to modernize the experience farmers have when accessing USDA programs, USDA Secretary Brooke L. Rollins announced recently the development of a new digital portal for Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA). The intent is the creation of a single, streamlined record that follows the farmer anywhere they go in the USDA system.

Secretary Rollins recently pointed out that USDA’s Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area currently runs on over 500 separate outdated systems, is managed by more than 1,000 contractors and costs taxpayers over \$1 billion every year for FPAC IT alone. When this new system is fully operational, producers will be able to access their USDA data in a single, modern, secure system built to today’s cybersecurity standards.

The first phase of this multi-year initiative has proven successful. The Farmer Bridge Assistance Program, which is providing \$11 billion in assistance for crop farmers, was implemented with the new digital system. Acceptance by producers was quick as signup in the first few days far outpaced past programs.

The USDA also plans to modernize the acreage reporting system with an advanced platform that will allow farmers to file faster and easier. The goal over the next two years is to capture all the ways farmers interact with USDA which will give agency personnel the ability to prefill applications and recommend programs and assistance.

The Department announcement was quick to note

that USDA will always offer in-person support, paper applications and traditional acreage reporting. It will not be a requirement that farmers digitize.

Ag Labor Reform

Several bills dealing with immigration reform in one fashion or another have been introduced in this session of Congress. A few would be very helpful to Idaho dairy producers who have struggled without a visa program to access foreign-born workers for decades. Thankfully, members of the Idaho congressional delegation, Mike Simpson, Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, have consistently been willing to be helpful on the most serious issue facing dairy farmers in the state.

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act has been reintroduced in the House of Representatives with Congressman Mike Simpson as an original cosponsor again. A bill known as the DIGNITY Act has been introduced with bipartisan support. That bill would offer a seven-year transition to legal work status for current workers across the economy with the payment of a \$7,000 penalty over the transition period. Yet another House bill would cap the H-2A program at 400,000 visas, about the same number of applications approved last year. A bill introduced recently in the U.S. Senate would codify changes to the wage structure in the H-2A program in a rule issued by the Trump Administration last fall.

A bipartisan bill from the House Agriculture Committee is expected to be released soon. Indications are that the bill will address the future labor needs of non-seasonal agriculture like dairies, make several reforms to the H-2A program regarding a streamlined application process, the wage structure and some flexibility on the housing requirement, and offer the chance for current workers to adjust status and stay in their jobs. IDA will continue to work with the state’s congressional delegation to try to get a workable legislative solution to the Ag labor crisis across the finish line as soon as possible. ■

Charlie Garrison

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PNWDRC Awards Research Grant

Megan Satterwhite & April Leytem | Pacific Northwest Dairy Research Consortium

The Pacific Northwest Dairy Research Consortium (PNWDRC) Producer Advisory Committee has selected a grant awardee to fund one research project led by Dr. Gilbert Miito (University of Idaho) and Dr. Matt Yost (Utah State University). Miito and Yost will serve as the Principal Investigators for the project with support from other UI and ARS personnel.

The project is titled Sustainable Dairy Forage, Manure and Water Management Strategies in the Arid West. This multi-institutional project involving the University of Idaho, Utah State University, and USDA-ARS aims to quantify how irrigation, manure management, and forage cropping systems interact to influence reactive nitrogen losses, nitrogen and water use efficiency, and forage productivity and quality.

Field trials at sites in Idaho and Utah will test innovative cropping and manure management strategies under varying irrigation regimes, including interseeded corn-alfalfa rotations and deficit irrigation, while monitoring nitrogen fluxes, soil moisture, and agronomic performance. The research will generate datasets for crop and environmental modeling, with the goal of developing management practices that minimize nitrogen losses and enhance resource efficiency without compromising yield or quality. Findings will be shared with stakeholders through extension programs, providing actionable recommendations to improve the sustainability of Western dairy forage systems.

The project was selected from a very competitive pool of six applicants submitted by research institutions from across the Pacific Northwest. All proposals were first reviewed by consortium staff, followed by an external scientific review panel. The final funding decision was made by the Producer Advisory Committee after their review of the applications.

The PNWDRC was formed in 2025 with the objective of serving as a regional hub for dairy researchers to collaborate and conduct meaningful research specific to western dairy production practices. Under the leadership of Megan Satterwhite of the Idaho Dairymen's Association and Dr. April Leytem, the consortium is structured to ensure research

investments align directly with producer priorities. The Producer Advisory Committee plays a critical role in guiding funding decisions, reinforcing the consortium's commitment to relevant, economically feasible, and practical outcomes for dairy operations across the region.

Funding for this project was provided by Dairy West, ensuring producer checkoff dollars are directed toward research that delivers meaningful and applicable outcomes for the dairy industry.

Project updates and findings will be shared as the research progresses. For additional information about the Pacific Northwest Dairy Research Consortium or this project, please contact Megan Satterwhite or April Leytem. ■

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April Leytem
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Idaho Beef Council Launches BQA Continuing Education Program

Tatum Sitz | Idaho Beef Council

The Idaho Beef Council (IBC) is proud to offer a flexible and forward-thinking Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Continuing Education (CE) Program, designed to better serve Idaho's certified producers and industry partners.

Developed in response to producer feedback and the evolving needs of Idaho's cattle industry, producers may renew their BQA certification beginning immediately after their initial certification and up to one year past their expiration date with the CE program. To recertify, participants must complete a total of three CE credits through a combination of approved online and in-person trainings. Once three credits are earned, certification is renewed for an additional three-year period.

Producers can earn CE credits online through the National BQA Learning Center and in person by Idaho industry professionals. These modules are automatically recorded in the national BQA database upon completion, making the process seamless and efficient. A current BQA certification is required to access online CE courses. Available topics include Principles of Stockmanship, Biosecurity, Foundations of Herd Health, Herd Health Management Practices, Basics of Facility Design, Back to BQA Basics, Calf Care and Quality Assurance (CCQA), and BQA Transportation courses for farmers, ranchers, and professional drivers. Most online modules are worth one credit, while transportation courses offer two credits, with one transportation course allowed per recertification cycle.

In addition to online learning, IBC approves select in-person trainings that expand upon BQA principles. These may include Idaho Continuing Education specific BQA sessions, transportation trainings, Secure Beef Supply programs, Beef Schools, and other pre-approved industry events. Credit is awarded based on instructional time: approximately 50–60 minutes equals one credit, 100–120 minutes equals two credits, and 150–180 minutes equals three credits. Each CE credit requires a minimum 10-question assessment with an 80 percent passing score. Attendance rosters are verified and uploaded by IBC staff to the national database.

All CE content must build upon foundational BQA principles, remain science-based and evidence-driven, and include clear learning objectives. Trainings reinforce key pillars such as herd health, biosecurity, stockmanship, transportation, worker safety, and environmental stewardship.

To begin earning your CE credits, follow these easy steps:

1. Login to your Beef Quality Assurance profile online at BQA.BeefLearningCenter.org.
2. Hover over "Course Catalog" then click "Continuing Education Courses" tab in the top left corner of the site.
3. Select your desired CE course.

By combining national online resources with Idaho-specific in-person education, the Idaho BQA CE Program maintains high standards while offering relevant, practical recertification pathways—strengthening producer knowledge and reinforcing Idaho's leadership in animal care, beef quality, and consumer confidence.

For more information, visit IdahoBeefQuality.com, email BeefCouncil@IDBeef.org or call (208) 376-6004. ■

Tatum Sitz
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FARM Shares Animal Care Program Progress

Beverly Hampton Phifer | FARM Animal Care

The National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Animal Care Program, in partnership with ACER Consulting, in January released its Animal Care Version 4.0 Data Highlights report related to evaluation results highlighting on-farm practices across U.S. dairy herds.

The report summarizes aggregate anonymized national data on the characteristics of participating herds, presents performance measures on each Animal Care Program standard under Version 4, and highlights key strengths and areas for improvement.

A total of 25,101 second-party evaluations were conducted during the Version 4 cycle, starting January 2020 through June 2024, representing 7,839,305 lactating cows across the country.

Farms performed strongly across a majority of standards such as antibiotic stewardship, calf nutrition and care, non-ambulatory animal care, euthanasia and outcomes-based herd health

indicators.

- Over 92% of farms met all antibiotic stewardship requirements, demonstrating consistent, responsible treatment practices.
- More than 91% had protocols meeting standards for timely colostrum feeding, appropriate milk or replacer, starter feed and consistently clean water access for calves.
- 95% of farms had protocols that met standards for humane movement, prompt medical treatment, appropriate shelter and segregation of non-ambulatory animals.
- 95% met standards for clear criteria of consistent methods and proper carcass disposal approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association and/or the American Association of Bovine Practitioners.
- Most herds met thresholds for body condition, locomotion and hock/knee health.

A second-party evaluation is an external assessment

of on-farm animal care practices for a participating dairy farm facility based on the FARM Program guidelines. Facilities participating in the Animal Care Program must undergo a second-party evaluation at least once every three years.

Version 4 affirmed the program area's commitment to excellent animal care with clearer requirements, mandatory documentation, expanded animal-based measures and structured corrective action plans to improve consistency and accountability. The FARM Animal Care Program develops animal care standards that are science- and outcomes-based and facility- and size-neutral. FARM program cycles undergo a review and revision period every three years.

Each FARM program area has its own respective task force to assess, consider and update program standards and guidance. The program also widely solicits input from other farmers, scientists and additional dairy stakeholders through mechanisms like public comment periods, town hall meetings and more. Final recommendations are subject to approval by the National Milk Producers Federation's Board of Directors.

The FARM Program had extended its previous version cycles by 18 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The current Animal Care version cycle, Version 5, was released in July 2024. Version 2028 will launch in January 2028 to reconcile the previous extension.

The National Dairy FARM Animal Care Program continues to identify areas for advancing animal welfare centered on science and best practices. The program area helps to demonstrate dairy farmers' commitment to providing excellent care of their dairy cattle and producing safe, wholesome milk. To learn more, please visit nationaldairyfarm.com. ■

Beverly Hampton Phifer
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The Middle East – Missiles and Milk

Dustin Winston | StoneX Group

If you weren't aware, on the final day of February this year the U.S. and Israel began targeted missile and air strikes on Iran, and Iran followed with counter-attacks which included an announcement that they would attack any ship in the Strait of Hormuz. We don't know what the outcome will be in the conflict but we do know there is an impact on dairy trade through the region.

In previous events where transportation issues occurred in the region, shipping was forced to divert around Africa which adds considerable time. Now when it comes to the direct impact to the dairy industry, our best estimate is that roughly 6% of global dairy trade passes through the Strait. As long as shipping remains at a standstill in the region there is a very real impact to the dairy industry. About 54% of the dairy imports coming through the straight are from the EU while 34% came from New Zealand during 2025.

The second complication is exports out of Iran, a significant exporter in the area. They export a respectable amount of SMP, cheese, and butter. Looking at the destinations for Iranian product, 89% of it goes to countries that share a land border with Iran and most of the rest goes to countries that share a border with those countries. Iran's exports are extremely regional with most of it likely moving over land instead of ocean freight. However, the government has suspended exports of all food and agricultural products to ensure an adequate supply of food inside of Iran. For now, the export ban removes additional product from the regional supply chain.

There are other indirect impacts to the industry with this issue as well. Higher energy prices could stoke inflation causing central banks to raise rates and slow economic growth which would be negative for dairy demand globally. A lot of fertilizer is exported through the Strait of Hormuz and prices have spiked with product trapped in the Gulf. If that leads to less fertilizer used or significantly higher input costs for farmers that could change yields or the mix of what crops get planted which would eventually impact milk production and dairy prices. And there are probably

a dozen other possible ways the conflict could impact things going forward that I'm not smart enough to think of right now.

All-in-all, as long as trade through the Strait of Hormuz is restricted, the net impact to global dairy demand is likely negative. That might be masked initially by logistics chaos and just-in-case stockpiling, but if trade remains restricted for a few months it should be bearish for dairy prices.

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. ■

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Unlocking the Potential of Small Grain Forage in Your Rotation

Tanya Hibler | HD Forage

Are you underutilizing small grain forage in your rotation? All crops have made great genetic advancements with selective plant breeding in the last 10 years. Perhaps you are overlooking the gains made in the small grain space and are unintentionally ignoring the potential available to your operation.

In last ten years, dairies in the western United States have begun to capture more and more value of small grain forages in their rotations. The double crop scenario with small grains and corn is an exceptional way to produce feed. Motivation for a double crop rotation has changed over time. In the past the goal may have been tonnage. Period. Then the advantage was nutrient uptake, and it was

factored in. Goals have shifted to focus on a forage that is high in digestible fiber but knowing how to get there can be challenging. Yield goals, harvest timing, feed quality parameters, and nutrient removal should all be factored into the decision of which seed best fits your rotation.

When double cropping, you need to look at early maturing varieties. Dairymen don't have time to wait for the grain to mature into June at the cost of corn silage. It doesn't make sense when the opportunity to plant early maturing varieties exists, especially high-quality ones. Don't get caught in the cycle of late planting due to late harvests.

Really the options are endless. Hybrid-rye matures



5-8 days ahead of the earliest triticale varieties. It will provide great yield and quality when harvested at the right time. However, quality doesn't stick around after the head emerges from the boot stage and will have the tightest harvest window. Hybrid-rye is the most drought tolerant. It performs exceptionally well in the driest years.

Barley will mature 3-5 days ahead of the earliest triticale varieties. Barley is the most salt tolerant and makes it a great fit for fields with lagoon water applications. Barley will have great forage quality and yields are average amongst the types of small grain forages. Some barley varieties are wimpy in the cold and best in more moderate weather.

Wheat, while always having the best quality, will be later maturing. It's hardy and can handle a cold winter... if we ever have one!

Triticale has little to offer when it comes to forage quality, however it makes up for it with tonnage. Most triticale varieties are the latest maturing with a few exceptions.

All of this to say: The ability to mix and match small grain types and varieties can allow you to meet any of the goals you set for your crop rotation. The key is to have accurate knowledge about each seed product to help inform the decisions being made.

As you harvest your small grain forage this spring, take the opportunity to reflect on previous efforts and outcomes. Where is there room for improvement? Did you reach the goals you set? What factors have you not considered when selecting your seed? Think about what questions you have and what considerations would help you develop goals for next year.

HD Forage is a seed business selecting ideal, standout seed genetics and accompanying agronomy expertise to provide farmers with the information to best utilize each variety. We employ on farm variety trials to help select the best options for each farm's goals and logistical abilities, fully customizing seed options to the needs of the farm. HD Forage was born in the high desert, standing for highly digestible and high density, with products tailored to western agriculture.

Our expertise has opened the door for farms utilizing small grain forages in double crop scenarios to fully capture the quality potential of the feed grown on their fields. We have witnessed a disconnect between the important players on the dairy farm

and have worked to reconnect those pieces. Our work has demonstrated the interplay between farm management and forage quality to put more milk in the tank. We pride ourselves on the expertise we have to offer and would love to share our experiences and support the dairymen of Idaho. ■

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We've Probably Hit Peak Cheese, but Everything Feels Surprisingly Okay

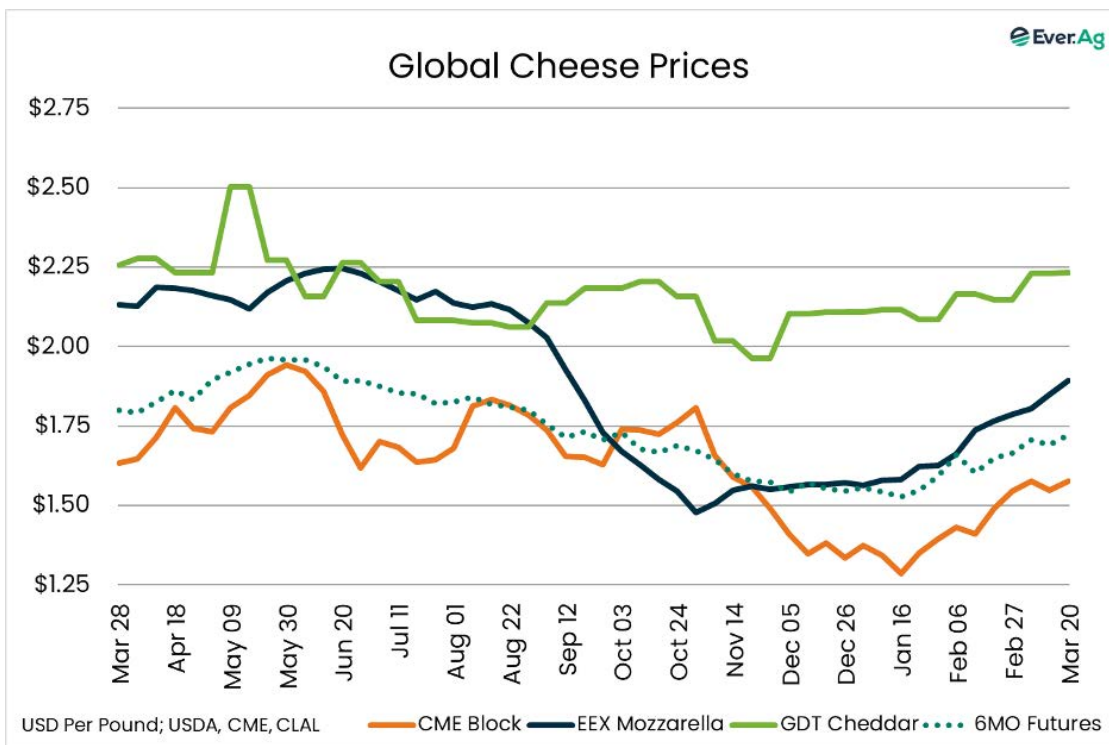
Colin Kadis | Ever.Ag

If you've been paying any attention to US dairy market dynamics over the past few years, you're well aware of the incredible growth in cheese processing. Since 2023, we estimate that the US has increased cheese processing capacity by around 20 million pounds of milk per day - and that's cheese processing alone. Assuming 80 pounds of milk per cow per day, that's 250,000 cows' worth of cheese capacity over a three-year period.

Naturally, as risk managers for a lot of dairymen who are paid on cheese and Class III pricing, we have been concerned about this additional cheese processing and potential impacts to on-farm profitability. Our concerns have been valid - we've seen cheese prices fall below profitable levels for many dairymen four times in the past three years - but the worst seems to finally be behind us. By our estimations, the highest level of cheese production happened sometime in Q1 2026, and there are no major cheese expansions on the horizon.

One might expect that peak cheese production would mean low cheese prices, and we did see spot cheese values in the \$1.20s per pound. That's just about as low as cheese prices can go, but currently cheese is priced nearly 30 cents higher. Despite historical expansion in capacity and milk production, international consumers seem to be punching above their weight and keeping prices elevated.

If the US is producing more cheese than the domestic market can consume, and we require cheese exports to clear our market, a safe assumption is that the floor on our cheese price is 25 to 30 cents below the European cheese price. At the end of 2025, this meant catastrophic prices for US dairymen. With EEX Mozzarella now trading in the high \$1.80-range, US cheese is likely to find support at \$1.50 - a price that dairymen might not love, but it is far better than the \$1.20s we saw earlier this year.





If European cheese prices continue to move higher, expect that US prices may find additional support and follow suit. If European cheese prices start to move lower, it will likely take a rapid expansion in US cheese demand or a decrease in milk supply (and thus cheese supply) for high prices to return.

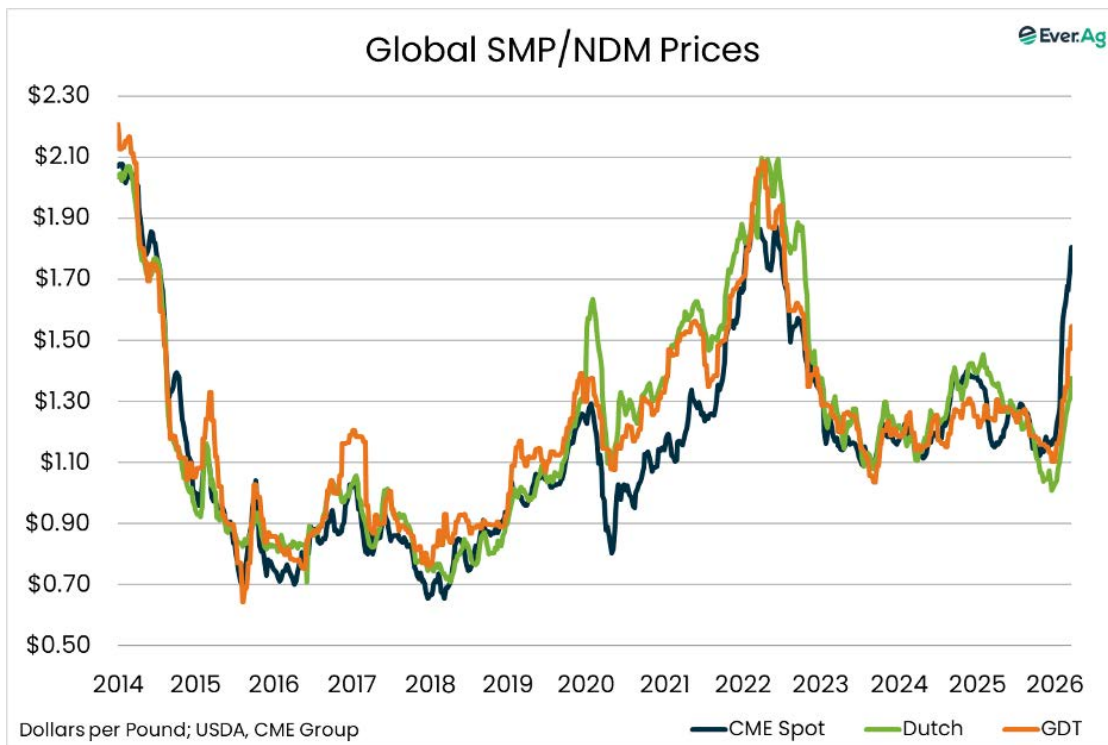
Also noteworthy for some dairymen may be the Class IV and nonfat dry milk market. Domestic prices are currently off to the races and sharply higher than our counterparts in New Zealand or Europe. This is a rare sight, given that our product often misses benefits such as “grass-fed” premiums and is typically about three cents cheaper on international markets. US prices are currently at about a 30-cent premium to rest of world prices. This rarely happens and often only when there are domestic production issues.

It is beginning to feel as though the worst prices for

2026 may already be behind us, but keep your eyes on activity abroad. International markets will likely hold the key to US price changes going forward. ■

The risk of loss trading commodity futures and options can be substantial. Investors should carefully consider the inherent risks in light of their financial condition. The information contained herein has been obtained from sources to be reliable, however, no independent verification has been made. The information contained herein is strictly the opinion of its author and not necessarily of Ever.Ag and is intended to be a solicitation. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

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Margin Management Topics for Idaho Dairy Producers

Chip Whalen | Commodity & Ingredient Hedging

As a new contributor to Idaho Dairy Focus, we are excited to share insights on how we help dairy producers both in Idaho and across the U.S. manage the price risk associated with their operations. For those readers not familiar with Commodity & Ingredient Hedging (CIH), our approach is to focus on the overall margin of the business, taking both revenues and input costs together and treating them as a single unit of risk. While this does not necessarily mean that we manage these independent variables of profitability the same way, they are always considered in tandem when making price management decisions and executing strategies to protect margins. We do this by taking an objective approach and looking at the unique characteristics of each operation as margins vary across different dairies, even within the same geographic region. Using a combination of proprietary technology, in-depth education, and customized strategies, we help identify and manage the net margin of the business looking out a year or more into the future and consult on various alternatives to protect this profitability as margins fluctuate over time.

In terms of the margin for a dairy operation, the revenue consists of the proceeds from milk sales, cull cows, and more recently the increasing value of dairy-beef cross calf sales. Input costs are divided between feed and non-feed expenses, roughly representing about 50% each of the total operating costs to determine a breakeven price for the dairy in any particular period. Given certain

Worksheet - 3rd Quarter 2026

Print
Prices Current as of:
03/24/2026 1:53 PM

Quarterly Milk Production			
Projected Milk Pounds			33,294,800 lbs
• Class III (equivalent)	100 contracts		19,976,880 lbs
• Class IV (equivalent)	67 contracts		13,317,920 lbs
Quarterly Feed Requirements			
• Corn (equivalent)	36 contracts	177,871 bu	4,980 tons
• Soybean Meal (equivalent)	12 contracts		1,184 tons
• Other Feed		You Own: 0 tons	18,543 tons
Quarterly Costs & Revenue			
• Feed Cost			
Corn and Meal Cost		\$1,704,196	\$5.12 per cwt
Other Feed Cost		+ \$1,828,551	+ \$5.49 per cwt
Total		\$3,532,747	\$10.61 per cwt
• Non-Feed Cost			
		\$3,096,081	\$9.30 per cwt
• Non-Milk Revenue			
		\$744,000	\$2.23 per cwt

Prices							
	Futures Contract	Price	Proj. Basis	Proj. Cash Price	Cash Price Based on Inputs & Position	Coverage	
						Delta	Max
Corn	Sep26	\$ 4.75	\$1.953	\$6.70	\$6.70 /bu	0%	0%
Soybean Meal	Sep26	\$ 313.00	\$119.356	\$432.36	\$432.36 /ton	0%	0%
Milk	Class III (60%) Jul26, Aug26, Sep26	\$ 18.52		\$18.52	\$18.52 /cwt	0%	0%
	Class IV (40%) Jul26, Aug26, Sep26	\$ 20.05		\$20.05	\$20.05 /cwt	0%	0%
Net Pay Price			\$0.10	\$19.23	\$19.23 /cwt	0%	0%

Margin		Total Dollars	Per CWT
Open Market Margin	Milk Revenue	\$6,402,287	\$19.23 per cwt
	Mailbox Breakeven	\$5,884,828	\$17.67 per cwt
	Open Market Margin	\$517,459	\$1.55 per cwt
Unrealized Net Margin	Milk Revenue	\$6,402,287	\$19.23 per cwt
	Mailbox Breakeven	\$5,884,828	\$17.67 per cwt
	Unrealized Net Margin	\$517,459	\$1.55 per cwt

practical considerations such as risk management tools like government-sponsored insurance including dairy revenue protection (DRP) that price in quarterly intervals, we look at dairy profitability in calendar quarter periods to identify margin and evaluate strategies to protect it. Figure 1 illustrates a model dairy operation's Q3 margin, detailing the components of that margin and the prices driving the profit margin discovery. The futures market allows us to leverage forward price curves on both Class 3 and Class 4 milk* as well as corn and soybean meal to

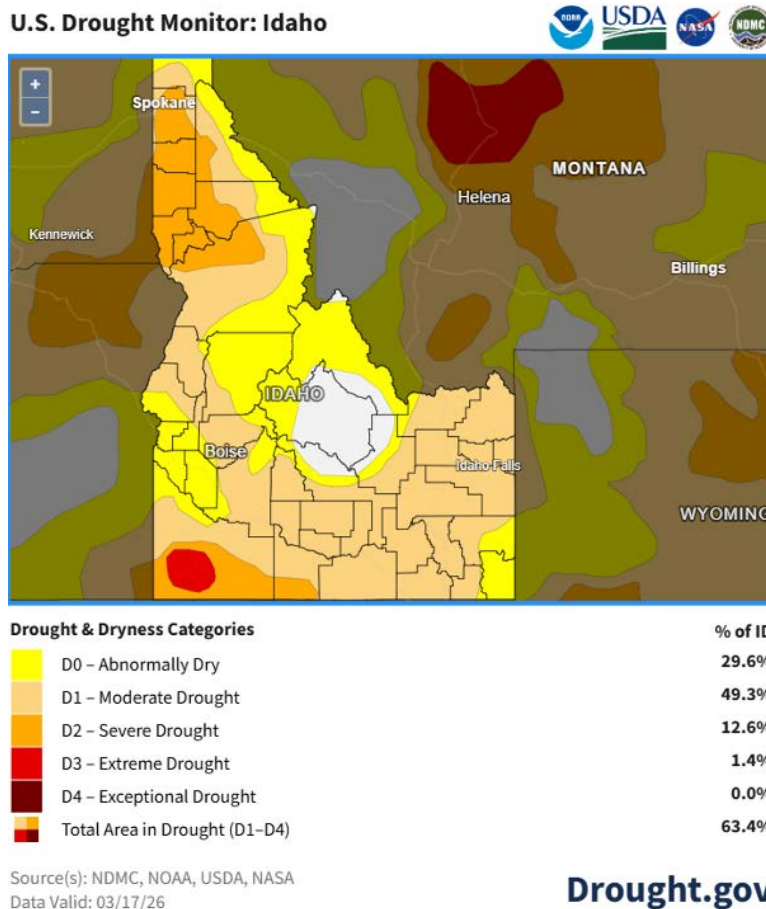
imply revenues and costs in future time periods. This is because both the mailbox price and milk check revenue along with actual feed expenses relating to certain energy and protein equivalents in the feed ration directly correlate to futures prices at the CME Group.

**note in this model operation, the dairy's projected milk revenue is split 60/40 between Class 3 and Class 4 milk; respectively, which may be different than many Idaho operations that are priced solely off Class 3 or have a different weighting to both classes of milk depending on where they ship their milk and the contracts they have in place with their milk processors.*

Looking at the individual components of the dairy margin for this model operation, it is evident that the milk price is by far the largest driver of profitability, although feed costs also play a big role in determining whether the operation is above or below breakeven levels. Diving into the cost side a little deeper, you will notice under the "Quarterly Costs and Revenue" that the total feed cost is evenly divided between "Corn and Meal Cost" and "Other Feed Cost." This

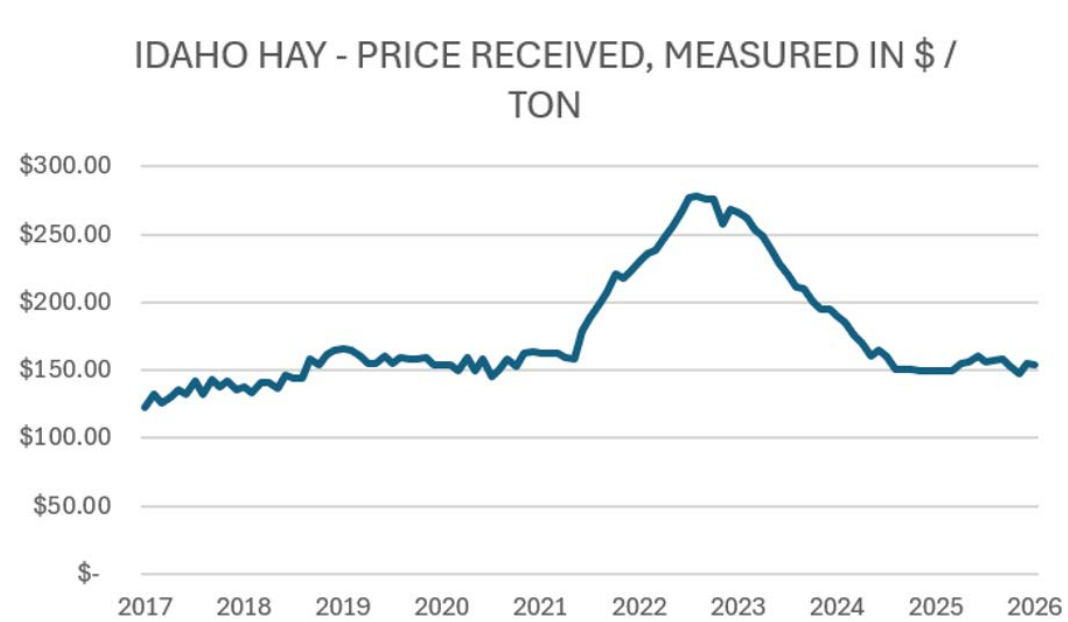
relates to the portion of the feed ration where we can use the futures market to model forward cost projections based on actual cash prices that correlate to either corn or soybean meal futures, versus other feed expenses for which there is no direct correlation to a futures price on the exchange. Examples of ration components that correlate to corn futures would be corn silage, flaked corn, or distillers dried grains (DDG's) while an example of a feed correlating to soybean meal futures would be canola meal. One large feed expense for many dairies that does not necessarily correlate to either corn or soybean meal futures would be hay.

Hay prices may be a component of margin risk for Idaho dairy operations that merits particular attention right now. Due to a "snow drought" this winter following record-high temperatures (despite significant precipitation), almost half the state finds itself in moderate drought with southwest portions of Idaho in severe or extreme drought according to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor map published by NOAA.



Because hay prices don't correlate to either corn or soybean meal futures, the risk can't be hedged with derivatives and therefore needs to be managed in the local cash market, either directly with growers or contracting through brokers. Until recently, feed costs have been relatively subdued with an ample supply/demand balance in both corn and soybeans suggesting that upside price risk would be limited through the remainder of the crop year. Following the outbreak of war with Iran however, this risk

profile has become more complicated given the tie-in that both markets have with the energy complex and the resulting surge in fuel prices. There has been added attention and focus on managing feed costs as a result, and while both corn and soybean meal equivalents can be hedged with derivatives, hay prices must be secured locally. Fortunately, hay prices have been relatively subdued, currently trading around \$150/ton in Idaho.



While corn and hay prices don't correlate directly with one another, there are certainly cases where they can spike in tandem and recent upside risk factors may add to this dynamic in addition to the current drought conditions across Idaho. Besides cross-correlations to oil and gasoline that may be impacted by the ongoing conflict with Iran and the broader Middle East, the fact that the Strait of Hormuz remains closed also has raised fertilizer prices with about one third of the global supply transiting through this waterway. Although it is likely that most U.S. producers have already covered their fertilizer needs for intended corn acreage in the current season, this development may further detract growers from corn in their rotation decisions. Another interesting development is a recent spike in Chinese domestic corn prices due to reported quality issues that may have rendered up to 30 million tons of grain unusable in the country Figure 4. This combined with an upcoming summit planned between President Trump and Chinese Premier Xi where agricultural trade is expected to feature prominently may lead to additional corn imports from the U.S.

While dairy margins for Idaho producers have improved recently due to a recovery in milk prices, profitability may still be negatively impacted by a sudden, unexpected rise in feed costs. It would be wise to review current margin opportunities for your own dairy operation looking out through the remainder of 2026 into early next year and consider covering feed expenses including hay to prevent potential margin erosion due to further unrest in the Mideast or poor weather during the upcoming growing season. For further information on how to identify and protect margins for your own operation, please contact us. ■

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Palmer Amaranth in the Pacific Northwest and How the Industry Can Help

Albert Adjesiwor & Nora Olsen | University of Idaho

In the rugged beauty of the Pacific Northwest, farmers battle plenty of foes: fickle weather, fluctuating markets, and ever-hungry pests. However, in recent years, a sneaky new contender has joined the fight, weaving its way through fields and threatening crops like potatoes. Meet Palmer amaranth, aka “the careless weed”.

You might wonder, “What’s the big deal about a weed?” If weeds had superpowers, Palmer amaranth would wear a cape. This annual plant might sound like an ancient wizard from a fantasy novel, but to farmers, it is the ultimate supervillain. Native to the southwestern U.S., it has been sneaking its way across the country, hitching rides on contaminated seeds, feed supplements, farm equipment, and even the bottoms of muddy boots. Now, it is here in the Pacific Northwest, threatening some of the region’s most valuable crops. In fact, over the past three years, we have fielded several

calls regarding Palmer amaranth in several crops (corn, dry bean, hay, potato, small grains, and sugar beet), as well as in right-of-way and private property. Some of these started as a few scattered plants that have now become thick patches nearly impossible to get rid of.

What Makes Palmer Amaranth a Nightmare?

First, Palmer amaranth is a supervillain of weeds; it grows at an extremely rapid rate, reaching up to 3 inches per day under suitable conditions. Picture this: you walk into a field in the morning, and by evening, you swear a small forest has appeared. The Palmer amaranth plant can be identified by its smooth, hairless stems and egg-shaped leaves with long petioles. Mature plants can grow to 6–8 feet tall, towering over crops such as potatoes and stealing sunlight, water, and nutrients. The plant produces a long, shaft-like seed head containing hundreds of thousands of tiny seeds. Those seeds

scatter like glitter in the wind (and if you've ever tried to clean up glitter, you know it doesn't go away). To make matters worse, some populations have developed resistance to multiple herbicides. These resistance cases include herbicides in groups 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 14, and 15, which together account for the majority of herbicides used in Idaho and the rest of the region.

How Palmer Amaranth is Transported and Spread

Palmer amaranth is transported via contaminated livestock feed. Palmer amaranth is widespread in the southern states, where many of the commonly fed byproducts are sourced. Palmer amaranth has a very hard seed coat, which means that even if fed to livestock, a significant proportion could still be viable after passing through the digestive tract. Many farmers unknowingly apply manure contaminated with viable Palmer amaranth seeds. Palmer amaranth seeds are very small and difficult to clean completely from farm equipment. A significant number of Palmer amaranth detections along roadsides in the PNW suggest that these were introduced through contaminated vehicles traveling across the region from other states. Palmer amaranth seed can easily be transported through irrigation systems, return flows, and natural waterways.

Palmer Amaranth Distribution and Impacted Acres

Palmer amaranth was found in multiple counties in Idaho and Oregon. As of fall 2025, over 9,000 acres of cropland in Idaho and nearly 700 acres in Oregon have been affected.

We found Palmer amaranth in several crops (corn, dry bean, hay, potato, small grains, and sugar beet) as well as in rights-of-way and private properties. The crops most affected were potato and sugar beet.

Concluding Thoughts: the Dairy Industry's Role in Stopping Palmer Amaranth

Palmer amaranth is not just a crop production issue - it is a systems-level threat, and the dairy industry sits at a critical control point for preventing its spread and limiting new introduction. Equally important is collaboration: dairy producers, crop farmers, and extension professionals must work together to monitor, report, and rapidly respond to emerging infestations. A proactive, prevention-first approach will be far more effective and economical than reacting after widespread establishment. The dairy industry has both the opportunity and the influence to be a frontline defender in protecting Idaho agriculture from this highly aggressive weed.

Visit <https://idahoweedsceience.org/> to learn more. If you suspect you have Palmer Amaranth on your farm, please contact Albert Adjesiwor at aadjesiwor@uidaho.edu to confirm identification and discuss control measures. ■

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Nora Olsen
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Idaho Dairymen's Association 2026 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.



Dairymen at the Capitol: Legislative Banquet and Leadership Meetings

Riley Barney | Idaho Dairymen's Association

On March 11, the Idaho Dairymen's Association and the University of Idaho College of Agriculture and Life Sciences hosted the annual Legislative Banquet. This event was attended by over half of Idaho legislators, fellow commodity groups, and many other supporters of the dairy and agriculture industry. In total, there were over 300 people in attendance.

The program began with Rick Naerebout introducing special guests and recognizing all dairymen in attendance. During this legislative session, the dairy industry has faced increase criticism from some sitting legislators who have demonstrated a lack of understanding of the industry, and in some cases, little interest in

learning. During Rick's remarks, he emphasized that the dairy industry is centered on family, faith and farming values. Our industry is great because of the people in it, who selflessly work to give back to their communities.

The special guest at the banquet this year was Idaho Milk Products, and it was fantastic to have the owner families and their children in attendance, including Luis and Sharon Bettencourt, Russel and Jennifer Visser, and Mike and Rachel Bosma. Having over 20 of the family members present to be recognized emphasized that Idaho dairies truly are family-owned with multiple generations involved in the daily operations.





After introducing the families, Daragh Maccabee, CEO of Idaho Milk Products, gave an overview of the company and provided some exciting details on the new ice cream plant and powder blending facility. Idaho Milk Products also brought several of their new ice cream products for attendees to enjoy.

The following day, IDA board members and other dairymen had the opportunity to meet with State leadership to discuss the issues that impact the industry. The group met with Speaker Mike Moyle, Pro Tem Kelly Anthon, Lieutenant Governor Scott Bedke, and Governor Brad Little. This provided valuable opportunities to discuss the current legislative session and key issues such as water and labor. IDA extends its thanks to state leadership for

taking the time to meet with the group. ■

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 19

Idaho Primary Election - *Don't Forget to Vote!*

May 26

IDA Board Meeting - *Burley, ID*

IDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pete Wiersma, President (Buhl, ID)

Arie Roeloffs, Vice President (Wendell, ID)

Ted Vander Schaaf, Secretary/Treasurer (Kuna, ID)

Andrew VanderWoude (Parma, ID)

Rudi DeWinkle (Melba, ID)

Alan Branch (Malta, ID)

Hank Hafliger (Filer, ID)

Lael Schoessler (Kimberly, ID)

Dave Alves (Jerome, ID)

Allan Swainston (Preston, ID)

Justin Engbersen (Monteview, ID)

Lynn Keetch (Montpelier, ID)

Rick Naerebout, CEO