



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update by Senator Howard Marklein July 17, 2015

We Have the Beef!

July marks another major economic driver for our communities as we celebrate Beef Month in Wisconsin!

In celebration of Beef Month, I was honored to join the Iowa County Cattlemen's Association for their annual steak feed earlier this month. In talking with many of the dedicated beef producers in our community, I was inspired to learn that while our state is usually known for our dairy cows, Wisconsin has nearly as many beef cattle.

I was also proud to learn that six of the top 10 counties for beef in Wisconsin are in the 17th Senate District! According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Grant, Iowa, Lafayette Vernon and Monroe counties hold the top five rankings for beef cows in our state; Sauk county is number seven! We have a lot to be proud of in the 17th Senate District!

According to the Wisconsin Beef Council, there are more than 1 billion cattle in the world. The United States has less than 10% of the world's population, but we produce nearly one quarter of the world's beef supply. Wisconsin holds a huge share of this industry with nearly 15,000 beef producers who raise 3.35 million cattle every year that produce 2.287 billion pounds of beef!

Wisconsin is 12th in the nation for beef production, but our growth is out-pacing other states. In the past 10 years, we are only one of 10 states that have increased our beef cow herd and we're only second to Oklahoma!

The beef industry has a major impact on our state's economy. More than \$200 million in state and local government revenues come from the beef industry. Nearly 35,000 people are employed in beef industry jobs with an overall economic impact of \$8.1 billion in Wisconsin.

Production of beef cattle supports 14,000 jobs. We generate \$631 million in total income and \$1.86 billion in industrial revenue. Beef processing creates 20,900 jobs and \$1.47 billion in total income with \$4.9 billion in industrial revenues.

Beef may be big business, but most herds in Wisconsin are small. According to the USDA, 70% of beef operations in Wisconsin have fewer than 20 head of beef cows. Approximately 46% have less than nine head. At the time of the last major cow census in 2007, only eight producers had operations of 500 head or more.

Where are these small herds? According to the Wisconsin Beef Council, many dairy farmers raise their steers for beef production alongside their dairy cows and then sell them when they reach marketable size. In addition, some dairy operations have shifted entirely to beef operations as the demand for products or their property for grazing have changed.

In the Driftless region – most of the 17th Senate District – grazing beef cattle is a profitable and effective use for land that is difficult to plant with crops. Lush, fertile river valleys surrounded by steep hillsides are perfect for hearty beef cattle.

According to the Kickapoo Grazing Initiative, a collaboration among Trout Unlimited, Valley Stewardship Network, Vernon County Land & Water Conservation and UW-Extension: Crawford County, managed grazing of grass-fed beef is a positive, sustainable farming practice that is proving to be a good choice for many farmers in the Driftless region. Beef cattle grazing helps build soil organic matter and fertility and protects it from erosion which preserves its long-term viability. Grazing uses less pesticide and reduces fertilizer costs when compared to raising crops on the same property, which also introduces fewer pollutants into water resources.

Combine the environmental benefits of grazing beef cattle with the demand for beef products and it's no wonder local farmers are dedicating more of their time, effort and property to beef cattle.

As you drive through the 17th Senate District this month, enjoy our beautiful scenery and check out all of the beef cattle that are contributing to our economy. Thank you to all of the dedicated farmers who put food on our tables, support our communities and give us the beef!

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.