



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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May is Beef Month!

May is Beef Month in Wisconsin! Most people think of Wisconsin as “The Dairy State,” but there are actually more beef producers in Wisconsin than licensed dairy producers. There are approximately 14,800 beef producers and 11,000 dairy producers in Wisconsin. As the most agriculture-dependent senate district in the state, the 17th Senate District and our communities rely on the success of the beef industry.

According to the Wisconsin Beef Council, beef production and beef processing provides more than 35,000 jobs annually to Wisconsin while contributing \$2.1 billion in total income. For every 10 jobs in beef production, there are an additional 4.5 jobs supported in other industries. For every \$100 of income from beef production, an additional \$117 of income is generated elsewhere in the Wisconsin economy.

The beef industry generates almost \$7 billion in on-farm processing in our state. Beef production also generates \$200 million in state and local government revenue, which can be used to support education, roads, and other programs in our communities.

Wisconsin is one of only 10 states that has seen an increase in their herds since the 1980s, despite the fact that according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the country is at the lowest beef cattle inventory since the 1950s. While the cow inventory in the U.S. has decreased in the past few decades, the production of beef cows in Wisconsin has grown considerably, an increase of 44%!

Wisconsin ranks 11th nationally in beef production. The average size of a herd in Wisconsin is around 18 cows. According to the USDA, 70% of beef operations in Wisconsin have fewer than 20 head of beef cows. Around 46% of Wisconsin producers have less than nine. In Wisconsin, many individuals can maintain a small operation with a herd of 30-50 cows while working at an off-farm job. In other cases, landowners that have property that may not be conducive to growing crops can use the land for grazing cattle.

Much of the beef cow herd in the state is located in Southwest Wisconsin. Grant County is the top producer of beef cows in Wisconsin, with nearly 10% of all beef cows. Of the top seven beef cow producing counties in Wisconsin, six of them are in the 17th Senate District: Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Vernon, Monroe, and Sauk. The production in these counties make up more than 75,000 head of cattle in Wisconsin.

The steep hillsides and fertile river valleys in Southwest Wisconsin may not be great conditions to grow crops, but they are perfect conditions to raise a herd. 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 beef is a sustainable farming practice that is good for the land in the Driftless Region. Grazing helps to build organic matter and

promote fertility in the soil. Another benefit of grazing in this area is that it protects the land from erosion. This can protect the land's fertility on a long-term basis. Grazing also uses less pesticides and fertilizers, which can release harmful pollutants into the local water resources. Raising cattle seems to be a good choice for our area!

As you sit down with your family to enjoy your next steak or hamburger, think of all that goes into contributing to this prolific industry. 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.

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