

THE PUBLICATION OF AFR INSURANCE
AN AFFILIATE OF OKLAHOMA FARMERS UNION
VOL. 102, NO. 3 | SUMMER 2021



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Golf Tournament Raises Funds for AFR Foundation



The fifth annual AFR Foundation golf tournament took place June 17 at FireLake Golf Course in Shawnee. The AFR Foundation is a non-profit organization focused on the betterment of rural communities in Oklahoma. Through the fundraising event, the AFR Foundation raised more than \$13,000. All tournament proceeds will support

future AFR Foundation youth and community outreach endeavors. "The AFR Foundation does important and necessary work throughout the year," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "Golf tournament funds make needs-based grants, special local and county projects and certain youth events possible."

Winners of the AFR Golf Tournament were Sequoyah County AFR in first, Choctaw County AFR in second, and Porters Insurance in third. The winner of the longest drive contest was Clinton Whitworth. Closest-to-the-pin contest winner was Matt Oberste. The tournament also featured a never-won hole-in-one contest.

VOL. 102, NO. 3 SUMMER 2021
www.afrcoop.org
First Published in 1920

AFR Today is published by
AFR Insurance
Oklahoma Farmers Union
4400 Will Rogers Parkway
Oklahoma City, OK 73108
(405) 218-5400 | (800) 324-7771
Fax: (405) 218-5593

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Oklahoma State Union of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America

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Navigating Financial Wellness

By Brandice Rhoades, AVP of AFR LIFE

Navigating and planning for financial wellness in today's ever-changing environment can be intimidating. Many families are having difficult discussions regarding final expenses, life insurance and estate planning due to the impact of the pandemic. While we are turning the corner and many are feeling hopeful, the past year has made it evident that planning for the loss of a loved one is top of mind and becoming a more common conversation.

Taking true stock of future financial needs for family creates a sense of security. A key foundation to any solid financial plan includes life insurance planning to address risks that may have a major impact on a family's financial wellbeing. It is important to assess how income reduction due to the loss of a family member may impact those that are dependent upon you. Building a solid plan to assess finances for an acceptable standard of living, as well as school funding plans and retirement, is key to understanding your insurance coverage needs.

When evaluating how to protect your family with life insurance, not all needs are the same or one-size-fits-all. Consider the differences between long-term financial needs, such as funeral cost, medical and legal expenses (needs that will continue regardless of your age), and short or intermediate financial needs, such as mortgages, college tuition

and any outstanding debts (needs that have a more specific duration).

There are key life insurance products that will address each season of financial wellness planning. Whole life insurance products are a long-term strategy that meet long-term needs. In some cases, these programs can be fully paid in a number of years, allowing the coverage to continue while the premium cost is no longer necessary. In contrast, term life insurance policies provide coverage in 10, 15 or 20 year increments, covering the intermediate risk of outstanding debts or maintaining standard of living while insureds are younger.

Pairing different products (whole life and term insurance) can address both long and intermediate term needs. This can provide a more complete sense of security that many are searching for. Obtaining a term life product that covers your family to the end of your mortgage is a common approach to maintaining the standard of living your loved ones will require. Pairing this with a whole life product will support you past retirement years and, if paid in full early on, may allow a retiree to hold insurance that is fully paid and is not a strain to post-retirement income.

A comparison can be drawn between these two life insurance strategies and crop insurance. For example, one could look at long-term crop insurance as being similar

to a whole life coverage in that it covers the entire life cycle from planting to harvest. A similar comparison can be drawn between term life coverage and covering your crops for hail damage. In this, it covers the potential loss for a shorter term when the financial risk of loss may be higher during hail season. In this comparison, the hail season is similar to the season of life in which you are paying a mortgage and supporting the educational needs of children.

Planning for the future of loved ones is the gift of peace of mind. Assessing financial needs for all seasons of life and unforeseen events will ensure that your family continues to reap the rewards of what you have worked so hard to build.

There are many tools readily available to help you in calculating the appropriate amount of insurance needed. In many cases, these are simple worksheets to support you through the process and provide you with an unbiased and no-pressure assessment of long term and intermediate financial risks and needs. AFR Life has a simple assessment document available to support members who do not feel comfortable with electronic tools. If you are interested in using this document to assess your life insurance needs, contact AFR Life at 800-425-9303.



Are You Covered?

How a Lumber Boom Can Affect Property Insurance

By Darin Miller, AFR Dir. of Claims and Underwriting

Many people found the COVID-19 pandemic a time to complete do-it-yourself projects around their home. Billions of dollars have been spent modifying living spaces over the past year and a half. The pandemic-driven renovation craze has made some materials pricey and hard to come by – especially lumber. Those taking it a step further and finding the pandemic a good time to build or purchase a new home have felt the effects of the rising lumber prices as well. According to the National Association of Home Builders: *Lumber prices skyrocketed more than 300% between April 2020 and May 2021, causing the average price of a new single-family home to increase by nearly \$36,000.*¹

How does this boom affect property insurance? It can have a significant impact if a claim is submitted to an insurance carrier for damage to property that is covered by

an insurance policy. Many policyholders purchase replacement cost coverage on their homes (versus actual cash value coverage, which is basically replacement cost minus depreciation). Replacement cost coverage is beneficial in that it would cover the cost of buying materials to repair damage to a home at today's prices.

However, the amount paid under replacement coverage may be reduced if the home is not insured to within a certain percentage (usually 80%) of the cost to rebuild the entire home at the time of a covered loss. For example, if the cost to rebuild a home at the time of a covered loss is \$100,000, then the homeowner must maintain at least \$80,000 [\$100,000 x 80%] in coverage on the home in order to collect the full cost to repair the damage. If the homeowner carries less than \$80,000 coverage in that example, then payment of

their loss is reduced to the greater of: (1) the actual cash value at the time of loss or (2) that part of the replacement cost of the damaged part which the limit on the home bears to 80% of the full current replacement cost of the building.

So, while a homeowner may think they are fully covered in the event of a covered loss to their home because they carry replacement cost coverage, this may not be true due to the increased cost of building materials. Now is a good time to check in with your AFR Insurance agent to make sure your home is "insured to value" and prevent you from being penalized on a future claim.



¹National Association of Homebuilders

OKLAHOMA LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

2021 Highlights

By Bray Haven
AFR Cooperative Lobbyist

Upon passage of the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year, the Oklahoma Legislature concluded its regular 2021 legislative session, in which it sent a record number of bills to Governor Kevin Stitt's desk. House Republicans held a historic majority with 82 of 101 seats in the chamber and Republican legislative leaders called this session comprehensive, policy-focused and successful.

SESSION ACTIVITY

BUDGET

Gov. Stitt signed additional legislation into law as part of the Fiscal Year 2022 state budget package, including House Bill 2900, the general appropriations bill. The FY 2022 budget cuts taxes for all Oklahomans, invests a record \$3.2 billion in education, and replenishes over \$800 million in state reserve funds that were significantly reduced to offset pandemic-related revenue reductions last year for a record \$1.3 billion in savings for the state of Oklahoma.

The Governor also signed HB 2895, which apportions \$80 million to the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety (ROADS) Fund; HB 2951, which creates the State-Tribal Litigation Fund; HB 2961, which reduces the tax rate paid by banking associations and credit unions; SB 608, which creates a new film tax incentive to attract and recruit more film industry projects; and HB 2946, which expands broadband in underserved and unserved areas statewide through a \$42 million tax incentive for providers.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Gov. Kevin Stitt signed a controversial education funding measure that will have school funding more closely follow students. HB 2078 will have school funds be based on the enrollment count only from the prior school year, not two years ago. It also would allow districts to carry over more money from year to year in their general fund, which supporters say will allow districts to carry over more federal stimulus funds to offset any state funding reductions.

Donors to public and private schools can expect a tenfold increase in allowable tax credits, marking a key policy priority for Republican lawmakers. Gov. Kevin Stitt said he will sign a bill to raise the maximum tax credits from \$5 million to \$50 million for donations to schools. Public and private schools each would have a \$25 million cap on tax credits for donors through the Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship Act.

MANAGED CARE

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled Gov. Stitt's plan to privatize much of the state's Medicaid program is unconstitutional. In a 6-3 ruling on June 1, the court determined the Oklahoma Health Care Authority did not have the legislative approval to move forward with the plan, dubbed SoonerSelect. The court also determined a constitutional amendment approved by voters last year to expand Medicaid to more low-income people also did not authorize a new managed-care program like SoonerSelect.

LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING

The legislature will be back this fall for a special session to draw new congressional maps for Oklahoma's five congressional districts. The state is expected to receive in mid-August the U.S. Census Bureau data needed for the redistricting. State lawmakers will hold a series of in-person and virtual town halls this summer to solicit feedback for Oklahoma's congressional redistricting process.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter resigned June 1. Gov. Stitt's replacement will inherit numerous legal cases and negotiations related to the recently-affirmed Indian reservations in eastern Oklahoma.

Several key elections will take place in the state next year. Gov. Stitt has held campaign events across the state and is anticipated to file for reelection. Only two other candidates have filed for the Governor's race so far. Former Democratic state senator Connie Johnson, from Oklahoma City, filed a statement of organization with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission, which allows her to start raising and spending money on her campaign. Former state senator Ervin Yen, a Republican from Oklahoma City, also has filed candidacy paperwork indicating he plans to challenge Gov. Stitt in the GOP primary.

Oklahoma State Treasurer Randy McDaniel will not seek reelection in 2022 in order to prioritize his family, rather than a statewide campaign. He added that making the announcement now allows candidates time to organize their campaigns. He will serve through the end of his current elected term in January 2023. Several other elected officials will also term out next year, including Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister and Corporation Commissioner Dana Murphy.

Gov. Stitt's chief operating officer John Budd will resign in July. Budd played a key role in the state's COVID-19 response and helped implement Stitt's vision for streamlining state government and improving how agencies deliver services.

LEGISLATIVE OVERREACH

Gov. Stitt signed legislation Republican state lawmakers say will allow Oklahoma to push back against federal overreach. HBI 1236 allows the Oklahoma Legislature to ask the state's attorney general to review and evaluate the legality of federal actions, including executive orders from Pres. Biden. If the attorney general declines to review the constitutionality of presidential executive orders, acts of Congress or federal agency rules, Oklahoma's GOP-led Legislature could seek judicial review of federal actions if a majority of state lawmakers approve.



PRIORITY BILLS



16

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY
BILLS PASSED

40+

BILLS
DEFEATED

HB 1032

Creates the Homemade Food Freedom Act which provides for regulation and oversight for the production, transportation and sale of homemade food products.

Authors: Reps. Garry Mize, Dean Davis, Forrest Bennett, Meloyde Blancett, Jay Steagall, Mark Lepak, Steve Bashore, Brian Hill, Justin Humphrey, Tammy West, Gerrid Kendrix, Mike Osburn, Jim Grego, Eddy Dempsey, Marilyn Stark, Eric Roberts and Jacob Rosecrants; Sens. Adam Pugh, David Bullard, Blake Stephens and Shane Jett
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

HB 1093

Establishes a date by which the Water Resources Board must update the Oklahoma Water Quality Standards to include a provision to allow for the development of nutrient trading programs by state environmental agencies.

Authors: Rep. Dell Kerbs; Sen. Casey Murdock
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

HB 1135

Removes requirements that landowners post notice on their property prohibiting trespassing in order for persons to be fined for such violations and provides for various groups which are exempted from provisions defining trespassing.

Authors: Rep. Scott Fetgatter; Sens. Zack Taylor and Blake Stephens
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

HB 1620

Prohibits local ordinances which would impair the use of working animals or a working animal enterprise for agritourism.

Authors: Reps. Garry Mize and Jay Steagall; Sens. John Michael Montgomery, Blake Stephens, Michael Bergstrom and Shane Jett
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

HB 1631

Requires new or expanding poultry operations to provide nutrient management plans to the Department of Agriculture for review; EMERGENCY.

Authors: Reps. David Hardin and Sheila Dills; Sens. Casey Murdock and Blake Stephens
Earliest effective date: April 19, 2021

HB 2279

Creates the Industrial Hemp Remediation program to permit producers of industrial hemp to process hemp and remove THC in order to meet requirements.

Authors: Reps. Josh West, Trish Ranson and Mickey Dollens; Sen. Chris Kidd
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

HB 2364

Prohibits the labeling of bovine product as Oklahoma Certified Beef unless it meets certain requirements; EMERGENCY.

Authors: Rep. Ty Burns; Sen. Casey Murdock
Earliest effective date: July 1, 2021

HB 2805

Relates to the determination and assessment of livestock, directing certain livestock be designated to be employed in support families provided the ownership of such livestock is majority state residents.

Authors: Rep. John Pfeiffer; Sens. Lonnie Paxton, Cody Rogers and Blake Stephens
Earliest effective date: January 1, 2022

SB 422

Establishes different methods for persons seeking eligibility for certain agriculture tax credits to prove eligibility for such credits; EMERGENCY.

Authors: Sens. Frank Simpson, Roland Pederson, Warren Hamilton and Blake Stephens; Reps. Dell Kerbs, Ty Burns, John Pfeiffer, Trey Caldwell, Dick Lowe, Rick West, Anthony Moore, Mike Dobrinski, Scott Fetgatter, Garry Mize, Judd Strom, Mark Vancuren, Jim Grego, Charles McCall, Rhonda Baker, Bob Culver, Avery Frix, Kevin McDugle, Steve Bashore, Brad Boles, David Hardin, Kyle Hilbert and Jay Stegall
Earliest effective date: July 1, 2021

SB 775

Authorizes ODAFF to create and maintain a Livestock Offender Registry on their website for public access to include crimes involving the theft of various livestock, as submitted by the counties where such convictions occurred.

Authors: Sens. Casey Murdock, Roland Pederson and Blake Stephens; Reps. Eddy Dempsey and Carl Newton
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

SB 838

Creates the Public Safety Protection District Act which allows municipalities to create public safety protection districts and provide additional municipal funding to law enforcement and fire services.

Authors: Sens. Darrell Weaver, James Leewright, John Haste, Jo Anna Dossett, Carri Hicks, John Michael Montgomery, J.J. Dossett, Dave Rader, David Bullard and Jessica Garvin; Reps. Jadine Nollan, Kyle Hilbert, Jacob Rosecrants, John Waldron, Melissa Provenzano, Lonnie Sims, Carol Bush and Mark Lawson
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

SB 939

Exempts critical infrastructure facilities from being considered a nuisance when certain acts are within compliance and consistent with governmental rules, guidelines or laws applicable to their sector.

Authors: Sens. Zack Taylor, John Michael Montgomery, David Bullard, Kim David, Brenda Stanley, Roland Pederson and Casey Murdock; Reps. John Pfeiffer, Mark McBride, Tammy West, Kyle Hilbert, Trey Caldwell, Logan Phillips and Dustin Roberts
Earliest effective date: November 1, 2021

SB 1033

Provides relative to various provisions related to medical marijuana licensure, sale, dispensary location and ownership and permits coordination across agencies for enforcement; EMERGENCY.

Authors: Sen. James Leewright; Rep. Scott Fetgatter
Earliest effective date: May 28, 2021

If you'd like regular legislative and industry updates from the AFR Cooperative, like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/AmericanFarmersandRanchers. For more in-depth coverage, email Bray Haven at bray.l.haven@gmail.com.

AFR Day at the Capitol

Following a year of unique challenges for the agriculture sector, AFR Cooperative brought rural issues to the Oklahoma Capitol Building on May 5. Nearly 100 AFR members from across Oklahoma convened to discuss agriculture and rural issues and meet directly with state lawmakers.

“Because last year brought unprecedented circumstances to our legislative landscape, we knew AFR members would have both new and returning issues they needed to discuss with members of the Oklahoma Legislature,” said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh.



AFR members lobbied on behalf of all rural Oklahoma, with a particular emphasis on state agriculture tax exemption eligibility, increased funding for additional state meat inspectors and prevention of foreign ownership in the medical marijuana sector. Most importantly, each AFR member was encouraged to talk with their representative about the issues most important to their farm, their family and their community.

“As an organization, we strive to educate rural Oklahomans on policy issues and encourage them to get involved in the legislative process,” said Blubaugh. “Our legislative program is truly

grassroots. We connect AFR members directly with their representatives and help them fight for the issues that are most important to them.”

The 2021 AFR Day at the Capitol included a legislative panel discussion featuring Chairman of the House Ag Committee Dell Kerbs (R-Shawnee), Sen. Darcy Jech (R-Kingfisher), and Rep. Ty Burns (R-Morrison). Attendees also heard an update on tribal jurisdiction from Ryan Leonard, Special Counsel for Native American Affairs for Gov. Kevin Stitt. AFR Cooperative Lobbyist Bray Haven also provided tips on effective communication with lawmakers.





“I enjoyed learning from the AFR Day speakers. The discussions on the McGirt case and rural marijuana issues were especially informative. I was also able to meet my new representatives and talk with them about the proposed ag tax exemption bill. It was a good experience all around.”

-- David ZumMallen
Farmer, Rancher, Rural Advocate,
Tenured Industrial Air Specialist





"Our first time participating in AFR Day at the Capitol was a great experience, and we enjoyed getting to talk with legislators about rural and agricultural issues. It was an informational day learning about policies impacting our state, and we look forward to the next one."

*-- Dillon and Kaylee Travis
Farmers, Ranchers, Agribusiness Owners, Educator*



"I was extremely grateful to be a part of the recent AFR Day at the Capitol. It was refreshing to see how much support our Oklahoma legislators have for our AFR leaders. They are focused on agricultural growth and stability across the state."

*-- Brandon Higgins
AFR Insurance Agent, Educator*



"AFR Day at the Capitol was a wonderful chance to get to better know our legislators and their staff. Those personal relationships are important to build; they really help when issues arise."

*-- Jennifer York, Durham
Agribusiness Owner, Farmer, Rancher, AFR Insurance Agent*



AFR Pleased with Passage of Ag Sales Tax Exemption Legislation

One of AFR Cooperative's priorities at the 2021 AFR Day at the Capitol was Senate Bill 422. SB 422, authored by Sen. Frank Simpson (R-Springer) and Rep. Dell Kerbs (R-Shawnee), passed the Senate 45-0 May 19 and the House 96-0 May 24. SB 422 provides clarification and flexibility to farmers and ranchers applying for or renewing an agricultural sales tax exemption permit. Applicants can now qualify for the exemption by providing satisfactory documentation from one of four categories—a federal tax form, such as a Schedule F, Form 4835, Form 1065, or an equivalent IRS form; a one-page business description form provided by the Oklahoma Tax Commission; a USDA FSA

number or program form; or other documents the Oklahoma Tax Commission sees fit to verify involvement in production agriculture. "Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers are an integral part of our state's economy; it is essential we foster a regulatory environment that keeps farming operations successful and encourages the next generation of producers," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "Clarifying Oklahoma's agricultural sales tax exemption process will provide certainty to our producers, while also providing eligibility guidelines for regulators that ensure the ag sales tax exemption is reserved for active farmers and ranchers." A coalition of Oklahoma's agriculture

organizations urged passage of SB 422. The bill was considered to be the best option to ensure producers could secure a state agriculture sales tax exemption permit, while also preventing fraud in the sales tax exemption process. "In today's challenging legislative environment, I'm pleased to say this bill was championed by the entire agriculture community," said Blubaugh. "It will help reduce fraud in the agriculture sales tax exemption and create certainty amongst producers and regulators alike. AFR Cooperative was glad to support it."

Well Represented

AFR Cooperative Names 2021 Legislative Advocates

AFR Cooperative has named two state legislators 2021 AFR Legislative Advocates. This year's AFR Advocate Awards recognize Rep. Garry Mize, R-Guthrie, and Sen. Frank Simpson, R-Springer. The AFR Legislative Advocate Award is presented to state leaders that advocate for AFR Cooperative policies and work hard on issues that are important to the AFR membership during each state legislative session. Simpson and Mize were recognized for their work during the 2021 legislative session. "These legislators successfully represented rural Oklahoma during this year's session," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "We applaud the leadership of all our legislators and their service to Oklahoma. Frank Simpson and Garry Mize are two legislators who went above and beyond in 2021 and we're pleased to honor them with



Majority Whip from 2014-2018. Mize represents Oklahoma House District 35. During the 2021 Oklahoma legislative session, Mize authored HB 1620, which prohibits local ordinances that would impair the use of working animals or a working animal enterprise for a g r i t o u r i s m

this award." Simpson represents Oklahoma Senate District 14. During the 2021 Oklahoma legislative session, Simpson was the Senate principal author on a major legislative priority for AFR—SB 422, which establishes different methods for persons seeking eligibility for certain agriculture sales tax exemptions. Simpson chairs both the Veterans and Military Affairs Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. He currently serves as Assistant Majority Floor Leader and served as Senate

purposes. He also worked on compromise language for HB 1032 that created the Homemade Food Freedom Act, which provides for regulation and oversight for the production, transportation and sale of homemade food products. Mize chairs the Select Committee on Utilities and serves on the Appropriations and Budget and Insurance committees. He is also currently serving on the State and Federal Redistricting North Central Oklahoma Subcommittee.

RAMP-UP Act Implemented Through New MPIRG Grants

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced \$55.2 million in competitive grant funding available through the new Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) program. "Throughout the past year, America's meat producers and processors have faced unprecedented market challenges. At a time when producers are experiencing increased demand for high-quality meat, meat processors across the United States are racing to increase their capacity to meet the demands of consumers and producers," said Rep. Frank Lucas (OK-03). "USDA's new Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant program will give processors the tools to become federally inspected facilities, which widens their customer base while maintaining strong inspection standards. It will also reduce the financial burden for smaller meat processors, by reducing the high cost of compliance with Federal requirements that are barriers to entry and/or survival. I'm proud to see this program being

implemented to expand the opportunities for not only Oklahoma's processing facilities, but meat processors across the United States." In July 2020, Congressman Lucas and former Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (MN-07) introduced the Requiring Assistance to Meat Processors for Upgrading Plants (RAMP-UP) Act, which would establish a grant program to help small meat processors make improvements necessary to meet federal food safety standards and bolsters the meat supply chain. The MPIRG is funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, which included an amended version of the RAMP-UP Act. "We are building capacity and increasing economic opportunity for small and mid-sized meat and poultry processors and producers across the country," said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Through MPIRG, meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities can cover the costs for necessary improvements to achieve a Federal Grant of Inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the Poultry

Products Inspection Act, or to operate under a state's Cooperative Interstate Shipment program." The MPIRG program helps processors qualify for federal inspection, which would, in turn, enable them to sell across state lines and into export markets. Oklahoma facilities can apply for the MPIRG Planning for a Federal Grant of Inspection (PFGI) project grant, which is for processing facilities currently in operation and are working toward federal inspection. Applications must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, August 2, 2021. For more information about grant eligibility and program requirements, visit the MPIRG webpage or contact mpirg@usda.gov. This announcement is part of the Build Back Better initiative, a commitment to invest more than \$4 billion to strengthen the food system, support food production, improved processing, investments in distribution and aggregation and market opportunities.

Oklahoma Certified!

Oklahoma Certified Beef Association Producer Directory

Benefield Cattle
Clark Benefield
Cell: 918-629-0642
Claremore, OK

Beratto Farms
Chase Beratto
Cell: 405-385-1082
Facebook: Beratto Farms
Mill Creek, OK

Blubaugh Angus Ranch
Scott & Lisa Blubaugh
Office: (580) 628-3660
Facebook: Blubaugh Angus Ranch Beef
Retail Space: 107 E Grand Ave
Tonkawa, OK

Blue Line Angus Beef
Alexander Black & Josh Kelle
Cell: 580-761-7290
Website: www.bluelineangusbeef.com/
Stillwater, OK

Burns' Far Away Ranch
Ty Burns
Cell: 580-307-5970
Morrison, OK

Brainard Beef
Brad Brainard
Cell: 580-761-7780
Enid, OK

Cedar Trails Longhorns
La Vonda Lewis & Allison Carroll
La Vonda: 580-678-0895
Alison: 580-216-1991
Facebook: Cedar Trails Longhorns, LLC
Rush Springs, OK

County Line Beef
Stephen & Alex Morcom
Cell: 405-626-7673
Marlow, OK

Cowan Farms
Shadley Cowan
405-444-4089
Wayne, OK

Dunagan-Farms
Jace & Heather Dunagan
Cell: 405-821-0562
Website: dunagan-farms.com
Retail Space: 8747 E County Rd 74
Guthrie, OK

Destiny Ranch
William & Karen Payne
Cell: 580-320-7073
Website: destinyranch.org
St. Louis, OK

Ford Land & Cattle
Garret Ford
918-773-2588
Facebook: Ford Land AndCattle
Vian, OK

Inhofe Land & Cattle
Bill Inhofe
Office (Muskogee): 918-684-4000
Office (Tulsa): 918-445-0895
Facebook: Inhofe Land & Cattle
Retail Space: 3190 W 21st St S **Tulsa, Ok**
2300 N 32nd St W **Muskogee, OK**

LoCo Farms
Ben Coffin
Cell: 405-714-3015
Facebook: Granny Had One
Retail Space: 312 W. Oklahoma Ave
Guthrie, OK
Edmond Outdoor Farmers Market

No Name Ranch
Dawn Buechner
Cell: 580-768-1023
Facebook: NoName Ranch LLC
Retail Space: 46865 Hwy 29
Wynnewood, OK

River Bottom Cattle Company
Jerry & Sue Calvert
Cell: 405-650-7172
Norman, OK

SER Ranch
Vickie Roop
580-318-4508
Okarche, OK

Shallow Creek Ranch
John Ogden
Office: 918-687-1321
Muskogee, OK

Shelton Farm Grass-Fed Beef
Jim & Sara Shelton
Cell: 918-244-1077
Vinita, OK

Silverwood Wagyu
Linda Woodruff
Cell: 580-484-0352
Enid, OK

Watson Farms
Damon Watson
Office: (918)-474-3267
Retail Space: 110 S Broadway
Council Hill, OK

4T Ranch Beef
Connie Tabor
Cell: 620-762-0275
Website: <https://4t-ranch.com/>
Agra, OK

6R Cattle Company
Levi & Taylor Ransom
Cell: 580-886-5077
Facebook: 6R Cattle Company
Canton, OK



Verified through a third-party system, Oklahoma Certified Beef is guaranteed to be bred, born, raised and processed right here in Oklahoma.

By choosing beef that's certified Oklahoman, you can be certain your food dollar stays closer to home and benefits the rancher that produced your steak, hamburger or other delicious Oklahoma beef item.

For more information on the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association or our member ranchers visit www.afrcoop.org/ocba.



ANTITRUST IN AGRICULTURE

ANTITRUST MOVEMENT GAINS STEAM, RENEWS HOPE OF ENFORCEMENT IN FARM SECTOR



AFR Today began covering antitrust issues in agriculture at large in spring of 2020. Antitrust concerns in agriculture had been simmering for years, but pandemic market disruptions added fuel to the fire. In the last year, major players from both the poultry and pork sectors have either pled guilty to anticompetitive practices or settled claims outside of court as part of investigations started before the pandemic.

The beef sector was also already under investigation before the pandemic began. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) launched an investigation into alleged price manipulation by the Big Four meatpackers following the August 2019 Tyson beef plant fire in Holcomb, Kan. This investigation was expanded to examine price volatility during the early stages of the pandemic. USDA has released recommendations for addressing this price volatility, but stopped short of declaring whether or not anticompetitive behavior had occurred.

Extreme price disparities between live cattle and boxed beef during the pandemic intensified calls for antitrust enforcement. In May 2020, the U.S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) responded with its own antitrust investigation. The Big Four meatpackers were subpoenaed early on, but that investigation is ongoing and no updates have been released.

Already frustrated by years of volatile markets and two black swan events, the

lack of updates from the DOJ investigation is unacceptable to ranchers and the industry groups and lawmakers who represent them.

The demands for an update have grown to a cacophony. To date, more than 100 members of Congress from a total of 37 (THIRTY-SEVEN) states have been active in the push for answers—from the USDA or the DOJ investigation, or both. The effort is nationwide, bipartisan and bicameral. This show of cooperation is reassuring to say the least.

In addition to the congressional push, the governors of at least six states and attorneys general from 11 states have encouraged the DOJ to continue the effort and requested an update or swift conclusion to the investigation.

Oklahoma has been well represented in this nationwide push for answers and antitrust enforcement. Gov. Kevin Stitt has twice written U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland requesting an update from the DOJ investigation. Oklahoma Sec. of Agriculture Blayne Arthur joined him on one correspondence.

All five Oklahoma representatives—Kevin Hern (R-01), Markwayne Mullin (R-02), Frank Lucas (R-03), Tom Cole (R-04) and Kendra Horn (D-05)—pushed for a swift conclusion to the 2020 USDA investigation. In June 2021, four of Oklahoma's representatives—Markwayne Mullin (R-02), Frank Lucas (R-03), Tom Cole (R-04) and newly-elected Stephanie Bice (R-

05)—continue to push for an update from the DOJ investigation. Oklahoma's senators—Jim Inhofe (R) and James Lankford (R)—have been absent from the discussion.

While this widespread push for answers has not resulted in an update from the DOJ, it has shown the importance and urgency of the issue and the Biden Administration is responding.

In March, Pres. Biden nominated Janie Simms Hipp, an Oklahoman and member of the Chickasaw Nation, to serve as USDA General Counsel. Hipp has extensive experience with farms of all sizes and has pledged to work with the DOJ on the beef concentration issue.

In June, U.S. Sec. of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has announced USDA intends to strengthen enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act, a law originally designed to farmers and ranchers from "unfair, deceptive and anti-competitive practices in the meat markets."

Finally in early July, Pres. Biden signed a broad executive order that aims to promote competition in several industries, including agriculture. The order directs USDA to consider issuing new rules to strengthen the P&S Act and better define when meat can bear "Product of USA" labels. The order also directs USDA to develop a plan to increase market access for farmers and encourages the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to limit equipment manufacturers from restricting the right to repair.

Pres. Biden's executive order indicates antitrust enforcement will be a major priority for the Biden-Harris Administration. In fact, the administration has called it a "historic commitment to fight monopolization and promote competition across the economy."

Following Pres. Biden's executive order, USDA announced its intent to invest \$500 million in American Rescue Plan funds to increase competition and capacity in the meat and poultry processing markets. USDA also intends to invest \$150 million for existing small and very small processing facilities to help them compete in the marketplace. In the announcement, USDA also doubled down on its intention to revitalize the P&S Act. There will no doubt be additional developments over the summer. Look for the next update in the Fall 2021 edition of AFR Today.

Progress in Phoenix

BLUBAUGH REPRESENTS STATE AT HISTORIC CATTLE MEETING

PHOENIX—It's no secret that the last few years have been a roller coaster ride for cattle ranchers. The Coronavirus pandemic and other disruptive events have wreaked havoc on live cattle markets and left ranchers feeling out of control of their own industry, even as consumers clamor for more

American beef.

When the gap between live cattle prices and retail beef prices widened to historic levels in 2019, ranchers across the U.S. cried foul. When it happened again in spring of 2020, they piled even more pressure on lawmakers and industry or-

ganizations to address meatpacker concentration issues and what appears to many to be a broken market system.

Legislation has been proposed and industry organizations have come up with various solutions, but it has been difficult for all groups to align behind a unified plan. In an effort to find common ground, member leaders of American Farm Bureau Federation, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Farmers Union, R-CALF USA, and the United States Cattlemen's Association met May 10 in Phoenix, Ariz. The organizations convened at the request of Livestock Marketing Association.

The Phoenix meeting was a historic event and likely the first of its kind. In an effort to hear directly from ranchers on the front lines of the issue, the meeting was organized in secret and attendance was limited. Each organization sent four representatives, all of which were members or elected officials. No legislative staff or organization employees were allowed to attend.

American Farmers & Ranchers (AFR) Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh was chosen to attend the Phoenix meeting as a representative of National Farmers Union (NFU). He was the only Oklahoman included in the event.

"I'm honored to have been included in such a discussion and to be part of the

reforms that will ensure independent cattle producers and cattle feeders have a place in their own industry," said Blubaugh.

Of the meeting itself, Blubaugh was afraid it would be unwelcoming or even hostile, but he was surprised by the atmosphere in the room.

"Lack of competition in the beef industry has led to an outcry over cattle market issues that is now at a fever pitch," said Blubaugh. "Tensions have been running high lately and I didn't know what to expect. But, I was pleased by

how open we all were. We had a frank, respectful discussion and I was surprised by how much we were able to accomplish.

"The meeting brought all sides of the cattle business together to work toward solutions and that's what we did. It was clear to me that everyone there has a heart for this industry and the knowledge to back it up. We all know what's on the line."

According to a joint press statement released May 17, the unprecedented meeting in Phoenix brought together the diverse set of industry organizations to "discuss challenges involved in the marketing of finished cattle with the ultimate goal of bringing about a more financially sustainable situation for cattle feeders and cow-calf producers." The press statement also claims that "attending organization representatives were pleased to have reached consensus on many issues and are committed to the ultimate goal of achieving a fair and transparent finished cattle marketing system."

Blubaugh agrees that the groups did find a lot of common ground and even reached consensus on a few points. "Last week's historic cattle industry meeting happened because of the dire situation many ranchers have found themselves in," said Blubaugh.

"Our nation's ranchers have become increasingly more desperate for a fair and transparent marketplace and I believe everyone in the room understood that.

"Six major players, with differences of opinions and different policies, came together and formally recognized that our producers are in trouble and, in large part, the market system is to blame. Despite our differences, we identified problems and solutions we agree on and have agreed to move forward with what we can. On those items of consensus, we'll all be marching in the same direction. That's huge."

Key takeaways from the joint press statement include topics of discussion, including but not limited to:

- Packer concentration,
- Price transparency and discovery,
- Packer oversight,
- Packers & Stockyards Act enforcement,
- Level of captive supply, and
- Packer capacity.

According to the statement, Phoenix meeting attendees agreed to take the following action items to their respective organizations for consideration:

- Expedite the renewal of USDA's Livestock Mandatory Reporting (LMR), including formula base prices subject to the same reporting requirements as negotiated cash and the creation of a contract library.
- Demand the Department of Justice (DOJ) issue a public investigation status report and as warranted, conduct joint DOJ and USDA oversight of packer activity moving forward.
- Encourage investment in, and development of, new independent, local, and regional packers.

For the complete joint statement, visit <https://lmaweb.com/press-releases/>.

SENATE AG COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON CATTLE MARKETS

Industry consensus at the Phoenix meeting increased pressure on Congress to do something about the seeming dysfunction and lack of transparency in the live cattle market. On June 23, the Senate Agriculture Committee held a hearing titled "Examining Markets, Transparency, and Prices from Cattle Producer to Consumer."

A recording of the hearing is available on the Senate Ag Committee website.

Managing FARM STRESS in 2021

Story Assistance by Brent Brewer, AFR Field Rep and Farm Stress Management Team Member

The AFR Farm Stress Management Team has had an impactful and positive first year. Within 24 hours of returning from our farm stress management training, we had our first call. There was no time to settle back into our routines and wonder if we would be ready when the call came. It was already here. In that first call, a financial issue had caused tremendous stress to a farmer. It was an intense call, but we had been well prepared by the national training team to handle such a situation. We were able to comfort the farmer and ultimately connect him to someone who could help in the restructuring of his loans. The farmer was able to better his situation, reduce his stress level and get back on track.

A few weeks later, we received a call from a farm family that was in extreme distress. Unlike many farm stress situations, finances were not part of the problem. The farmer was struggling with mental health issues that had been intensified by extreme exhaustion. The call was a true suicide call. Thankfully, our training kicked in again. We reduced the man's sense of urgency, diffusing the situation long enough to provide an informal evaluation and gain him admittance to an appropriate facility. Our training helped save his life.

These were just the first two calls of our Farm Stress Management program. In total, there were six high-stakes interactions throughout the year, including a farm family contemplating a double suicide. Every circumstance was different, but an incredible stress level was common to them all. There have been many other calls that were not urgent. Some farm families just need someone to talk to or help finding a resource for a specific situation. Some are single call conversations; some we stay in touch with regularly. Some are AFR members; some are not. We welcome calls from everyone. The farm families we've helped come to us in a variety of ways. We've received calls routed through Farm Aid's national hotline or directly through our AFR Farm Stress Hotline. We've been contacted through social media and even helped someone through a direct connection made on Facebook. They had watched former Oklahoma Sec. of Agriculture and AFR Board Member Terry Peach discuss mental health and succession planning with the Okla. Dept.

of Agriculture, Food & Forestry. When we're not fielding calls, we're building program awareness among professionals who work directly with farmers, ranchers and farm families. Our goal is to be known to most rural lenders, coop managers and agribusiness owners, so they know to call the AFR Farm Stress Management Team when the need arises. The network building has been affective; some of our calls have been from bankers or coop managers worried about their customers. More than once, an AFR team member has been asked to sit in the bank lobby while a lender works through the difficult conversation of farm dissolution with a longtime farmer or rancher. The team member is there to help the farmer, but is also a comfort to the lender who doesn't know how the conversation will unfold. We had planned to conduct many "train the trainer" sessions over the last year, but the pandemic halted much of that effort. We were able to conduct some training sessions remotely via Zoom and plan to move forward

with in-person training later this summer. So far, we have worked with the AFR Women's Council, Nat'l Assoc. of Conservation Districts (NACD), Oklahoma Coop Council, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Oklahoma Ag Mediation Program. We are planning future training sessions with Oklahoma Cooperative Council (for cooperative managers and financial staff members), the Oklahoma Bankers Association and Farm Credit. The AFR team has gained some national notoriety. For example, team member Brent Brewer conducted a short training session at the 2021 NACD Annual Convention. His farm stress management breakout session had 700 viewers from across the United States. Through a handful of national interviews, our farm stress management efforts have been noticed by mental health professionals throughout the country. Our hope is that these interactions will raise awareness of the mental health struggles that are unique to production agriculture. The notoriety has already resulted in an invitation for AFR Farm Stress Management team member Brent Brewer to represent Oklahoma on a committee about rural health facilities. One goal of this committee is to increase urgent access to mental health resources in rural areas. If there is no immediate help available, minutes can turn to hours and, in urgent situations, hours can be deadly.

I am so proud to help family farms in any way I can and farm stress management has always been a major need. Farmers and ranchers carry a unique stress. It's always a mixture of things that are job related, but it's not always financial. It can be easy to miss unless you know what to look for and many farmers hide it so well it's never detected. This is an unnecessary burden—stress can be worked through and treated to maintain a healthy mental state.

-- BRENT BREWER
FARM STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM

AFR COOP WELCOMES BREWER AS WESTERN OKLA. FIELD REP

Brent Brewer, Salt Fork, began his work as the AFR Cooperative Western Oklahoma Field Representative this spring. In addition to his field representative tasks, Brewer serves as an integral member of the AFR Farm Stress Management Team. Brewer graduated from Deer Creek-Lamont High School in 1979 and earned a degree in agricultural education from Oklahoma State University. In 1983, he returned to his family's farm and purchased adjoining land to grow wheat, alfalfa, milo, soybeans, mung beans and barley. He also has a custom farming and haying business and plants Bermuda grass sprigs some years. In addition to his farming operation, he constructs farm buildings, has helped manage Muegge Feeders, and has been an operator for DEM oilfield operations. Brewer has served as president of Clyde Cooperative Association, Equity Marketing Alliance (now CoMark), Farmland Dissolution Board of Directors and Grant County Conservation District. He has served on the boards of State Exchange Bank, Grant County FSA and Grant County Fair. He served on the Beef Industry Council at its conception and has been a committee member of the OSU Farm Transitions program and Oklahoma Wind Power. Brewer has served on several nominating committees and on OSU's Agriculture Enhancement Board, where he helped design the curriculum for agriculture students. He has recently served on the AFR Policy Committee and was one of two National Farmers Union 2020 Member Spotlights. Brent and his wife of 36 years, Theresa, farm and ranch in the Salt Fork area where they manage an Angus cow/calf and stocker operation. They also operate an Airbnb in Billings.



Women's Cooperative

By Ellen Roth, Women's Program Coordinator

This June, the annual AFR Women's Cooperative retreat returned with a bang. On June 26 and 27, 40 AFR members from across the state traveled to Northeast Oklahoma for a weekend full of fun, food and friendship.

The trip started with a stop for lunch at Tulsa's Mother Road Market food hall. Attendees had the chance to get to know one another while enjoying food from a variety of the market's 12 different restaurant booths.

As the group headed toward Pawhuska, we stopped in Lotsee, OK, the state's smallest incorporated town. Lotsee's lone residents, Mike and Lotsee (the town's namesake) Spradling gave our group a tour of their commercial pecan operation on the Flying G Ranch. As we left, members had the opportunity to purchase snacks for the road at The Nut Shop, Flying G's retail space.

From there, the tour headed to Pawhuska for the full *Pioneer Woman* Experience. First, we stopped at the Drummond Lodge where attendees got an inside look at Ree Drummond's dressing room, pantry, on-camera kitchen and even a visit from the ranch guard dogs.

After leaving the lodge, we headed into downtown Pawhuska for shopping and socializing before enjoying a private dinner at The Mercantile. After sampling The Merc's pulled pork, chicken fried chicken, green beans, mac n' cheese and cinnamon rolls, it is easy to see why people travel in from all over the country to visit. The second half of our trip started bright and early Sunday morning. Attendees gathered in the hotel ballroom to share

“I learned so much Oklahoma history and desire to return and visit more of each area.”

--AFR MEMBER RHONDA STEPHENSON

breakfast and hear from Kelly Bland, Executive Director of both the Pawhuska Chamber of Commerce and Osage County Tourism.

In addition to sharing her personal experience as a woman in agriculture, Bland spoke about the significant changes Pawhuska and Osage County have experienced in the last five years.

Starting with the Mercantile opening its doors in 2016, Pawhuska's downtown district has become a leading Oklahoma tourism destination. In addition to the Mercantile, the Drummond family has opened a pizza restaurant, a sweet shop, an event center and even a boutique hotel. Other local entrepreneurs have also taken advantage of the opportunity, opening a variety of shops and attractions, including the Ben Johnson Cowboy Museum.

Their efforts have certainly paid off as

Bland reported the town's guestbooks have been signed by visitors from all 50 states and destinations as far as India and Germany this year alone.

This growth is positioned to only continue as famed director Martin Scorsese films his newest movie, based on David Grann's *Killer's of Flower Moon*, in the area. While the crew was not filming during our rainy visit, attendees had the chance to see some of the storefronts that have been transformed to look like they may have in 1920.

Our group continued their journey back in time at our final stop, the Marland Mansion in Ponca City. Members were treated to a private tour of the 43,561 square foot home by Museum Director, David Keathly. The tour was the perfect cap to a fun weekend learning more about the history and heritage of our great state. The Women's Cooperative is already looking forward to traveling together again next year.



Longtime AFR member and Lotsee resident, Mike Spradling, demonstrates the pecan shelling and packaging process.

AFR Women's Mentorship Program

Who: Collegiate women enrolled in any Oklahoma college or university.

When: Applications will open early this fall.

Where: More information will be available on AFR Social Media Channels and afrcoop.org.

Giving Back

COUNTY & LOCAL AFR ORGANIZATIONS
COMMITTED TO THEIR COMMUNITIES



Beckham County AFR and AFR Local #14 each donated \$500 to Help Inc. Food Resource Center in Elk City. The funds were used to help offset the food pantry's significant increase in families served during the pandemic last year. The number of families served jumped by more than 50% in 2020.



AFR Insurance agent Jake Stunkard with AgLand Insurance is very involved in the Fairland community. Today (June 12), his AFR Local #60 is sponsoring and facilitating the annual Fairland Strawberry Festival.

Are you a member of a county or local AFR organization that's doing great things in your corner of Oklahoma?

Let us know!

We'd love to showcase your contributions. Email details and photos to afrcoop@afrmic.com.



Creek County AFR hosted an end-of-school-year cookout for Lonestar School in Sapulpa. AFR Field Representative Jim Pilkington, AFR Insurance Agent Johnie Brown of Brown Insurance in Sapulpa, and Creek County AFR Board member Justin Whitehouse served more than 800 students and staff at the summer send-off.



An Insurance Journey

THOMPSON RETIRES AFTER 53 YEARS

Longtime AFR Insurance Agent Sue Thompson has announced her retirement from the insurance industry. Sue has been affiliated with AFR for more than 23 years, and has worked in the insurance industry for more than 53 years. She has most recently been an agent for Storehouse Services in Altus. Sue's winding journey through the insurance industry began in 1967 when she went to work for a small insurance agency near her home in Oklahoma City. Sue was 18. It was her first real job, her first home, and her first baby. Her plan was to work until she could pay for a washer and dryer. "That was back when we had to wash diapers," said Sue. "I was going to work until my new Sears washer and dryer were paid for—50 plus years later, here I am!" Sue became a licensed agent in 1975. From 1972 to 1985, she worked for several small independent agencies, most of which are no longer in business. The largest one was McEldowny, McWilliams, Deardeuff & Journey in downtown Oklahoma City. "I worked with many great people downtown who are still my friends today," said Sue.

From 1985 to 1988, Sue worked for Oklahoma General Agency, a wholesale broker. In her role as a marketing representative, she called on agencies all over the state. In Altus, this included Bob Bartlett Insurance, Dobbs & Brinkman Insurance, H&H Insurance, and Buck and Garrison Insurance. In 1988, Sue went to work for another Oklahoma City wholesale broker, Westphalen, Bradley & James. In her new role, she again dealt with agents across the state as a truck underwriter. Then in 1994, Sue decided it was time to relocate back to Southwest Oklahoma. She went to work for Dobbs & Brinkman Insurance, an Altus agency she had a strong connection with through her previous role as a statewide marketing representative. In 1997, Sue purchased half of Curtis Liles' AFR Insurance agency. She became an AFR Insurance agent as part of Liles & Thompson Agency. Sue purchased Liles' half of the agency in 2000 and operated the agency on her own for nine years. In 2009, Sue sold her agency to Storehouse Services. "Jimmy [James] and Mike [Altom] made me an offer I couldn't refuse!" said Sue. Sue and her two employees became part of Storehouse Services and Sue has still been able to help her longtime customers, many of whom have become friends. "I will miss them all and the people I work with who have become family," she said. Sue was raised in Mangum and graduated from Mangum High School in 1965. She earned her associate degree from Western

Oklahoma State College (WOSC) in 1998 and her bachelor's at MidAmerica Christian University in 2000. "That's only 35 years after I started college!" Sue has been a member of the Altus Lions Club since 2004 and served as its president in 2008. She also served as governor of the Southwest District in 2013-2014 and vice council chair for the state in 2014-2016. In her retirement from the insurance industry, Sue will be moving back to Oklahoma City to work in the Lions Club of Oklahoma state office. She's also excited to be closer to her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. "Life is full of changes and the time has come for what I hope will be my last move," said Sue. "I have loved living in Mangum and Altus and will miss everyone, but I will be visiting often!" Sue has been active in the National Association of Insurance Women for many years and served as state director from 1999 to 2001. She also served on the board of the Independent Insurance Agents of Oklahoma from 2004 to 2006. She has served AFR Cooperative as the secretary and treasurer for the Jackson County Farmers Union and as secretary of AFR Local #241. She has been active in the AFR Women's Cooperative, AFR Southwest Agents Association, and First United Methodist Church of Altus. Sue's retirement party will be held July 30, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Storehouse Services, 1220 N. Main St., Altus, Okla.

Ag Groups Form Task Force to Tackle Issues Caused by Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Industry

Five Oklahoma agriculture groups have formed a task force to develop solutions to the issues facing farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses from the exponential growth of the medical marijuana industry across Oklahoma. The Medical Marijuana Impacts on Oklahoma Production Agriculture Task Force—AFR Cooperative, Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, Oklahoma Agricultural Cooperative Council and Oklahoma Farm Bureau—was created to focus on crafting state and federal solutions to the increasing impact of medical marijuana on production agriculture across Oklahoma. "This taskforce represents thousands of agricultural producers across the state," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "As we respond to mounting problems the medical marijuana industry is presenting to Oklahoma production agriculture, task force



members recognize the immediate need to find solutions. We know the issues are not hypothetical; they're affecting farmers and ranchers today." The task force will review the challenges confronting Oklahoma agriculture and work together to provide policy recommendations to state and federal leaders.

The task force plans to engage with key stakeholders, including other state agriculture organizations, public and private utility providers, members of the Oklahoma Legislature and congressional delegation, and the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. "The challenges for Oklahoma's agriculture producers that have come with the introduction of the medical marijuana industry in our state are numerous," said Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur. "We hear from producers from all areas of Oklahoma that are dealing with the variety of impacts medical marijuana grow facilities are having on their livelihoods and day to day operations. As we continue the discussion to identify answers to these challenges, I appreciate the insight I anticipate this Task Force will provide and the momentum toward solutions it brings."

AFR YOUTH



AFR Cooperative sponsors many contests throughout the year, including the 2021 Tulsa Cattle Grading Contest held June 22 at Tulsa Stockyards. AFR Senior Field Representative, Jim Pilkington, attended on behalf of the AFR Cooperative and presented awards to FFA High Individual Kaden Brunner (left), Perkins-Tryon, and 4-H High Individual Chasin Smalley (right), Oklahoma Union.

AFR SPONSORS OKLAHOMA FFA CONVENTION

AFR Cooperative was proud to be a diamond-level sponsor of the 2021 Oklahoma FFA Convention. This year, student convention attendees from across the state visited the AFR Cooperative booth to declare who or what inspires them on a sticky note. Students used the sticky notes to write out AFR on the table next to the booth.



SAY HELLO TO LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2021!

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

...

Teen: July 25-27 Senior: July 28-31
Heartland Conference Center
Midwest City, OKC

afrcoop.org

Interested in running for Youth Advisory Council?

During Senior Leadership Summit, five youth program participants are elected to the AFR Youth Advisory Council. These young Oklahomans represent AFR through the next year as they work side-by-side with the youth coordinator on projects in service to the youth of Oklahoma.

Election Process:

- 1.Fill out a written application at Leadership Summit.
- 2.Interview with a panel of three judges.
3. Give a short campaign speech in front of peers.

Requirements:

1. Entering the 12th grade at the time of Leadership Summit.
2. Attended Leadership Summit at least two previous times.
3. Current American Farmers & Ranchers policy holder.

2021 STATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Seth Jackson
Oklahoma State University



Tala Gillenwaters
Southwestern Okla. State University



Abby Bell
Oklahoma State University



Katelyn Blevins
Oklahoma State University



Braden Burns
Oklahoma State University



Cassidy Baughman
Oklahoma State University



Faith Whitehouse
Northeastern State University



Kye Heldermon
Eastern Okla. State College



Jace James
Oklahoma State University



Cada Janda
Great Plains Tech. Center



Lindsey Kilgore
Tulsa Community College



Jacey Kuhn
USAO



Haylee Lundry
Oklahoma State University



Paike McNiel
Southwest Baptist University



Gavin Sager
Universal Tech. Center



Elena Santiago
Oklahoma State University



Abbigail Long
East Central University



Cade Leonard
NWOSU



Grace Whitehouse
University of Oklahoma



Jaxon McCullah
Oklahoma State University



Jentry Squires
Butler Community College



Kaylen Plemmons
Northeastern State Univ.



Keegan Carrera
Oklahoma State University



Kensington Kerbs
Oklahoma State University



Reagan Detrick
Northern Oklahoma College



Rylee Detrick
Oklahoma State University



Cooper Shebester
Eastern Okla. State College

2021 COUNTY MATCH SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Grace Schneberger
Oklahoma State University



Rhett Glazier
SWOSU



Cody Conrady
SWOSU



Ryker Salyer
Okla. City Comm. College



Jake Springer
Oklahoma State University



Emily Hutchins
University of Arkansas



Josie Foster
University of Arkansas



Shawn Hillary
Oklahoma State University



Blakley Howard
Cameron University



Desiree McGriff
Oklahoma State University



Mckenna Holbert
Eastern Okla. State College



Jenny Wood
Clary Sage College



Silas Hauser
Oklahoma State University



William Lane
Northeastern Okla. A&M



Kadyen Johnson
Oklahoma State University



Leah Brown
TBD



Hunter Fox
Northern Oklahoma College



Trevor Heath
Southeastern Okla. State University



Tommi Whilley
Redlands Community College



Kimberly Boyer
Redlands Community College



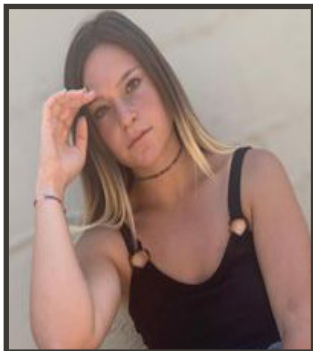
Cole Cathcart
Meridian Techology Center



Kyra Hickaby
Western Okla. State College



Rachel Mithcell
SWOSU



Ciara Moore
Coffeyville Community College



Cheyla Ward
Connors State College



McKenna Blair
Oklahoma State University



Collin Conduct
University of Oklahoma



Bryce Stovall
Oklahoma State University- IT



Malorey Easley
TBD



Jordan Hawthorne
TBD



Carstyn Webb
Oklahoma State University



Haylee Farris
Seminole State University



Rylee Trent
University of Oklahoma



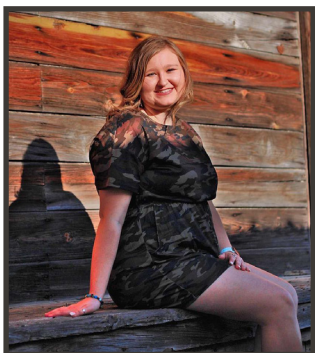
Dalton Harris
Northern Oklahoma College



Riley Price
Northern Oklahoma College



Makaylee Andrews
University of Arkansas



Emily Farley
Texas A&M University



Ethan Knight
TBD



Emma Wilson
Midwestern State University

Not pictured: Drew Duff, Oklahoma State University; Chase McCracken, Northwestern Oklahoma State University; Pazile Jones, Southwestern Oklahoma State University; Monica Flores, University of Center Oklahoma; Cole Weathers, Oklahoma State University; Hunter Stargent, Kiamichi Technology Center; Jackson Green, Univeristy of Oklahoma; Emily Duffy, Oklahoma State University; Vance Hamlin, Eastern Oklahoma State College; Zelfhia Norman, Eastern Oklahoma State College; Bailey Hudspeth, Connors State College; Ryan Patton, Murray State College; Amanda Stone, Seminole State College; Lydia Weise, TBD; Lance Nutt TBD; Asa Robertson, TBD.

77TH ANNUAL AFR SPEECH CONTEST

CENTRAL DISTRICT- NOV. 4, TECUMSEH

NORTHEAST DISTRICT- NOV. 9, SAPULPA

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT, NOV. 11, WILBURTON

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT- NOV. 15, CACHE

NORTHWEST DISTRICT- NOV. 18, ENID

STATE SPEECH- DEC. 4, STILLWATER



What promoted beef more than 20 million times?

Your Dollar Did.

LaVerne Tucker “Granny T”
98 years young
Beef farmer for more than 75 years
AFR member since about 1945

See how your Oklahoma Beef Checkoff worked to inspire Oklahoma and US consumers to choose beef through 20 million video views in FY 2020 highlighting Beef’s flavor, nutrition and sustainability.

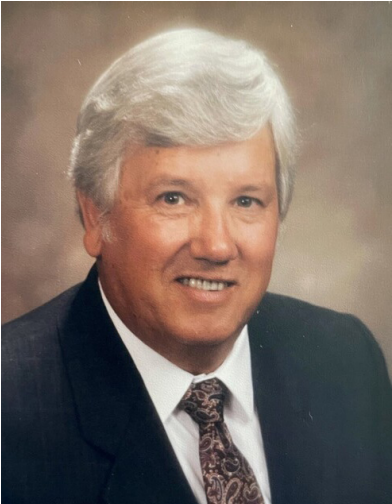
Sign up for your complimentary newsletter at BeefBoard.org/YDD.

Learn more at www.oklabeeff.org



In Memoriam

Jimmie Billington



Jimmie Ray Billington, 90, passed away April 6, 2021. He was born to Obie “Pete” and Winnie Kellison Billington July 27, 1930, in Harmon County. In 1953, he married Delores June Southall. Jim graduated from Blair High School in 1949 and attended Cameron University before enlisting in the Air Force in 1950. He was honorably discharged in 1953 at the end of the Korean War. Jim earned a B.S. in Ag Education and later an M.S. in Ag Economics, both from OSU. Jim took his first job in 1956 as superintendent of the Lugert Altus Research Station. In 1958, Jim and June moved to Madera, Cali., where Jim worked as an Extension farm advisor. Jim served as president of the Woodward Production Credit Assoc. (PCA) from 1967-1975 and as president/CEO of First National Bank of Beaver from 1975-1978. He returned to farming in 1978 until his retirement in 2013. Jim was involved in the Democrat Party and devoted his life to agricultural advocacy. He remained a proponent of OSU and his proudest legacy is that of his wife and their family. Jim served as president of the Jackson County AFR, the Wheat Growers Assoc. of Okla., the Nat’l Assoc. of Wheat Growers, and the Nat’l Wheat Foundation. He was appointed by the Sec. of Agriculture to the Federal Grain Inspection Advisory Board and to the Farm Credit Board in 1986 by Pres. Reagan. In 1989, Jim became president/CEO of the Minn. Wheat Promotion Council and Wheat Growers Assoc. Jim was preceded in death by his parents, sister Betty Cosyns, brother-in-law Albert “Al” Cosyns, and brother Grady Billington, all of Madera, Cali. He is survived by his wife of 67 years; sister Pat Autrey and husband Wendell of Katy, Texas; sister-in-law Janet Billington, of Madera, Cali.; daughters Denise Cramer of Tulsa, Rhonda and husband Doug Snoeyenbos, of Arlington, Va., and Linda and husband Michael Maberry, of Elk City. He is also survived by his grandchildren Ashlee Crouch and fiancé Ray Hall, Wade and Priya Cramer, Evan and Ryan Hunt, Cole and Candice Cramer, Seth Cramer, Will Snoeyenbos and Eric Snoeyenbos; five great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Mary Morris



Mary Annette Morris, 67, passed away June 2, 2021, in Stillwater. Mary married Leon Morris on Dec. 6, 1975. They had two children—their son Josh and daughter LaNette. The door was always open at their house and whoever walked in immediately became family. After attending college, Mary began working with her grandfather Ray V. Henderson selling insurance for Oklahoma Farmers Union in 1978. She purchased the business from him in 1984. She ran her business to serve others and did so until her passing. Mary was a beloved member of the community. She was very involved in her church and loved the Lord. Mary lived for her grandkids and family. She was always following them to their events, whether it was football, rodeo, dance, basketball, or anything else. After she became sick, she still strived to get to all of their events. She was blessed to see her granddaughters Brigam’s and Brinley’s first dance recital just two weeks before she went to be with the Lord. She gave her battle to the Lord, but was strong and fought until He called her to her Heavenly Home.

Judy Rush



Judy A. Rush, 79, passed away May 24, 2021, in Shawnee. She was born Dec. 28, 1941, to William Henry and Lena Mae (Litton) Brown in Shawnee. Judy was raised in Shawnee, but lived in Wanette for 61 years. She graduated from Shawnee High School in 1959 and married Terry Rush May 6, 1960, in Shawnee. Judy owned Rush Propane and Rush Insurance Agency and operated the local tag agency. She was a member of the First Baptist Church of Wanette, where she served as the church secretary. She volunteered at the senior center and for Flag Day. She would help anyone who needed it. She enjoyed playing the piano and loved watching her grandchildren play ball. Judy was preceded in death by her parents; one sister, Janice Spears; and one brother, David Brown. She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Terry Rush; daughter, Tari Ann and Scott Dubler of Wanette; sons, Steve and Melanie Rush of Madill and Greg Rush and P. J. Howard of Wanette; grandchildren, Caleb and Emily Dubler, Tarin Dubler, Branton and Melissa Rush, Stephanie and Aaron Henson, Rusty and Kendra Rush, Terrell Rush, William Rush, Wesley Rush and Adam Rush; great grandchildren Andrea Rush, Blayton Rush, Rylie Rush, Kelcie Rush, Hattie Henson and Atlee Henson and one on the way, Jackson Scott Dubler; sister, Mary Sue Mullendore; sister-in-law, Sharon Brown; and many other relatives and friends.

Cleta Belle Zook



Cleta Belle Zook, 81, passed away June 19, 2021. She was born to Alfred Henry and Leona Pearl (Hall) Paris June 11, 1940, in Woods County. Cleta Belle attended Highland School through the eighth grade and graduated from Waynoka High School. On March 28, 1958, she married Jakie Lee Zook in Waynoka, where they made their home. The Zooks owned and operated several businesses in Waynoka, including J&C Ready Mix, Zook Oil Company and a Farmers Union Insurance agency. She was active in the Waynoka Chamber of Commerce and on the Cimarron Stampede Rodeo Committee. Cleta attended New-Song Church, was a member of Lone Star H.C.E. and Atheneum, and regularly enjoyed the fellowship and a good card game at the senior citizens center. Cleta was preceded in death by her parents, her husband of 61 years, Jakie, and one sister, Louise Durkee. She is survived by her son, Larry Zook and wife Linda of Waynoka; her daughter, Lynetta Braun and husband Bill of Hobart; six grandchildren: Caleb Zook and wife Machel of Waynoka; Russell Zook and wife Dana of Kingfisher; Mary Belle Zook and partner Beau Adams of Shawnee; Jacob Gamble and wife Kelly of Decatur, Texas; Jessica Braun of Weatherford, and Matt Braun of Hobart; nine great-grandchildren: Kennedy Zook and Kade Zook of Waynoka; Norah Zook and Holt Zook of Kingfisher; Ada Belle Adams of Shawnee; Madison Belle Gamble of Decatur, Texas; Alanna Solvato, Katie Solvato, and Joey Solvato all of Decatur Texas; and many other relatives and friends.

AFR TODAY TRADING POST

FIRST DUE DATE FOR ONLINE ADS: **August 15, 2021**

AFR TODAY TRADING POST ADS
PHONE: 405-218-5591 FAX: 405-218-5591 P.O. BOX 24000
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Classified advertising in the Trading Post is available free of charge to all paid-up members of AFR. Ads must be of personal nature and strictly non-commercial. Commercial ads and ads from non-members can be purchased at the rate of \$1 per word, paid in advance. Member ads must be 30 words or less, unless the member pays in advance for additional words. Each member is limited to one advertisement per issue. Advertising will not be accepted for services or products in direct competition with those offered by AFR or affiliates. AFR reserves the right to not print any ad deemed inappropriate.

WANTED

12-Bolt Chevy or 9-inch Ford posi-track rear-ends. How can you tell? Spin one wheel, if the other spins the same direction, it's a posi-track. 405-517-4130.

I buy mineral rights. Call 405-347-1907 or email ecpreble@gmail.com.

Dead, rough or burned tractors, 1960s to 2020. Any size or any model, 4WD or 2WD. Call 405-641-7728.

Any Oklahoma Farmers Union memorabilia (pictures, agency signs, elevator items, old charters, etc.). Call 405-218-5559.

Old cars, hard tops and convertibles. Running or not. Call 918-482-3272.

I loan money on mineral rights. Any county like Carter, Grady, Kingfisher or Blaine; states like Oklahoma or North Dakota. If you need a loan or want to sell, call 580-227-2456.

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Registered Polled Hereford bulls and heifers. Remitall Online 122L and PW Victor Boomer P606 genetics. Considering selling 51-year lifetime membership registered Polled Hereford herd, retiring. Call 580-332-2468.

Genetically superior bulls. Gentle, growthy, LBW. Add 50-75 lbs to your weaning weights. Semen tested, vaccinated, wormed. Over 4,000 bulls sold in 39 states since 1970. Only herd in nation to earn four different world records for yearling weight. Fair prices, your satisfaction guaranteed. Volume discount, delivery available. Kusel Limousins. Call John, 580-759-6038.

Registered Red Angus bulls. Fertility tested. Gwen Sue Ranch. Rush Springs, Okla. Call Jim at 405-514-0706.

Registered Brangus bulls, \$2,000, and fancy replacement heifers, \$1,250. Gentle dispositions, quality genetics. Discounts for veterans. Delivery available, lots of happy customers. Horsehead Ranch, www.horseheadranch.net. Call 918-695-2357.

FOR SALE - Miniature Sicilian donkeys for sale. Good pets, protectors. Also excellent sheep and cattle protectors, ward off dogs, big cats and buzzards. Call 918-297-2628, Hartshorne.

Registered Longhorn cattle, gentle and easy keepers. Starter herd packages include heifers or bred cows and 7 breeding-age bulls to choose from. We have 84" horn genetics and 10 years in the business. Great bulls to use on heifers for low birth weight calves. Can deliver. www.cattlecallranch.com. 580-364-6592.

Registered Beefmasters. Bulls, cows, heifers (bred and open), show heifers. Red, black and dun. Polled and horned. www.doubleducebeefmasters.com. Call 918-253-8680 or 918-557-6923.

*** NOTICE ***

THE AFR TRADING POST IS MOVING ONLINE!

**BEGINNING AUGUST 2021, ALL TRADING POST
ADS WILL BE HOSTED ONLINE AT
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 405-218-5593.

Beefmaster bulls. Tested and ready to work. Heavier weaning weights increase net profit. Call 580-456-7226 or 580-513-4113. Black Angus bulls, sons of top EPD bulls in the breed. Low birthweight, tremendous weaning and yearling weight growth. Fertility tested, wormed and shots up to date. Seyler Farms. Call Sandy @ 580-614-1150, Greenfield.

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FARM & RANCH EQUIPMENT

FOR SALE - John Deere 6' 3-pt brush hog, \$850. New AgriX 6' 3-pt brush hog, \$1,520. 405-624-2448.

MISCELLANEOUS

BIDS ACCEPTED - 50 acres of farmland for sale. 2 miles east, 1.5 miles south of Yale. Bids accepted until Sept. 1. There is a reserve. Send bids to Pat Glenn, 434311 US Hwy 271, Tuskahoma, Okla., 74574.

FOR SALE - High quality purebred Angus meat. Retail by the pound or sold by the quarter, half, or whole. Oklahoma Certified Beef, guaranteed to be born and raised in our pastures. Tonkawa. Call 580-628-3660.

Professional Sheep Shearing. 40 years of experience. Call 580-336-8766.

Free help understanding Medicare and Medicare supplements for AFR/OFU members 65 or older. Including Parts A, B, C and D, open enrollment, guarantee issue, sign-up times, etc. Call Melodie, 580-276-3672.

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**FOR MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER,
EMAIL.FARMSTRESS@AFRMIC.COM.**

COUNTY MEETING NOTICES

CADDO COUNTY

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 5:30 P.M.
Where: Fort Cobb School Cafeteria

CADDO CO. LOCAL #346

Thursday, December 2, 2021, Noon
Where: Tackett Insurance Agency
103 W. Main Street, Fort Cobb

CREEK COUNTY

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 7 P.M.
Where: Creek County Fairgrounds,
17808 W. US Rt 66, Kellyville
RSVP: Brown Insurance, 918-512-8380;
or Dowdy Insurance, 918-367-9950
Extra Info: Guest speaker will be AFR
Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh.
Meal provided.

DELAWARE COUNTY

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 6 P.M.
Where: Jay Community Building
429 S. 9th St., Jay, Okla.
Extra Info: Local #527 will meet
immediately afterward.

GARFIELD COUNTY

Friday, October 8, 2021, 6 P.M.
Where: Oakwood Christian Church
401 N. Oakwood, Enid
RSVP: By Oct. 1 @ 5 p.m. --
Bolenbaugh Agency, 580-242-2818;
Detrick Agency, 580-796-2100
Extra Info: Guest speaker will be Cory
Rink, Garfield Co. Sheriff. Meal provided.
There will be a business meeting with
election of officers and presentation of
resolutions. Lap blankets, no-slip socks,
hygiene products will be collected for
nursing home residents. Locals #152,
#529 and #668 will meet afterward.

GRADY CO. LOCAL #223

Monday, December 13, 2021, 5 P.M.
Where: Shebester Insurance Agency
615 W. Chickasha Ave., Chickasha

JACKSON COUNTY

Thursday, October 14, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
Where: Friendship Inn,
1800 N. Main Street, Altus
RSVP: Storehouse Services, Altus,
580-480-0049. Local #241 will meet
immediately afterward.

MAYES CO. LOCAL #220

Thursday, November 4, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
Where: Ag Center, OSU Extension
Office, 2200 NE 1st Street, Pryor
RSVP: By Oct. 27 -- Delozier Insurance
Agency, Pryor, 918-825-4353
Extra Info: Meal provided. There will be
a short business meeting with election
of officers for the coming year.

OKFUSKEE COUNTY

Monday, October 4, 2021, 6 P.M.
Where: FreeWill Baptist Church, Paden
RSVP: Cross Timbers Insurance,
918-623-2840
Extra Info: Locals #419 and #462 will
meet beforehand at 5:45 p.m.

OTTAWA COUNTY

Monday, December 6, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
Where: Ottawa Co. Courthouse Annex,
123 E. Central, Miami
RSVP: By Dec. 3rd -- 918-542-9677
Extra Info: Meal provided. There will
be a short business meeting with
election of officers for the coming
year. A membership/policyholder
business meeting will be held for each
local. Locals #60 and #79 will meet
immediately afterward.

PITTSBURG COUNTY

Saturday, Oct. 23, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
Where: Southeast Expo Center,
4500 W. Hwy 270, McAlester
RSVP: By Oct. 15 -- Aliene Bristow,
918-469-2360; Becky Ricks, 918-423-
7926; Janelle O'Kelley, 918-297-2553
Extra Info: Meal provided.

POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY

Tuesday, October 26, 2021, 5:30 P.M.
Where: Firelake Arena
18145 Old Rangeline Rd., Shawnee
RSVP: Call your agent by Oct. 22 w/
no. attending -- Stanford, 273-7095;
Williamson, 567-4959; Gilbert, 598-
2590; Mize, 997-5760.
Extra Info: Meal provided. Canned
goods will be collected for the area
food bank. There will be a short
business meeting and election of
officers for the coming year. A
membership/policyholder business
meeting will be held for each local.

Giving Back?

Is your AFR/OFU county or local organization giving back to your community? Whether it's a small donation or a big project, we'd love to hear about it!

405-218-5593
afrcoop@afrmic.com

Upcoming 2021 Events

July 20-22	OSU Big 3 Field Days, Stillwater
July 23-24	Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association Convention, Norman
July 25-27	Leadership Summit, Teen Session, Midwest City
July 28-31	Leadership Summit, Senior Session, Midwest City
July 29-30	High Plains Journal's Cattle U, Dodge City
August 1-3	CareerTech Oklahoma Summit, Oklahoma City
August 9-10	Oklahoma Women in Ag Conference, Oklahoma City
Sept. 6	Labor Day, AFR Home Office Closed
Sept. 27-Oct. 10	Tulsa State Fair
Sept. 30	Tulsa State Fair Livestock Judging Contest
Oct. 6	Tulsa State Fair Premium Sale



Oklahoma STRONG

From the Desk of Scott Blubaugh

As I've contemplated my message for this newspaper, I can't help but compare this summer to Summer 2020. This time last summer, we were navigating "life with Covid" and dealing with a myriad of changes to our daily lives. Unfortunately, these changes included a lot of canceled events and missed celebrations.

In comparison, this summer feels somewhat ordinary and unremarkable. We had a mild storm season and an abnormally cool early summer—a recipe that encourages people to get out and mingle. I think we're all more than ready to gather together again. Life is getting back to normal and everyone is welcoming it.

One event we're thrilled to welcome back is the AFR Leadership Summit. Leadership Summit is a longstanding summer camp tradition for AFR and it was a heartbreaking decision to cancel last year. This year, we couldn't be more excited to be back and hosting some of Oklahoma's best students in an immersive leadership experience.

We will have a special staff at this year's camp with several of our past Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members working as camp counselors. It will be fun to reconnect with them, but it's also an added benefit for our Summit attendees. Not only will campers grow connections with their peers, they'll also have an opportunity to build connections with "high flier" students who are just a bit older.

In addition to our YAC counselors, our AFR Youth Coordinator Tailor Fields Atkinson will be leading her first Summit this year. Tailor grew up in the AFR Youth Program and is now in charge of the camp she attended as a student years ago. We couldn't be more proud of the achievers our youth program creates! We wish Tailor luck as she finishes her planning and

welcomes Oklahoma's best and brightest students from across the state to the AFR Leadership Summit.

*I'm pleased to report another topic has actually *not* changed that much from last year. During the summer of 2020, the outcry against consolidation in agriculture and antitrust issues in the beef industry reached a fever pitch. This unified voice of discontent has not diminished or died out. In fact, the movement is continuing to gain ground.*

From a multitude of ranchers pushing for antitrust enforcement and increased market transparency to legislators, attorneys general and governors (including our own Gov. Kevin Stitt) petitioning USDA, Congress and even the president to take notice and take action, a movement is building. Change is on the horizon.

This beef antitrust movement has been a grassroots ground swell that leaves me in awe. In this time of "get big or go home" messaging, many individual farmers and ranchers feel like they're up against the machine of "Big Ag." But, the antitrust movement has reminded us of what we can accomplish by staying involved, staying on target and never giving up.

These early summer months have been huge for this movement. In May, Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) hosted a closed-door meeting in Phoenix with the five major cattle industry groups. It was an incredible honor for me to attend as a representative of National Farmers Union.

No staff or lobbyists were allowed to attend the Phoenix meeting and no press were invited. Because of its strict attendance standard, the meeting was likely the first of its kind. The conversation was rancher-to-rancher. No lobbyists, no attorneys, no hired guns. It was just 24 cattlemen and cattlemen talking

through the issues WITH each other, rather than AT each other.

I think the Phoenix meeting was a great success and an important stepping stone to unraveling the antitrust problems in the beef industry. We found consensus on some action items, got close to consensus on several others, and learned that we're closer together in opinion than we had once thought. Most importantly, we showed Congress and USDA that we have common ground and goals that we ALL want to achieve.

In June, the Senate Ag Committee held a hearing on beef market transparency and pricing. The hearing, packed with intense questioning and impassioned testimony, really laid bare the issues ranchers are facing across the U.S. If you haven't seen it, I encourage you to watch the hearing in its entirety. It will be time well spent.

Also in June, USDA announced a plan to begin strengthening enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act and, in July, President Biden signed an executive order that aims to promote competitive markets in many sectors, including agriculture.

As we watch for more antitrust developments through the summer, the AFR Cooperative staff will continue to champion the family farm and the rural communities that make our way of life possible. We fight every day for the ideals of our membership. If you have an interest in helping us, we'd love to hear from you.

Through the rest of this "return to normal" summer, I hope you find time to gather with your friends and family. We have so much to celebrate in this great nation and there's no better time than now.

God bless!

-Scott