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# Animal Welfare Update

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# CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

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Department of Agricultural Economics
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## Animal Welfare Update

| Market Report | Yr Ago | 4 Wks Ago | 10/7/11 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Livestock and Products, Weekly Average*** | | | |
| Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight | $95.09 | $117.69 | $121.00 |
| Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb. | 123.51 | 155.28 | 152.32 |
| Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb. | 112.79 | 140.00 | 138.77 |
| Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass | 152.42 | 180.25 | 184.20 |
| Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated | 70.54 | 83.02 | 92.53 |
| Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean | 82.94 | 94.52 | 98.06 |
| Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Wooled, South Dakota, Direct | 144.00 | 179.25 | 174.75 |
| National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB | 339.27 | 408.98 | 404.71 |
| ***Crops, Daily Spot Prices*** | | | |
| Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu. | 5.89 | 7.19 | 5.74 |
| Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu. | 4.89 | 7.17 | 5.90 |
| Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu. | 10.61 | 13.77 | 10.90 |
| Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt. | 8.27 | 12.00 | 9.82 |
| Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN , bu. | 3.64 | 3.63 | 3.38 |
| ***Feed*** | | | |
| Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton. | * | 185.00 | 185.00 |
| Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton. | 75.00 | 132.50 | 140.00 |
| Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton. | * | 85.00 | 92.50 |
| Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average. | 145.00 | 209.00 | 205.00 |
| Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average. | 49.50 | 74.00 | 72.75 |

*No Market

Beginning in 2002, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) embarked upon a campaign to ban battery cages for laying hens, gestation crates for pregnant sows and veal crates for veal calves. The HSUS strategy is to gather sufficient signatures to place their animal welfare initiative on the ballot, and present an emotional campaign regarding food animal confinement including sad pictures of laying hens, pregnant sows and veal calves in tight confinement. This approach has resulted, in recent years, in voter support exceeding 60 percent.

It seemed that the HSUS could do no wrong, and that wherever they proposed a ballot initiative, it was bound to be adopted. Some observers, including yours truly, expected a California-type ballot initiative to appear on the 2012 Nebraska General Election ballot.

Then Missouri happened. The HSUS placed an initiative on the November 2010 Missouri ballot, Proposition B, to regulate puppy mills. Initiative supporters included the Missouri Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the HSUS. Favorable editorials supporting adoption of the initiative were published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Kansas City Star. Opposing Proposition B were the American Kennel Club, the Missouri Veterinary Medical Association, the Missouri Family Farm Alliance, the Missouri Farm Bureau and the Missouri Pork Producers. Rural newspapers generally opposed Proposition B on their editorial pages. An October 18-20, 2010 poll showed 69 percent of likely voters were in favor of Proposition B. However, the final vote was a squeaker: Proposition B was narrowly approved, 51.6 percent for and 48.4 percent against. A 1.7 percent voter swing would have beaten the HSUS initiative.

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| State | Date | Vote | Species and Effective Date of Ban |
|---|---|---|---|
| Florida | November 2002 | 55% - 45% | Gestation Crates - 2008 |
| Arizona | November 2006 | 62% - 38% | Veal Crates and Gestation Crates - 2013 |
| Oregon | June 2007 | Statute | Gestation Crates - 2013 |
| Colorado | May 2008 | Statute | Veal Crates - 2012; Gestation Crates - 2018 |
| California | November 2008 | 64% - 36% | Battery Cages, Veal Crates and Gestation Crates - 2015 |
| Maine | May 2009 | Statute | Veal Crates and Gestation Crates - 2011 |
| Michigan | October 2009 | Statute | Veal Crates - 2012; Gestation Crates and Battery Cages - 2019 |
| Ohio | July 2010 | Agreement | Veal Crates - 2017; Gestation Crates - 2026 (existing) 2011 (new) |

The Missouri Proposition B vote was a major political wake-up call for the HSUS. And their post-Missouri strategy seems to be to limit their initiatives to more initiative-friendly blue states like Washington and Oregon, and to hold off making an initiative effort in red states like Nebraska. That certainly is my expectation, although HSUS could mount a petition campaign as late as next spring and still have time to get it on the 2012 ballot. But we will simply have to wait and see on that.

Finally, on July 7, 2011 the HSUS and the United Egg Producers (UEP) announced an agreement to seek federal legislation requiring the phase-in, over the next 15-18 years, of enriched poultry housing systems, gradually replacing the battery cages which the HSUS has long sought to outlaw. To say that the HSUS-UEP agreement rocked the agricultural community would be an understatement. Any federal legislation would likely supersede the current battery cage restrictions in Arizona, California, Michigan and Ohio.

What will happen in Congress is anyone's guess. Livestock groups and agricultural groups in general have not been supportive of the HSUS-UEP proposal. But no doubt an animal welfare proposal will surface in Congress in 2012. Farmers and livestock producers should stay tuned, as it is possible that any proposed federal legislation could address veal crates and gestation crates, in addition to battery cages.

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