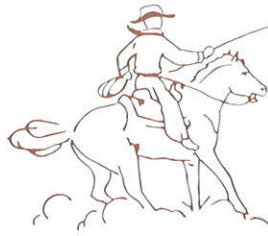


North Dakota
STOCKMEN'S ASSOCIATION



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Aug. 16, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

The North Dakota Stockmen's Association is a 90-year-old beef cattle trade organization representing 3,000 cattle-ranching families in our state. We write to you to request your assistance with a situation that has recently occurred.

As you are aware, on Aug. 9, 2019, fire shut down Tyson's Holcomb, Kan., beef processing plant. With a 6,000-head-per-day capacity, the facility is significant to the overall U.S. beef industry, representing approximately 6 percent of our nation's total beef processing capacity. The loss has sent ripples through the industry, adding uncertainty as cattle producers and feeders scramble to find a place to harvest their livestock and resulting in a dramatic negative market reaction, exacerbating an already dismal market environment just ahead of our producers' primary marketing season.

According to CattleFax estimates, other major packing facilities in Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Colorado and Iowa would need to slaughter more than 8 percent more cattle per week, or operate nearly three and a half more hours per week, to make up for the production shortfall due to the loss of the Holcomb plant. USDA will play a critical role in helping these plants – and our industry – work around these challenges. We urge your agency to help accommodate the added inspection and grading demands that will come with these elongated schedules until the Tyson plant is able to reopen. This may mean allowing inspectors to move to other plants and/or to work expanded shifts and weekends to keep up and to help keep our beef supply and our market current.

Additionally, we know that there are opportunists that could try to take advantage of this unfortunate situation and work to manipulate the market. We urge the Packers and Stockyards Division to be cognizant of this possibility and extra vigilant in guarding against any action that could ultimately devastate America's cattle-ranching families.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please call our office at (701) 223-2522.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Ellingson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Julie Ellingson
Executive Vice President