MONTANA Farm Bureau News Brief

TOP STORIES

September 2026

Supreme Court Candidate Forum

The MFBF Political Action Committee (PAC) and Yellowstone County Farm Bureau are hosting a Supreme Court Candidate Forum on Monday, September 21 at the Billings Hotel & Convention Center. A social will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the candidate forum from 7-8 p.m.

Plan to attend in person or livestream it on MFBF's YouTube channel, listen on Northern Ag Network's affiliate stations or contact your local radio station to request they air the event.

ACE applications open

Montana Farm Bureau's popular leadership training class, ACE (Advocate. Communicate. Educate.) is now accepting applications for 2027.

During this year-long program, participants will attend six in-person seminars focused on enhancing advocacy skills and leadership development. Class members will also participate in a Farm Bureau book club reading the MFBF history book, Legacies.

For additional information, including the dates of the 2027 seminars, and for an application visit https://www.mfbf.org/a-c-e. Applications are due by December 7, 2026.

Questions? Contact Sue Ann Streufert, sueanns@mfbf.org, 406-587-3153 or Karli Johnson, karlij@mfbf.org, 406-868-1233.

County annual meetings celebrate participation

Montana Farm Bureau's policy development process begins at the local level. County annual meetings—currently underway throughout September—serve as both listening sessions and decision-making forums. Members bring forward challenges facing their operations and communities, propose solutions, and vote on recommendations. A concern raised by a single farmer at a county meeting can, and often does, become state law or national policy.

A recent example comes from Cascade County sheep rancher Merrill McKamey. Facing stock losses from black bear predation, McKamey noted that Montana's Livestock Loss Board did not reimburse for black bear damage. He brought a proposal to his county annual meeting to expand the program. The policy gained support at the county level, advanced through the grassroots process, and was approved at the MFBF Annual Convention.

Guided by this member-driven policy, Montana Farm Bureau's legislative team advocated for the change during the 2025 Legislative Session, partnering with Rep. Eric Tilleman to introduce House Bill 356. McKamey testified in Helena, sharing his firsthand experience. On May 15, 2025, HB 356 was signed into law. Since then, Montana producers have been reimbursed over $12,800 for more than 20 black bear losses.

Grassroots engagement drives national impact, as well. Last year, Chouteau County member Lochiel Edwards introduced a proposal opposing the $85 billion Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern railroad merger, helping ignite a nationwide coalition.

The next policy success story starts locally—whether formulated in a pickup truck, an agronomist's office, or around the kitchen table. Montana Farm Bureau encourages all members and agricultural community neighbors to attend their local county annual meeting this September to share challenges, shape policy, and drive real results for Montana agriculture.



County annual meetings offer a time to set policy but also enjoy camaraderie. Pictured are the new Judith Basin County President Stan Olson, Jeanne Rankin and Cody Dirkson ready to enjoy a great meal.

STATE NEWS

Nominate the best woman in agriculture

Nominate the best of the best in the MFBF Outstanding Woman Farmer of Year. 2026 is designated as International Year of the Woman Farmer. What better time to acknowledge one of the outstanding women farmers or ranchers we have within our own Farm Bureau membership. Nominate an outstanding Woman Farmer or Rancher that is worthy of receiving the 2026 Montana Women Farmer/Rancher of the Year award.

The nominee must be a woman Farm Bureau member in production agriculture or agribusiness.

Submit your entry to tinyurl.com/WomanFarmerNomination and keep in mind that all nominations are due October 1, 2026.

Montana Research Roundup

Pulse researchers, producers, and agricultural organizations are invited to attend an interactive input session on Monday, November 30, 2026, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn in Great Falls, Montana. This gathering, hosted by the Montana Pulse Crop Committee, provides a platform to discuss current industry challenges, share market feedback, and guide the direction of future pulse research.

Hay trucking relief

Gov. Greg Gianforte issued an executive order that temporarily suspends hours of service regulations for certain carriers to facilitate and expedite the delivery of hay to Montana's farmers and ranchers. Waiving hours of service requirements ensures that producers can transport greater volumes in a short timeframe to prepare for the winter months ahead. The order is effective August 31, 2026, to September 13, 2026.

Protecting private property rights, ag in Helena

The 2027 Montana Legislative Session is shaping up to be fast-paced and critical for agriculture. Throughout the interim, MFBF monitored committee work and advocated for producers across several key policy areas. Here is a quick look at what we expect in Helena.

Protecting property rights remains an essential value for Montana farmers and ranchers. Legislative attempts will be made to legalize corner crossing—the practice of stepping between diagonally touching public parcels across private airspace. MFBF views this as a direct infringement on private property rights and will actively oppose these ef-forts. Rather than pitting public access against land ownership, Montana should build on its success with voluntary programs like Block Management, which already enrolls 6.9 million acres.



The Exempt Wells discussion will continue with three proposals: two expand exemptions, one does not, and one halts new wells when water is unavailable. MFBF views exempt well overuse as a symptom of a flawed water permitting system and will advocate for streamlined permitting for small uses alongside a comprehensive study bill.

MFBF will continue to support simplifying mitigation water rules for new uses and continuing the Water Court as an effective venue to resolve disputes.

Other legislation will cover the Livestock Loss Board proposals which would expand reimbursement eligibility to include eagle predation as well as losses of donkeys and alpacas and expanding county weed statutes to cover gravel and compost, while increasing noncompliance penalties.

As for property taxes, the battle will continue. As the state moves into a tighter budget session, expect attempts to undo the 2025 shifts that favored ag and primary residences over second homeowners, along with potential pushes for sales or income tax adjustments. MFBF will strictly defend agriculture against unfair tax burdens.

Don't miss Calling on the Capitol February 8-9, 2027 which provides an excellent time to visit with your legislators, testify in a committee on an important bill, and meet with state agency leaders.

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Calendar

MFBF Annual Convention & Trade Show
November 15-18, 2026
Billings, MT

AFBF Annual Convention
January 9-12, 2027
Charlotte, NC

MFBF Fusion Conference
February 6-7, 2027
Helena, MT

Calling on the Capitol
February 8-9, 2027
Helena, MT

People

Past District 3 Director **Kris Descheemaeker** was interviewed by Yellowstone Public Radio regarding President Trump's Proclamation for importing 300,000 metric tons for beef tariff-free.

Gallatin County Member **Jake Callantine** has been elected vice president of the Montana Beef Council.

In press release from **Senator Tim Sheehy** on the "American Food for American Schools" Act, MFBF President **Cyndi Johnson** noted, "Just like farmers nationwide, we here in Montana are proud of the products we grow so we appreciate the effort to highlight the importance of delivering this healthy, delicious food to kids in our local schools."

Mike and **Henry Hollenbeck** were interviewed by the Western Ag Reporter regarding their Conditional Use Permit for an indoor lamb feeding facility in Molt, Montana.

COUNTY NEWS

Powder River/Carter County held a fun-filled Membership Extravaganza August 2 at Boyes Hall with cornhole, trap shooting, bingo, cribbage, and frog and turtle races with great prizes for the winners. Lunch featured local lamb, ham, salads and desserts.

Southwest Counties held a meeting with officials from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, including Director Christy Clark August 5 in Dillon to discuss the proposed change to the grizzly bear 4 (d) rule.

Yellowstone County has been busy at the Montana Fair. On August 14 they were presented with the Livestock Appreciation award by the Yellowstone County 4-H. On August 16, they helped with Livestock Sale dinner by serving the dessert.

Judith Basin County held their annual meeting at the Stanford City Hall August 25. The program included updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Farm Service Agency and the County Conservation Office. Andy Burton from Halter, the satellite cow collar, supplied information on this new technology.

Carbon/Stillwater held their annual meeting August 27 at the Joliet Community Center. The meeting included presentations from Cattlemen U and AgriDrone Solutions.

Lewis and Clark County donated $500 to MFB Foundation during their annual meeting August 29 at Missouri River Brewing in East Helena.



Power River/Carter County held frog and turtle races during their Membership Extravaganza.

Rosebud/Treasure County held a golf scramble tournament as part of their county annual meeting August 29 at the Forsyth Golf Club. They had nine teams competing, presented awards, had a delicious hamburger lunch, then had their annual meeting.

Yellowstone County along with the MFBF PAC, is hosting a Montana Supreme Court Candidate Forum September 21 in Billings. **Richland County** will be hosting a candidate forum September 24 in Sidney.

Mark your calendar for the District 6 Fall Fest, held Saturday, October 17 at the Eastern Plains Event Center in Glendive. **Dawson/Wibaux**, **McCone**, **Prairie** and **Richland County** host this action-packed event featuring tasty food, fabulous door prizes and music/dancing. The keynote speaker for the event will be nationally recognized author and speaker and Wyoming native, Ron Rabou who will talk about his personal experiences in ag and entrepreneurship. Watch the MFBF social media outlets and Fall *Spokesman* for more information.



Lewis & Clark County President Scott Stoner presents MFBF President Cyndi Johnson a check for the MFB Foundation.



Southwest Counties held a meeting with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to discuss grizzly bears.



Yellowstone County leaders serve dessert during the Livestock Sale dinner at the Montana Fair.



Carbon/Stillwater County members enjoyed a drone demonstration from AgriDrone Solutions.



Rosebud/Treasure County President Dusty Martens congratulates Forsyth High School graduate Kayden Schiffer on receiving their scholarship.



The Rosebud/Treasure Golf Tournament winning team with Melanie Martens, Logan Martens, Dusty Martens and Dylan Sorenson. Following the tournament, members enjoyed a tasty lunch and participated in the annual meeting.

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NATIONAL NEWS

MFBF frustrated with beef imports proclamation

Montana Farm Bureau Vice President Casey Mott has expressed frustration with President Trump's announcement of importing an additional 300,000 metric tons of beef into the United States, tariff-free.

"As a rancher I am extremely disappointed in President Trump's proclamation to drop tariffs on imported beef. It will certainly affect prices paid to the rancher but I'm not so sure it will reduce the price paid by consumers," said Mott. "The prices Montana ranchers have received for their cattle have been good recently. Those good prices finally provided us with the ability to catch up financially because the inputs for raising beef have increased $400 per animal from 2020; that's nearly 30 percent. That means we must make that much more to break even. Everything we put into raising that beef has increased, including the cost of hay, leased pasture, pickup trucks, tractors and equipment. Even the cost of our groceries has increased, and diesel prices have sky-rocketed. I don't see any of our costs decreasing. Dropping the tariffs on imported beef certainly will have a huge negative impact on the feeder cattle market."

Farm Bill still a work in progress

Farm Bureau is still working toward a full, five-year Farm Bill. While many provisions were enhanced and extended by the One Big Beautiful Bill in 2025, other Farm Bureau priorities remain in limbo. Legislation designed to complete full reauthorization across conservation, rural development, research, trade, forestry, energy and specialty crop programs is in the works. The House passed their bill out of committee in late April but the Senate committee failed to advance their bill on a party line vote, shortly before August recess. When Congress reconvenes, the Senate must pass the bill out of committee. The bills are different so they must then be conferenced. A large delegation of farmers, including several from MFBF, will be in DC the week of September 14 as Senate Ag attempts another passage vote.

Farm Bureau Rx

Purchasing prescriptions shouldn't break the bank! Now Montana Farm Bureau can help keep money in your wallet with this member benefit.

As a Farm Bureau® member, you and your family have access to a FREE Prescription Drug Card program. Save up to 80 percent at more than 68,000 national and regional pharmacies.

It is easy. There are no forms to fill out. Simply take the card into a participating pharmacy with your prescription to use for discounts on medications.

Visit mt.fbiris.com/benefits for details.