

# President's Message



## Randy Schmitt, President *Rugby*



Greetings to all from the Schmitt Ranch!

In early February, our executive team traveled to Nashville, Tenn., to attend CattleCon, the convention and trade show of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). Ironically, all but one day we were there, it was warmer in North Dakota than it was in Nashville. Thanks to our hosts for providing a great venue and outstanding hospitality. The convention saw record-setting attendance, with reports of nearly 9,500 registered participants.

The strong turnout may have been influenced in part by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the secretary of Health and Human Services, who addressed attendees on the importance of nutrition and shared his perspective on the new Dietary Guidelines. His message emphasized how the beef we proudly produce fits into his vision of making Americans healthy again — starting with wholesome, nutrient-dense meals like our grandmothers used to prepare.

One of the highlights of the convention for me each year is the CattleFax report and market forecast. A few key takeaways stood out. On the supply side, the U.S. beef cowherd is expected to begin 2026 approximately 180,000 head higher, marking 2025 as the cyclical low. The continued closure of the Mexican border to feeder cattle imports is expected to keep the cattle on feed below year-ago levels through the first half of 2026, maintaining the imbalance between harvest capacity and available fed cattle supplies. The timing and pace of a Mexican border reopening in 2026 will significantly influence feeder cattle prices next year and beyond. Carcass weights are forecast to increase by another 10 pounds for the third consecutive year,

although at a slower rate than the previous two years.

On the demand side, 2025 proved to be record-strong even as prices continued to climb. With the “flipping” of the food pyramid and consumer trends prioritizing protein intake, nutrient-dense foods, less-processed options and reduced concern over fat content, the outlook remains encouraging. These trends should continue to support beef demand into 2026 and beyond.

CattleFax's extended weather outlook was less definitive for the Northern Plains. My takeaway was a projection for slightly warmer temperatures with fewer moisture events — something we will continue to monitor closely.

At our ranch, early March marks the arrival of a new calfcrop. Early calving requires additional labor, along with fresh straw-bedded pens and barns to give newborn calves a strong start during those cold, blustery days and nights. After their first 24 hours, they move into larger, clean areas with wind protection until Mother Nature tells us it's time to open the gates.

Each calving season feels like turning the page to a fresh chapter. While 2025 will undoubtedly be remembered as a historic market year and referenced in conversations for years to come, it is now behind us. As we look ahead, we remain hopeful and optimistic that 2026 will bring continued success stories that fit seamlessly into those future conversations.

NDSA Environmental Services Director Scott Ressler told his wife Sheila the house was freezing. Sheila said, “Just go stand in the corner.” Scott asked, “Why?” Sheila said, “Because it's always 90 degrees there.”

## PAST PRESIDENTS

### 1988-90:

Roger Stüber • Bowman • (701) 523-5371

### 1992-94:

Dean Meyer • Dickinson • (701) 225-2736

### 1998-2000:

Richard C. Tokach • St. Anthony  
(701) 445-7390

### 2000-02:

Gene Harris • Killdeer • (701) 863-6695

### 2002-04:

Jeff Dahl • Gackle • (701) 485-3762

### 2004-06:

Melvin Leland • Sidney, Mont.  
(701) 565-2347

### 2006-08:

Mark Huseth • McLeod • (701) 439-2385

### 2012-14:

Jason Zahn • Towner • (701) 720-7247

### 2014-16:

Steve Brooks • Bowman • (701) 523-6732

### 2016-18:

Warren Zenker • Gackle • (701) 320-2585

### 2018-20:

Dan Rorvig • McVile • (701) 797-7338

### 2020-22:

Jeff Schafer • New Rockford • (701) 947-2568

### 2022-24:

Jason Leiseth • Arnegard • (701) 770-1129

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