

The Cattleman



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NEWS BRIEFS

Cattle Raisers Fire Relief Fund Applications Due June 30

Almost \$350,000 has been raised through generous contributions from cattle raisers, producer organizations and allied industry friends to the Cattle Raisers Relief Fund of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Foundation. Applications for funding assistance will now be considered from ranchers and landowners affected by the March 2017 wildfires in the Texas Panhandle. Distribution of the funds will be managed by a committee consisting of members of the foundation, TSCRA and local producers. Consideration will be given to the number of acres burned, number of cattle lost or impacted, fence repairs and replacement, corral and structure losses and other fire-related costs. Assistance is not limited to TSCRF or TSCRA members. The deadline to submit an application for assistance is June 30, 2017. Applications are available at tscra.org/relieffund. Call 817-332-7064 for a printed form or for more information.

TSCRA Applauds Passage of HB 2817

TSCRA applauded the final passage of HB 2817, authored by State Rep. Mary Gonzalez, D-El Paso, and sponsored by Sen. Charles Perry, R-Lubbock. The legislation was sent on May 30 to Gov. Gregg Abbott for his signature. Provisions within the bill ensure those who criminally kill livestock will be held accountable, and that TSCRA Special Rangers have the tools necessary to continue their steadfast protection of Texas' ranchers.

TSCRA Special Rangers have noticed a disturbing increase in offenses that involve the criminal killing of livestock, prompting concern for the welfare of the cattle and the livelihoods of Texas cattle raisers.

At present, criminal offenses involving the killing of cattle do not carry the same penalty as stealing that same animal, although both crimes have the same net effect on the rancher. Regardless of whether an animal is stolen or killed, the rancher loses the value of that animal and its potential offspring. HB 2817 ensures that shooting a cow will be as punitive as stealing it, a minimum third-degree felony.

The bill was also amended in the Texas Senate to include language from a separate House bill, authored by Rep. Tracy King, D-Uvalde, which had passed unanimously from the House Agriculture and Livestock Committee. The provision guarantees that TSCRA can continue its cattle inspection program, a valuable asset for Texas ranchers. Over the past decade, the program has helped recover or account for more than 37,000 head of stolen cattle and related property worth more than \$42 million.

TDA Warning Against Hay Sales Scammers



The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) would like to warn Texans about a scam being run against individuals who have hay for sale. TDA has received alerts from Johnson and Karnes counties about scammers contacting hay sellers. The supposed hay buyer will send the seller a check in excess of the sale price of the hay and then ask the seller to wire the extra money somewhere else. The scammers explain the overpayment by saying they need to cover taxes or shipping costs; however, then the check bounces and the scammer already has the money wired to them. The hay seller is then left to pay the money back to the bank.

TDA recommends always reaching out to your local law enforcement agency if something seems fishy about a transaction or purchase. In addition, you may use TDA's Hay Hotline to locate hay sellers and buyers in your area by visiting TDA's website at texasagriculture.gov and typing Hay Hotline in the search box.

BQA Tip of the Month: Be Buckshot Aware

A core principle of BQA is the implementation of management practices that prevent the adulteration of beef from foreign objects such as bullets, birdshot and buckshot. Never use a shotgun to gather cattle or use a firearm to encourage the neighbor's bull to go back across the fence. Additionally, make sure hunters are educated about this issue and that they are aware of the locations of any livestock during a hunt.

For more information about BQA and the dates of upcoming BQA training sessions, please visit texasbeefquality.com.

Arrest in Case of Cattle Stolen From 97-Year-Old Rancher

Bryan Andrew McBrayer, 49, was arrested last month on charges of Theft of Cattle Against an Elderly, a second-degree felony. The charges and arrest are the result of an investigation by TSCRA Special Ranger Kenny Murchison.

In November 2016, Murchison was contacted by a 97-year-old Williamson County rancher who reported cattle missing from his property. The victim suspected that his stepson, McBrayer, was involved in the theft. Murchison contacted the nearest livestock auction and learned that the each time the suspect hauled cattle to the auction for his stepfather he also sold cattle in his own name. McBrayer, however, did not own any cattle. In all, nine head of cattle were sold by the suspect netting more than \$7,500 in ill-gotten proceeds.

Murchison presented the case to a Lampasas grand jury, who decided to indict McBrayer. Murchison subsequently obtained an arrest warrant and McBrayer was taken into custody on May 17 by the Texas Department of Public Safety. He was booked into the Williamson County Jail and is now awaiting trial.

Cattle Thief and Federal Fugitive Enters Guilty Plea

Ronald Ryan Shepard Jr., 41, is finally heading to a Texas prison. On May 18, Shepard pled guilty to three counts of Theft of Livestock, third-degree felonies, in the Eighth District Court of Rains County.

Shepard first caught the attention of Texas authorities in August 2011 after he failed to make prompt payment for cattle purchased from seven East Texas auction markets. TSCRA Special Ranger Larry Hand began an 11-month investigation, which ultimately led to Shepard's indictment. However, in March 2012, he faked his own kidnapping and went on the run. It was revealed that multiple states had, or were in the process of issuing, arrest warrants for Shepard. He was also wanted by federal authorities after violating his federally-supervised release on bank fraud charges.

Following his disappearance, TSCRA's Operation Cow Thief program offered a reward for information on Shepard's whereabouts. Special Ranger Hand also solicited the assistance of the U.S. Marshals Service. Information obtained by TSCRA was passed on to federal authorities and was vital in locating Shepard. He had fled to Mexico and was hiding out in Mazatlán, where he was subsequently arrested and extradited in July 2012.

Upon his return to the U.S., Shepard faced indictments in a myriad of federal and state courts. He has since pleaded guilty to federal or state livestock related charges in Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri and Texas.

Texas was the final jurisdiction to receive custody of Shepard. As a result of his guilty plea, he was remanded to the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to serve 10 years in prison. He was also ordered to pay court costs, attorney's fees and more than \$125,000 in restitution to his victim in Texas. As a part of the plea agreement, he also agreed to pay restitution of \$200,000 to a victim in Florida in lieu of extradition and criminal prosecution.

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TSCRA EVENT CALENDAR

You Are Welcome to Attend!

- Jun. 15-17:** TSCRA Summer Meeting, Galveston
- Jun. 19:** TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Pittsburg
- Jun. 20:** Ranching 101 – Rancher Panel Discussion, Fort Worth
- Jun. 22:** TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Henrietta
- Jul. 11:** TSCRA Ranch Gathering, New Braunfels
- Jul. 13:** Wichita Falls Cattleman's Luncheon, Wichita Falls
- Jul. 18:** Ranching 101 - Genetics, EPDs and AI, Fort Worth
- Jul. 20:** Texas Beef Quality Assurance Training, Gainesville
- Jul. 21:** Texas Beef Quality Assurance Training, Clarksville