

# Business issues addressed by livestock producers

Ranchers, feeders and dairy producers addressed business concerns through policy approved at the Kansas Livestock Association Convention on Dec. 3-4 in Wichita.

Kansas Livestock Association members voted to endorse resolutions dealing with taxes, livestock marketing, transportation issues and water policy, among others.

"These resolutions were built on member input, starting with roundtable discussions across the state this fall, continuing through committee and council meetings at the convention and ultimately gaining approval from the general Kansas Livestock Association membership during the annual meeting," said Kansas Livestock Association President Mark Smith, a rancher and farmer from Sharon Springs.

A number of resolutions have application to the state's current budget challenges. As lawmakers look for additional revenue going into the 2010 Kansas legislative session, Kansas Livestock Association members support continued sales tax exemptions for inputs and livestock.

These include exemptions on new and used farm machinery, grain storage facilities, drying and cleaning equipment, repair parts and the service and labor on repairs.

Kansas would be at a disadvantage to surrounding states if these exemptions were lost.

Kansas Livestock Association members support continuation of the Kansas Animal Health Department as a stand-alone agency.

This policy is based on the belief that effectively protecting the health of the state's livestock population is important to the overall economy, and Kansas Animal Health Department, as a stand-alone agency, is best suited to the task.

A viable transportation system is the subject of one resolution. Members support passage of a new, comprehensive transportation plan for Kansas.

Language suggests the new plan should prioritize the maintenance of existing transportation systems and the construction of major infrastructure projects connecting the economic activities of Kansas with other states.

Kansas Livestock Association members adopted a new resolution supporting the prohibition on harvesting non-ambulatory cattle for human consumption.

This policy suggests non-ambulatory cattle should be humanely euthanized.

Long-standing policy opposing government regulations that narrow the business interests or limit the management and marketing freedoms of individual producers was retained.

Another resolution charges Kansas Livestock Association with guarding members' freedom of choice to conduct business and utilize marketing programs as they see fit.

A new resolution suggests futures contract specifications match industry needs and facilitate convergence of futures prices with the cash market.

Kansas Livestock Association members believe this is necessary

for a meaningful risk management system.

Proposed changes to the Clean Water Act are opposed in Kansas Livestock Association policy. Members oppose expanding Clean Water Act jurisdiction by redefining "waters of the U.S."

The resolution also opposes amendments to CWA that would usurp state primacy issues or impair state water allocations, management systems and property rights.

Water conservation was addressed during policy discussions. Kansas Livestock Association members support continuation of the Water Rights Conservation Program administered by the Kansas Division of Water Resources.

The Kansas Livestock Association membership formed new policy opposing the translocation of wild and feral horses and burros to geographic areas outside the western U.S.

Members favor, as an alternative, using humane means to reduce the population and manage these animals.

*Kansas Livestock Association is a trade organization representing the state's livestock business on legislative, regulatory and industry issues at both the state and federal levels.*

*The association's mission of protecting members' common business interests and enhancing their ability to meet consumer demand is funded through voluntary dues dollars paid by its members.*

## Road

(Continued from Page 1) old road bed, cutting down the hill and resurfacing the roadway. Stiles said the primary hill will be cut down by six feet.

"It will provide the infrastructure necessary to support the existing businesses and current growth of our community as well as promote future growth,"

she said.

"It is essential to prepare for future growth in order to take full advantage of opportunities when they arise."

"The Washington Street Improvement Project provides the final infrastructure necessary to future business growth as the area is already equipped with

water and sewer line access," Stiles said.

Removing the hill will also provide for public safety, Stiles said, because the hill limits visibility.

Jane Wyatt, Emergency Medical Services director, said the facility should be finished by Jan. 19.

"Our local contractors are doing a great job," she said.

## County

(Continued from Page 1) but may have to charge for it in the future.

•Norton County Health Department Administrator and Registered Nurse Gina Frack told the commission she wanted clarification on the employee handbook because she had an employee who had a question regarding foster children.

Frack said the employee wanted to know if a sick day could be taken if the child got sick or if they needed to be taken to the doctor. The commission discussed it, saying a foster parent has the same responsibility to foster children as biological children.

The commissioners decided to table the issue before making a change to the employee handbook.

Frack reported on the distribution of H1N1 vaccine, saying they have been getting weekly shipments, and public demand has been high.

She said the health department will begin distributing it to Norton Correctional Facility inmates at the end of the week or next week.

•Norton City/County Economic Development Director Diane Stiles presented the application for the Recovery Zone Economic Development Bond Reallocation.

•The commission discussed payroll for county employees due to the courthouse being closed on Dec. 8.

They decided to do straight pay with no overtime or extra pay for those employees who had worked. The sheriff's office, Emergency Medical Services personnel, road and bridge and county health department had employees working

to provide essential services, even though the courthouse had been closed.

The next Norton County Com-

missioners meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Dec. 28 on the second floor of the courthouse.

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## Armory

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A total of 29 full time Guard staff and 412 traditional/M-day Guard soldiers will be impacted by the consolidation. Traditional/M-day soldiers are those who train one weekend a month and two weeks a year.

For several soldiers, the changes will mean a shorter drive to work. Prior to these closures, more than 52 percent of Kansas Guardsmen lived within 50 miles of their armory.

After these closures, two percent more of Kansas Guardsmen, for a total of 54 percent of Kansas Guardsmen, will live within 50 miles of their armory, making it a shorter drive to work.

Closing the 18 armories will reduce \$156,662 from the current fiscal year's operating budgets to meet state requirements and addresses additional cuts for next year's budget for a total of \$264,217 for 2011.

Significant additional savings beyond the \$420,000 will result from consolidating operations and no longer maintaining or inspecting the facilities.

In the past, maintenance has been deferred and later made up with millions of dollars in bonds.

"We carefully deliberated the best approach to consolidate our personnel and equipment while maintaining a strong National Guard presence in each region of the state," Bunting said.

"Our closure plan allows us to do this and we will continue to support the communities of Kansas in times of need as we always have."

In the communities of Horton, Sabetha and Troy, the Head Start Program is operating out of each of the armories. Guard leadership will work with the community regarding the program to ensure it can continue operations at the armories for the remainder of its 2009/2010 school year.

**Criteria for determining closures**

A comprehensive strategic analysis was conducted to consider the closure of armories and consolidation of operations.

It included location and proximity to other armories, historical and projected demographic shifts in population, consolidation of operations, condition of current facilities and the potential to expand to accommodate new mission requirements in the future, required facility upgrades and maintenance costs.

Another factor included ensuring a National Guard presence in each of the seven homeland security regions to support domestic response operations.

"Many of the facilities to be closed were built in the 1950s and designed for 100 to 150 soldiers; however, today several of these facilities have only 50 people training there," Bunting said.

"This isn't cost effective, it reduces the cohesiveness of our units and it isn't sustainable given the budget situation we have been facing for several years and which isn't likely to improve in the near future."

**Disaster response will not be impacted**

Despite the consolidations, the Kansas National Guard is committed to its state mission of disaster support to communities.

"Although the Kansas Guard has never had an armory in every community or even every county, we have always fulfilled our mission to help protect Kansans and their property during emergencies, no matter where they occur in our state, and we remain com-

mitted to this," Bunting said. "We didn't have armories in Greensburg, Chapman, Osawatomie, Hoisington, Sublette or Parsons as well as many other communities hit by severe weather in recent years, yet we responded and stayed as long as we were needed."

Eventually all of the closed armories will be returned to the communities for local use.

In the meantime, some of the impacted facilities will remain unoccupied for a time while equipment and personnel are transferred and operations are consolidated.

"With fewer armories, strategically located around the state, we will be better postured to sustain the 38 remaining facilities and provide our Guardsmen and the local communities with the type of facility they deserve," Bunting added.

Prior closures of armory locations have occurred in Kansas for a variety of reasons; however, usually these involved one or two at a time. A total of 14 armories have closed since 1982.

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