



# 2025

## MINNESOTA STATE CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL REPORT



#### Mission:

To create and maintain an economic and political climate that provides individual members the opportunity to sustain and grow the cattle industry in Minnesota.

The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association (MSCA) continued its mission in 2025 to strengthen the beef industry across Minnesota by advancing producer advocacy, expanding educational outreach, fostering community engagement and enhancing member value. Throughout the year, MSCA worked on behalf of cattle producers to influence public policy, deliver impactful educational programs and promote a strong, sustainable future for Minnesota beef.

Advocacy remained a top priority for MSCA in 2025. Association leadership actively engaged with state and federal policymakers on issues critical to cattle producers, including livestock depredation compensation, grazing access and wildlife management. Steak on a Stick held in April gives MSCA a great opportunity for this. MSCA supported efforts to strengthen livestock risk protection tools and emphasized the importance of disease preparedness, including Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccine bank funding, to safeguard Minnesota's cattle industry.

MSCA hosted its annual Summer Beef Tour in Little Falls, bringing producers together for a full day of learning and networking. The tour featured multiple stops highlighting cattle operations, agribusiness partners and feedlot practices, providing valuable insight into management strategies and industry trends.

The 2025 Minnesota Cattle Industry Convention was held December 5-6 at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud. The event offered educational sessions on market outlooks, production technologies, succession planning and policy updates, along with a robust trade show and networking opportunities. Family Feud was a big hit as well!

In partnership with the Minnesota Beef Council, MSCA supported leadership and advocacy training through Top of the Class, to help emerging leaders effectively communicate

the beef industry's story and represent producers at the local and state levels.

MSCA continued to keep members informed through the *Minnesota Cattleman* newspaper and the *Policy Pen* digital communications. Regular updates highlighted legislative activity, event information and producer success stories, ensuring members remained connected and engaged throughout the year.

Local cattlemen's associations played a vital role in MSCA's success. At the annual convention, outstanding affiliate achievements in beef promotion, community outreach and youth engagement were recognized, underscoring the strength of Minnesota's grassroots cattle organizations.

The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association enters 2026 positioned for continued success. Through strong advocacy, quality education and dedicated member involvement, MSCA remains committed to advancing the interests of Minnesota cattle producers and strengthening the beef industry for future generations. Thank you to all the board members who volunteer your time. Your time away from your farms and ranches does not go unnoticed.

This association would not work without all of you. Your input and leadership helps keep MSCA representing producers across our diverse environments within this state.

Your membership is the reason we have a voice in St. Paul and Washington D.C. Thank you for your membership, and encourage others to join to make us stronger.

Jake Thompson

President

Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

## 2025 Cattlemen Events



### ESAP

Rachel Gray of Blackduck, MN, and her family were awarded as the NCBA Region III Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) winners in February during CattleCon in San Antonio. Established in 1991, ESAP celebrates outstanding land stewards in the cattle industry. Regional ESAP winners come from every corner of the country and undertake stewardship efforts unique to their environment, landscape and resources.



### Steak on a Stick

The MSCA once again grilled steaks on the front lawn of the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul during April. This annual event brings cattle producers and state legislators/staffers together to network and discuss priority issues. The West Central Cattlemen's Association (WCCA) and Cottonwood Cattle Producers provided grills for the event, and WCCA donated the steaks. MSCA members assisted with grilling and serving steaks. We were able to serve over 1,000 "steak on a sticks" in just one hour! This is our opportunity to share the story of beef production with policy makers while enjoying our delicious product.



### Washington D.C. Advocacy

MSCA Executive Director Kaitlyn Root and MSCA Region 7 Director Ryan Vos traveled to Washington D.C. in September to meet with Congressional offices to discuss Minnesota cattle producer priorities. While in D.C., Ryan and Kaitlyn met with nearly all of the Minnesota delegation members of Congress. Key topics discussed included improving the Conservation Reserve Program to include more opportunities for grazing; support for the Beef Checkoff; delisting the gray wolf and updating the Endangered Species Act; and increasing truck weights.



## Developing Future Leaders

The MSCA sponsors the Minnesota Beef Council's Top of Class program each year. This program develops future leaders of the beef industry through two in-state classes and one trip to Denver, Colorado. The mission of this program is to develop the skills of Minnesota's beef industry leaders to maximize their impact and effectiveness in local, state, national and international arenas.

MSCA also supports youth in the beef industry by offering two \$500 scholarships each year – the Dennis Bottem & Reid Mason scholarships – and by sponsoring the Beef Ambassador Scholarship and 4-H Award sponsorships.

## Summer Tour

The Mississippi Valley Cattlemen's Association hosted the 2025 MSCA Summer Tour in Little Falls, Minnesota. The tour brought in around 600 attendees and highlighted multiple operations and businesses in central Minnesota, including Barrett Petfood, Kathrein Farms, Smude's Angus Farms, Kaiser Farms, Caughey Cattle Co. and Zapzalka Farms.

## Farmfest

The MSCA kept tradition this year by selling our Big Beef Sandwiches at Farmfest in August. This is one of the largest fundraising events for the MSCA, and the event also serves as an opportunity for discussion with Minnesota policy makers and representatives. Influential representatives stopped by to grab a sandwich and discuss what is happening on the ground for Minnesota cattle producers. This year also marked the retirement of the "Farmfest Committee" (Mark Malecek, Grant & Dawn Breitkreutz, Dick Pesek and Krist Wollum). The MSCA is grateful for the time this committee has dedicated towards running a successful event each year for us.



## Minnesota Cattle Industry Convention

The MSCA hosted the Minnesota Cattle Industry Convention at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud Dec. 5-6. The convention offered educational sessions including presentations on utilizing technology in beef production, finding stability in volatile times and farm succession planning, as well as a state legislative policy update. Keynote speakers included U.S. Meat Export Federation Senior VP, Industry Relations, John Hinners, National Cattlemen's Beef Association President-Elect Gene Copenhaver and American National CattleWomen Vice President Debbie Chute. Dick Pesek was awarded as the 2025 Minnesota Cattleman of the Year, and Amy Mastin received the 2025 Industry Service Award. Lilly Ostlie was named the recipient of the Dennis Bottem Scholarship.



## State Priority Issues



**Jake Thompson**  
President, Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

### Elk/Wolf Depredation Funding

Producers in northwestern Minnesota face crop and fence destruction from elk. Elk depredation claims through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) totaled \$184,323.50 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. This amount exceeds the \$155,000 the MDA had allotted for claims. Minnesota producers also face the detrimental problem of wolf kills. FY 2024 wolf depredation claims totaled \$185,792, and FY 2025 claims totaled \$197,920. Both of these totals are higher than the \$175,00 that was allotted to the MDA for reimbursement of claims.

During the 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session, MSCA President Jake Thompson testified in support of increased depredation funding for elk and wolf claims in both the Minnesota House and Senate ag committees.

On May 23, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signed the ag omnibus bill into law. This bill included an additional \$350,000 total for elk and wolf depredation the next two fiscal years.

The MSCA also does not support the transfer of elk from northwestern Minnesota to the Fon du Lac Reservation in Carlton County. MSCA representatives attended meetings with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources this year to discuss the proposed transfer and MSCA's stance.

### Delisting Gray Wolves

The MSCA continues to support delisting of the gray wolf and updating of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA's intent was to identify species most at risk of extinction, provide tools for recovery and delist those species when recovery goals were achieved. Identification, evaluation, listing, recovery and delisting are all key components of the ESA process – but since 1973, only two percent of listed species have met their recovery goals and been delisted. Now is the time to make urgent improvements, and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association is advocating for updates as well.

### Feedlot Regulations

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is proposing to amend existing Minnesota Rules Chapter 7020 governing animal feedlots. MPCA

held sessions around the state this year to provide background, review technical standards and lay out an expected timeline for the animal feedlot rulemaking. MSCA representatives attended meetings with MPCA to discuss this proposal and submitted comments during the comment period. This is a multi-year process, and MSCA will keep members updated as this process moves forward.

### Cell-cultured Fake Meat Labeling

The MSCA supports legislation which will require laboratory protein producers and/or processors to label consumer packaging identifying that fake meat product contains cell-cultured product. MSCA supports free market opportunities and consumers being able to buy what

they choose at the grocery store. However, our consumers deserve to know if the "meat" they are buying was produced in a lab, rather than on a farm. On March 21, MSCA Executive Director Kaitlyn Root testified in the Minnesota Senate Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development Committee in support of Senate File 239, a bill defining cell-cultured meat and requiring food labels to identify a product containing cell-cultured meat or cell-cultured poultry. There was no inclusion of this bill into law this year, but MSCA will continue advocating for this measure.



**Kaitlyn Root**  
Minnesota Cattlemen's Association  
SF 239  
Defining cell-cultured meat and cell-cultured poultry

### Keeping Beef on the Plate

On Jan. 16, MSCA President Jake Thompson provided verbal comment during the virtual public meeting for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to hear oral comments from the public on the Scientific Report of the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Jake shared the importance of having beef in Americans' diets. On Jan. 7, 2026, MSCA and NCBA welcomed the release of the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). The updated DGAs nearly double the recommended daily amount for protein intake, increasing it to 1.2-1.6 grams per kilogram body weight, depending on your age group and individual caloric needs. Red meat is specifically mentioned as a healthy source of protein in a varied, balanced diet in these recommendations.

### Ag/Environmental Lawsuit

In April of this year, a broad-based coalition of respected Minnesota farmer organizations, including the MSCA, filed a request to intervene in Ramsey County District Court litigation filed in late January by the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA), Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) and the Minnesota Well Owners Organization (MNWOO). The MCEA/MNTU/MNWOO litigation alleges that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have not adopted sufficient rules to protect ground and surface water in the SE MN Karst and Central Sands region from nitrates and seeks to force the state agencies to rewrite existing regulations on farming practices. The coalition of Minnesota farmer organizations strongly disputes these allegations against the state agencies charged with protecting ground and surface water.

## SAVE THE DATE – 2026 EVENTS

**July 14, 2026** – MSCA Summer Tour – Marshall, MN area, hosted by Southwest Cattlemen

**December 11 & 12, 2026** – Minnesota Cattle Industry Convention – Mankato, MN