

Virginia Cattlemen's Association

Policy for State & National Issues

The resource and advocacy group of the Virginia cattle industry

(Updated July 24, 2020)

Animal Damage Control

- The Association recognizes the threat of natural predators to cattle operations and supports counter measures that are biologically sound as well as effective.
- The Association supports predator control programs that are private or public in nature and encourages cooperation between the sectors for solutions that best fit individual operations.
- The Association encourages continued support for livestock predator control through the USDA Wildlife Services agents and the continued support of necessary permits to reduce the population of wildlife and nuisance species in order to minimize the damage to crops and livestock throughout the entire state.
- The Association supports re-examination of The Migratory Bird Treaty Act to allow for more invasive and comprehensive control of nuisance species of birds and particularly the Black Vulture which causes threat to livestock and hardship to livestock producers through limited means of control.
- The Association, recognizing the threats posed by elk to agriculture, and cattle production particularly, supports maintaining the population of elk in Virginia to the current controlled management area of Buchanan, Dickinson and Wise counties with eligibility for elk to be taken outside of this management area during the regular deer season without implementation of a special tagging system.

Cattle Care

- The Association supports responsible use and production of cattle for food, fiber, work, education, exhibition, and research conducted for the benefit of both cattle and humans.
- The Association supports the Beef Quality Assurance standards for cattle handling, nutrition, management, transportation, and animal health practices.
- The Association supports cattle care decisions made in the best scientific knowledge and professional experience and opposes state or local policies that are burdensome, unreasonable, and unnecessarily affect the ability of a cattle producer to care for or sustainably endeavor to produce cattle.
- The Association supports the advancement of cattle care practices through research and education particularly advancements supported by the utilization of Checkoff dollars.
- The Association opposes investigation of animal care by those who have no training or experience in livestock or food animal husbandry whether it be by citizen volunteers or those employed by government or non-government agencies.
- The Association supports bovine emergency response training (BERP) by local & state law enforcement, first responders and emergency management to more appropriately address accidents involving cattle transport.
- The Association recognizes the importance of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program and therefore supports increasing the number of Virginia producers that are BQA-certified and promoting the understanding of the BQA program and the positive outcomes it provides for the cattle industry.

42 **Cattle Health**

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- The Association supports the efforts of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to preserve the Commonwealth’s USDA compliant standing for disease prevention and eradication programs.
 - The Association supports animal health regulations that are minimally invasive on direct cattle production management and preserve individual rights to manage land, water and other on farm natural resources.
 - The Association supports federal and state statutes providing for a specific Veterinary Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) agreement that recognizes the necessity for population and herd diagnosis and treatment of disease and clinical health conditions in food animal agriculture.
 - The Association opposes animal health regulations that restrict participation in foreign markets.
 - The Association recognizes the threat of foreign animal diseases to the health and economic value of the Virginia cattle business. The Association supports continued enforcement of effective regulations to protect cattle against the movement of livestock and equine with unknown health status into and out of Virginia.
 - The Association supports efforts of the State Veterinarian’s office to determine if Virginia should have import regulations for Trichomoniasis, a bovine venereal disease, testing of cattle or acceptance of cattle from known areas where Trichomoniasis is endemic.
 - The Association opposes transfer of livestock industry programs from USDA, FDA and related agencies to Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services where disease monitoring or related animal identification program transfer of responsibility results in excessive costs, added regulatory and inspection burden, producer confidentiality concerns, consequential producer liability and/or vague requirements for implementation and adherence.
 - The Association advocates for the responsible and judicious use of all classes of antibiotics, antimicrobials and similar drugs as outlined in Beef Quality Assurance guidelines for all cattle, as appropriate, in total herd health management.
 - The Association supports the United States Department of Agriculture placing high priority on the development, funding, production and banking of an active Foot & Mouth Disease vaccine bank suitable to mitigate any outbreak of this disease in the United States as quickly and efficiently as possible.
 - The Association supports the development of an enhanced animal disease traceability (ADT) program that should:
 - Be compatible with private sector programs and verifiable through USDA
 - Utilize low cost technology and made widely available with funding support from federal and/or state funds when possible
 - Require cattle identification information be kept confidential and protected from disclosure
 - Protect ownership information from future owners
 - Protect cattle producers from liability of acts of future owners
 - Work within a framework to accommodate all classes of cattle
 - Work as closely as possible to the speed of commerce in consideration of animal welfare so as not to unnecessarily restrict movement of cattle
 - The Association opposes the unnatural movement of all wildlife species into and within the State of Virginia.

87 **Cattle Marketing**

- 88 • The Association believes that Virginia agricultural policy should assure a free, private enterprise driven
89 and competitive marketing system for cattle. We support a producer’s ability to make marketing
90 decisions that will benefit them individually and is best suited for their specific production situation. The
91 Association opposes any government or legislative regulation that suppresses the grid system, and / or
92 quality of incentive paid by packers for a premium product. However, the Association recognizes the
93 need for increased robust price discovery and therefore understands that legislative or regulatory
94 solutions maybe necessary.
- 95 • Virginia agricultural policy regarding the marketing of cattle should not,
96 1. Guarantee profit
97 2. Restrict operation of the competitive marketplace
98 3. Dictate who may participate in the marketing environment
- 99 • The Association believes interstate highway weight limits should conform to a unified national policy to
100 legally transport live cattle from the farm or marketplace. The interstate highway system is critical for
101 marketing of Virginia feeder cattle and these highways should allow for greater competitiveness by
102 allowing weight limits similar in all states
- 103 • The Association supports a permanent waiver from the US Department of Transportation mandate
104 requiring the use of Electronic Monitoring Devices (ELD) for all commercial haulers of livestock or a less
105 restrictive allowance within the mandate that is considerate of animal well-being, increased cost of
106 transportation potential and limited availability of livestock haulers presented without any exemption
107 from the current ELD mandate.
- 108 • The Association recognizes that cattle transactions conducted outside of the requirements of the Grain
109 Inspection Packers and Stockyards Act (GIPSA) may present significant risk for guaranteed payment to
110 sellers and creditors, therefore the Association is supportive of the establishment of a Dealer Trust
111 requirement assuring reasonable expectations of fulfilling payment obligations to sellers and creditors
112 involved in cattle sale transactions.

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114 **Commodity Programs Policy**

- 115 • The Association believes that Virginia agricultural policy should assure a free, private enterprise driven
116 and competitive marketing system for commodities. Any commodity program must include thorough
117 consideration of the impact of subsidies and guarantees for given commodities on other commodities as
118 a result of such policy.
- 119 • The Association believes it is not in the best interest of the industry to have policy that,
120 1. Set prices
121 2. Underwrite inefficient production
122 3. Manipulate supply, demand, cost, or price
- 123 • The Association opposes arbitrary decisions affecting the production, use or marketing of agricultural
124 commodities without sound scientific and/or economic validation.
- 125 • The Association supports strictly voluntary production and process labeling programs that adhere to
126 auditable standards for cattle production management and promote beef product differentiation in the
127 market place solely for the purpose of economic development and not imply or convey false concerns or
128 claims related to scientifically accepted practices affecting food safety, food quality or animal
129 husbandry.

- 130 • The Association opposes creation of excise tax commodity assessments without initial consent and
131 support of said commodity producers, or targeted special interest taxed, under assessment plan.
132 • The Association supports the maintenance of a Virginia state cattle assessment program that is
133 disseminated at the will of Virginia cattle producers.

134 **Energy**

- 135 • The Association supports production and utilization of energy that is safe, affordable, and reliable.
136 • The Association is opposed to energy production that unfairly alters commodity supplies from
137 availability for traditional uses such as food, fiber, and feed.
138 • The Association supports market-based solutions for renewable energy production that are not based in
139 artificial price supports or manipulative of supply and demand.
140 • The Association opposes efforts by the state to mandate or support specific levels of renewable fuels
141 production.

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143 **Economic Development & Trade**

- 144 • The Association supports efforts and programs intended to promote agribusiness and agricultural
145 enterprises in an economically sustainable manner. Economic development of agricultural enterprises
146 should not be hampered by local requirements that are more restrictive than those at the state level.
147 • The Association supports state policy that encourages increased availability of working capital to farmers
148 at competitive rates and encourages a healthy business environment.
149 • The Association encourages the state to communicate with industry stakeholders about the health of
150 the agricultural economic and business environment.
151 • The Association recognizes the enhanced economic value opportunities that trade of beef and beef
152 products adds to the overall value of live and feeder cattle.
153 • The Association supports efforts to grow domestic and foreign markets and trade opportunities through
154 multi-lateral trade agreements, where practical, of participating parties.
155 • The Association supports Trade Promotion Authority to allow the Executive Branch of the Federal
156 government to negotiate trade agreements while maintaining the right of Congress to approve final
157 conditions of all trade agreements.
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159 **Environment**

- 160 • The Association recognizes the critical role that natural resources play in sustainable cattle production.
161 Sound science based environmental stewardship is a prerequisite of responsible cattle management.
162 • The Association supports ongoing and adequate resources for a private and public partnership to
163 employ voluntary best management practices that meet water quality goals developed in a sensible and
164 scientifically based manner.
165 • The Association supports a uniform statewide stream fencing cost share program scoring system that
166 prioritizes herd sizes exceeding the state average, requires investigation and consideration of local,
167 state, federal and inter-agency funding sources for the project, prioritizes projects in identified TMDL
168 areas and deemphasizes linear feet of surface water fenced as priority consideration.
169 • The Association opposes Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) permitting requirements that are not specific
170 to manure management.

- 171 • The Association supports the adequate staffing and funding for the Agricultural Stewardship Act and
172 continued management within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- 173 • The Association supports land application of bio-solids and other soil amendments, imported, or
174 generated on the farm, in accordance with soil test and/or nutrient management plan recommendation
175 as well as regulation only at the state level.
- 176 • The Association supports a data collection system for agricultural best management practices that is
177 comprehensive and inclusive of all implemented practices both voluntary and funded on the local, state,
178 and national level.
- 179 • The Association supports water quality regulations developed under federal authority and administered
180 through state oversight improving the business environment for agriculture.
- 181 • The Association opposes federal goals related to state water quality improvement that are arbitrary and
182 without definitive end points that will allow for a transition from improvement practices to maintenance
183 practices and best manage a combination of federal and state resources to sustain water quality
184 programs.
- 185 • The Association supports consistent and fair administration of the Virginia Pollution Abatement Permit
186 program by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.
- 187 • The Association recognizes the need for glyphosate containing herbicides in agronomic cropping
188 systems and supports the continued use of glyphosate, which has been scientifically proven to be safe
189 for humans and the environment when used appropriately.
- 190 • The Association recognizes the potential for flash grazing of cattle in the grass riparian buffer areas of
191 stream fencing Best Management programs and utilization of these grass riparian buffers for flash
192 grazing to control invasive weeds in a manner that is environmentally sensitive and affordable to the
193 goals of the active Best Management Program practice.
- 194 • The Association opposes the use of any Aircraft Systems of any type to monitor environmental health or
195 best management program compliance by any private, non-governmental agent or public agency and
196 supports on site visitation as the best means for environmental assessment.
- 197 • The Association supports the allowance for a pasture and/or hay land based approved Nutrient
198 Management Plan to include a current soil test and documentation of recommended application of soil
199 nutrient amendments.
- 200 • The Association recognizes cattle producers have a preeminent appreciation for environmental
201 stewardship. Therefore, the Association supports current research-based programs to assess the
202 condition of natural resources and the associated management recommendations, expansion of
203 resources and information to protect the cattle industry from invalidated management options and
204 privately owned and managed natural resources are more effectively conserved with government
205 oversight than control.
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207 **Extension, Youth and Higher Education**

- 208 • The Association supports fulfillment of the *Morrill Act* and Land Grant mission by Virginia Tech and
209 Virginia State University while maintaining a focus on the sustainability of and enhancing agricultural
210 production and businesses.
- 211 • The Association supports adequate state funding for Land Grant university programs, initiatives, and
212 maintenance and capital improvement projects that enhance outreach and information dissemination
213 to agricultural producers.

- 214 • The Association supports Virginia Cooperative Extension and preservation of Agency 229 funding for
215 programs, faculty, facilities (including Agricultural Research & Extension Centers) and services that
216 enhance Extension capability to work with agricultural producers and interests.
- 217 • The Association supports Technical and Agricultural Education in public schools, community colleges and
218 vocational programs that enhance skills necessary to prepare youth for work in agriculture and related
219 fields.
- 220 • The Association supports 4-H and FFA as valuable leadership development organizations for youth and
221 encourages strong management of both on the state level.
- 222 • The Association supports programs to encourage large animal veterinarians to locate in rural areas of
223 Virginia where there are populations of livestock.
- 224 • The Association supports funding that would support Cooperative Extension that can be utilized for Beef
225 Quality Assurance (BQA) training.

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227 **Farm Bill**

228 The Association supports guiding principles in development of the Farm Bill as follows:

- 229 • Natural resource and conservation policy that does not infringe on private property rights, encourages
230 continued public/private partnership and resource support for conservation programs, provides
231 flexibility for state priorities and supports third parties to assist in dissemination of federally authorized
232 programs
- 233 • Maintains free and competitive market-based support of livestock markets and incorporates improved
234 livestock marketing risk management options that are based on subsidizing true cost of production and
235 differentiated appropriately by region of the country and considering reasonable marketing options of
236 cattle
- 237 • Encourages availability of agricultural credit at competitive rates
- 238 • Supports continued development of foreign markets for trade of agricultural commodities and products
- 239 • Supports production based agricultural research with preference given to studies conducted through or
240 led by Land Grant Universities
- 241 • Supports alternative energy markets that do not create artificial demand and price support for any
242 commodity
- 243 • Provides funding for development of a national Foot and Mouth Disease vaccine bank
- 244 • Free of any Livestock Title pertaining to animal husbandry practices or directives affecting management
245 of cattle operations or accessibility to federally sponsored programs

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247 **Food Safety, Labeling & Research**

- 248 • The Association supports the inspection of meat processing facilities under current state and federal
249 guidelines for the production of safe meat products.
- 250 • The Association opposes efforts to legalize or increase limits of uninspected meat and meat products on
251 a retail level direct to consumers.
- 252 • The Association opposes adding meat and meat products to any state or Food & Drug Administration list
253 of “high risk foods” or “potentially hazardous foods”.
- 254 • The Association supports the current position of the Virginia State Dairymen’s Association regarding the
255 production and sale of unpasteurized milk for sale from the farm.

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- The Association supports Dietary Guidelines for Americans that encourage Americans to eat a healthy diet and focus on foods and beverages that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight, promote health, and prevent disease. Beef and red meat have been scientifically proven to be a beneficial contributor to a healthy diet and lifestyle as well as a source of valuable nutrients in diets subsidized by USDA funds including school lunch programs.
 - The Association recognizes that the utilization of Genetically Modified Organisms in the production of food and/or fiber is sustainable, scientifically validated to be safe for humans and the environment as well as necessary to assist agriculture in meeting the demands of a growing global population for food and fiber products.
 - The Association, recognizing the continuous advances in food production technology making food more efficient to produce and process; supports further understanding of the cultured meat process, further understanding of the nutritional profile of cultured meat, appropriate labeling of cultured meat to differentiate it from conventionally produced meat. The Association supports USDA and FDA certified inspection of cultured meat and its production facilities to assure equivalent standards for red meat safety, processing and packaging are met.
 - The Association believes that evolving genetic manipulation technologies such as gene editing, with potential to vastly increase cattle management efficiency as well as decrease beef cattle susceptibility to disease, are not scientifically the same as development of food animal health and drug interventions and therefore genetic manipulation technologies in food animals should be regulated by USDA and not under the Food & Drug Administration’s Guidance 187.
 - The Association supports truth in labeling from producers to processors and from processors to consumers.
 - The Association supports the definition of beef to only include products derived from actual livestock raised by cattle producers and harvested for human consumption.

281 **Land Use**

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- The Association encourages all localities to adopt the practice of land use valuation assessment for livestock agricultural operations.
 - The Association recognizes the tremendous value of rented and leased land to cattle production by non-farming landowners in the state. Therefore, the Association supports state and local land use planning to support to animal agriculture production.
 - The Association opposes eligibility for land use assessment being tied to water quality regulations or implementation of conservation best management practices.
 - The Association supports the State Land Evaluation and Advisory Council (SLEAC) Program as an option for determining land use value tax assessment basis among localities in the Commonwealth.
 - The Association supports protection of cattle producers from liability when they maintain a legally recognized fence in both fence-in and fence-out counties.

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294 **Legal and Other Regulatory**

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- The Association supports the National Beef Checkoff and the Virginia Cattle Assessment; and opposes any redistribution of these monies to the state General Fund as prohibited in the Code of Virginia.
 - The Association supports the Dillon Rule and the limitation of local government powers in respect to existing state regulation and limitations.

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- The Association supports Cooperative Federalism, particularly in the jurisdiction of natural and water resources, and opposes policies and regulations that restrict the rights of private property owners.
 - The Association supports exceptions in Freedom of Information Act requirements that limit disclosure of information relating to regulated programs or actions conducted by the state within their authority in connection with livestock producers and their businesses.
 - The Association supports development of a federally managed migrant worker program that creates an environment for maintaining a year around work force considerate of the tasks performed on a diversified livestock or dairy operation, does not present unnecessary financial burden to producers such as unreasonably high standards for wage and benefits including housing/transportation and does not require mandatory use of the E-verify program.
 - The Association supports the Virginia's Right to Farm Act intention of protecting farmers from nuisance suits if they follow the law and best management practices and thereby assuring the Right to Farm Act's prohibition on nuisance lawsuits against responsible farmers by ensuring that such farms are appropriately protected from baseless claims of nuisance, and from significant and unfair judgments, when such claims may be appropriate.
 - The Association opposes the use of Aircraft Systems of any type on private property to obtain information without permitted entry.

317 **Soil and Water District Conservation Boards**

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- The Association supports voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP) and cost share programs.
 - The Association supports appropriate representation of the agricultural industry, and specifically food animal production, on Soil and Water Conservation District Boards on the local and state level.
 - The Association supports priority funding of cost shared programs related to incorporation of precision agriculture technology that reduces nutrient inputs, improves production efficiency and yield, and lowers overall production costs.

325 **Tax**

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- The Association supports favorable tax policy for agricultural business development and sustainability that also reflects current industry production practices including sales tax exemption on farm supplies.
 - The Association supports permanent repeal of the Estate Tax.
 - The Association supports a federal tax code that maintains important allowances and consideration for agriculture including but not limited to maintenance of stepped up basis, 2032(A) Special Use Valuation provision that encourages land to stay in agricultural production and cash accounting practices on a calendar year term.
 - The Association supports access to adequate health care that includes premiums set in a traditional and market-based manner, full deduction of premium costs or tax credits for self-employed business owners and maintaining feasibly large networks of covered providers of services.
 - The Association does not support any usage or consumption taxes on beef created or enforced by any local, state or federal governments.

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339 **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

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- The Association recognizes the need and value of a sound cooperative relationship between the private sector and services offered through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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- The Association supports dedicated funding for support of weights and measures, grading, inspection and assuring the integrity of agricultural commodities and commodity markets.
 - The Association supports adequate funding for the State Veterinarian’s office to provide necessary services for permitting, regulation, disease response and education of livestock producers.
 - The Association supports the Department maintaining inspection and regulatory authority to preserve a sanitary and safe food distribution environment including inspection of all food products and the establishments where food is prepared.
 - The Association supports the efforts of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to expand domestic and export markets for Virginia cultivated and/or processed agricultural products.

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