

THE STABLE & FARM

BRIEF[©]

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A farm bill moved out of committee with an Oklahoma deadline attached, a federal judge froze the deadlines driving USDA's reorganization, USDA ordered ESG work out of every commodity checkoff — including the one Oklahoma cattle producers pay into — and screwworm turned up in a horse one state away.

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HOT TOPICS & LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Farm Bill 2.0 clears the Senate Agriculture Committee on a 12-11 party-line vote — On Wednesday, September 16, 2026, the Senate Agriculture Committee resumed a recessed business meeting and reported the Agricultural Act of 2026 favorably, 12 to 11, after Sen. Mitch McConnell returned and restored the majority's one-vote margin. Sen. Joni Ernst first tried to attach the Save Our Bacon Act, which would nullify state livestock-production mandates such as California's Proposition 12; her challenge to Chairman John Boozman's authority failed. The same committee reported the 2018 farm bill 20-1. The bill now goes to the full Senate before the current extension lapses September 30, and would then have to be conferenced with the House's Farm, Food, and National Security Act. **Takeaway for Oklahoma:** nothing here is law yet, so do not restructure a lease, marketing plan, or conservation enrollment around provisions that can still change in conference. Watch the titles that actually reach Oklahoma operations — Title I commodity programs for wheat, grain sorghum, corn, soybeans, and cotton, federal crop insurance, and livestock and drought assistance. Fall leases signed now will run straight through whatever Congress does or fails to do by September 30, so in a crop-share or flexible-cash lease say in writing who receives any Title I commodity payment, who holds the base acres it attaches to, whether cash rent adjusts if reference prices or program terms change mid-term, and which party absorbs the loss if the extension lapses and a payment the lease assumed never arrives. (DTN/Progressive Farmer; Oklahoma Farm Report)

Federal judge freezes the deadlines behind USDA's reorganization — On September 14, 2026, U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria in the Northern District of California granted an administrative stay in federal employee unions' challenge to USDA's restructuring, halting every deadline attached to the "management directed reassignment" letters issued so far. USDA may not enforce those deadlines, pursue termination or discipline because an employee declined a reassignment or refused to relocate, or impose absent-without-leave status. The stay runs through October 2, with a preliminary-injunction hearing September 29, and the judge called it deliberately "as limited as possible," reaching mission areas including Farm Production and Conservation, Food and Nutrition, and Rural Development. The underlying plan would move roughly 2,600 Washington-area employees to regional hubs. **Takeaway for Oklahoma:** this pauses relocation deadlines; it does not hold the reorganization unlawful, and it expires in under two weeks. Farm Production and Conservation houses FSA, NRCS, and Risk Management — the agencies behind every Oklahoma county office. Get program determinations, deadline extensions, and eligibility commitments in writing rather than by phone, keep date-stamped copies of every filing, and calendar September 29 and October 2. (Government Executive; Federal News Network)

FEDERAL REGULATORY UPDATES

USDA orders ESG work out of the dairy checkoff and every other commodity checkoff — On Thursday, September 17, 2026, Secretary Brooke Rollins wrote the chair of the National Dairy Board directing that, effective immediately, dairy checkoff-funded projects focus on long-term value creation and not on advancing environmental, social and governance frameworks, net-zero initiatives, or climate-neutrality initiatives. The letter names Scope 3 greenhouse-gas accounting, the U.S. Dairy Net Zero Initiative, Pathways to Dairy Net Zero, the Greener Cattle Initiative, and FARM Environmental Stewardship. A companion

memorandum signed the same day by Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Dudley Hoskins extended the directive to every research and promotion board the Agricultural Marketing Service oversees, directing AMS and the boards to "[t]erminate research and promotion (checkoff) funds and work associated with ESG-related projects" and stating that no checkoff funds "should be used to support the solicitation or enforcement of mandatory ESG commitments, pledges, scorecards, reporting requirements, or similar frameworks." It applies to all boards, contractors, affiliated organizations, and all State, Regional, and Importer Programs. It landed as USDA was due to answer a June lawsuit by three Wisconsin dairy farmers challenging compelled checkoff funding of ESG projects; the plaintiffs agreed to pause that case. **Takeaway for Oklahoma:** this is not a dairy-only story. Oklahoma cattle producers pay the \$1-per-head beef checkoff each time an animal is sold, and by statute a producer participating in a qualified State beef council program receives a credit of up to 50 cents per head for contributions to it — which is how half the Oklahoma dollar stays with the Oklahoma Beef Council. Oklahoma producers of pork, dairy, sorghum, soybeans, cotton, peanuts, and pecans fund national boards among the 22 checkoff programs AMS oversees — though Oklahoma's wheat checkoff is a state program under the Oklahoma Wheat Commission and is not one of them. If your operation, cooperative, or commodity board holds a checkoff-funded contract, grant, sponsorship, or data-sharing arrangement tied to sustainability metrics, read the termination and change-in-law clauses now. Producers relying on those programs to satisfy a buyer, packer, or lender requirement should confirm they will still exist before the next contract cycle. (USDA; [USDA Under Secretary Memorandum](#), Sept. 17, 2026; 7 U.S.C. § 2904(8)(C); [Oklahoma Beef Council](#); [USDA AMS FY2027 Explanatory Notes](#); [Wisconsin Public Radio](#))

OKLAHOMA-SPECIFIC UPDATES

OWRB approves the Coffee dam consent order in a 40-second consent vote — On September 15, 2026, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board approved a consent order bringing unpermitted dams on property owned by former Senate President Pro Tempore Glenn Coffee and his brother into regulatory compliance while permitting proceeds. The order is a legally binding agreement requiring dam improvements and setting out the steps to obtain permits. OWRB staff found no evidence the dams violated Cedar Lake's water right, attributing the falling wells and shrinking lake to drought and groundwater depletion; residents disagreed and wanted the impounded water released. After postponing the vote in July, the board took the order up inside a summary disposition of roughly eighty other items, and the whole block passed in about forty seconds — a resident reached the podium to ask that it be severed about four seconds after the vote closed, and the acting chairman ruled the vote had already occurred. **Takeaway for Oklahoma:** consent agendas are lawful and efficient, but unforgiving. If a matter before OWRB, ODAFF, a conservation district, or any other Oklahoma board affects your water, your land, or your organization, file a written request to sever the item in advance, appear before the gavel, and ask to be recognized on the record. Objecting afterward preserves almost nothing, and an appeal built on a record you never made is an uphill fight. (KGOU)

EMERGING ISSUES

Screwworm turns up in a New Mexico horse days before the Santa Teresa port reopens — On Thursday, September 17, 2026, officials confirmed New World screwworm in a horse in Grant County, New Mexico, near the Mexican border — the state's second case since the parasite crossed into the United States in June, and one of three then-active U.S. cases alongside a horse and a dog in Texas. It came a day after Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced at the Santa Teresa port that USDA was preparing to resume

Mexican livestock imports there on September 24. **Takeaway for Oklahoma:** ODAFF reports no confirmed Oklahoma case, but the two states with active cases are Oklahoma's neighbors and trading partners, and screwworm is reportable here. Suspected cases must be reported immediately to the ODAFF State Veterinarian's Office at 405-522-6141, and owners should not self-treat before consulting a veterinarian or state official. Practically: inspect wounds routinely, document those inspections, and — for horse owners especially — write haul-in, breeding, training, sale, and boarding contracts so a sudden quarantine or change in interstate health-certificate requirements does not put one party in breach for something neither controls. Review force majeure, movement-restriction, and refund provisions before the fall sale and show season. (U.S. News & World Report / Reuters; ODAFF New World Screwworm)

That's the week: a farm bill on the Senate floor's doorstep, two USDA shake-ups with short fuses, and two Oklahoma lessons — one about speaking before the gavel, one about writing contracts that survive a quarantine.

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