MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Lee Links

LEE COUNTY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026



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5338 CLIFF OOOKIN BLVD., TUPELO, MS 38801

What a year it has been.

by Rosanne Brown

Unless you have a crystal ball or you regularly do a little time traveling, one would have never guessed the year would have unfolded like it has. Similar to many of our rural roads, the year has brought the most unexpected twist and turns along with vast gaps of sunlit, open spaces. Beginning with a chilly winter, this year dealt us a lot to bear. Freezing temperatures, ice, and snow kept many of us paralyzed for days, some weeks, as neighbors helped neighbors, and warmth could be found from hearths to hearts. As we cleaned and prepared to rebuild, the sun insured the temperature rose and the promise of warmer days and a beautiful Spring was just around the corner, a much needed reprieve from the harshness of the previous months.

With the onset of spring, you could feel the hope in the air. From the smell and coolness of freshly turned soil to the brilliant kaleidescope of colors, the anticipation of new growth and beautiful days was upon us. Soon we had spring showers, a variety of new vegetation, and expectant anticipation for new blooms. But as the flowers emerged, time seemed to slow down.

The dog days of summer were upon us. Our nation prepared for it's 250th birthday, and Fourth of July was a celebration for the record books. With increasing temperatures, it made the month one of the hottest in history. A sudden lack of rain brought back the familiar monotony of hot, dry days, with only sporadic downpours here and there. Forecasts brought little relief to what seemed a sweltering, unending summer. It felt as if summer was here for the duration and wasn't going to give fall a chance. Even up until the writing of this article, one is hard pressed to feel fall's welcomed chill in the air, unless you are inclined to a nocturnal outing. The stark absence of autumn's familiar colors and most afternoon's returning heat are also reminders of the summer's harsh effects. At this point, the promise of a full fledged fall season is just as elusive as a predictable football season, but just like loyal fans, we continue to anticipate a better season.

Season to season, the Lee County Extension Office is always striving to better serve you. From nutritious recipes and healthy tips, to publications on gardening, managing your outdoor and indoor spaces, and financial management, to being available to identify and diagnose your pond or field problems, under the guidance of Mississippi State University, we work diligently to provide you with helpful information for the season you are in, for better or for worse.

So remember, when those frigid temperatures do arrive, trust you can find warmth from the return of holidays filled with family and friends, and hold tight to those traditions of charity, kindness, and thanksgiving. We hope you have the happiest of holidays, and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. ANGUS L. CATCHOT JR., Director

CATTLE MARKET NEWS

Beef Production in 2026 and 2027

Josh Maples, Mississippi State University Extension



Tight cattle supplies over the past few years are leading to tight beef supplies now and the latest USDA report revised 2026 and 2027 production estimates lower again. USDA's October WASDE report lowered the beef production forecasts for both 2026 and 2027. The 2026 estimate was cut 75 million pounds to 24.8 billion pounds, which would be about 4.6 percent below 2025 and the smallest annual total since 2015. The 2027 forecast was reduced 160 million pounds to 24.7 billion pounds which would be about a half percent below the 2026 estimate. The October report was the eighth consecutive month USDA has lowered the 2026 beef production forecast, which now sits about one billion pounds lower than the estimate at the start of 2026.

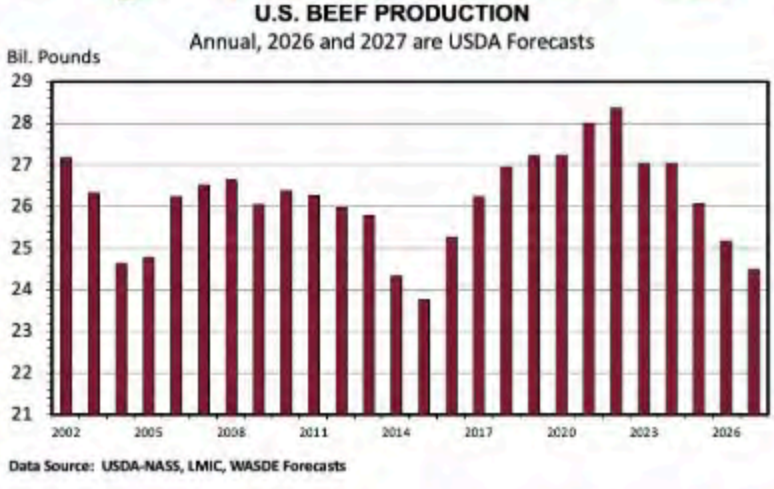
The lower 2026 estimate is driven by lower expected steer and heifer slaughter and lighter carcass weights in the second half, which more than offset slightly higher expected cow slaughter. For 2027, USDA cited lighter dressed weights and slower feedlot marketings early in the year, which follows directly from the lower feedlot placement from the cattle on feed reports. Placements have run below a year ago in ten of the past twelve months.

Fourth quarter 2026 production is projected at 6.4 billion pounds which would be down 3.8 percent from the same quarter in 2025. First quarter 2027 is projected at 6.1 billion pounds, about 1 percent below first quarter 2026. The year-over-year declines are getting smaller, which is consistent with a herd that has stopped shrinking but has not yet started to grow.

The slaughter data show what is driving the lower 2026 beef totals. Through August, federally inspected steer slaughter was down about 6 percent from a year ago, heifer slaughter was down 11 percent, and beef cow slaughter was down 14 percent. Dairy cow slaughter was up 4 percent, which partly offset the beef cow decline, but total cow slaughter was still down about 5 percent. Total cattle slaughter through August was 7.3 percent below 2025. Heavier carcass weights have kept beef production from falling even lower.



The WASDE also includes fed steer price forecasts by quarter and year and these didn't change in the October report. The five-area steer price is projected at $225 per cwt for the fourth quarter, $237.56 for the 2026 annual average, and $238 for the 2027 annual average. Lower production is already built into those estimates. The near-term question is whether current cash prices which are around $220 increase over the next few months to reach the $225 forecast. Seasonal demand should provide some boost, but the cutout has not shown much movement lately.



Lee County Cattlemen Association connects local cattlemen and provides access to learning & knowledge for the betterment of their cattle herds, from farm to plate. The next meeting will be **Thursday, January 21st, 6 pm.** **Call 662-841-9000 by NOON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 19TH, to RSVP.**

FORESTRY NOTES

Forestry/Wildlife Myths & Misconceptions

Revised by Brady Self, PhD, Extension Professor, Forestry, from an earlier version by Tim Traugott, PhD, Extension Professor Emeritus

(CONTINUED FROM September/October 2026 Lee Links)

Misconception #7: If you have plenty of mast-producing oaks, you don't have to worry about providing wildlife food.

Although many species of wildlife feed on them, acorns and other mast are seasonal and sporadic. Deer, for example, depend on year-round browse for their food supply. The two basic wildlife food-producing areas in a forest are trees and the forest floor. Hardwood trees produce acorns, nuts, berries, and fruits. Plants growing under canopies produce other food sources: grasses, forbs, fruits, and browse.

Acorn production is very unpredictable. This makes it impossible to manage wildlife populations using this food source alone because it varies from year to year. In addition, acorn production depends on soil types, and good hardwood sites produce more acorns than poor sites.

Deer and other wildlife must find food year-round, and, at best, acorns are available for only a few months. Other food sources must be available to ensure healthy wildlife populations. These other food sources are normally found on the forest floor. Forest management usually enhances this food source. For example, thinning or harvesting trees allows sunlight to reach the ground. The result is a great increase in grasses, forbs, and browse on the forest floor.

Acorns and other mast are very nutritional and are beneficial to many wildlife species. However, unless other food sources are available, acorns by themselves do not provide enough food to meet the nutritional needs of most game species (Figure 8).

An unrecognized culprit of hardwood losses is conversion of hardwood forests to other uses, such as agriculture, housing developments, and road construction. A glaring example of this occurred in the Mississippi Delta. Between 1957 and 1977, more than 530,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods were cleared for agricultural purposes.

Explore this complete publication & more information on the extension website at:
https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/forestrywildlife-myths-and-misconceptions



Figure 8. Species such as white-tailed deer and turkey need more than just acorns for food. Sites such as the one pictured provide a wide range of both herbaceous vegetation and seeds, and in the case of turkeys, a likely spot to find insects. (Photo courtesy of Amber Floyd, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Join us for the next Forestry meeting, Monday, February 1st, 2027, at 6 PM.



Call 662-841-9000 by 12 PM on Friday, January 29th to reserve your seat.

What's NEWS?

Bloom at Noon

Join us Tuesday, November 10th, at 12 PM, at the Lee County Extension Office, for a quick "Byte of Google Basics" with India Crews, Mississippi State Extension Project Specialist for Tech Outreach. She will offer insights into using Google to help you better navigate today's tech-driven world. Seating will fill up quickly. Call our office to reserve your spot! Our number is 662-841-9000. We hope to see you there!



THE LEE COUNTY CLASSIC LIVESTOCK SHOW WAS A GRAND SUCCESS!!!



Thank you to all the exhibitors & parents for participating and guaranteeing we had a quality show by providing exceptional livestock for a group of wonderful judges. The show was made possible through the continued support of our sponsors, to whom we offer a huge **"Thank You": Lee County Board of Supervisors, JT Ray Co., & Birchwood Lumber**. Also, thank you to all the agents & volunteers who help to make this show run smoothly. We look forward to next year!

Toy Drive



Last year you stepped up, and we had generous participation in our annual toy drive. We ask again this year that you help us provide for those who aren't afforded the same opportunities as others during the holidays. Bring donations to our office by Thursday, December 10th. Help us share with others in this season of giving. Donations benefit God's Incredible Toy Store in Verona, MS.

We also offer many opportunities for youth ages 5-18 in our 4-H programs. If you know a child in the Lee County area that is looking for a place to learn and grow, contact our office about available clubs. We offer a wide of array of options from participation in animal projects, to learning art, cooking skills, & sewing, STEM activities, a Junior Master Gardener club, and Shooting Sports competitions.

Please call us at 662-841-9000 for more information or to reserve your seat at our next program!

11 MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION NOVEMBER 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
01	02 Forestry 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	03	04 Crochet 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	05	06	07
08	09 Cloverbuds 5-7 Jr Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 5-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	10 Bloom at Noon 12 PM Sewing 10-18 3:30 PM Aggies 8-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	11	12 Expressive Arts 8-13 3:30 PM Shooting Sports 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	13	14
15	16 Horse Bowl & Hippology 5 PM Ropes & Reins 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	17	18	19 Foodies 9-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext Office Back Kitchen	20	21
22	23 STEM Club 5-13 2-4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	24	25 Crochet Workshop 10-18 9-11 AM Lee Co. Ext. Office	26 HAPPY Thanksgiving DAY	27 OFFICE CLOSED	28
29	30	01	02	03	04	05

12 MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION DECEMBER 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	01 Foodies 9-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office Back Kitchen	02 Crochet 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	03 Aggies 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	04	05
06	07 Horse Bowl & Hippology 8-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	08 4-H Awards Program 6 PM NEMS Research & Ext. Center Verona, MS	09	10 Expressive Arts 8-13 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	11	12
13	14 Cloverbuds 5-7 & Jr Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 5-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	15 STEM Club 5-13 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	16	17 Sewing 10-18 3:30 PM Ropes & Reins 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	18	19
20	21	22	23 OFFICE CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS	24	25 Merry Christmas	26
27	28	29	30	31	01 Happy New Year	02

We also offer many opportunities for youth ages 5-18 in our 4-H programs.

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