



Beef Bytes
May 8, 2012

Hello, friends.

As the General Assembly convenes again this week in Harrisburg, be assured that Versant Strategies will be in the Capitol working on your behalf. Also vying for attention are the members of ABATE who have made their annual trek via motorcycle (on a rainy day, no less!) and a large contingent of taxpayers calling for property tax reform. It's always a very busy season as the General Assembly shifts into serious budget mode in May and June! Next week the House and Senate will take a break but will return again on May 21st.

And did you know that "May is Beef Month"? Take a moment or two to check out the facts on beef production in the Commonwealth and media releases from the Center for Beef Excellence at www.beefexcellence.com. If you are interested in receiving their weekly newsletter, you can sign up online.

According to the General Assembly, May is also "Lyme Disease Awareness" month. Thanks to the PA Pest Management Association for these tips on protecting yourself from this disease:

Blacklegged ticks (also called deer ticks) are the primary vector of Lyme disease in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic & North Central United States. A few precautions should be taken to avoid these ticks and their habitat and/or to make the environment less hospitable to ticks.

When walking in tick-infested areas:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts & pants.
- Tuck pant legs into socks to prevent ticks from crawling under pant legs.
- Wear light-colored clothing to help see ticks.
- Walk in the center of well-worn trails & avoid touching tall grasses & shrubs while walking
- Wear repellants, such as those containing DEET.

After walking in tick-infested areas:

- Immediately inspect your body for ticks
- Clothing should be washed immediately in warm water & detergent

Other recommendations:

- Keep grass & weeds cut short in tick-infested areas to create dry microenvironments unsuitable for ticks & to minimize suitable habitat for alternative hosts such as rodents
- Treat pets for ticks

Manage rodents to limit the number of alternative hosts

Have a great week!
MeeCee

Articles of Interest

Pennsylvania News:

[Drilling Utica Shale](#)

Located below the Marcellus shale, the Utica shale stretches across Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia and is another significant source of natural gas. Chesapeake Energy is drilling in the formation with 10 wells currently operating and plans to average 13 wells/year in 2012 and 2013.

National News:

[Followup on BSE Cow](#)

USDA inspectors are diving into the history of the dairy cow recently diagnosed with BSE. They are searching for calves that came from the same farm, at the same time as the infected cow as well as her calves to determine if there are other infected animals.

[Animal ID Plan](#)

A plan for national animal identification and tracking was sent to the white house for approval in response to concerns over BSE and other possible animal disease outbreaks. The plan would be implemented gradually, with species specific requirements for identification.

[Agricultural Investment](#)

Financial planners are seeing a growing interest in investment in agricultural enterprises. Farmland is popular due to high crop prices, and infrastructure projects are also growing. High prices in the US are leading to increasing investment in developing nations as well.

[Consumer Flavor Demand](#)

Research from Texas Tech University confirms that consumers find flavor a huge driver of beef quality. Tenderness is also important, but once acceptable levels are reached there is room for improvement in flavor. Flavor is highly correlated with marbling and fat content.

[Promoting Healthy Diets](#)

The Beef Checkoff has released a new tool that allows people to determine their eating 'type' and then find tips and recipes for eating healthier. The plan is one way to help people understand dietary guidelines and meet their goals for healthier living.

[Agricultural Initiative Priorities](#)

AGree, a partnership of nine foundations, has determined to change agriculture and set forth priorities for the coming years. Goals focus around four main areas, including meeting future food demand, conservation, nutrition and the development of the agricultural community.

[Responding to the Pink Slime Controversy](#)

Industry experts addressed the need to respond to negative publicity following the media attack on lean finely textured ground beef. They emphasized the need to spread the message of safe and affordable beef using available means such as social media.

Global News:

[South Korean Beef Concerns](#)

Government officials in South Korea are working to reassure the public that human health and safety are top concerns as they face pressure to halt imports of US beef following

concerns over BSE. Opposition parties are accusing the government of going back on promises to ban imports in the event of new BSE cases, but so far South Korea has continued with US beef imports.

Cattle Management Articles:

[Deworming Young Calves](#)

Research points to benefits of deworming calves while they are still nursing their mothers, as trials showed an average gain of 21 pounds at weaning. With high calf prices, the value was calculated at \$1.18 for each additional pound- leading to a total gain of \$24.78/animal.

[Managing Grazing](#)

There are many factors that play into managing forages effectively, but monitoring timing of when pastures are grazed is critical. In addition, adjusting stocking density and investing in water systems and fencing can pay off in terms of long term capacity.

[Fly Control](#)

As summer approaches, producers begin to consider how to control flies on cattle. Horn flies, face flies and stable flies all annoy cattle and can cause losses in productivity. Options for control include dust bags, insecticide ear tags, animal sprays and pour on or oral insecticides.

[Selecting for Temperament](#)

Identifying high strung heifers and culling them will allow producers to make gains in the overall working attitude of their herd. These animals tend to be poorer performing and have more health issues than others in the herd and the trait is moderately heritable.

General News:

- 05-07-2012 [**Penn State Extension restructuring takes shape**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-07-2012 [**Farmer uses innovative methods to ensure success continues**](#)
SOUTH BEND — The corn planter at Creekland Farm is so innovative that Andrew Kimmel can measure, keep records and monitor every inch of acreage where he's planted seed or used fertilizer on his 1,600-acre cash-grain and beef cattle farm outside the tiny village of Idaho, using the machine's... - [*Kittanning Leader-Times*](#)
- 05-04-2012 [**USDA: Pennsylvania Ranks 7th in Cheese Production**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-04-2012 [**Inside PDA for May 4, 2012**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-03-2012 [**PAMD: Dairy Farmer Premium Price Threatens Pennsylvania Milk Market Share**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-02-2012 [**PA Farm Bureau Urges PMMB to Maintain Dairy Price**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-01-2012 [**Department of Agriculture: All-American Dairy Show Announces 2012 Judges**](#)
(Press Release)

05-01-2012

Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs

5/01/12, 9:00 a.m., 156 Main Capitol

By Nina Lehr The committee held an informational meeting to discuss the programs offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Legislative Activity

[HB 439](#) [Mustio](#) Act prohibiting certain licensees from knowingly employing illegal aliens; and imposing sanctions.

Companions: [HB 1773](#) Mustio (Refiled from 09R Session)

Printer Number(s): [P0410](#) [P2502](#) [P2732](#)

Bill History: 05-07-12 S Press conference held

[HB 761](#) [Cutler](#) Amends Tax Reform Code, in realty transfer tax, further providing for definitions, for excluded transactions, documents & acquired company; and, in inheritance tax, further providing for transfers not subject to tax.

Printer Number(s): [P0784](#) [P2590](#) [P3345](#)

Bill History: 05-01-12 S Set on the Senate Calendar
05-01-12 S Rereferred to Senate Appropriations

Capitol Review

It may be home to the most dysfunctional city government in all the land, but we found out that the [Harrisburg area unemployment rate is now down to a pre-recession level of 6.7%](#), proving once again that the labor market is a wonderfully unpredictable thing.

But that wasn't the only good news of the week! For the first time since the Pleistocene Era, [state revenue collections were ahead of schedule](#), and the once-daunting \$700 million budget shortfall has become a somewhat less daunting \$350 million shortfall. Yes, in Pennsylvania, we celebrate smaller deficits. This is what it has come to.

Advocates for education (both the higher kind and the kind for the wee ones) and human services folks were heartened by this news, and the scramble is already on to get a piece of that \$350 million restoration pie. Should the numbers keep improving, it is possible that this year's state budget dance will be a much shorter, less acrimonious one. One thing to keep a sharp eye out for (if you would prefer, we'll keep our eyes on it for you) is a [possible battle between budget cut restoration folks and the business community over the phase-out of the Capital Stock and Franchise tax](#).

As folks begin to digest the details of the [Philadelphia School Reform Commission's plan to reinvent the Philly public schools](#), the agita levels are on the rise. At the heart of the plan is privatization of scores of functions and a wholesale move from public schools to charter schools. Critics of the plan, however, are going to have to, at some point, present a viable alternative, since the status quo really doesn't look to be an option anymore.

[The House of Representatives this week passed a measure that would take the state's final full casino license \(formerly owned by the fine folks at Foxwoods\) from the City of](#)

[Philadelphia and open it up statewide](#). It would also change the price from a flat \$65 million (for both slots and table games) and instead auction it to the highest bidder. This idea has been floated for years, and the problem remains the same. There is little question some group will overbid for the license, which will then hamper their ability to invest in building the actual casino and creating actual jobs. But no matter, around here we like to fix what isn't broken. In less than a decade, Pennsylvania has built a multi-billion dollar casino industry that has created thousands of jobs, all while being taxed at a rate of 47%. Yup, clearly the law needs to be changed. Oh, and go ahead and mention that tax rate to a natural gas driller and see what happens.

It was a banner week for southeastern Pennsylvania, as [Delta Airlines announced it will purchase the Trainer refinery complex](#). That massive sigh of relief you heard was from every elected official from the U.S. Senate on down who invested a lot of time and energy making the deal happen. Pennsylvania sweetened the deal with some tax credits and assorted bric-a-brac, but we have no doubt that Delta finally decided to come into the state because we are phasing out the Capital Stock and Franchise tax. Yup, that was the kicker, no doubt.

And lest you think that all the good news of the week was confined to the east, look west, young man, where [Highmark and UPMC finally laid down their arms and came to an agreement through 2014](#), ending a bitter stalemate that scared the living bejesus out of western Pennsylvanians. In the end, the most instructive comment came from Governor Corbett, who basically said "Either do a deal, or the government will do one for you." Nothing like a little bare-knuckled incentive to move things along.

And the good news just won't stop! [According to big shots in the chemical industry, the Keystone State is poised for a manufacturing boom](#), thanks in large part to our natural gas deposits. As soon as Shell announced it would build its new cracking facility in western Pennsylvania, speculation began that many other would soon follow.

[The State Senate this week passed a bill that will prohibit jackpot payouts to departing school superintendents](#), spurred on by the recent platinum parachute that the Philly Schools bestowed on Arlene Ackerman. The official response from school superintendents across the state was "Gee, thanks, Arlene. Way to screw it up for everyone else."

From the Be Careful What You Ask For file, we find that the [House GOP this week steered a bill through the chamber that would close the dreaded Delaware Loophole](#), a nifty little tax shelter that costs the state anywhere between zero and a gazillion dollars a year, depending on whom you ask. House Democrats have advocated for this move for years, but they didn't really like the way the bill was crafted, saying that it will cost taxpayers between zero and a gazillion dollars a year in new corporate tax breaks. After years of getting their ears beat in about the Delaware Loophole, it seems the GOP put a little top spin on that baby and lobbed it right back at the Democrats. It is here that we break out our snobby British accent and say "Advantage: Republicans."

One of these days, we will report that the City of Harrisburg is doing just fine and its elected leaders are getting along swimmingly. Of course, when that happens, the earth will be crashing into the sun, so it won't much matter, will it wise guy? [Harrisburg City Council this week defied the Commonwealth and refused to hire the recommended Chief Operating Officer](#). We know what you are thinking. Why on God's green earth would a city as efficient and trouble-free as Harrisburg need a COO?

The state (read: Corbett Administration) reacted quite coolly to the news, essentially [telling city council that the decision to hire a COO might not even be theirs to make](#), considering the state took over management of the city some time ago. So yeah, hold a voting meeting if you want. You can also whistle "Dixie" and make animal balloons if it makes you happy.

The Department of Revenue is sad. [It seems like their estimates on the new voluntary online sales tax reporting haven't gone nearly as well as planned](#). Shockingly, people have been slow to self-report the amount of money they spent buying crap on E-Bay on their income tax forms. Stunning development, to be sure. The DOR estimated it would collect north of \$5 million; instead it has collected south of \$3 million. Better luck next year.

[The state's Voter ID law has officially been challenged in court, thanks to the ACLU](#). Claiming voter disenfranchisement (as well as all the other arguments we have covered ad nauseum for months), the ACLU became the first, but likely not the last, group to officially cry foul in a court of law. Now it gets interesting.

This just in: [everyone still hates the new legislative reapportionment maps](#). And that about wraps it up for this week's newsletter! We'll get back to you again next week with more news!

In Other News

- 05-07-2012 [**Ag Department: New PA Fair Guide Offers Affordable Destinations for Families**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-07-2012 [**Rep. Cox: Homeowners Rally for Property Tax Replacement at State Capitol**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-07-2012 [**Penn State Board of Trustees election results announced**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-06-2012 [**Students expected to toss tons of used electronics**](#)
CALIFORNIA — Nearly 6,000 pounds of used electronic items were recycled as students moved out of apartments and dormitories at California University of Pennsylvania last May. Still, there were televisions and microwave ovens in the trash on the last day of collections before students left for the summer, according to John... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)

- 05-04-2012 [**Group of SEPTA Employees Claims \\$107.5 Million Powerball**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-03-2012 [**CORRECTED: DLI - Extended Unemployment Benefits Program Ending in Pennsylvania**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-03-2012 [**Penn State Data Center's Monthly Tipsheet for May 2012**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-03-2012 [**Senator Casey Pushes to Extend Moratorium on Postal Closures**](#)
(Press Release)

- 05-03-2012 [**DEP to Offer Live Webcast of Peregrine Falcon Banding Event on May 9**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-02-2012 [**First Time Bill Closing Delaware Loophole Passes PA House**](#)
(Press Release)
- 05-02-2012 [**ACLU: Groups File Lawsuit in Commonwealth Court to Overturn PA's...**](#)
(Press Release)
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