



North Dakota
Livestock Alliance

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My name is Amber Boeshans, I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Livestock Alliance (NDLA). The North Dakota Livestock Alliance is a new organization, founded in 2017, with the mission to support, enhance and promote animal agriculture our state. We are non-profit and we do not engage in policy or lobbying activities. Our board consists of the ND Pork Council, ND Corn Utilization Council, ND Soybean Council, ND Farmers Union, Midwest Dairy – North Dakota Division and the North Dakota Ethanol Council. Our Advisory Board is the Northern Crop Institute, NDSU Extension, NDSU Department of Animal Sciences, ND Stockmen's Association and the ND Department of Agriculture. We also have memberships beyond our board that include individual farmers and ranchers, and the North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association.

Due to our unified efforts, this 'star-studded' cast has made tremendous strides in these short two years, especially in the fields of livestock development and outreach to the leaders of our rural communities. But we see a few areas of need that we would like to touch-on today.

The first of which is Extension Livestock Support in the form of Swine and Dairy Extension Specialists. A Swine Extension Specialist is in immediate need. Our state is poised for growth in the swine industry, with major interest from crop farmers wanting to diversify their grain markets and to improve soil health through manure. Many of these farmers are new to swine production and need research-based advice and knowledge from an impartial advisor who isn't trying to sell them something. This industry is highly technical and constantly changing, which leads us to the unprecedented threat of African Swine Fever (ASF).

African Swine Fever does not cause illness in humans or any other species but causes extremely high mortality in pigs. This Foreign Animal Disease is spreading like wildfire across China, Asia and Eastern Europe, causing a worldwide protein shift. The U.S. pig industry has a huge opportunity to provide pork and other proteins to these ASF infected nations, but we can only do so if we keep ASF out. A NDSU Swine Extension Agent would be vital to share practices for foreign animal disease prevention, to assist swine producers and their staff in crisis preparedness and to support the producers and emergency responders if ASF breaches our borders. This is an 'all hands on deck' situation.

NDLA would also like to emphasize the need for a Dairy Extension Specialist. The retirement of this position has left a devastating gap in knowledge and resources to our state's dairy farmers during very

The North Dakota Livestock Alliance is a non-profit, non-partisan organization developed to provide assistance to farmers, ranchers and communities with the development or expansion of the livestock industry and to strengthen our connection with consumers to instill confidence in the practices we use and the food and products we produce.

challenging times. Yes, our state's dairy farm numbers continue to fall along with those in almost every other U.S. state, but our dairy cattle numbers are holding with reasonable growth on the horizon. Just this fall, a ND dairy expanded their permit, with another small herd taking shape in the Red River Valley. On-farm milk processing also continues to expand. But, fewer and fewer dairies result in increased pressure on infrastructure and on-farm resources. North Dakota's dairy farmers need a Dairy Extension Agent to be the impartial advisor for maximizing their resources in creative ways, such as innovative feed ingredients, strategic heifer management and modern lactation production practices. As infrastructure stresses continue, the dairy farmers will be increasingly independent and will need NDSU to stand by them as they adjust to their new surroundings. The North Dakota dairy industry is not lost, but it is changing quickly. Our dairy farmers need us now more than ever.

We would like to close our comments with a few observations for simple modernizations in the NDSU Dairy Barn. Cattle headlocks were recently installed in the heifer handling areas and have been a great success. Dairy farmers who toured this barn said they would like to see those headlocks installed in the lactating barn as well. Headlocks are low-cost, low-stress cattle handling equipment that not only improves dairy cattle health, it positively impacts employee safety. The barn could also greatly benefit from improved lighting and expanded ventilation. The dairy industry has put a large emphasis on the value of high-quality lighting and ventilation throughout all stages of production. Ventilation is especially important due to the sensitive nature of dairy cattle's lungs and its direct impact on milk production. In addition, these modernizations have been credited with improvements in employee morale and safety. If NDSU is interested, several dairy farmers and NDSU alumni have volunteered to form a working group to brainstorm ideas for these modernizations.

Thank you for your time and best wishes for a successful 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

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