



Come What May...

May, the month when temperatures begin to rise, school takes a break, and backyard grills fire up. Here in the south, we take this time to create memories, enjoy holiday celebrations, and seemingly begin to slow down for the long, hot creep of the summer months. But are we really slowing down?

As much as we romanticize our laid-back, easy way of life, we know this time of year could easily be considered your busiest. From backyard gardening to commercial farming, you are busy maintaining established plantings, defending them from the inevitable siege of both bug & weed, and preparing for the back & forth of drought to impending flash flood.

During these times, know we, your local Lee County Extension Office staff, are here and ready to help you. We offer a wealth of information and provide guidance when you have questions. Take advantage of our hands on service & experience, whether you drop by our lobby, or request a visit to your property. Our staff of agents are ready and available to answer your questions.

Are you needing information on a specific concern? We carry a variety of publications in-house, or we can access more using our [extension website](#). You can take home resources to aid in diagnosing, treating, or maintaining your plot of land.

Are you having trouble diagnosing the problem? Contacting our office by phone, email, or visit, can connect you to an agent who can help pinpoint your issue and begin to find a solution. Either through pictures, video, or a site visit, agents get to the heart of the matter and work on getting you a better outcome. Our agents are always happy to help you in your endeavors, whether big or small.

Are you needing further assistance? For challenges that involve a more specific topic requiring a more intricate solution. Mississippi State University Extension Service has many research facilities & campus specialists. Our agents can facilitate connecting you with researchers & specialists involved in creating new & innovative solutions.

So come what may, we are here for you. Drop in and see us, friend!

5338 CLIFF GOOKIN BLVD., TUPELO, MS 38801

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- Cattle Market News
- Forestry News
- May/June County Events Calendar
- Lee County Extension Service Links & Contact Information



CATTLE MARKET NEWS

Quarterly Report Shows Decrease in Heifers on Feed

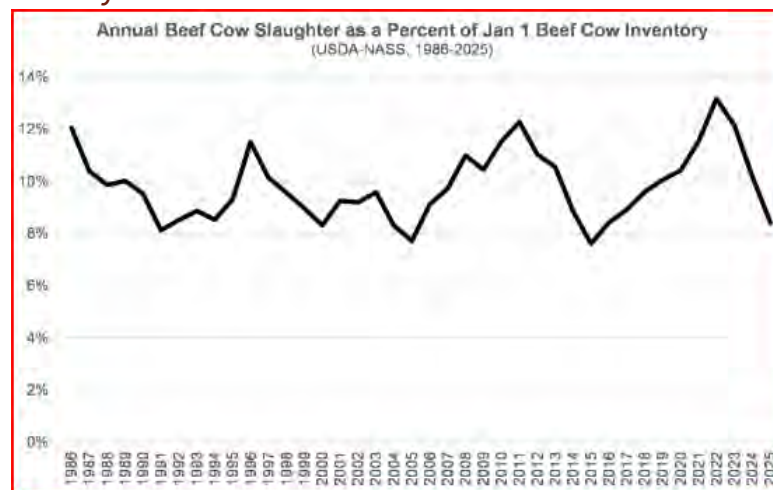
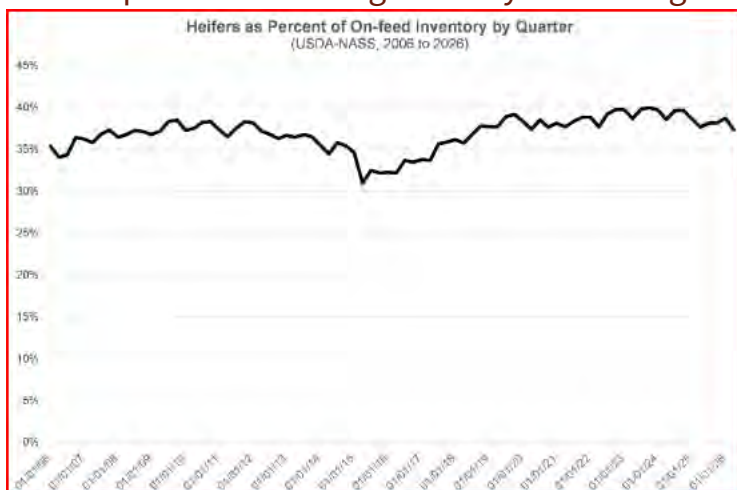


Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky

USDA's April Cattle on Feed report came in very close to expectations. Total on-feed inventory was down by just over 0.5% from 2025 at 11.58 million head. Both placements and marketings were down considerably from last year, but very close to pre-report estimates. The report was generally consistent with the ongoing trends of tight cattle supplies, lower slaughter levels, and longer feeding periods. Being a quarterly report, the steer/heifer breakdown was the most interesting element of the April 1 estimates, and I want to spend a little time talking through that.

USDA-NASS estimated that there were 4.32 million heifers on feed as of April 1, which was 60,000 (1.4%) fewer heifers than last April. For the sake of comparison, steers on feed were largely unchanged year-over-year. To start the second quarter, heifers were estimated to represent 37.3% of total on-feed inventory. This number is often viewed as a retention indicator with potential to indicate future expansion (or contraction) of the beef cow herd and has been watched very closely in the last few years.

The figure below charts heifers, as a percentage of on-feed inventory, going back to January of 2006. I purposely wanted to take that longer-run view to help put the most recent number in perspective. At 37.3%, heifers make up a slightly larger share of on-feed inventory than they did on average over the last twenty years. While this does not suggest widespread heifer retention, I do think the downward trend over the last 2-3 years is noteworthy. This is actually the smallest heifer percentage seen in quarterly cattle on feed data since 2018. That statistic is a little deceiving because we have been under 38% several times since then (most recently at 37.7% last April), but it is also hard to ignore. The bigger story of 2026 may be less about heifer retention and more about beef cow slaughter. After culling the herd very hard from 2021 to 2023, beef cow slaughter was sharply lower in 2024 and 2025. Through the first 14 weeks of 2026, beef cow slaughter has been running almost 18% lower than the same time last year. If that trend held for the balance of the year, the 2026 beef cow culling rate would be about 7%, when the culling rate has averaged over 9.8% the last twenty years. Weather conditions are likely to impact both heifer retention and cow culling as we move through current year, but the current pace of cow slaughter may be the largest inventory driver as we move towards 2027.



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 meetings will be **Thursday, May 21st, 6 pm**, adjourning for the summer & resuming **Thursday, September 17th, 6 pm**, with Kelsey Harvey, for the fall. **Call 662-841-9000 by NOON the TUESDAY BEFORE 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 March/April 2026 Lee Links)

Misconception #4: Cutting only big trees leaves the younger trees room to become more valuable.

One of the statements that foresters dread hearing is, “The best way to harvest (or sell) timber is to cut the big trees and let the little ones grow.” This statement reflects the common misconception that large trees are old and small trees are young.

Larger trees are not necessarily older than small trees. In fact, often the larger trees in a stand of timber are about the same age as the small-diameter trees. The large trees are bigger because they grew faster. Prove this to yourself the next time you see a pine plantation. The diameters of trees in the plantation will vary in size from small to large, even though all were planted at the same time. This is also true in natural stands.

The rate at which a tree grows depends on species, soil fertility, competition, genetics, and other factors. It’s a mistake simply to “cut the big trees and let the little ones grow.” Often, this results in harvesting the fastest-growing trees and leaving the poorest ones.

When you harvest your timber by cutting everything larger than a specified diameter (for example, 14 inches), you are sacrificing future species composition and timber quality in that stand. This technique is called “diameter-limit cutting.” Sadly, it is one of the most common ways timber is sold and harvested in Mississippi. Many landowners have sold timber this way only to realize later the “little trees” that are left are of poor quality and unable to reseed the harvest area (Figure 5). Often the only alternatives available afterward are expensive site preparation and planting or leaving the land cut over and out of production.

We will explore the other common misconceptions in newsletters to follow. If you can't wait until then...

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

**Join us for the next Forestry meeting,
Monday, May 4th, at 6 PM.**

Call 662-841-9000 by 12 PM on Friday, May 1st to reserve your seat.
Save the date for our fall Forestry meeting, Monday, August 3rd, at 6 PM.

Figure 5. This is a hardwood stand with trees marked for a high grade. Note the lack of any large, higher-value trees left unmarked.



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MAY



2026

EXTENSION

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	01	02
03	04 Forestry Meeting 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	05	06 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	07 Sewing Club I 10-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	08	09
10	11 Cloverbuds 5-7 & Jr Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 5-18 5:30PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	12 Aggies 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	13	14 Expressive Arts 8-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	15	16
17	18 Sewing Club II 10-18 3:30 PM Ropes & Reins 8-18 6 PM	19	20	21 Cattlemen Association 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	22	23
24	25 MEMORIAL DAY OFFICE CLOSED	26 MS 4-H Club Congress (Ambassadors Only)	27 MS 4-H Club Congress, MSU	28 Junior Master Gardener 8-13 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	29 MS 4-H Club Congress, MSU	30
31	01	02	03	04	05	06

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JUNE



2026

EXTENSION

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	01	02	03 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	04	05 NEMS 4-H Horse Show, MS Horse Park	06 NEMS 4-H Horse Show, MS Horse Park
07	08	09	10	11	12 NEMS Project Achievement Day NEMCC	13
14	15 Rabbit Club 5-18 4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	16 Aggies 8-18 6 PM	17 State 4-H Horse Show Jackson, MS	18 State 4-H Horse Show Jackson, MS	19 State 4-H Horse Show Jackson, MS	20 State 4-H Horse Show Jackson, MS
21	22	23	24	25 Junior Master Gardener 8-13 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	26 STEAM Day Starkville, MS	27
28	29	30	01	02	03 OFFICE CLOSED	04 4TH OF JULY INDEPENDENCE DAY SINCE 1776

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

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