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HIGHLIGHTS:

Annual Red Meat Production
February Red Meat Production
Potato Stocks
February Milk Production
Crop Revisions for 1997-2002
Cattle on Feed
Sheep & Lamb Losses
Egg Production

2003 Red Meat Production

Montana slaughter plants produced 16.0 million pounds, dressed weight, of red meat during 2003, compared with 16.8 million pounds in 2002. There were 19,000 cattle slaughtered during 2003, down 6 percent from the previous year. The total live weight of 22.1 million pounds was down 5 percent from a year earlier. The average live weight was up 7 pounds to 1,159 pounds.

There were 15,000 hogs slaughtered in Montana, unchanged from 2002. Total live weight at 3.5 million pounds was unchanged from the last year. The average live weight was 234 pounds per head compared with 236 the previous year. Sheep slaughter amounted to 3,700 head, a decrease of 100 head from a year earlier. The average live weight at 126 pounds was 4 pounds heavier than the previous year. Total live weight of all sheep and lambs slaughtered in 2003 decreased one percent from 2002 to 461,000 pounds.

The number of federally inspected slaughter plants in Montana on January 1, 2003 was 10, down one plant from 2002. There were 142 non-federally inspected plants on January 1, 2004, down 5 from the same date a year ago.

Red meat production for the United States totaled 46.8 billion pounds in 2003, 1.2 percent below last year's record high. Red meat includes beef, veal, pork, and lamb and mutton. Red meat production in commercial plants totaled 46.6 billion pounds.

Beef production, at 26.3 billion pounds,

was 3 percent below the previous record high set last year in 2002. Veal production totaled 201.1 million pounds, down 2 percent from last year, and set a new record low. Pork production, at 20.0 billion pounds, was 2 percent above last year, setting a new record high. Lamb and mutton production totaled 203.4 million pounds, falling 9 percent below the previous record low set a year ago.

Commercial cattle slaughter during 2003 totaled 35.5 million head, down 1 percent from 2002, with federal inspection comprising 98.3 percent of the total. The average live weight was 1,231 pounds, down 20 pounds from a year ago. Steers comprised 49.2 percent of the total federally inspected slaughter, heifers 31.7 percent, dairy cows 8 percent, other cows 9.1 percent, and bulls 1.8 percent.

Commercial calf slaughter totaled 1.0 million head, down 4 percent from a year ago with 97.5 percent under federal inspection. The average live weight was 318 pounds, up 6 pounds from a year earlier.

Commercial hog slaughter totaled 100.9 million head, up 1 percent from 2002 with 98.8 percent of the hogs slaughtered under federal inspection. The average live weight was up 1 pound from last year, at 266 pounds. Barrows and gilts comprised 96.5 percent of the total federally inspected slaughter.

Commercial sheep and lamb slaughter, at 2.98 million head, was down 9 percent from 2002 with 94.2 percent comprised by federal inspection. The average live weight was up 1 pound from 2002 to 134 pounds.

There were 850 slaughtering plants under federal inspection on January 1, 2004 compared with 879 last year. Of these, 689 slaughtered at least one head of cattle during 2003 with 15 slaughtering over 56 percent of the total cattle killed. Hogs were slaughtered at 662 plants, with 13 accounting for 58 percent of the total. Likewise, 8 of the 290 plants that slaughtered calves accounted for 57 percent

of the total and 4 of the 505 plants that slaughtered sheep or lambs in 2003 comprised 69 percent of the total head. Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas accounted for over 52 percent of the United States commercial red meat production in 2003, similar to 2002.

February Red Meat Production

Montana slaughter plants produced 1.1 million pounds, dressed weight, of red meat during February 2004, up 1 percent from last month but down 12 percent from February of 2003. Cattle slaughter totaled 1,300, down 7 percent from a year ago. The average live weight of 1,164 pounds decreased 25 pounds from last year.

During February 1,100 hogs were slaughtered, unchanged from a year ago. The average live weight at 236 pounds was up 4 pounds from last year. February sheep slaughter in the state totaled 300 head, up 100 head from February 2003. The average live weight increased 7 pounds from last year to 126 pounds.

Commercial red meat production for the United States totaled 3.40 billion pounds in February, down 3 percent from the 3.50 billion pounds produced in February 2003.

Beef production, at 1.80 billion pounds, was 7 percent below the previous year. Cattle slaughter totaled 2.43 million head, down 6 percent from February 2003. The average live weight was down 28 pounds from the previous year, at 1,233 pounds.

Veal production totaled 14.5 million pounds, 9 percent below February a year ago. Calf slaughter totaled 71,500 head, down 14 percent from February 2003. The average live weight was 19 pounds above last year, at 336 pounds.

Pork production totaled 1.57 billion pounds, up 3 percent from the previous year and a new record high for February. Hog kill totaled 7.89 million head, 3 percent above February 2003. The average live weight was 1 pound above the previous year, at 268 pounds. (Continued on next page)

February Red Meat Production (continued from front page)

Lamb and mutton production, at 14.8 million pounds, was down 2 percent from February 2003. Sheep slaughter totaled 213,000 head, 6 percent below last year. The average live weight was 139 pounds, up 6 pounds from February a year ago.

January to February 2004 commercial red meat production was 7.1 billion pounds, down 6 percent from 2003. Accumulated beef production was down 12 percent from last year, veal was down 9 percent, pork was up 2 percent from last year, and lamb and mutton production was down 3 percent.

Montana Potato Stocks Up 4 Percent, U.S. Up 1 percent

Montana potato producers held 2.9 million cwt. of potatoes in storage on March 1, 2004, up 4 percent from the previous year. Eighty-seven percent of the 2003 Montana potato crop is still in storage.

The 15 major potato States held 167 million cwt of potatoes in storage March 1, 2004, up 1 percent from last year and 5 percent above 2002. Potatoes in storage account for 41 percent of the 2003 fall storage States' production, unchanged from a year ago.

Disappearance of 237 million cwt from the start of harvest to March 1, is down 2 percent from the same period last year but 4 percent above two years ago. Shrink and loss, at 22.6 million cwt, is up 2 percent from last year and 4 percent above two years ago.

Processors used 120 million cwt of 2003 crop potatoes so far this season, down 4 percent from a year ago but 5 percent above two years ago. February usage of 18.8 million cwt is 1 percent above last year and 3 percent above two years ago. Dehydrators used 26.1 million cwt to date, down 7 percent from last year.

Western States held 114 million cwt of potatoes in storage on March 1, down 6 percent from last year and 1 percent below two years ago. Idaho's potato stocks are down 6 percent from last year, Washington decreased 3 percent,

Colorado's storages held 21 percent less, and California lost 10 percent. Oregon's sheds stored 11 percent more than last year and Montana increased 4 percent.

February U.S. Milk Production Up 1.7 Percent

Milk production in the 20 major States during February totaled 11.8 billion pounds, up 1.7 percent from February 2003. However, adjusting production for the additional day due to the leap year causes February milk production to be down 1.8 percent on a per day basis. January revised production, at 12.5 billion pounds, was down 1.0 percent from January 2003. The January revision represented a decrease of 11 million pounds from last month's preliminary production estimate.

Production per cow in the 20 major States averaged 1,531 pounds for February, 42 pounds above February 2003.

The number of milk cows on farms in the 20 major States was 7.72 million head, 91,000 head less than February 2003, but 4,000 head more than January 2004.

Montana and U.S. Crops and Grain Stocks 1997-2002

The final estimates for all crops and grains stocks for 1997 to 2002 are now available. The publication contains any changes in crop acres, yield, production, or grain stocks for 1997 to 2002. Montana had mostly minor revisions to acres, yield and production for winter wheat, barley, hay, corn, pulse crops, and oilseeds for some of the years. Hay stocks were also revised for some of the years during this period. You can find the final estimates for all crops and grain stocks on our website www.nass.usda.gov/mt.

The final estimates for the United States were also published and are available on the NASS website /www.usda.gov/nass/. Data included in this publication provide a historic record and a benchmark for current estimates. Revisions were made after a thorough review of the original survey data and all additional data now available, including the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Other data series considered included United States Department of Agriculture farm program administrative

records, shipment records, exports, and quantity processed information. The Agricultural Statistics Board evaluated the current acreages with historic totals to ensure comparability with past Census relationships. Production, beginning stocks, and recorded disappearance were compared to historic totals for evaluating ending stocks. The 1998-2002 estimates are considered final and will not be revised again.

At the National level, all revisions to production estimates of major crops (corn, soybeans, all wheat) were less than 1 percent. Revisions were made to 2002 and 2001 corn estimates. The 2002 grain production estimate was revised down 0.5 percent and the 2001 production was revised down fractionally. Changes in harvested acres and yield were made to both large and small corn producing States. The 2002 soybean production was revised down 0.2 percent. Revisions were made primarily in the smaller producing States. The all wheat production estimate for 2002 was revised down 0.8 percent, the 2001 production was revised down 0.5 percent, and the 2000 and 1999 production levels were each revised down 0.2 percent. Changes in harvested acres and yield were made to both large and small wheat producing States.

U.S. Cattle on Feed Up 4 Percent

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in the United States for feedlots with capacity of 1,000 or more head totaled 10.98 million head on March 1, 2004. The inventory was up 4 percent from the 10.55 million head on March 1, 2003 but 5 percent below March 1, 2002.

Placements in feedlots during February totaled 1.61 million, 2 percent below 2003 and 11 percent below 2002. Net placements were 1.54 million. During February, placements of cattle and calves weighing less than 600 pounds were 319,000, 600-699 pounds were 351,000, 700-799 pounds were 548,000, and 800 pounds and greater were 392,000.

Marketings of fed cattle during February totaled 1.69 million, 2 percent below 2003 and 6 percent below 2002. Other disappearance totaled 69,000 during February, 3 percent below 2003 but 10 percent above 2002.

Sheep and Lamb Losses for 2003

Montana sheep and lamb producers lost 58,000 animals to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 2003, representing a total value of more than \$4.5 million. While the total number of sheep and lambs lost decreased 9,000 head from last year, the total value of inventory lost was 14 percent higher than a year ago. Higher average market prices this past year resulted in an increase to sheep and lamb values. Total inventory is 7 percent lower than the previous year. Sheep and lamb deaths amounted to 9.5 percent of the January 1 inventory and lambs born -- slightly less than the previous year.

The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 17,700 head, down

3,700 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 13,800 head, down 16 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 3,900, down 1,000 head from a year ago. Predators caused an estimated \$1.3 million in losses in 2003, up 6 percent from the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 2.9 percent of the January 1 inventory and lambs born and 31 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 67 percent of the predator caused losses and 20 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was \$0.8 million.

The total value of non-predatory losses was \$2.6 million in 2003, 10 percent more than the previous year. Non-

predatory losses accounted for 57 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses were lambing complications at 8,600 head.

Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 10,300 head, 6 percent lower than 2002. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 22,700 head, 6,300 head lower than a year ago.

Producers reported a 28 percent increase in the number of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes this past year. Lambs lost to unknown causes totaled 4,500 head, compared with 3,500 head last year. Unknown causes claimed 2,800 sheep, 600 head more than last year. The value of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes increased to \$0.6 million.

SHEEP & LAMBS: Death Losses by Cause, Montana, 2002-2003

Cause of Loss	SHEEP LOSS				LAMB LOSS				TOTAL LOSS			
	Number of Head		Value in Dollars (000) 1/, 3/, 4/		Number of Head		Value in Dollars (000) 2/, 3/		Number of Head		Value in Dollars (000) 3/, 4/	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
Predators												
Fox	100	--	9.0	--	1,200	1,000	57.8	61.8	1,300	1,000	66.8	61.8
Dog	500	600	45.0	70.2	500	400	24.1	24.7	1,000	1,000	69.1	94.9
Coyote	2,800	2,100	252.0	245.7	11,100	9,700	534.8	599.5	13,900	11,800	786.8	845.2
Eagle	100	100	9.0	11.7	1,500	1,100	72.3	68.0	1,600	1,200	81.3	79.7
Bobcat	100	--	9.0	--	200	--	9.6	--	300	--	18.6	--
Bear	300	300	27.0	35.1	300	500	14.5	30.9	600	800	41.5	66.0
Mountain Lion	200	100	18.0	11.7	500	300	24.1	18.5	700	400	42.1	30.2
Wolf	300	300	27.0	35.1	200	200	9.6	12.4	500	500	36.6	47.5
Other Animals	200	--	18.0	--	200	100	9.6	6.2	400	100	27.6	6.2
Unknown Predators	300	400	27.0	46.8	800	500	38.5	30.9	1,100	900	65.5	77.7
Total Predators	4,900	3,900	441.0	456.3	16,500	13,800	795.0	852.8	21,400	17,700	1,236.0	1,309.1
Non-Predators												
All Diseases	1,500	2,100	135.0	245.7	6,600	6,100	318.0	377.0	8,100	8,200	453.0	622.7
Weather Conditions	1,900	600	171.0	70.2	11,500	5,700	554.1	352.3	13,400	6,300	725.1	422.5
Poison	800	600	72.0	70.2	700	500	33.7	30.9	1,500	1,100	105.7	101.1
Lambing Complications	1,700	1,400	153.0	163.8	6,200	7,200	298.7	445.0	7,900	8,600	451.7	608.8
On Back	700	800	63.0	93.6	100	100	4.8	6.2	800	900	67.8	99.8
Old Age	2,500	3,700	225.0	432.9					2,500	3,700	225.0	432.9
Theft	300	700	27.0	81.9	600	800	28.9	49.4	900	1,500	55.9	131.3
Other	1,500	400	135.0	46.8	3,300	2,300	159.0	142.1	4,800	2,700	294.0	188.9
Total Non-Predators	10,900	10,300	981.0	1,205.1	29,000	22,700	1,397.2	1,402.9	39,900	33,000	2,378.2	2,608.0
Unknown Causes	2,200	2,800	198.0	327.6	3,500	4,500	168.6	278.1	5,700	7,300	366.6	605.7
Total Loss	18,000	17,000	1,620.0	1,989.0	49,000	41,000	2,360.8	2,533.8	67,000	58,000	3,980.8	4,522.8

1/ Using average reported value for Ewes 1+. 2/ Lamb values equal to market year average price received for lambs multiplied by an average weight of 60 pounds per lamb. 3/ Totals may not add due to rounding. 4/ 2002 revised values for ewes 1+. -- Denotes less than 100 head.

February U.S. Egg Production Up 3 Percent

U.S. egg production totaled 6.89 billion during February 2004, up 3 percent from last year. Production included 5.89 billion table eggs, and 1.00 billion hatching eggs, of which 948 million were broiler-type and 54.0 million were egg-type. The total number of layers during February 2004 averaged 339 million, down slightly from a year

earlier. February egg production per 100 layers was 2,033 eggs, up 4 percent from and February 2003 contained 20 weekdays, 1 holiday, and 4 Saturdays.

All layers in the U.S. on March 1, 2004, totaled 340 million, down slightly from a year ago. The 340 million layers consisted of 281 million layers producing table or commercial type eggs, 56.8 million layers producing broiler-type hatching eggs, and 2.44 million layers

producing egg-type hatching eggs. Rate of lay per day on March 1, 2004, averaged 70.5 eggs per 100 layers, up 1 percent from a year ago.

Laying flocks in the 30 major egg producing States produced 6.44 billion eggs during February 2004, up 3 percent from a year ago. The average number of layers during February, at 316 million, was down 1 percent from a year ago.

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