



Legislative Update

March 3, 2026

Week Six (February 23-27, 2026)

The penultimate week of the 2026 session was busy. Over 1,000 bills are drafted and introduced.

Appropriations Update

This week, the Executive Appropriations Committee finalized its work. Utah Farm Bureau is especially pleased to see \$695,300 in **ongoing funding** secured for the [Utah FFA Association](#), along with support for an FFA teacher mentor position at Utah State University. Farm Bureau has worked for several years to build awareness and advocate for this long-term investment, and securing ongoing funding is a true game-changer for FFA students, agricultural educators, and the future of Utah agriculture. This commitment provides stability, strengthens program growth, and ensures more students across the state have access to high-quality agricultural education and leadership development opportunities for years to come.

Utah Farm Bureau is also pleased that the Committee recommended an additional \$175,000 in one-time funds for the [Utah State University Extension Rural E-Commerce Accelerator](#). You can view the final voting packet results by clicking [here](#).



Photo Credit: Terry Camp

H.B. 494 - Transfer of Water Interests

On Monday, the Utah Farm Bureau testified before the House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee in support of [H.B. 494, Transfer of Water Interests](#), sponsored by [Rep. Doug Owens](#) and floor-sponsored in the Senate by [Sen. Derrin Owens](#). The bill clarifies and reinforces the Legislature's established process for transferring shares in private water companies, helping prevent attempts to transfer those shares by

deed as an “appurtenant interest” to land outside the statutory process. Although Utah law carefully defines how water company shares are conveyed, disputes continue to arise, often stemming from poor documentation or family disagreements, claiming that shares automatically transferred with the land. These arguments frequently rely on the 1954 decision in *Brimm v. Cache Valley Banking Co.*, which interpreted prior statutory language as creating a rebuttable presumption that shares were not appurtenant, but could be shown to run with the land under certain conditions. More recently, the Utah Court of Appeals reaffirmed the importance of following statutory transfer procedures in *Zundel v. Ramsdell* (2024 UT App 88), a decision that came after years of costly litigation involving the Bear River Canal Company. H.B. 494 helps protect shareholders and nonprofit water companies by reducing uncertainty and litigation risk, while preserving the integrity of Utah’s private, nonprofit water companies, many of which were formed in the pioneer era and continue to deliver critical, cost-effective water management across the state under the Utah Revised Nonprofit Corporation Act.¹

[HB 348 – Dedicated Water Amendments](#)

On Tuesday, we once again testified in support of [H.B. 348, Dedicated Water Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jill Koford](#), which refines the tools available for dedicating agricultural water to environmental and system purposes while adding important safeguards to protect continued production agriculture. The bill defines a “dedicated water application” as an application to change the existing nature of use under a water right by adding an instream flow use, use on sovereign lands, or a project to deliver water in the Colorado River System. It also authorizes the state engineer to deny a dedicated water application if approval would prevent a field from being irrigated for more than two years within a five-year period, ensuring that new dedication mechanisms do not result in effective long-term fallowing of farmland.

[HB 410 – Water Leasing Amendments](#)

At the same hearing, we once again spoke in support of [H.B. 410, Water Leasing Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jill Koford](#). This bill establishes the Great Salt Lake Preservation Program to temporarily lease water from agricultural water users for delivery to the lake, creating a voluntary, compensated pathway for producers to participate in lake restoration efforts. The bill creates a five-member board with three voting members (an agriculture representative, executive director of the Department of Natural Resources, and the commissioner of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food) and two non-voting members (the state engineer and the Great Salt Lake commissioner’s designee), to administer the program and set leasing rates, with the board accepting annual applications from agricultural water users wishing to lease water. You can rewatch the hearing by clicking [here](#).

[H.B. 179 - Milk Amendments](#)

On Wednesday, February 25, Utah Farm Bureau testified before the Senate Business and Labor Committee on H.B. 179 Milk Amendments. The 2026 session began with three separate raw milk bills — [H.B. 179, Milk Amendments](#) ([Rep. Kristen Chevrier](#)), [H.B. 283, Raw Milk Amendments](#) ([Rep. Mike Kohler](#)), and [S.B.217, Local Food Amendments](#) ([Sen. Kirk Cullimore](#)) — which were ultimately consolidated into a single measure through Utah Farm Bureau’s collaboration with House and Senate leaders, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, and other stakeholders. H.B. 179 Substitute 3 establishes three regulatory tiers based on production volume and method of sale. The commercial sales tier requires compliance with Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) standards for sanitation, facilities, and operations, while separate tiers outline requirements for on-farm direct-to-consumer sales and limited small-producer production.

¹ [Utah Code § 16-6a-1701](#)

Utah Farm Bureau is comfortable with the final version of the bill. In addition to clarifying compliance expectations for producers, the legislation allows raw milk to be sold in more retail settings, while preserving defined testing protocols and enforcement authority to address potential public health concerns.

FFA Students at the Capitol



Utah Career & Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Day on the Hill

Utah FFA Students & State Officers with Wade Garrett, Utah Farm Bureau VP of Advocacy & Strategic Relationships, FFA National Officer Claire Woeppel, Senator Ron Winterton, and Terry Camp, Utah Farm Bureau VP of Public Policy



Delta FFA Chapter at the Capitol

[H.B. 326 - Animal Depredation Amendments](#)

We finished the week on Friday by testifying before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee in support of [H.B. 326, Animal Depredation Amendments](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rex Shipp](#). The bill protects livestock, crops, and rangeland by improving predator-control tools, strengthening enforcement against illegal introductions of feral swine, and providing clearer rules for producers and agencies working to prevent agricultural damage.

Specifically, the bill updates the Agriculture and Wildlife Damage Prevention Act by aligning definitions with the wildlife code and clarifying how the state manages depredating animals. It establishes a landowner aerial hunting permit and separate pilot license for taking coyotes from aircraft, clarifies rulemaking authority, allows permit or license suspension or revocation for violations, and establishes that the Agricultural and Wildlife Damage Prevention Board set predator control fees annually through the fee schedule with legislative approval instead of through periodic statutory changes.

The legislation also strengthens enforcement related to holding raccoons or coyotes in captivity and updates stray and feral swine laws. It defines feral swine, creates third-degree felony penalties for releasing, transporting, importing, or attempting to hunt or capture feral swine, authorizes UDAF, DWR, and peace officers to seize or destroy feral swine, and allows law enforcement to seize and potentially forfeit vehicles used in feral swine crimes.

[Policy Resources](#)

As the session continues in its final week, please remember that you can follow priority legislation through the Utah Farm Bureau Legislative Tracker, available under the [“Policy & Action”](#) tab on our website. The 2026 Policy Book is also now online, and you can read it by clicking [here](#). You can find your state representative and senator by typing your address in the search bar on this [page](#).

As always, we encourage you to actively send our policy team questions or comments on topics of concern.

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