



# Legislative Update

January 31, 2022

It was good to see many of you in St. George last week. It is always good to spend time with our Farm Bureau friends. We are moving into the third week of the legislative session. Legislators will continue to hear appropriation requests this week as they prioritize funding and work on creating a balanced budget. Some of the requests we have been working on include:

**Additional meat inspectors** – We have processing plants in the state that would like to begin or expand operations but are prevented from doing so because the state does not have meat inspectors available. We are working to correct this problem.

**Agriculture infrastructure** – We are working with UDAF to secure \$3 million for a grant program to help increase processing capacity in the state.

**Water optimization** – UDAF has requested up to an additional \$50 million for the Agricultural Water Optimization program. This money will be used to help improve water optimization on farms across the state.

**USU Vet School** – We have been talking about this all session. This is great opportunity for Utah, and we are fully supportive of creating a 4-year veterinary school at USU.

## A few bills to make note of this week:

**HB 62, Big Game Amendments** – The intent of this bill is to clarify how DWR responds to and compensates landowners for big game depredation. We were concerned that the bill changed the long held “72-hour rule” from 72 hours to 3 business days. We have worked with the sponsor and DWR to have the bill amended to protect the 72-hour rule while still addressing their concerns. We are continuing to work on this bill to see that it fits with Farm Bureau policy. We believe it is much closer to that today than when it was first introduced.

**HB 129, Navigable Waters Determination** – This bill was introduced in an attempt to resolve the conflict between landowners bordering navigable rivers and the fishermen that want access to fish on those rivers. This issue has been litigated for several years with various court cases. In years past, the Legislature has attempted to find a solution that will pacify both sides, but those efforts have been unsuccessful. We met with the bill sponsor, Rep. Hawkes, and he has agreed not to run the bill this session. However, he remains committed to discuss the issue over the interim to see if a compromise can be reached and Farm Bureau will be involved with those discussions to see that the property rights of landowners are protected.

**Animal Welfare** – There are several bills this year addressing various animal welfare concerns. From animal fighting and dogs riding in the back of pickup trucks to domestic violence involving companion animals. We are evaluating each of these bills to make sure that there are no unintended consequences for agriculture.

**HB 232, Utah Lake Authority** – This bill was introduced last year and raises concerns for several groups, including Farm Bureau. A committee was formed that worked throughout the summer to address those concerns. We are evaluating the bill to make sure our concerns have been resolved. We believe they have but will continue to monitor the bill.

As always please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

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