



Legislative Update

October 10, 2023

Interim Update

We hope everyone is enjoying the beautiful autumn colors and cooler temperatures. The Utah Farm Bureau policy team is ready for a busy fall with County Farm Bureau Annual Business Meetings and our annual convention in Provo, [November 15-17](#). We are working closely with the legislature during Interim, and we look forward to visiting your counties to discuss your priorities for the 2024 General Session.

The Utah State Legislature returned for Interim meetings in August after having July off. On August 9, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee met to discuss Interim Study items. One of the issues discussed at the hearing was egg sale restrictions. The committee requested that committee and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) staff “[s]tudy egg sale restrictions, including the experience of other states transitioning to cage-free egg facilities, whether other states have restricted imports, and the impact to producers in those states.” In 2021, the Legislature approved S.B. 147, Confinement of Egg Laying Hens. This law requires all Utah egg facilities to be cage free by January 1, 2025. The bill did not include import restrictions on eggs from non-cage free states. The committee discussed this legislation and how producers in Utah and in other states are making the transition. The committee opened a bill file to address the production of cage free eggs. Our Utah Farm Bureau policy team will be actively involved in further discussions on this topic. You can view the presentation and listen to the debate by clicking [here](#).

Another topic of interest discussed at the hearing was agritourism. Committee staff provided an overview of agritourism and what is included in other states’ agritourism statutes. Representatives from UDAF then presented about promotion of agritourism in Utah and challenges surrounding agritourism. Following the presentations, Terry Camp, VP of Public Policy, spoke on agritourism and expressed support for the committee studying agritourism and considering reforms to Utah’s existing agritourism statute. You can view the presentations by clicking [here](#).



(Photo Credit: American West Heritage Center)

The committee's consideration of agritourism is timely, as earlier this year the UFBF Board of Directors requested a PIRC on agritourism to review Utah Farm Bureau agritourism policy, to analyze Utah's existing agritourism statute, and to discuss new ways to promote agritourism operations. The Agritourism PIRC met on August 7 and Board Member Sherrie Tate chaired the group. During the meeting, PIRC participants listened to presentations by Mr. Rusty Rumley from the National Agricultural Law Center and Amber Brown from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. Discussion following the presentations touched on the definition of agritourism, added liability coverage, inclusion of specific text for posted warning notices, adding agritourism to nuisance laws (Utah Right-to-Farm statute), setting up a registration process for agritourism operators, and adding agritourism as an approved use within Agriculture Protection Areas.

The Utah Farm Bureau policy team is actively collaborating with Representative Carl Albrecht (R-District 70 Beaver, Iron, Piute, and Sevier) to draft an agritourism reform bill for consideration during the 2024 General Legislative Session. The bill will propose enhanced liability protections (e.g., wild animals, zoonotic diseases), add specific language for posted warning notices at agritourism operations, establish a process for agritourism operators to voluntarily register with the state to enhance promotion, include agritourism under Utah's Right-to-Farm statute, and clarify that agritourism is an approved use within an Agriculture Protection Area.

The Legislature's Interim meetings in September took place remotely on the campus of Utah Tech University in St. George. The Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee discussed a wide range of proposals. One of the topics discussed was implementation of the Watershed Councils Act (Utah Code §73-10g-Part 3). The purpose of the Watershed Councils Act is to "develop diverse and balanced stakeholder forums for discussion of water policy and resource issues at watershed and state levels...". Candice Hasenyager, Director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, noted that the state has adopted organizing documents for watershed councils and watershed councils have been fully certified for the Bear River, Weber River, and Utah Lake. Additionally, the Jordan River Watershed Council is partially certified, and the West Desert Watershed Council is formed and awaiting certification. In the coming months, the Division of Water Resources will be working to organize watershed councils for Great Salt Lake, Uintah Basin, and Sevier River.

Another topic discussed at the hearing was rural veterinary services. UDAF provided an update on veterinary needs in rural Utah and highlighted the Veterinary Loan Repayment Program that the legislature approved last year. UDAF proposed legislative changes, including allowing \$20,000 of repayment to a qualifying veterinarian per year rather than \$100,000 after five years under Utah's new Veterinary Loan Repayment Program. You can watch UDAF's presentation by clicking [here](#).

The next dates for Interim Session are October 10, 11, and 12. You can view the upcoming schedule by visiting le.utah.gov. As always, we encourage you to actively send our policy team questions or comments on topics of concern. We also encourage you to read through the [2023 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book](#), which can also be found under the policy section of our website.

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