

# United States Senate

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Perdue:

I am reaching out today to urge you to take immediate action to address the effect of sharply declining cattle prices on Montana's ranchers. Since January 1, 2020, live cattle futures lost nearly a quarter of their value. As the United States continues to take measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic, cattle prices are likely to continue to decline. I urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to examine this urgent situation and take steps to support the domestic cattle industry.

Last week at the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, you and I discussed the importance of taking action to level the playing field for ranchers across the county. Today, ranchers face the steepest price decline for cattle in forty years, with most prices down roughly \$30/cwt in the last few days. Livestock producers already face unprecedented difficulties – rapid consolidation of the industry, competition from innovative technologies, and rising input costs, all of which deeply cut into ranchers' margins.

Recognizing that many markets are currently uncertain, I ask that you consider the years-long pressure put on the cattle industry and use USDA's authority to support the livestock industry. Under the Commodity Credit Corporation, Congress granted USDA many tools to alleviate market pressure in situations like the one the industry is currently facing. Your actions now could make the difference between folks going broke, or staying in the industry for another generation. I appreciate your time and consideration to this issue. I stand ready to work with you to best-serve Montana's ranchers.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester