



COLORADO
Department of Agriculture

2026 SMART Act Hearing

Joint Ag and Natural Resources Committee

January 2026

Robert Sakata, Acting Commissioner of Agriculture

Who We Are

Our mission is to strengthen and advance Colorado agriculture; promote a safe and high-quality food supply; protect consumers; and foster responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources.

Our vision is that Colorado agriculture be strong and vibrant, a key driver of the state's economy, and recognized worldwide for its safe and abundant supply of high-quality food and agriculture products.

Our core values are Respect, Professionalism, Partnership, Service, and Proactivity.

Commissioner's Office
24 FTE

Robert Sakata
Acting Commissioner

Animal Health
21 FTE

Dr. Maggie Baldwin
State Veterinarian

Animal Welfare
15 FTE

Joe Stafford
Director

Brand Inspection
61.2 FTE

Todd Inglee
Brand Commissioner

Colorado State Fair
20 FTE

Andrea Wiesenmeyer
General Manager

Conservation Services
29 FTE

Evanne Caviness
Director

Inspection and
Consumer Services
59 FTE

Mark Gallegos
Director

Laboratory Services
26 FTE

Eric Petty
Director

Markets
18.4 FTE

Amanda Laban
Director

Plant Industry
45 FTE

Wondirad Gebru
Director

Our Key Impacts and Successes

- Japanese Beetle infestation in Mesa County reduced by 85%
- Initiated R&D of biocontrol agents to combat corn earworm threatening Olathe sweet corn
- 116 small business reported \$10M in sales through 10 CDA trade missions (30:1 ROI)
- Implemented robust HPAI response measures that influenced national strategy for poultry and beef industries.
- Issued \$300K to mountain communities and embedded two range riders in first year of the Non-lethal Conflict Reduction Program.
- Issued \$5M in Community Food Access Grants across 42 counties
- State Fair recognized with 23 international and regional awards

Celebrating 250/150 Through Story, Art, and Experience

A bold, public mural created by **Thomas “Detour” Evans**, unveiled at the National Western Stock Show at the Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center on Jan 10



Explore the full celebration at SettingColoradosTable.com

Celebrating 250/150 Through Story, Art, and Experience

- Authentic producer voices featuring oral histories from the state, featuring leaders like the late John Stulp, Jay Fetcher, Ronda Lobato and others.

Created in partnership with History Colorado

- Harvest Table launch event at the 2026 Colorado State Fair on Sept 1



Explore the full celebration at SettingColoradosTable.com



Colorado For All

- **Expanding Leadership Training:** Empowering 120+ current leaders with an additional 38 already committed for 2026, ensuring long-term culture stability.
- **Elevating Perspectives:** Our “Voices in Agriculture” series provides a quarterly platform for dialogue, connecting industry leaders with real-world solutions.
- **Data-Driven Accountability:** Rigorous workforce analysis ensures our hiring pipeline, from application to offer, is transparent and representative of our community.



Colorado For All

- **Economic Opportunity:** Participated in the Statewide Equity Office's Supplier Diversity initiative to broaden our economic impact and support a wider range of local businesses.
- **Modernizing Accessibility:** Strengthened our commitment to ADA by establishing Standard Operating Procedures (Title I) and refined policies (Title II) to ensure seamless access for all.
- **Systemizing Digital Access:** Became the 3rd state agency to complete our IT Checklist and increased our website scores. We're developing 5 online learning modules, embedding accessibility into the daily workflows for staff.



Federal Impacts

- USDA terminated \$18M in Climate Smart Commodities Grant Funding
 - Reapplied under the new Agricultural Markets Program
- Delayed grant and contract reimbursements at the beginning of the calendar year
- HR1(OBBB)
- USDA Workforce Reduction (20,000 staff, 18% of total workforce)
- Federal Shutdown
 - Access to Services
 - Delay in administration of programs and reimbursements



Wildly Important Goals

2025-27 WIGs

1. Expanding National and International Market Access for Agricultural Businesses
2. Developing Agricultural Leaders
3. Advancing the Colorado Water Plan
4. Non-lethal Wolf Conflict Reduction
5. Providing Education on Animal Mistreatment and Livestock Theft (New in FY26)



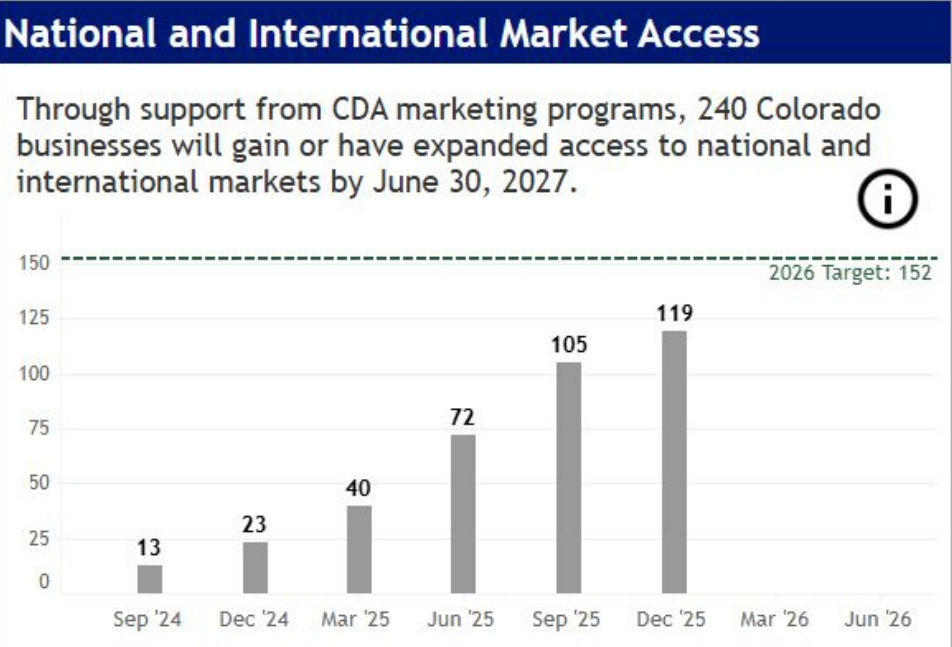
National and International Market Access



Building on FY25 Success

FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
72	152	240

Through support from CDA marketing programs, 240 Colorado businesses will gain or have expanded access to national and international markets by June 30, 2027.



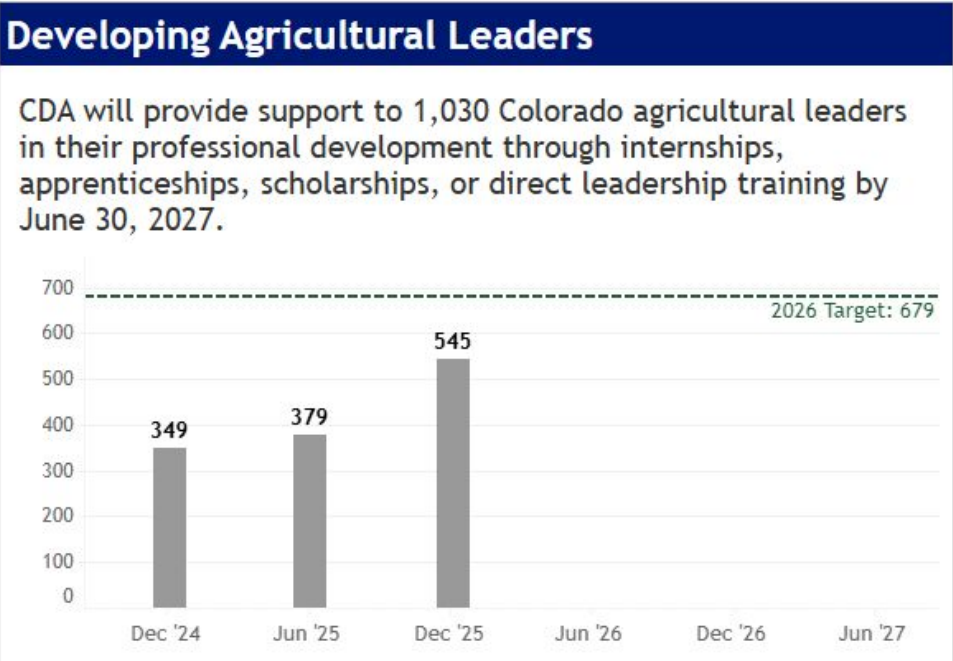
Developing Agricultural Leaders



CDA will provide support to 1,030 Colorado agricultural leaders in their professional development through internships, apprenticeships, scholarships, or direct leadership training by June 30, 2027.

Building on FY25 Success

FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
379	679	1,030



Advancing the CO Water Plan



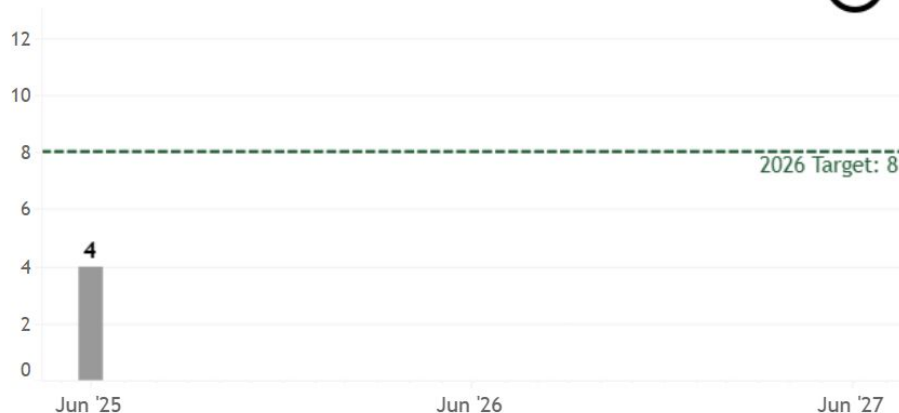
Building on FY25 Success

FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
4	8	12

To advance water resiliency within Colorado agriculture, CDA will take action on 12 agency initiatives that are aligned with the Colorado Water Plan by June 30, 2027.

Advancing the Colorado Water Plan

To advance water resiliency within Colorado agriculture, CDA will take action on 12 agency initiatives that are aligned with the Colorado Water Plan by June 30, 2027.



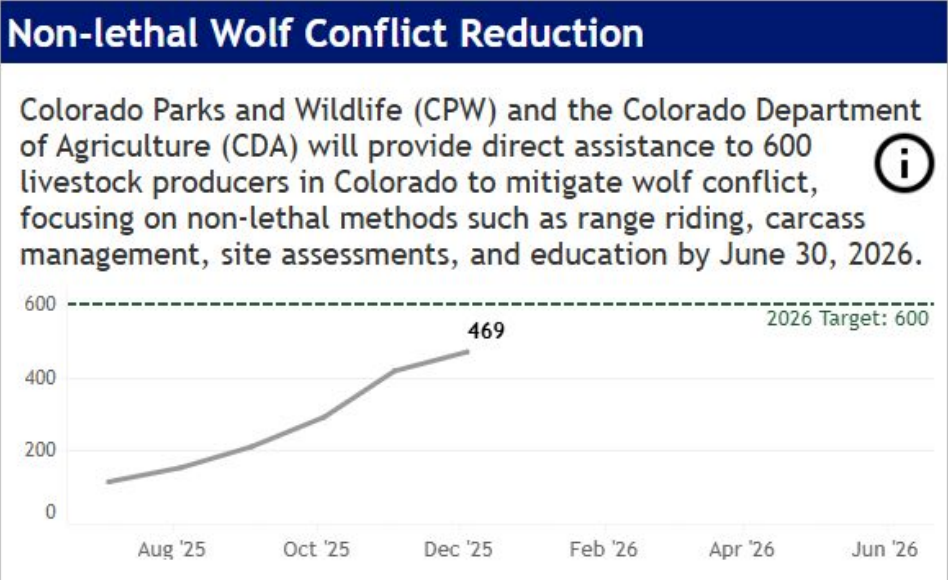
Non-lethal Conflict Reduction



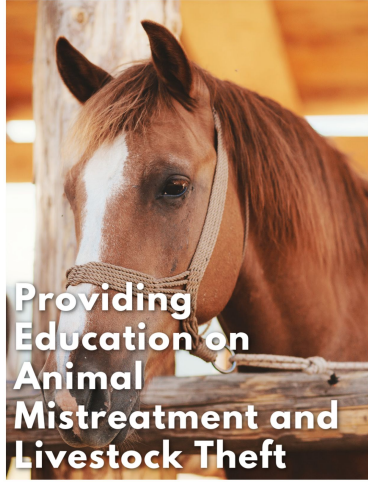
FY26 Targets

Carcass Mgmt Education	Range Riding and Site Assessments
500	100

Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Agriculture will provide direct assistance to 600 livestock producers in Colorado to mitigate wolf conflict, focusing on non-lethal methods such as range riding, carcass management, site assessments, and education by June 30, 2026.



Education on Animal Mistreatment and Theft



2 Year Targets

FY26 Target	FY27 Target
8 out of 10 Confidence Level	8 out of 10 Confidence Level

Local law enforcement, district attorneys, brand inspectors, and Bureau of Animal Protection agents who complete a CDA training will report an average confidence level of 8 out of 10, indicating they are "very confident" in applying animal welfare and livestock theft laws by June 30, 2027.

Providing Education on Animal Mistreatment and Livestock Theft

Local law enforcement, district attorneys, brand inspectors, and Bureau of Animal Protection (BAP) agents who complete a CDA training will report an average confidence level of 8 out of 10, indicating they are "very confident" in applying animal welfare and livestock theft laws by June 30, 2027.



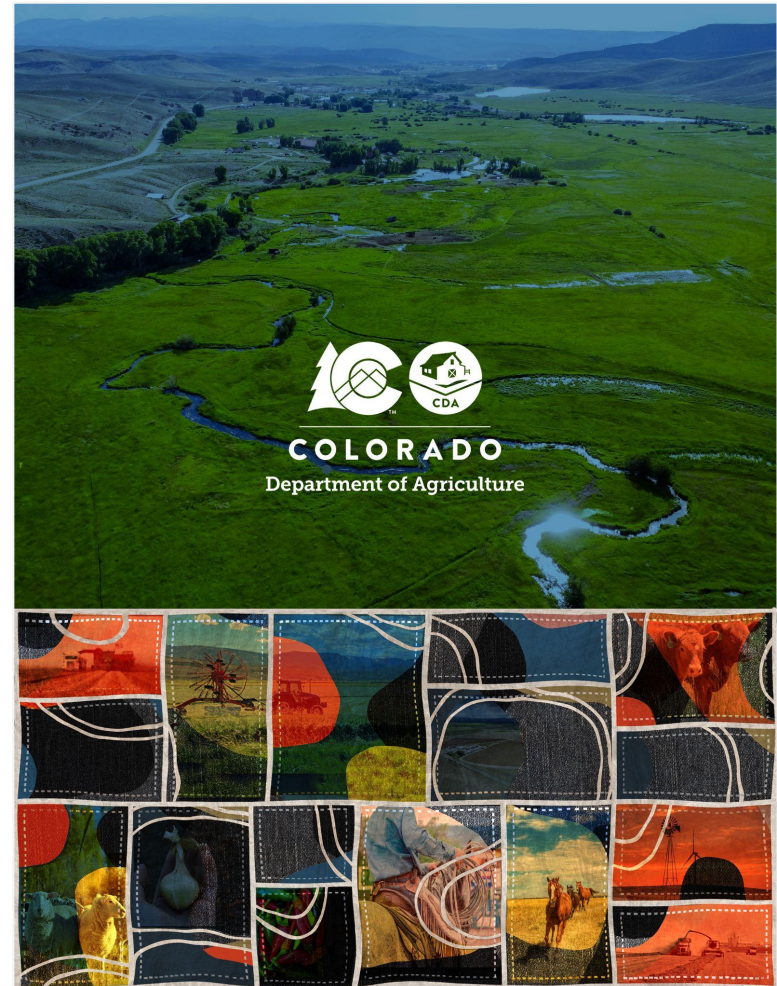
More Information

To view monthly updates on Wildly Important Goals and corresponding lead measures, please visit the [Governor's Dashboard](#).

For more information on additional CDA goals, view our [FY25-26 Performance Plan](#)

Also, review our FY24-25 Performance Plan Summary on existing goals

- [WIG #1 National and International Market Access](#)
- [WIG #2 Developing Agricultural Leaders](#)
- [WIG #3 Advancing the Colorado Water Plan](#)
- [WIG #4 Supporting Ranchers Through Non-Lethal Predator Conflict Reduction](#)



Strategic Framework: 5 Directions



Focuses the diversity of CDA's work in five key directions:

1. People & Community
2. Market and Economic Productivity
3. Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience
4. Animal Health & Welfare
5. Internal Operational Improvements

27 distinct paths, each with specific objectives, strategic actions and measurable performance benchmarks and impacts.



FY25 Strategic Plan Success by the Numbers



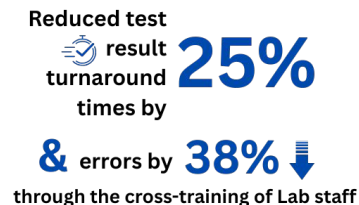
People and Community



Market and Economic Productivity



Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience



FY25 Strategic Plan Success by the Numbers



Animal Health & Welfare

Responded to



11

agricultural emergencies

like Las Animas-Baca County Blizzard & Alexander Mountain and Quarry Fires

Engaged

16 county law
enforcement offices

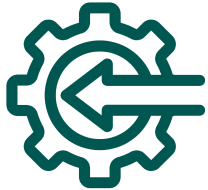


& **18** livestock
associations

on brand law
education

234,650

no-cost RFID
tags distributed
a **102%** increase



Internal Operational Improvements

Established **13**
initiatives in the
Brands Division

8 focused on operational
efficiencies,



3 on cost savings,

2

on improved customer XP

Established self-
audit processes for



3 out of **8**

ICS inspection
programs

5 public forums
hosted in



4 counties
with over



170 attendees

Post Action Summary Reports for every completed action can found on our [Strategic Plan Public Dashboard](#).

CDA Strategic Plan in Decision Making

Strategic Plan Benefits

- Dynamic and flexible adjustments
- Buy-in and accountability
- [Public transparency](#)
- Workload and resource planning
- Measure our performance and impact
- Uniting CDA's work under a **'One Health'** lens to solve complex challenges through systems thinking

One Health Approach

One Health recognizes that the health of people, animals, and ecosystems are all interconnected and interdependent.

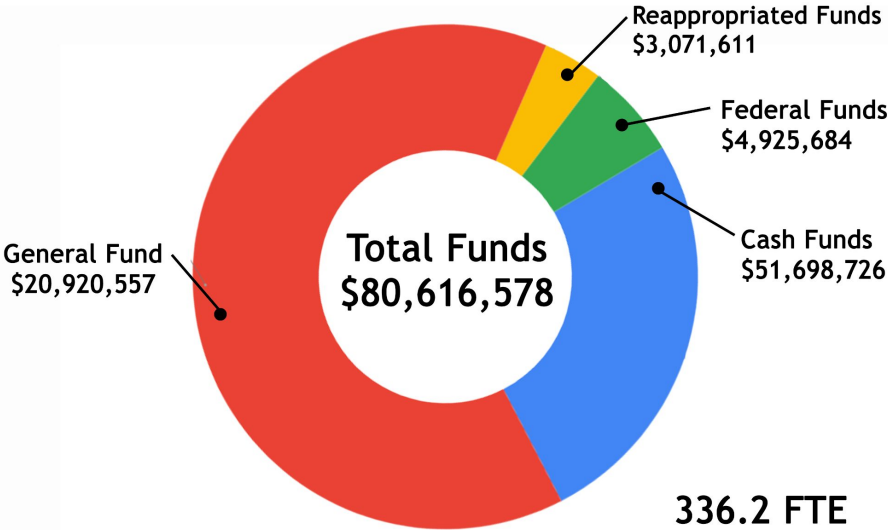
CDA is striving to look at it's work through this lens to ensure we aren't making decisions in silos and implementing solutions that serve all coloradans by coming together as "one" community.



FY 2026-27 Budget Overview

- FY 2026-27 Budget Requests
- Statewide Supplemental/Budget Amendment Request
- Continued Commitment to Budget Balancing

FY 2026-27 Budget Breakdown



FY 2026-27 Total Funds
\$80,616,578

FY 2026-27 General Funds
\$20,920,557

FY 2026-27 FTE
336.2



CDA FY 2026-27 Budget Requests

R-01: Budget Balancing Reductions:

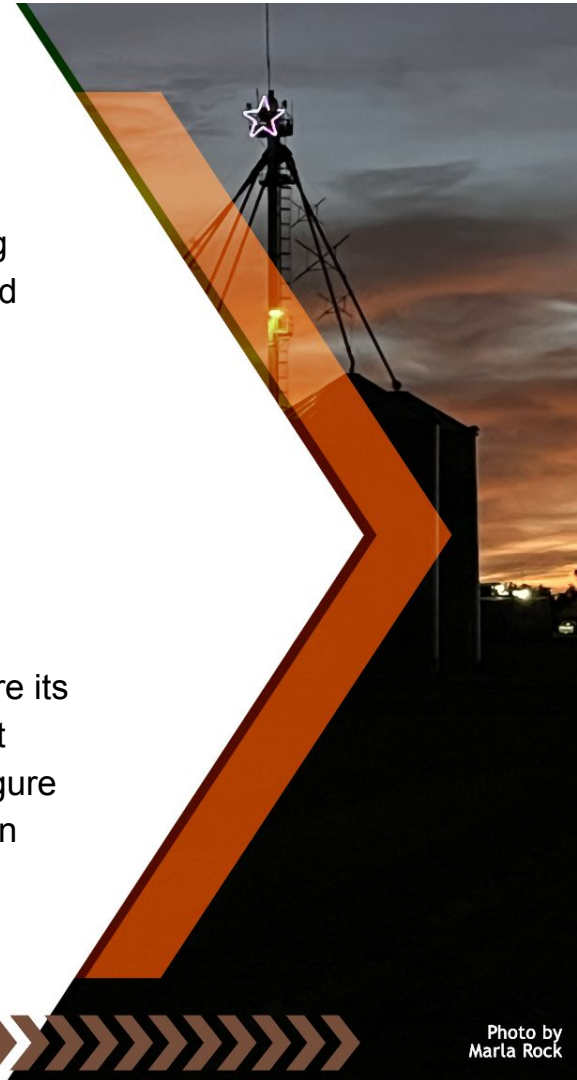
\$356,556 on-going General Fund reduction. This proposal includes ongoing funding decreases at CDA of \$236,502 for the Commissioner's Office Personal Services and \$120,054 for the Plant, Health and Environmental Protection Fund.

R-02: Agrivoltaic Rollforward:

This budget-neutral request seeks an additional year of rollforward authority for Agrivoltaics Grants to ensure grantees have sufficient time to complete infrastructure-related work and fully expend awarded funds.

R-03: Long Bill Reorganization:

Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) requested R-03 in FY 25-26 to restructure its Long Bill lines in order to align certain funds & FTE in the Long Bill with their current division and promote transparency. This request was approved in concept during figure setting and CDA has been working with the Joint Budget Committee analyst to begin implementing these changes for the FY 2026-27 long bill.



Statewide Supplemental/Budget Amendment Request

S-02/BA-02 Mountain Pine Beetle:

- \$101,540 CF and .75 FTE in FY25-26 and annualizing to \$322,993 CF and 3.0 FTE in FY 2026-27.
- Request is part of a statewide coordinated response.
- Supplemental resources are requested to support innovative biocontrol research and deployment by the Department of Agriculture's (CDA) Palisade Insectary.



Continued Commitment to Budget Balancing

In addition to the **General Fund reduction of \$356,556** discussed previously, the Department has made the following additional reductions in collaboration with the JBC that were **approved by the General Assembly last session**.

General Fund Reductions

- One-time (FY 2024-25): \$1,290,569
- On-going (beginning FY 2025-26): \$1,776,444 (8.6% of GF budget)

Cash Fund Reductions

- One-time (FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26) : \$1,222,895
- On-going (beginning FY 2025-26): \$340,730



FY 2025-26 Regulatory and Legislative Agenda

- Regulatory Agenda
- Legislative Agenda
- Information Requests and Program Reporting



Regulatory Agenda

In 2025, we conducted 10 rulemaking hearings, including:

- **9 rule revisions**
- **1 new rule**

In 2026, we have six rulemaking hearings planned, and 8 efficiency reviews including:

- **2 Division of Plant Industry rules**
- **4 Inspection and Consumer Services Division rules**
- **8 efficiency reviews will take place across the Animal Health, Conservation, Plants, and Markets divisions.**



Legislative Agenda

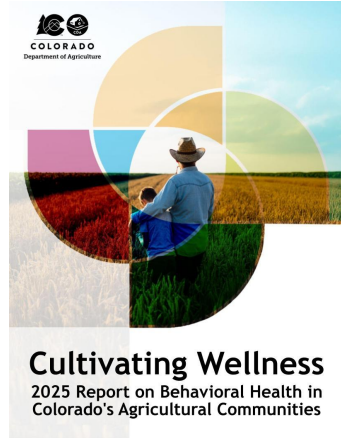
- Ag Land Conservation Loans
- Expanding Eligibility for the Community Food Access Tax Credit
- Pesticide Disposal Program
- Livestock Indemnity Fund Modification



Information Requests and Program Reporting



[Colorado Wild Horse Working Group Year Two Recommendations](#)



[2025 Report on Behavioral Health in Colorado's Agricultural Communities](#)



Soil Health
Annual Report



Agricultural
Commission Board
Engagement

Markets Update

2026 Outlook

- Farm profits forecast to drop to \$1.8B
- Beef industry will drive profits
- Grain & other commodity prices low in 2025, uncertainty for 2026
- Specialty crop producers struggling to find profitability

Cattle Prices

- Forecast to remain high in 2026
- Herd sizes still recovering, demand high/inventory low, consumers willing to pay

Tariffs

- Impacting profitability
- Higher input costs, unpredictable commodity prices
- Supply chain disturbances



Animal Health Updates

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

- 2022 - current
- H5N1 continuing to circulate
- CO - ~10M domestic poultry, 75% of dairies
- Stage 4 status (dairy) - NMTS
- Looking ahead - vaccines

New World Screwworm

- Outbreak in Mexico
- US and CO preparedness and outreach
- CO December Workshop
- After Action Report - coming Q1 2025



Animal Health Updates

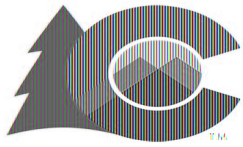
Emerging Diseases and Public Health Concerns

- Increase in disease challenges - globally
- African Swine Fever
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease

Indemnity Fund Leg Request

- AHD has no reserve funding
- Expand use of Indemnity fund
- Preparedness and response
- Small scale outbreaks (no federal funding or declaration)
- Equipment, diagnostic support





COLORADO
Department of Agriculture

Thank you!

Robert Sakata, Acting Commissioner
Colorado Department of Agriculture

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All of the photos in this presentation are entries in CDA's ["Best in Show" photography contest](#).

Photo by
Sidney Ferrari