

Testimony for SB 2373

Chairman Thomas and the House Agriculture Committee

Livestock friendly county program – Establishment.

1. The commissioner shall establish a process, including criteria and standards, to recognize and assist efforts of counties to maintain or expand their livestock sector. A county that meets the criteria may apply to the commissioner to be designated a livestock friendly county.
2. The commissioner shall designate a county as a livestock friendly county based on that county's efforts to maintain or expand its livestock sector. The commissioner shall consider the following criteria in making a livestock friendly county determination:
 - a. A formal expression of interest by a county commission, by a duly enacted resolution following a public hearing, in developing the livestock production and processing sectors of such county's economy;
 - b. A commitment that the county intends to work with all other political subdivisions within its boundaries in implementing livestock development within the county;
 - c. Flexible and individual treatment allowing each county to design its own development program according to its own timetable;
 - d. Completion of a study identifying suitable locations for rural economic development, including confined animal feeding operations, agricultural processing and storage facilities, and other agricultural-related development (*Note: reference to HB 1437*); and
 - e. Other activities currently underway or being initiated that support livestock development.
3. The commissioner may revoke the livestock friendly county designation from any county that no longer meets the criteria necessary to be a livestock friendly county.
4. Supports HB1437 which provides grants to counties and/or regional councils to 1. Conduct rural development site analysis and 2. Help townships update zoning ordinances. (note: The livestock friendly county bill includes the rural development site analysis as a prerequisite for the designation.

Sen. Robert Erbele

District 28

Livestock Friendly County (LFC) Benefits

Every county has something to gain from pursuing the Livestock Friendly County (LFC) designation. However, designation is not something the state does to a county, but rather it is recognition for the work the county does to establish a thriving livestock industry. Summarized below are just a few of the benefits of seeking designation.

Framework for Discussion

Pursuing the LFC designation initiates a conversation among county residents about the impact livestock has in the county, as well as how the industry is supported. The conversation becomes a self-examination of where the county is and where it wants to go with livestock and livestock business development. Designation means that the county has made a commitment to support the livestock industry in a socially, economically, and environmentally sound manner.

Producer/Business Confidence

LFC designation tells livestock producers and related businesses that the county wants economic growth and will support their industry for years to come. This type of confidence helps businesses make long-term decisions about investing in and possibly expanding their operation.

Public Education

Education begins with an open and honest conversation with friends and neighbors about the livestock industry. It is a conversation about the impact the industry plays as a consumer of local grains, how it supports main street businesses, and how livestock production adds economic activity to the county. Livestock businesses also contribute taxes that pay for roads, schools, and other services. It's a conversation about how a healthy livestock industry can co-exist with neighbors and businesses, both rural and urban.

County Pride

The LFC sign at the county entrance tells visitors that the county is committed to the people, the businesses, the environment, and the livestock industry. The designation is a strong statement of support for animal agriculture.

Publicity

Designation ceremonies are a celebration that provides an opportunity to put the county in the spotlight with both local and statewide media outlets. This type of positive publicity exposes the county to a large number of outside people and businesses, and it does so in a very favorable light. This positive publicity is then ongoing as the county is listed on NDA's web site with all other officially designated Livestock Friendly Counties.