

OKLAHOMA CITY â€” Two Oklahoma state legislators have organized a task force to analyze problems in marketing and processing beef. State Rep. Justin Humphrey, R-Lane, and state Sen. David Bullard, R-Durant, have invited independent ranchers, meat buyers, meat processors, livestock auction owners and meat inspectors to convene and identify financial obstacles and structured solutions that will provide a process for long-term financial gain for Oklahoma farmers and ranchers. â€œFour major meat packers, Tyson Foods, Cargill, (Brazilian owned) JBS and National Beef are controlling about 87 percent of beef processing and sales,â€• Humphrey said in a statement. â€œThey have considerable control over what ranchers are paid for cattle and what consumers pay for meat. The beef price is very low for ranchers and extremely high for consumers while meat packers are making millions of dollars. This is not acceptable.â€• Oklahoma ranchers are feeling the financial squeeze as production costs continue to climb along with farm debt, lawmakers said. Chapter 12 bankruptcies are up 24% over last year. The beef supply chain has been challenged nationwide because of the closure of 75% of American feedlots and 48 packing plants. Also, the pandemic has had a negative impact. â€œWe are extremely pleased that practitioners in Oklahoma agriculture have agreed to participate in the examination of problems in raising and selling cattle,â€• Bullard said in a statement. â€œWe also are happy to learn that Sen. Murdock (R-Felt) and Rep. Ty Burns (R-Pawnee) have agreed to join the task force.â€• Brad Hutchinson is president of the Oklahoma Independent Stock Growers Association. â€œThe future of our children, grandchildren and our western lifestyle are at risk,â€• he said in a statement. â€œWe appreciate Oklahoma legislators stepping up to help solve major problems, which are impacting our economic wellbeing.â€• The task force will file a final report with the Oklahoma Senate and House Agriculture committees, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Featured video Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy. The business news you need Get the latest local business news delivered FREE to your inbox

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