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## **New antitrust rules begin to level playing field for livestock producers**

**Billings, Mont.** – Proposed rules published today by the Agriculture Department are a good first step to protect livestock producers from unfair practices by the large meatpackers, but more reforms are needed to improve the livelihoods of ranchers, according to the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC).

The rules make it easier for ranchers to sue companies accused of using deceptive trade practices or offering unfairly low prices. The rules also prohibit packers from selling livestock to each other, end discrimination against producers based upon size alone, and restrict livestock buyers from buying for more than one packer. In addition, the rules contain improvements for contract pork and poultry growers.

“The rules will improve the market conditions for cattle ranchers, hog producers, and poultry growers in today’s concentrated livestock and poultry markets,” said Shane Kolb, Chair of WORC and rancher from Meadow, S.D. “These rules are a good start towards solving the problems of market manipulation by the meat packing industry. The next step is to require packers to pay a firm bid price for all livestock they procure and require them to sell in an open public market where all buyers and sellers have access.”

The public can submit comments by email at [comments.gipsa@usda.gov](mailto:comments.gipsa@usda.gov); fax to (202) 690-2173; mail to Tess Butler, GIPSA, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Rm 1643-S, Washington, DC 20250-3604; or on the Federal e-rulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Comments are due August 23.

“USDA has taken action by strengthening an important law we already have, the Packers and Stockyard Act, but they need to do more to restore competition and fair markets,” Kolb said. “I encourage producers and consumers to comment on these rules and to urge the Agriculture Department to continue to address the market power of the large meatpackers.”

Based in Billings, Mont., WORC is a network of grassroots organizations representing farmers, ranchers, landowners, and consumers in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

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