

PERSPECTIVE

February 6, 2026



Garfield County Farm Bureau family awarded 2026 AFBF Farm Dog of the Year

Recognizing the vital role that four-legged friends often play on family farms and ranches, American Farm Bureau launched the Farm Dog of the Year contest several years ago – now a popular feature of the AFBF Convention.

The winner of the 2026 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year award is Max, a 4-year-old Border Collie owned by Oklahoma Farm Bureau members John, Charla and Brynley Enns. AFBF, with support from Nestlé Purina PetCare, recognized Max as the winner, from among nearly 100 contenders. Max was selected by a team of judges.

“Farm dogs are more than workers, they’re family,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “While they assist with chores, they also offer the companionship that makes tough days a little easier. It has been a pleasure to partner with Purina for the eighth annual Farm Dog of the Year contest, showcasing the important role dogs play in everyday farm life.”

Rounding up livestock, chasing off predators, opening gates, fetching or

carrying tools/buckets and greeting visitors are among the many tasks performed by farm dogs. The contest celebrates the diverse ways farm dogs support farmers and ranchers.

Farm Dog of the Year Max’s primary role is to herd beef cattle on the Enns’ farm. His assistance is invaluable for John, who is disabled and uses a mobility scooter. Moving “momma cows” and their growing calves from pasture to pasture so they have access to nutritious, fresh grass is a recurring chore for John and Max.

“I can’t image doing this without Max,” John said. “Max is not only a working dog, he’s great with the family.” After a long day of herding boisterous cattle on mostly hilly terrain, Max often accompanies John and Charla to pick daughter Brynley up from school. Balancing farming with a disability and family life while navigating today’s challenging farm economy would test anyone. But John remains undeterred.

“Together, we make things work,”

he said.

Purina, one of the nation’s leading pet care companies, donated prizes for the contest again this year, which included \$5,000 in prize money, a trophy plate, a year’s supply of Pro-Plan dog food and other Purina products for Max.

The People’s Choice Pup, Goose, received a trophy plate, Purina products and a \$2,500 cash prize. Nestlé has been helping dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives through scientifically based nutritional innovations for 130 years.

“Purina is proud to continue partnering with the American Farm Bureau to celebrate the essential role of farm dogs like Max,” said Jack Scott, vice president of sustainable sourcing at Nestlé Purina PetCare. “These remarkable dogs are invaluable partners in agriculture, and through the Farm Dog of the Year award, we’re honored to recognize their contributions and the bond that makes pets and people better together.”

OKFB delegates help set AFBF policies for 2026

Five delegates from Oklahoma Farm Bureau helped set grassroots policy at the 2026 American Farm Bureau convention in Anaheim that will guide the policy efforts of the nation's leading farm organization for the coming year.

Farmers and ranchers from around the nation gathered on Tuesday, Jan. 13, to consider, discuss and vote upon proposed changes to the AFBF policy created and submitted by grassroots Farm Bureau members.

Oklahoma was represented in the business meeting by Stacy Simunek, OKFB president; Kerry Givens, district four director; Gary Crawley, district five director; Macy Strom, district nine director; and Allison Theis, Young Farmers and Ranchers chairman.

"Being able to watch the grassroots process from the start in one of our counties to the end at national convention encourages me of the importance of what we do in our county resolutions meetings," Simunek said. "I would also like to say what a great job our Oklahoma delegates did for our Oklahoma Farm Bureau members."

For the fourth year, delegates were polled during the voting session regarding their farms. The results show

almost 99% of those who cast votes operate family farms and more than two-thirds represent small- to mid-size farms as defined by USDA. The discussion highlighted the fact that farmers across the spectrum and across the country are struggling.

"America's farmers and ranchers are facing unprecedented challenges in agriculture, including high supply costs, trade imbalances, and low commodity prices," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall at the conclusion of the business session. "Today, our members gave us clear guidance on how we should address those challenges in the coming year. Farm Bureau's strength was on display today, as our grassroots set the policy for this organization. We look forward to taking their stories to leaders in Washington as we work to ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to fill pantries for families across the country."

Delegates adopted policy to improve labor programs to meet the needs of America's farmers and ranchers, including formalizing support for the new Adverse Effect Wage Rate methodology and further revisions to avoid unpredictable rate swings in

the future.

They voted to support federal funding for research and biosecurity facilities to better identify and combat illnesses and pests that threaten the health of crops and animals. New policy also includes committing more resources to eradicate the New World Screwworm, and keeping the U.S.-Mexico border closed to cattle trade until the screwworm is controlled.

Delegates revised national farm policy to provide more protection for dairy farmers who may suffer losses due to market challenges.

Delegates also formalized support for prioritizing locally grown fruits, vegetables, bread, and proteins in institutional purchases such as schools and government facilities.

Voting members also requested that the AFBF board of directors analyze several agricultural issues, including the impact of tariffs and the lack of affordable insurance options for poultry farmers.

OKFB President Stacy Simunek was also elected to fill a one-year term on the AFBF board of directors during regional caucuses held on Jan. 13.

Tulsa County Farm Bureau member appointed to serve as AFBF YF&R chair

Tulsa County Farm Bureau member Tommy Salisbury was appointed to serve as the chair of the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers committee on Sunday, Jan. 11, during AFBF's 2026 convention in Anaheim, California.

Salisbury was appointed to serve a two-year term as chair Sunday after being appointed to the AFBF YF&R committee in early 2025.

Salisbury farms about 3,200 acres of soybeans and milo in Tulsa County, and he also has a custom hay-baling operation, runs more than 200 cow/calf pairs and 500 yearlings, and owns the Collinsville Livestock auction. He also owns the Collinsville feed store to provide a resource for urban and local 4-H and FFA students.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be able to serve in this position," Salisbury said. "It means a lot to me to be able to

represent Oklahoma and young farmers and ranchers from across the nation at the national level."

Salisbury has served on the Tulsa County Farm Bureau board for the last five years and currently serves as the board president. Additionally, he has served as the ex-officio representative on the Oklahoma Farm Bureau YF&R committee for the last year alongside his wife, Chalayna.

"I look forward to advocating for young agriculturalists and keeping the momentum going that AFBF has set forth in building the next generation of agricultural leaders," Salisbury said.

The AFBF YF&R committee is made up of 16 positions that represent all regions of the United States. Committee members are responsible for program planning, including YF&R competitive events during AFBF's annual convention and the Harvest for All program.



Cherokee, Payne County Farm Bureaus recognized with national awards at 2026 AFBF convention



Oklahoma's Cherokee County Farm Bureau and Payne County Farm Bureau were each recognized with County Activities of Excellence Awards at the 2026 American Farm Bureau convention in Anaheim in January.

The counties were two of 24 counties recognized by AFBF for their commitment to offering quality programming to their counties to promote Farm Bureau and support their local agriculture communities.

Cherokee County Farm Bureau was recognized for their hay wrap take-back program, a competition between area schools to see who could collect the most hay wrap. This competition provided an opportunity for students to get involved in agriculture while also helping clean up pastures.

"We were recognized in Oklahoma for this award as well, and that was a huge

honor," said Mandi Halpin, Cherokee County Farm Bureau member. "To be recognized by the American Farm Bureau is just above and beyond what we could have expected."

The participating schools submitted the amount of hay wrap they collected, and Cherokee County Farm Bureau presented the top five schools with cash prizes.

"We are excited that this project has taken off," Halpin said. "Ottawa County has taken off with it, and we are excited to see where it goes in the future."

Payne County Farm Bureau earned a CAE award for their block party, an event aimed to share the story of Farm Bureau and agriculture with their local community. In their second-annual outreach event, Payne County Farm Bureau welcomed more than 1,400 attendees with vendors, games and fun

for the whole family.

"Block party is a community outreach event that we hosted at our county office that was open to the community free of charge," said Taylor Benson, Payne County Farm Bureau administrator. "The goal of this event was to educate the attendees on who and what we are and educate them on agriculture."

This free event brought in both members and Payne County residents to the Payne County Farm Bureau office giving them a hands-on look at Farm Bureau and agriculture.

"It meant a lot to us to win this award," said Benson. "We did this as a community event, and it was amazing that OKFB honored us for our hard work. It means so much more that AFBF saw our event and thought it was good enough to compete against all of the other amazing county programs."

OKFB members to advocate for agriculture March 23-26 during 2026 Washington, D.C. Summit

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members will travel to our nation's capital for the organization's annual Washington, D.C., Summit advocacy fly-in.

The 2026 summit will be held March 23-26 and will provide Farm Bureau members with the opportunity to learn about national policies that affect agriculture and visit directly with Oklahoma's congressional delegation.

OKFB members will travel to Washington on Monday, March 23. Tuesday, March 24, will feature briefings on federal issues and regulations from policy experts in the morning, and then OKFB members will have time to tour

Washington on their own before a group dinner. Wednesday, March 25, will be spent on Capitol Hill as OKFB members visit directly with Oklahoma's U.S. Senate and House members on issues and topics that affect agriculture. OKFB members will return home on Thursday, March 26.

Registration for the event is available on the OKFB website using the form below and is open to OKFB members through Feb. 23.

The cost to attend the event is \$1,500 for a single attendee and \$2,000 for two attendees. The event cost covers three nights of hotel accommodations at Intercontinental Hotel – The Wharf,

breakfast the morning of March 24 and one group dinner.

OKFB members will need to book their own air travel for the event as the group travel block option has closed. OKFB suggests members plan to fly into Washington, D.C., Monday, March 23, and depart on Thursday, March 26, to be able to attend all planned group events and activities. Washington, D.C.,'s Reagan National Airport is the closest D.C.-area airport to the host hotel.

Interested members can register for the event by Feb. 23 using the online form at okfb.news/dcsummit26. For questions or more information, contact Brittney Krag at (405) 523-2300.

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Stitt gives nod to reducing regulations, capping property taxes in final State of the State address

Gov. Kevin Stitt kicked off the second general session of the 60th Oklahoma Legislature with his final State of the State address Monday, Feb. 2, at the state Capitol in Oklahoma City.

In his eighth address to the legislature and the people of Oklahoma, Stitt recounted his administration's efforts throughout his two terms as governor and his vision for his final year in office, including a three-fold approach to reduce governmental regulations, protect the vulnerable and secure Oklahoma's future.

Stitt's call for reducing regulations was a welcome announcement for Oklahoma's farming and ranching community, as keeping governmental regulations and overreach at bay allows farmers and ranchers to do what they do best: providing a safe and abundant food supply for their fellow Oklahomans and fellow Americans.

Stitt also called for a freeze in property tax growth across the board in the state, garnering applause from

throughout the chamber. The move would be advantageous for farmers and ranchers who cultivate and care for acres upon acres of farmland and pastureland to meet the needs of our growing population, and who have simultaneously been faced with severely rising input costs in recent years.

The governor also addressed Oklahoma's medical marijuana industry, calling it one of the greatest threats to public safety in the state. He pushed for the elimination of marijuana in Oklahoma entirely, citing the sheer volume of illicit, fly-by-night activity hidden behind the façade of medical marijuana grow operations and dispensaries.

Stitt called for reunification in a state divided by the 2018 McGirt Supreme Court decision, which designated nearly half of the state's land area as a tribal reservation. The ruling has raised numerous judicial and jurisdictional challenges for both law enforcement and non-tribal citizens in eastern Oklahoma

since the court's decision nearly a decade ago.

Stitt also spoke of Oklahoma's growing business economy and commended entrepreneurs and Oklahoma's business owners for having a vision and taking the risks required to run a successful business. Oklahoma Farm Bureau members understand the importance of a thriving business ecosystem, especially in the most rural areas of the state.

Throughout his speech, Stitt assured listeners that the state of Oklahoma is the strongest it has ever been, citing a continued low unemployment rate, a hefty budgetary savings account and a welcome environment for people and businesses looking to call Oklahoma home.

As Stitt begins his final year as governor of Oklahoma, he encouraged listeners to continue the forward momentum and ensure the state of Oklahoma remains a vibrant place for years to come.