



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

4875 MORABITO PLACE, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93401

PHONE (805) 543-3654 SLOFARMBUREAU.ORG

**MEDIA ADVISORY AND PRESS RELEASE -
EMBARGO UNTIL JULY 16, 2026 AT 7:00 p.m.**

Contact: Paul Clark
Phone: 805-471-2346 (mobile)
E-mail: pclark@slofarmbureau.org

WHO:

- San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau
- San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen's Association
- San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association
- Local farmers, ranchers and community members in attendance at California Mid-State Fair's Cattlemen and Farmers Day

WHAT: Awards presentation for the 2026 San Luis Obispo County Agriculturalist of the Year, Cattlewoman of the Year, and Cattleman of the Year

WHEN: Thursday, July 16, 202 at 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: California Mid-State Fair, Paso Robles Pavilion. 2198 Riverside Ave, Paso Robles. Located at North side of fairgrounds.

VISUALS: Crowd of approximately 1,500 people, awards presentation from stage

INTERVIEWS: Interviews with award recipients are available after the event around 6:00 p.m.

###

(SEE NEXT PAGE FOR PRESS RELEASE WITH BACKGROUND ON AWARD RECIPIENTS)

###

2026 San Luis Obispo County Agriculturalist, CattleWoman, Cattleman of the Year Named
Three local agriculture leaders honored at California Mid-State Fair

PASO ROBLES, CA (July 16, 2026) – Local agriculture organizations recognized three San Luis Obispo County farmers and ranchers during the California Mid-State Fair’s annual Cattlemen and Farmers Day at the Paso Robles Event Center on July 16, 2026.

The 2026 award recipients are:

John Lacey, Agriculturalist of the Year;
Nicole Nicholson, CattleWoman of the Year; and
Dale Evenson, Cattleman of the Year.

The respective awards were selected by members of the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen, and San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen’s Association.

“Every year, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen’s Association, and San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen select an individual who has served the agricultural industry and our community through farming, ranching, and advocating for agriculture. The San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen’s Association began this tradition in 1963. CattleWomen followed the Cattlemen in 1965, and Farm Bureau began in 1988,” said Farm Bureau Executive Director Paul Clark. “These recipients are all legacy contributors to our agricultural economy and culture. For four consecutive years, San Luis Obispo County total crop and livestock value has exceeded one billion dollars.”

Continue reading below for more information on the winners. Permission to reprint story is granted with credit to San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau. Photos of the award recipients are attached to the email transmitting this advisory Please attribute photos to Tom Meinhold Photography.

John Lacey, Agriculturalist of the Year

San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau has selected longtime rancher and agricultural leader John Lacey as its 2026 Agriculturalist of the Year, honoring decades of leadership, advocacy and commitment to the future of agriculture.

Born in Lone Pine, California to Mark Buckner Lacey and Elizabeth Lindsey Lacey, John comes from a family with deep ranching roots dating back to the settlement of the Owens Valley in the 1800s. After graduating with honors from Cal Poly with a degree in Animal Science, he served in the United States Marine Corps before continuing a lifelong career in ranching and agricultural leadership. John credits his parents for establishing the ranch work ethic by the time he could walk and he credits many mentors throughout his life, many of whom worked on the family ranch. John earned his bachelor's degree in animal science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, in 1960 and fell in love with San Luis Obispo County.

Lacey moved to San Luis Obispo County in 1975, bringing with him extensive ranching experience, a passion for Hereford cattle and quarter horses, and a strong belief in community service. Throughout his career, he worked both as a rancher and with Farm Credit, where he developed lasting relationships with local farmers and ranchers while helping support agricultural businesses throughout the region.

His influence extends well beyond San Luis Obispo County. Lacey has served on numerous local, state and national boards, including the Lone Pine School Board, Southern Inyo Hospital Board, California Beef Council and the Five Countries Beef Group. He also served as president of both the California Cattlemen's Association and the National Cattlemen's Association, later becoming president of the merged National Cattlemen's Beef Association during a pivotal time for the industry.

A longtime Farm Bureau member whose family has belonged to the organization since the 1920s, Lacey has remained a steadfast advocate for agriculture and for the farmers and ranchers who feed communities across the country.

John and his wife of sixty three years, Dee, have built a multi-generational ranching legacy alongside their children, Mark and Nicki, with grandchildren continuing the family's tradition through 4-H, FFA and agricultural leadership. His lifetime of service and dedication continues to inspire the next generation of California agriculture.

San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau has given the Agriculturalist of the Year award annually since 1988, making John Lacey the 38th person to receive this honor.

Nicole Nicholson, 2026 CattleWoman of the Year

The San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen's Association has named Nicole Nicholson its 2026 CattleWoman of the Year, recognizing her outstanding leadership, commitment to agriculture and dedication to serving both the ranching community and the Central Coast.

Nicholson represents six generations of California ranching. Raised on her family's cattle ranch along the Central Coast, she developed a passion for agriculture at an early age while working alongside her parents, Bill and Tracy Nicholson, on their certified Red Angus commercial cow-calf and grass-fed cattle operation.

Her agricultural foundation was strengthened through participation in 4-H and FFA before earning a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from Cal Poly, where she focused on beef production, reproductive physiology and animal genetics. She later completed a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, earned

an education specialist credential and received a doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Southern California.

After returning to the Central Coast, Nicholson combined her passion for education with community service by teaching at the college level and establishing a private educational therapy and psychology practice serving individuals with learning and language differences.

For more than 13 years, Nicholson has been an active member of the San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen's Association, following in the footsteps of her mother, Tracy Nicholson, who was named CattleWoman of the Year in 2021. She currently serves as the organization's president, leading initiatives that promote beef education while supporting local students, veterans, seniors and first responders. Her leadership has also helped raise thousands of dollars in scholarships for San Luis Obispo County students.

Nicholson remains deeply committed to preserving the traditions of California ranching while investing in future generations through education, agricultural advocacy and community outreach. Together with her husband, Tom Stainer, and her extended family, she continues to help steward the family's ranching operation in Cayucos while carrying forward a legacy built on service, hard work and a love for agriculture.

San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen has given the Cattlewoman of the Year award annually since 1965, making Nicole Nicholson the 61st person to receive this honor.

Dale Evenson, 2026 Cattleman of the Year

The San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association has named Dale Evenson its 2026 Cattleman of the Year, recognizing a lifetime dedicated to ranching, agriculture and service to the local cattle industry.

A San Luis Obispo County native, Evenson grew up helping his father manage the family's cattle operation in Arroyo Grande, where he developed a lifelong passion for ranching. As a youth, he participated in Edna 4-H, Arroyo Grande FFA and Santa Maria Young Farmers and Ranchers before earning a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Mechanics from Cal Poly.

Following graduation, Evenson built a distinguished 43-year career with Farm Supply Company, serving customers throughout San Luis Obispo and southern Monterey counties. Known for his knowledge, integrity and willingness to help fellow producers, he became a trusted resource for generations of ranchers and farmers.

Beyond his professional career, Evenson has been an active leader within the cattle industry. He served as president of the San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association from 2013 to 2014 and contributed to numerous committees, including Membership, Cattlemen's BBQ, Cattlemen's Play Day and Cattle PAC. His leadership also extended to state and national organizations, including service on committees with the California Cattlemen's Association and National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

Evenson has also devoted countless hours to community organizations, including the Edna Farm Bureau, Farm Supply Cooperative, San Miguel Lions Club, the San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Task Force and the Coalition for Labor, Agriculture and Business.

Today, he continues to enjoy life with his wife, Suze, their two sons, Ahrean and Casey, and four grandchildren. His dedication to agriculture, community service and mentorship has left a lasting

impact on San Luis Obispo County, making him a deserving recipient of the 2026 Cattleman of the Year honor.

San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association has given the Cattleman of the Year award annually since 1963, making Dale Evenson the 63rd person to receive this honor.