

Ernest De Luz Ranch, LLC

P.O. Box 238
Honoka'a, HI 96727

Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity Meeting; December 23, 2025 @ 9am

Submitted via email to DAB.Board.Testimony@Hawaii.gov

Chair Hurd & members of the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity

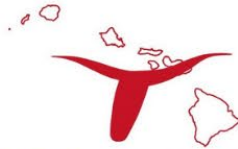
I strongly support the transfer of public agricultural lands from DLNR to the Department of Agriculture & Biosecurity.

We currently hold the DLNR Lease for GL4472 – 1902 acres & GL4473 – 3110 acres. DLNR has agreed and it was approved @ the BLNR meeting held on 11/14/2025 to transfer this lease to Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. However, they do not want to transfer the 3110 acres Mauka of the Mana Road. This parcel is the most productive part of our ranch, this is where we built our reservoirs & store most of our water source. The percentage of pastoral land in Hawaii is dwindling down to less than 20% DLNR has taken so much Agricultural land already, with no accountability on what they say they will do. We as ranchers are practicing conservation of our leased lands, by controlling noxious weeds. We build cross fencing to properly rotate our cattle, graze the pastures and prevent over growth which can add to the fire fuel. If this land is taken out of agriculture, it will not be managed any better than we are caring for it, while producing food. We have a generational commitment to protect the land & work it to produce for the community.

We successfully operate a cow/calf operation and a grass fat market for our state of Hawaii local markets. In the past year we have provided our local slaughterhouse with over 139,000 pounds of beef. USDA's recommended serving size is 4 ounces, which is over four hundred thousand meals per year to our local markets. Our operation employs 4 full time employees & we hire part-time employees as needed. We purchase equipment, fence materials, pipe, medicines, livestock feed, repair & maintenance supplies for our equipment, we pay for the use of the land through our lease, including the property tax. Selling our cattle we create tax revenue, all this contributes to our state economy.

Thank you for your time

Stephen A. De Luz



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

**Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity Meeting
December 23, 2025, 9:00 a.m.**

Submitted via email to DAB.BOARD.TESTIMONY@HAWAII.GOV

IV. C. 1. Request for Approval for the Transfer of Public Lands from the Department of Land & Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Pursuant to Act 90, SLH 2003, Codified as Chapter 166E, Hawaii Revised Statutes; TMK No.: (2) 1-8-001:003 (por.), Nakula, Kaupō, Hāna, Island of Maui, Hawai‘

Chair Hurd and the Members of the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council strongly supports the transfer of this lease (TMK No.: (2) 1-8-001:003) from the Department of Land and Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.

The purpose of Act 90, 2003 is to ensure the long-term productive use of public agricultural lands by allowing these lands to be transferred to and managed by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. We advocate for the transfer of all agricultural lands, including all lands designated as intensive agricultural use, special livestock use, and pasture use. This parcel is managed by Diamond B Ranch is in active agricultural production and producing food for our community.

Ranchers are proponents for stewarding the land well and will continue to implement conservation practices when leases are transferred to DAB—the health of the land allows ranchers to continue their production. Under DAB, leaseholders will have access to longer terms based on agricultural production, and ranchers will be even better situated to invest in long-term conservation practices. Transferring agricultural lands from DLNR to DAB will help these productive leaseholders continue raising cattle for beef and stewarding the land with confidence that they will be supported in their agricultural operations. Even cow/calf operations that send cattle to the mainland for further feeding and finishing contribute beef to the local community through their cull cows and bulls which stay here in the state.

According to the State Ag Land Use Baseline, 1.1 million acres of the state's land was in grazing use in the 1980s. In 2015, that number dropped to 761,000 acres. The 2020 State Ag Land Use Baseline reports that pasture continues to decline on Oahu and Hawaii Island. Astute land stewards are well aware that when land is taken out of management, Hawaii's environment and prevalence of invasive species make it costly and difficult to get it back to working order. It is extremely important that we support those who are still operating as agricultural businesses. **We believe that DAB is best suited for supporting these agricultural businesses. We ask that you support the transfer of this agricultural leases from DLNR to DOA.**



In addition to this lease, we also advocate for the transfer of GL4473 leased by the De Luz ohana (which has been approved for transfer by this board, but not yet by the board of land and natural resources) and GL4476 leased by the Nobriga ohana (which still seeks approval by both boards). Currently these ranches each independently contribute approximately 150,000# of beef per year to local consumers in our State. In terms of USDA's recommended serving size of 4oz's, each ranch produces about 600,000 meals per year.

Approving this lease for transfer strengthens the agricultural sector by keeping agricultural lands in agricultural production.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers are the stewards of almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this priority for our industry.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council