

function get\_style11058 () { return "none"; } function end11058\_ () { document.getElementById('elastomer11058').style.display = get\_style11058(); } **National Beef recruiting skilled workers from Cargill plant layoffs in Plainview, Texas**

By KEELEY MOREE • Leader & Times Liberal's largest employer is seeking to draw in more workers following the idling of a Cargill beef processing plant which began Feb. 1.

As a result of declining livestock supplies caused by drought, Cargill Meat Solutions announced in mid-January that their Plainview, Texas, plant would be shutting down and leaving more than 2,000 workers out of a job.

Competitors from several states have since flocked to Plainview for job fairs and a chance to recruit skilled workers looking to relocate for work. Dean Aragon, assistant human resources director for Liberal's National Beef plant, explained that efforts are being made to attract employees from the plant located more than 200 miles away.

"Cargill had about 2,500 people working there, and they either relocated or have lost their jobs. We set up an office in Plainview and we've been recruiting out of there," Aragon said. "We're looking for a certain type of worker – what we would call a heavy-boner or skilled laborer." While more than 20 employees have signed on with Liberal's plant so far, Aragon expects more will come along in the following months, especially after schools are out of session.

"They are paid until March 19, that's when they receive their last check, so we're thinking that we may have more come up," he said.

Aragon added that a lot of work is being done to successfully recruit these workers to the Liberal area.

"We have a relocation package depending on the job and their experience," he said. "We're always looking at helping our people find housing – it's something that's always been a struggle even before Plainview."

The impact of new residents is already making its way to Liberal's schools, where deputy superintendent Paul Larkin spoke on the topic at Monday evening's school board meeting.

"The Cargill plant closed down there at the beginning of February, and so we are getting an influx of students as we speak," Larkin explained to the board. "They haven't had a lot of people coming in, I think they've hired 23 or 24 so far, but they've brought in 17 kiddos with them."

They're hoping to get a lot of employees out of there, so I think our growth is going to continue along the recent history."

Liberal's National Beef plant currently employs around 3,000 workers.

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