

PLAIN TALK ABOUT RURAL COLORADO

How can we bridge the gap between the urban Front Range and the rest of the state? Here are nine ideas.



CHRISTIAN MURDOCH, THE GAZETTE

The cattle check out a visitor to their green grass in a field at the James Ranch outside Durango.

BY DAN NJEGOMIR • COLORADO POLITICS

The fact that most Coloradans reside along a narrow strip of terrain skirting the Front Range and straddling Interstate 25 speaks volumes about who we really are. • For all the pride we take in the unparalleled beauty of our state's vast open spaces; despite all the miles we log recreating up in the Rockies — and the time we spend stalled in gridlock attempting to get there — we are overwhelmingly an urban and suburban lot. • We all tip our hats in respect to the farmers and ranchers who work the land in Colorado's mountain pastures and on its prairies. We sing the praises of the presumably "simple life" in the small towns that dot the state's eastern plains. • We hold onto a vague sense that life there isn't easy, even if it's also thought to be more wholesome and sensible than the congested, smog-smothered rat race of the metro areas we call home. • And occasionally, it dawns on us that city folks quite literally couldn't survive without the daily toils of those out in the country who produce the state's beef, pork, poultry, grains, fruits and veggies, and, increasingly, its wind, solar, and bio-fuels energy.

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