The Virginia Cattlemen’s Association and the Virginia State Dairymen’s Association served 350 steak and milk lunches to the General Assembly members and their staff along with the Governor and his Cabinet on February 12, 2015.

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Opportunities

By Jason Carter
Executive Secretary

Winter finally came for much of the state in mid-February and, unfortunately, brought some numbing cold along as well. The moisture was much appreciated but even in Virginia with our distinct seasons the idea of temperatures well below zero at night, and only slightly on the plus side of zero during the day, make basking in the sunshine of a 45 degree March day worthy of daydreaming. This time of year also makes me chuckle a little when I think back to my Extension days and how we used the term “spring calving” so loosely. Personally, I have long been an advocate of “fall calving” which required normally a higher level of forage management but typically also resulted in more marketing options for feeders or yearlings as well as the least of the fictitious discounts for short ears and tails. However, for all of you in the throws of spring calving now, I tip my proverbial hat to you and am thankful for your investment in our wonderful business. The Virginia cattle industry is diversified as our spring and fall calvers as well as more important to our Commonwealth’s economy than most other commodities we offer.

The cattle market has continued its counter seasonal slide since the first of the year and slowly correcting the large disparity between cash and deferred futures that existed throughout much of the second half of 2014. Profitability is still high for cow/calf producers but margins have been considerably squeezed for backgrounders that purchased $1200+ feeders in the fall and are faced with selling $1500 heavy yearlings now. Looking at VCA sponsored sales for the month of January 2015, our overall numbers were slightly down as many markets saw less than average runs of calves and even some cancelled sales where there was spoty winter weather issues. There were 4609 head sold through our sponsored sales this past January compared to 5558 in January 2014. However the Tel O Auction program remains strong as ever and within that figure is a steady 2654 head sold from the field in 2015 versus 2690 in 2014 for January. You won’t have to try hard in Daleville to find champions for the Virginia Quality Assured program and averages of $72 and $96 per head for steers and heifers in 2014 over graded sale in barn values demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Out of the gate in 2015, the Abingdon group sold VQA calves on January 12th for an added value of $77 and $108 per head for steers and heifers. That’s a home run in any ball park and testament to the value of sticking with a marketing plan. There are a lot of cogs in the wheel of the VQA program but none more important than the investment of the producers for the long haul. Consistency pays in every market climate.

Speaking of cattle markets, Cattle Fax offered a peek into what they see in store for the beef cattle business in 2015 during the recent annual meeting of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association in San Antonio, TX during early February. A slow developing El Nino in the Pacific should still assure measured relief for drought stricken parts of the far Western US while a cool spring is expected to delay corn plantings waiting on soil temperatures to move up. The Southeastern US and Appalachian region may see drier than normal conditions as well. These may tempt early selloff of spring born calves for some producers if dry pastures couple with low hay inventories coming out of winter. Corn acres are expected to be slightly lower this year, due to a more realistic ethanol market since the US produces about 80%

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
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Tarter 5 Rotary Tiller
Lessens compact soil (100-03185)
### FROM PAGE 4

**OPPORTUNITIES**

The Meat Animal Research Center’s work and falsely portrayed scientific discovery as wanton animal abuse. On the Virginia budgetary front, the news from the General Assembly seems encouraging on several fronts including funding for renewed coyote control programs, water quality best management practices programs subsides and technical assistance, livestock facility improvements at Virginia Tech and protection of funds in our producer checkoff from General Fund coffers.

On the federal front, issues of concern still are mandatory Country of Origin Labeling, the recommendations of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee and establishing some permanency in our tax code. The World Trade Organization has set a third and final hearing date in March for the US appeal of an unfavorable ruling against our current COOL rule. Canada has been very vocal and is prepared to institute retaliatory tariffs on a variety of goods from the US and Virginia if we continue with COOL after an expected third ruling from WTO indicating our COOL policy is antagonistic to trade by being unfair in labeling of meat. COOL has certainly deeply affected our Virginia cattle business by nearly eliminating Canadian feeding of our cattle since they cannot be fed there and returned to the US for harvest and quality premiums. Hopefully the soon to be third unfavorable ruling by the WTO will lead Congress to rapidly eliminate this woefully ineffective and unnecessary trade policy that has too long hampered free trade.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

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### Sponsorship

**Virginia Cattlemen’s Association**

**Sponsored Graded Sales Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Market Name</th>
<th>Contact Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front Royal</td>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Feeders Virginia Cattle Co.</td>
<td>540-622-4889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Royal</td>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Feeders Virginia Beef LLC</td>
<td>540-992-7752</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrisonburg</td>
<td>12-Mar</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Feeders Rockingham Livestock Sales</td>
<td>540-490-050</td>
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<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Feeders Virginia Cattle Co.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Feeders Rockingham Livestock Sales</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Feeders Virginia Cattle Co.</td>
<td>540-622-4889</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26-Mar</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Feeders Rockingham Livestock Sales</td>
<td>540-490-050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radiant</td>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Feeders Virginia Cattle Co.</td>
<td>540-622-4889</td>
</tr>
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**March 2015**

Coop Auditors for the March of the previous month. The Virginia Cattlemen is a member of the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association and Graded Sales Program of the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association. Published cost of $70 per year in the Virginia’s Feed Market includes Virginia Cattlemen and Virginia Cattlemen’s Association. A Member of the Livestock Market Council.
We desperately need some permanency in being able to plan each year for fam- 
yly farms that experience vastly different incomes annually and may have the 
ability to grow but do not need the fear of huge tax penalties as a consequence of 
expansion.

March is the beginning of the spring sale season and there will be many qual-
ity sales of breeding cattle around the state in the com-
ing weeks through April. Mark your calendars to vis-
it the Virginia Beef Expo on April 17th and stick around for the weekend to support the VCA sponsored Junior Beef Roundup of events that includes the Common-
wealth Classic youth cattle show. Also, I hope you will 
save the date of July 17th as well. VCA is returning to cooperation with the Vir-
ginia State Dairymen’s As-
sociation to conduct an an-
nual member meeting and 
this year it will be held on 
Friday July 17, 2015 during 
the day at Kentland Farm 
near Blacksburg, VA. We 
are excited to be moving to 
 a field day format that 
will be free to attend and 
offer a day of networking 
and showcasing our in-
dustries. This year will 
feature the grand opening 
of the new dairy facility of Virginia Tech along with 
first hand tours of the beef 
cattle reproduction center and feedlot along with the 
unique Federal Aviation 
Administration collabora-
tion with Virginia Tech in 
operating a research based 
drone/airport/aviation 
project. The drone airport 
is located in between the 
dairy and beef facilities 
and is assisting with a great 
deal of aeronautical and ag-
ricultural research. There 
will be more to come about 
the annual meeting.

The Renewable Fuel Stan-
dard (RFS) made it to the top of the “fixed” list with a 
number of congressmen in-
introducing legislation reform 
many states. The RFS 
Elimination Act, introduced last week in 
the House of Representa-
tives by Congressmen Bob Southwestern (D-VA,). Peter 
Welch (D-VT), Steve Wom-
ack (R-AR) and Jim Costa (D-CA) would eliminate the 
corn-based ethanol man-
date under the RFS, reduce 
the overall requirements of 
cellulosic ethanol not filled by advanced biofuels, and 
rescind the requirements to blend 15 percent ethanol into the fuel supply.

“The ethanol mandate is a true ‘kitchen table’ issue. This unworkable policy im-
pacts every American family 
trying to make financial decisions. From food costs 
to wear and tear on the 
family car or lawnmower, the 
RFS means added costs and 
less money for other purchases. It certainly im-
pacts the cost of doing busi-
ness for many, but it’s the consumers who ultimately 
shoulder the costs of this 
broken policy. This is one of 
the concerns I consistently 
hear from folks in the Sixth 
District whether they run a 
restaurant, farm for a living, 
or have noticed an increase in 
their grocery bills. The 
Federal government’s etha-
ol mandate has triggered 
a domino effect that is hurt-
ing American consumers, 
energy users, livestock 
producers, food manufacturers 
and retailers. Plus, 
there is momentum for this 
Congress to achieve real re-
forms of the RFS. As we 
continue to work towards 
full repeal, the RFS Reform 
Act is a common sense solu-
tion to help curb some of the 
most harmful effects of this 
federal mandate,” Good-
latte said.

The elimination bill is 
identical to the one the con-
gressmen introduced in 
2013. But the legislation ap-
pears to have gained some 
support since then, with 38 
cosponsors and is support-
ed by a diverse group of 
over 50 organizations. ac

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Cost effective and cost saving - Scott Stidethome - 28 years FT

OPPORTUNITIES

PAGE 6, MARCH 2015, THE VIRGINIA CATTLEMAN
McDonald Farms
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‘Pick of the Pen’ Bull Sale
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“Our cows work for us; so our bulls will work for you.”

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- Ellington Legacy M299 “Olie”
- TJ Easy Money 101W
- CCR Pathway 934Y
- MF Dual Gambler 57X
- MCDF Dual Combo 262Z
- SDS In Force 112Y
- J Bar J Nightride 225Z
- PVF-J 4P14 Hyb Rookie
- GW Premier 754Y
- GCCR Easy Money Y108
- TNT Ever Ready R232

Angus:
- AAR Ten X 7008 SA
- Connealy Capitalist 028
- 44 Conveyance DX52
- GAR Prophet
- And Others . . .

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Roy and Teresa Foglesong
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Meadowview VA 24361
Home: 276-944-5561
Call: 276-856-8149
foglesongfarm1@gmail.com
According to Goodlatte. Both acts will be referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The RFS mandates that 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels be part of our nation's fuel supply by 2022. The oil industry says it is reaching the "blend wall" where the ethanol mix would have to exceed the renewable fuel mandate's volume target of 10 percent (the acceptable amount for use in automobiles) to meet the mandate.

And the Environmental Protection Agency has yet to issue final biofuel quota requirements for 2014 that expired in 2013.

The National Chicken Council (NCC) voiced strong approval for the reintroduced legislation.

"Since the RFS was enacted, chicken producers alone have incurred almost $50 billion in cumulative additional feed costs. The RFS is a mess, and NCC will support measures such as this to fix it," said NCC President Mike Brown.

According to NCC, President Jimmy Carter and Congress first started subsidizing ethanol back in 1978 under the "infant industry" theory of economics.

That theory contends that certain industries need government support to get up and running on their own.

"That's been the same argument used for ethanol ever since, whether it is for tax exemptions, tariffs, air emissions, regulatory preferences or the RFS mandate," Brown added.

"Representatives Goodlatte, Welch, Womack and Costa, and the cosponsors of this legislation, thank you for telling this 37-year-old 'infant industry' it's time to get off of Uncle Sam's couch and come out and compete on a level playing field." According to Brown, the rollercoaster the RFS has created has created chicken producers on edge.

"The problem with the RFS is that it mandates the use of corn for ethanol, regardless of what makes economic sense, regardless of who is hurt and regardless of what it costs.

"Despite record corn harvests, chicken producers are just one drought, flood or freeze away from having to face higher feed prices—and consumers facing even higher food prices—because of the amount of corn that is mandated to be used as fuel," Brown said.

"The American public has been sold on the need for the RFS in order to gain American energy independence. The U.S. ethanol industry exported more than 800 million gallons of ethanol in 2014. How does that fit into American energy security? If U.S. ethanol can be competitive in the global export market, why does it need the protection of the RFS in the domestic market? It is time to fix this mess," Brown added.

Big oil has also joined in supporting elimination of RFS. "The federal government mandating what Americans put in their gas tanks was a flawed policy from the start. The so-called Renewable Fuel Standard has not only failed to live up to its original objectives, it actively works against them. Today's measures are important first steps towards repealing or significantly reforming this anti-consumer program, which is no longer needed or wanted," said American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM) President Charles Drevna.

But support for RFS remains, primarily in the Corn Belt.

Bob Dinneen, President of the Renewable Fuels Association, called the legislation reckless.

"This bill is a slap in the face to corn farmers across the country who responded to the RFS with increased production and yields," Dinneen said. "The result of this bill will be increased farm program costs and pain across rural America."

World Resources Institute study

In addition to the congressmen's legislation plans, a new report has come out from the World Resources Institute, where authors Tim Serchinger and Ralph Heimlich rehash what the corn industry say is previously debunked theories related to food versus fuel and indirect land use change.

The report claims that any dedicated use of land for growing bioenergy feedstocks comes at a cost. The authors recommend policy changes that include phasing out bioenergy production.

But Keith Alverson, South Dakota corn grower and a member of the Corn Board, says the study is more of the same old argument.

"The fact is: Ethanol is a very efficient energy source. When calculating the amount of energy used to produce ethanol, from farm to pump, ethanol represents a 40 percent net energy gain. No other energy source comes close. Ethanol is also better for the environment, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 110 million metric tons, the equivalent of taking 20 million vehicles off the road," Alverson said.

"There is more than enough corn to meet all demands: food, fuel, feed, and fiber. Our farmers have grown the largest 11 corn crops in history over the last 11 years—and we’re doing so more efficiently than ever. Since 1980, corn yields have increased by a remarkable 88 percent. According to the Field to Market Key Stone Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, over the last 30 years, corn farmers have significantly reduced the environmental impact of producing corn, including 30 percent less land, 44 percent less energy and 53 percent less water. Corn used for ethanol also performs double-duty as fuel and animal feed byproduct so we can operate even more efficiently."

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BQA Free Certification Period Announced

BQA partnership with Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc. provides free certification through April 15.

Note: For questions about the online certification process, including technical issues, please contact Anne Jones at 540-992-1992 or ajones@vabeef.org.

During the Annual Cattle Industry Convention, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc. (BIVI), announced a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) free-certification period — from now through April 15. Beef and dairy producers can take advantage of free BQA certification online courtesy of Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc. and the BQA program, funded in part by the beef checkoff.

BQA helps increase consumer confidence in the beef industry by demonstrating that the industry strives to produce a safe, wholesome product. All segments of the industry can benefit from becoming BQA-certified, including producers from cow-calf, dairy, stocker and feedyard operations, and anyone affiliated with those segments. With an overall focus on animal handling and disease treatment and prevention, online certification modules are customized to meet each segment’s needs.

“The beef industry has embraced BQA as the right thing to do for our industry. BQA certification helps producers share with consumers their commitment and pride in raising quality beef,” says Josh White, executive director, producer education and national BQA program leader. “The partnership with BIVI helps encourage producers and their employees to become certified.”

Beyond reinforcing industry best practices for cattle production, obtaining BQA certification can be a useful tool in an ever-changing industry landscape where consumers want to be assured they are receiving a product raised in ways that align with BQA.

Certification in BQA is rapidly increasing through the partnership of free online certifications from BIVI, now entering its third year. More than 16,000 have enrolled in the BQA free certification program since BIVI partnered with BQA in 2013 — an impressive number that reflects both beef and dairy producers’ commitment to producing a quality beef product.

March is National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. The theme for 2015 is “Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle” which encourages everyone to adopt eating and physical activity plans that are focused on consuming fewer calories, making informed food choices and getting daily exercise in order to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of disease and promote overall health.

The Virginia Beef Industry Council maintains an important relationship with the Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to be sure beef is a part of canonical programs such as National Nutrition Month. Resources are provided to dietitians to support their role in a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages.

The National Restaurant Association today announced that the Beef Checkoff Program is a new sponsor of the Association’s award-winning Kids LiveWell program, a voluntary industry-wide initiative designed to help make the healthful choice the easy choice when dining out with children.

“America’s farmers and ranchers are committed to continuing to raise and supply nutritious beef for families, and we’re grateful for efforts like Kids LiveWell and its participating restaurants to highlight health for consumers,” said Clay Buttrum, a stocker and cow-calf operator from Stillwater, Okla. and chairman of the checkoff’s Nutrition & Health Subcommittee.

Beef Council Update

Mission: To effectively maintain and build beef demand in Virginia for beef and beef products that satisfy consumer preferences through market development programs (consumer information, promotion, research, and industry information), thereby increasing the opportunity for the cattle industry to earn an adequate return on investment.

“As a dad of three girls, I know how important it is for our children to have access to nutritious and healthy foods,” he said. “The kids’ menu can be a deciding factor for where to eat and, at the same time, parents themselves want a great steak or burger when dining out. By menuing a kids’ meal that includes beef, restaurants can attract parents making meal-time decisions for their families.”

The 2010 USDA Dietary Guidelines recommend that Americans build a healthy plate with nutrient-rich foods. Beyond highlighting lean beef provides nutrients that are vital for a healthy and active lifestyle, from infancy to adulthood.

The NRA launched Kids LiveWell in 2011 to help restaurants highlight their better-for-you menu choices for children. To join the program, restaurant operators have to agree to offer a selection of healthful menu items that meet nutrition criteria based on scientific recommendations from leading health organizations, including USDA’s Dietary Guidelines.

Kids LiveWell was developed in collaboration with Healthy Dining, whose team of registered dietitians works with restaurants to identify and validate qualifying menu choices. Participating restaurants and their qualifying items are listed on HealthyDiningFinder.com, and also via a free Kids LiveWell app in the Android Market and iTunes App store.

Currently, Kids LiveWell includes 150 restaurant brands representing more than 42,000 locations nationwide.
5 Lessons I Learned From My Cattle

By Anne Burkeholder

1. Proper preconditioning is vital to animal performance. Take the time to vaccinate, provide good nutrition early in life, and teach your cattle to trust a human caregiver before they leave the home ranch. Share that information with the new owner of the cattle so that appropriate care can continue despite the change in address.

2. A calf must be bred with an innate desire to live (vigour), and phenotypically capable of remaining healthy all of the way to the packing plant. This includes having a physical structure that allows it to attain an appropriate harvest weight without compromising welfare.

3. Limiting stress on cattle is critical for both calf health and performance. To effectively limit stress, cattle caregivers must work together in order to continuously meet the needs of the calf. Sharing information up and down the production chain, as well as working to limit transportation and acclimation stress, allows the calf to remain healthy and efficiently convert resources into high-quality beef. Collaboration provides the key as the animal moves from one farm to another along the production chain.

4. Establishing a “partner mentality” allows for improvement in animal care as well as beef quality. Together we get stronger. Together we work for continuous improvement. Together we grow beef that we are proud to share with our families. There is very little room for “I” in the beef production chain, a concentration on “we” creates sustainability as we look to the future.

5. It is the little things that count. Paying attention to detail when caring for a prey animal is a critical component for success. Cattle are creatures of habit as well as being sensitive to their environment. Learn to “think like a calf” so that you can set him up for success.

5 lessons learned from my customers

1. Don’t do anything on your farm that you cannot explain. What people outside of your farm think is important – they ultimately sign your paycheck.

2. Tell the true story – be real, be personal, be sincere. Focus on what you know – your farm – yet recognize that there are multiple ways to grow food with integrity.

3. Understand that you will have to share of yourself in order to build trust. It is people who have relationships and establish trust – there has to be a personal commitment that goes with making your farm transparent.

4. While drama can escalate fame and create temporary social media hype, that type of outreach rarely creates trust. I more closely resemble the “tortoise” of the blogging world, than the “hare.” I believe that meaningful engagement stems from genuine dedication to both transparency and empathy.

5. Agriculture needs to “pack.” We need to be dedicated to our common ground as farmers/ranchers while also celebratory of our differences. Ridiculing our contemporaries and professional consultants does nothing but cause industry self-destruction. Whether this belittling is done for personal marketing gain or simply in spite, it is unacceptable.

5 Lessons I Learned From My Cattle

Page 12, March 2015, The Virginia Cattleman
70 PERFORMANCE TESTED BULLS
- ELITE PERFORMANCE GENETICS AND EPD PROFILES
- FULLY EVALUATED PROVIDING COMPLETE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION, ULTRASOUND DATA, AND BAV RESULTS
- GROWTH, CALVING EASE, AND BALANCED TRAIT BULLS TO MEET ANY NEED
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100 SPECIAL FEMALE LOTS
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Bull Information:
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- BW: +1.8 WW: +60 YW: +120 SW: +53 SB: +111
- BW: +12 WW: +50 YW: +120 SW: +47 SB: +97
- BW: +12 WW: +50 YW: +120 SW: +47 SB: +97
- A FEATURED FULL CALVING FEMALE!
- A FEATURED 4 YEAR OLD BY CONSENSUS!
President Barack Obama used his fiscal 2016 budget to get behind an idea that’s been long discussed but considered nearly unreachable: merging food safety into a single federal agency. The White House, in the proposed budget released Monday, suggests the creation of an independent agency that would effectively siphon USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service responsibilities and move them under the jurisdiction of HHS.

The idea — considered by some to be dead on arrival in Congress — would eliminate the current duplicative and fragmented approach, the administration argues. Driving its point, the White House used the decades-old pizza illustration to paint the government’s current system as counterintuitive. “FDA and FSIS can each have jurisdiction over the same category of food at different points in the food chain: A cheese pizza and its ingredients are regulated solely by FDA, but both agencies play roles in regulating the components and manufacturing of a pepperoni pizza,” the budget states. “Food safety and the prevention, mitigation and response to foodborne illness outbreaks are public health concerns, consistent with the larger mission of HHS.”

The request from Obama is in line with a change food safety advocates have been suggesting for years to improve federal oversight and public health. It also follows closely on the heels of legislation to consolidate food safety under one agency introduced last week by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). The pair have introduced similar measures in the past — 1999, 2004, 2005 and 2007 — none of which ever got to a vote. Their latest bills have no Republican co-sponsors. But DeLauro and Durbin have said the interest in cutting back on wasteful spending, as well as consumers’ increased attention to what they are eating, would increase the chances of gathering bipartisan support for the bill.

“Why do you want to waste money?” Durbin mused during a teleconference last week. “Why don’t we make this a more efficient operation? I hope that argument can prevail.”

However, even some of the most ardent food safety advocates are expressing nothing short of extreme skepticism toward the White House proposal. They describe it as a sweeping move that lacks nuance and could wind up causing more harm than good. “We just think that this would be a complete disaster,” said Tony Corbo, a senior lobbyist for the food campaign at Food & Water Watch. “First of all, they haven’t implemented the Food Safety Modernization Act, so we’re going to throw meat into the mix?” Corbo said that bridging differing inspection philosophies between USDA and HHS will also be a challenge. Most of the staff at FDA work from offices, he said, while the majority of FSIS staffers work out in the field as boots-on-the-ground inspectors. “How is this going to be structured?” Corbo asked. “There are a lot of issues with this that I don’t think people have considered.”
Ten Percent
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S A V Ten Percent 3085 • Reg: 17633883
A A R Ten x Free Spirit 8164 • AMF-CAF-DDF-NHF

▲ Genetically and Phenotypically outstanding
▲ Stylish, Muscular with superb structure
▲ Dam is moderate framed and beautifully uddered – Kelly Schaff

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Jan. 13, 2015 USA Angus EPD's

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Jan. 13, 2015 USA Angus EPD's

Jason S. Geesaman | Alta Beef Rep. | jmarfarm06@gmail.com | 434-610-7257

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thought out.” As another FDA watcher put it: “It’s often an illusion that you can solve problems by redrawing boxes.”

The Consumer Federation of America is similarly leery of the consolidation. “We are not in support of that. It’s different from what we’ve called for,” said Chris Waldrop, director of CFA’s Food Policy Institute. By contrast, CFA and other advocates want an independent agency, but not under HHS or USDA, he clarified. “Food safety is going to get lost in HHS, even if it’s a consolidated agency. HHS is just so huge. It just doesn’t make sense,” he said.

Some areas saw a bump in the administration’s budget proposal, namely, the Food Safety Modernization Act. Obama’s budget calls for an overall increase in spending for FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, from $903 million in fiscal 2015 to $987 million in fiscal 2016, a substantial $84 million increase that comes out to $100 million more than the agency had in fiscal 2014. Food safety advocates and industry groups hope the boost to FDA’s budget will help the agency implement the Food Safety Modernization Act as major rules start rolling into effect in 2016. The fiscal 2016 budget also proposes $1.63 billion in fees to help fund implementation of the food safety overhaul, but lawmakers, agency officials and advocates of the law all seem to agree that fees are just not going to happen. Several industry groups, including the American Frozen Food Institute and the American Bakers Association, are staunchly opposed to the idea, which they argue is essentially a tax that will raise food costs for American consumers. Still, experts say, this year’s budget proposal might be more realistic, as it leans more toward an appropriations ask and slightly away from a reliance on fees to fill the gap. Last year, for example, the administration proposed $229 million in fees and a $20 million increase for food safety. Taylor has admitted that fees are not politically feasible anytime soon, telling reporters last spring: “I think the feedback is very clear: that it’s realistically not likely to happen in the next couple of years. This is our dilemma.”
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*Based on 2 doses per calf at retail price. †Helfrich Livestock accessed 7/9/14. ‡Beckett J. Efficacy of pour-on dewormer differing in active ingredient and carrier on weight gain and fecal egg count in slaughter beef cattle. College of Agriculture, Cal Poly State University. *Based on FOI summaries and label claims.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: No meat or milk withdrawal is required when used according to label. Do not use in calves intended for veal or unapproved animal species as severe adverse reaction, including fatalities in dogs, may result.

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The 2015 Junior Beef Roundup will be held in conjunction with the 2015 Virginia Beef Expo in Harrisonburg, VA. The Junior Beef Roundup will be held on April 17 – 19, 2015 and will feature a wide variety of activities for all youth involved in the beef and livestock industries.

The weekend will begin with the 2015 State 4-H/FFA Junior Stockmen’s Contest. This contest will be held Friday, April 17th at 10:00 AM. This state level event tests a youth’s livestock industry knowledge, which includes identification classes of meats, feeds, equipment and breeds, as well as evaluation of meats, hay, sheep, swine, and beef, a knowledge based quiz, and an applied team problem. This contest is open to enrolled members of a 4-H Club or FFA chapter.

Virginia Cooperative Extension will host a Youth Meat Quality Assurance (YMQA) training on Saturday morning, April 18. This YMQA training program educates youth on proper animal management, husbandry, and handling techniques. Through the classroom YMQA training, youth will be certified in the Youth Pork Quality Assurance Plus program. On Saturday afternoon, a chute-side training activity which compliments the classroom instruction will be held for those youth interested in becoming Beef Quality Assurance certified. All youth interested in attending the 2015 State Fair of Virginia must attend a YMQA training session in 2015.

The State Youth Cattle Working contest is also scheduled to begin Saturday morning. The State Youth Cattle Working contest features the top teams that have advanced from the five regional contests held around the state. The Youth Cattle Working contest develops a youth’s skills in animal management and handling. Working as a team, youth efficiently process three stocker calves utilizing Beef Quality Assurance guidelines.

The Junior Beef Roundup will also feature a Cattle Sales contest and a Cattle Fitting Contest on Saturday. The cattle sales contest is open to enrolled 4-H and FFA members, and serves to help youth gain a working knowledge of performance and pedigree information, along with marketing skills. The Cattle Fitting Contest is open to those youth competing in the Junior Beef Roundup Youth Beef Shows.

The 2015 Virginia Beef Ambassador contest serves as a promotional contest to advocate for the Beef Industry. The Beef Ambassador contest strives to provide youth with an opportunity to educate consumers of all ages about beef nutrition, food safety and stewardship practices within the beef industry. The Ambassadors serve as the official youth representatives of the beef industry and can be seen at various beef industry events.

The Junior Beef Roundup will finish out the weekend with the Youth Beef Shows. Showmanship competitions will take place Saturday afternoon, and the shows for purebred cattle, commercial heifers, and prospect steers will be held Sunday.

Information, including rules, registration forms and detailed schedules for the Junior Beef Roundup can be found at www.ext.vt.edu/youthlivestock under Shows and Virginia Beef Expo.
When Should You Call The Vet On A Difficult Calving?

The crew at Ashland Veterinary Center is a lot busier this calving season. And that’s just fine with them. It’s not because the veterinarians look forward to spending more time at the back end of a cow. It’s because they know they’re helping clients better manage their calving season and deliver more live, healthy calves.

Randall Spare, president of Ashland Veterinary Center in Ashland, Kan., and one of four vets at the operation, says the torrid cattle market is a big reason for their busy schedules. “We’ve assisted more people because they’ve said, ‘I don’t want to mess this up. That calf is too valuable.’”

But that’s true regardless of the current market. You can’t sell a calf that didn’t survive calving. To that end, Spare and his crew advise cattle producers to not be shy about calling their veterinarian when dealing with dystocia, or a difficult calving.

According to Dale Grotelueschen, a DVM and director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Great Plains Veterinary Educational Center at Clay Center, Neb., the calving process is divided into three stages.

In the first stage, the cow or heifer becomes restless. “She may get up and lie down more often and move around,” he says, and often will isolate herself from the herd.

Stage 2 begins when the water bag appears, and it includes the delivery process.

Stage 3 is expulsion of fetal membranes and involutions of the uterus, he says. Stage 1 can last 12 hours or it can be two hours, Spare says. “The challenge is not that every animal is different, but that we need to see progression,” he says. “If they’ve quit straining, then we need to intervene.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21
PLAN FOR SUMMER SLUMP
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Keep Eyes Open To Market Changes, CattleFax’s Blach Says

By Larry Dreiling

It was an address not so much to fellow longtime stalwarts in the industry, but to young people in the audience just beginning their careers, as Randy Blach, CEO of CattleFax, Inc., delivered the keynote address at the inaugural International Livestock Forum, held recently at Fort Collins, Colorado.

Almost like a chant or mantra, Blach kept saying two words throughout his address: incredible opportunities.

Blach first gave attendees a quick look back before moving forward as the livestock industry responded to a drought considered the worst since the Dust Bowl era.

“We couldn’t respond to the economic signals to grow our output in the protein markets because the economics wouldn’t justify it,” Blach said. The poultry and pork industries were losing a ton of money, the dairy industry was in a train wreck and the beef industry was having terrible time.

“Now, we have learned that markets are cyclical, with grain prices way down. What goes up must come down. Livestock markets do the same, as they correct themselves.”

A massive cattle selloff has been followed by disruptions in poultry and pork, leading to stronger markets.

“We’ve enjoyed prices from a profitability standpoint that are nearly unprecedented. In all my years, I’ve never seen all the segments get along as well as they have,” Blach said.

“Poultry, pork, beef all have had good runs. Even though we had other issues with PEDv, we still had incredible margins for pork producers.”

The U.S. just went through a 2.5 million head reduction in total cattle slaughter in one year, a supply shock Blach said he’s seen only.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42
FROM PAGE 41
MARKET CHANGES

about five times since 1980. “We had a couple in 1979-1980, another in 1986, a couple in the late ’90s and this one,” Blach said. “You get these shocks and markets make incredible moves. The difference now is with pork and poultry. They couldn’t respond to the shortage in cattle numbers and beef supplies. We had a problem with PEDv in pork and a problem with breeder blocks in poultry.

“In the last six or seven months, we’ve had the perfect storm. That’s why these markets have had the run they’ve had. We need to understand how we got here to understand where we’re headed down the road.”

Cow-calf profitability currently is averaging $550 a head, Blach said, while from 1980 to 2000, an average cow-calf profit was $2.04 per head.

“Twenty years of returns didn’t equal what we did this year. You won’t be able to sustain these numbers, but it helps to understand where we came from,” Blach said. “The dairy segment won’t be as profitable in 2015 as 2014, but we’ve had a good run.”

The bottom line, Blach said: Economics works. “We are responding to market signals. We have green grass and profitability. If we allow these markets to work, they’ll work, so long as we have a level playing field and the government doesn’t screw up,” Blach said.

“We will have an increase in the cattle numbers, an increase in beef output and the situation on the hog side with returns in the finished market at record profits. If you look at the hog situation from the mid-1990s to about 2000, we were growing the business at about 2 percent per year.”

Then came the ethanol mandate for 4 to 5 billion bushels of corn every year. “Prior to that we producing 9 billion bushels, now we’re producing about 14 billion bushels of corn annually,” Blach said. “The market had to attract the supply.

Before that, we had stagnant pork prices and times of terrible, terrible, losses. “I suspect we’ll be back on the normal growth curve once we get past the PEDv virus thing. Most people think we have the worst of that behind us, but we won’t know until we get deeper into 2015. Our forecast is for a 4 to 5 percent increase in slaughter.”

The hog slaughter figure will increase along with poultry slaughter, Blach added. “From 1980 to 2005, poultry production increase at a rate of 4.5 percent per year. That’s year in and year out. It’s slowed too. Now we’re seeing egg sets increasing and the poultry block situation straightening out, all the things are in place for weights to increase, so we’ll see poultry up again 4 to 5 percent. No surprises, but it’s the landscape of what we’ll be seeing.”

A few years ago, U.S. meat consumption was at 220 pounds of beef, pork, and poultry every year then went through about a 20-pound reduction. “Why did that happen?” Blach asked. “We couldn’t grow output. We saw incomes grow in the rest of the world and we went through a recession. Consumers around the world are able to
A Dirt Road Diary, A level Playing Field

By Steve Lucas

“Do you want lettuce and tomato on that burger, Hon?” the waitress asked.

“That all depends,” Pete replied. “Were they raised in a sustainable manner and harvested humanely?”

“You want what?” she responded snapping her gum loudly. “Hey Mack,” she yelled to the cook who was busy behind the counter, “can you put champagne on the tomato and lettuce for this guy’s burger?”

“No, no!” cried Pete. “Not champagne, humane and sustain.”

“Now look, she growled. “You are getting to be a pain. Do want lettuce and tomato on your burger or not?”

“Pete, what’s up with campaign stuff?” I interrupted.

“Not campaign! You just don’t understand,” Pete whimpered. “We raise cattle, right?”

“Yeah,” I responded thinking of the load of calves we had just unloaded at the barn.

“And we do our best to treat them humanely, and sustainably, right?”

“Sure,” I agreed.

“Well, all these restaurants and fast food places are insisting that we prove the meat they buy from us meets a higher standard than the other stuff they buy. No one has ever asked if the tomatoes and onions and lettuce on the burgers were raised on sustainable farms and treated humanely,” my companion continued.

“Why should they?” I asked. “They are just plants.”

“Just Plants!” Pete cried turning red in the face. “Plants have feelings, they feel fear, and they communicate with each other. These scientists in Missouri played the sound of caterpillars chewing on leaves and reproduced the vibrations the pests caused for some plants. The plants started producing oil to try to fend off the attack. This past summer, a Virginia Tech scientist documented that when a parasitic plant attacks a host plant it tells the host plant what chemicals to produce. Other scientists have recorded corn plants making clicking sounds. And what do they do? They plant crops in straight rows like frying crates. They crowd the plants together in ever increasingly narrow rows like chickens in a cage. They harvest the crops with huge machines or chop them off with machetes.”

The waitress was standing slack jawed. The cook had come out from behind the counter. Other customers had stopped eating to watch Pete’s spectacle. He roamed around the diner screaming like an evangelist at a revival.

“If we treated our animals like fruit and vegetable growers treat their crops there would be an outcry like you’ve never heard before. And then,” Pete continued, “restaurant workers chop up these poor, living creatures and drop them into boiling water or hot grease. Even worse, we…. eat them alive.” “What can we do, Pete?” I asked.

“We don’t want special treatment,” Pete replied, “just a level playing field. If livestock producers need to prove these things, so should the fruit and vegetables.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48
Prevention And Control Of Johne’s Disease In Beef Cattle

Part 1

Introduction

Many animals in the early stages of Johne’s disease may not be seen. Therefore, it becomes a herd problem, besides an individual animal problem. Johne’s disease can be prevented, controlled, and even eliminated from infected herds based on a thorough understanding of the disease. Halfearted attempts to prevent or control Johne’s disease will generally fail. Once a herd becomes infected, control of Johne’s disease takes time. Usually, the infection has been spreading through the herd for a few years before clinical cases are noticed. A typical herd control program may take 5 years or longer. Faster programs are possible, but may be more expensive. Prevention is cheaper than control.

Prevention

As veterinarians and producers alike believe most of the U.S. beef herds do not have Johne’s disease, a contagious bacterial intestinal infection, prevention should be the goal of every ranch and farm that is currently free of the disease. It is encouraging to note that management practices directed at preventing Johne’s disease will also reduce the risk for other important cattle diseases as well.

The basics of prevention are straightforward. Prevent infections by closing the herd from animal additions or securing additions from Johne’s-free or Johne’s test-negative herds. In herds where infection is already present, additional steps are required for control. These include manure management, colostrum or milk management, identification of infected animals and their removal or separation from the herd, and by culling offspring of known infected mothers.

I. Prevention Practices

Prevent infections by closing the herd or securing additions from Johne’s-free or Johne’s test-negative herds.

II. Control Practices for an infected Herd

A. Reduce infections by manure management (all manure is suspect). Prevent infections by closing the herd from animal additions or securing additions or replacements from Johne’s-free or Johne’s test-negative herds. In herds where infection is already present, additional steps are required for control. These include manure management, colostrum or milk management, identification of infected animals and their removal or separation from the herd, and by culling offspring of known infected mothers.

1. Maintain high standards of cleanliness in animal handling during calving periods.
2. Avoid build-up of manure and contaminated mud in pastures and corrals where animals are kept.
3. Calves should be born in a clean environment with minimal fecal contamination.
4. Avoid crowded calving areas.
5. Place new cow/calf pairs into clean uncrowded pastures as soon as bonding has occurred.
7. Protect post-weaned replacement heifers from adult fecal contamination at least until they are a year old.
8. Avoid manure contamination of feed by using feed bunks, hay racks and by not using the same equipment to handle feed and move manure.
9. Avoid manure contamination of water sources where animals drink.
10. For maximum risk reduction, infected pastures could be tilled or grazed by non-replacement, feeder-cattle until environmental conditions destroy the microbe.

B. Reduce infections in calves by colostrum management

1. Use the colostrum from
Injectable Minerals Take Up The Slack

By Gilda V. Bryant

Free choice minerals are the bedrock of a well-balanced nutrition program for beef cattle. But there are times when bagged minerals aren’t enough. For example, transported calves become stressed and don’t eat well for about 30 days plus they tend to ignore minerals. Animals on lush forages may bypass the mineral feeder. Bulls, cows and first-calf heifers also need an extra nutrient boost before breeding.

If producers develop smart tactics, they can ensure their animals receive the best supplements at the right time. Lourens Havenga, veterinarian and CEO of Multimin, USA says that mineral intake is always the first hurdle. Bagged mineral generally allows for two to four ounces per head per day. If intake isn’t consistent, some animals will be over-supplemented while others will be under-supplemented.

It’s not uncommon for herd members receiving the same feed, supplements and management practices to have a trace mineral variation of 40 to 50 percent between animals. When producers initially introduce minerals to the herd, cattle often eat more than two to four ounces, then level off with lower intakes. Cattle grazing on lush grass pastures often refuse to visit mineral feeders for weeks at a time.

Producers may feed molasses-based supplements that contain sulfur, an antagonist that decrease absorption of copper, zinc and manganese. When pregnant cows are exposed to sulfur for long periods, their calves are born with a copper deficiency. Without adequate levels of copper, animals are unthrifty, unhealthy and prone to sickness with poor reproduction rates.

Transport stress occurs when calves are shipped across the state or across the country. The strain of being on a truck comingled with animals they don’t know is a real problem. Calves lose their appetites, eat little and ignore minerals. Younger calves may not know how to feed at the bunk. Natural competition during feeding times may prevent a shy calf from eating enough.

“It’s usually in the first 14-21 days that we have Pasteurella that causes BRD (Bovine Respiratory Disease),” explains Havenga. “It may be because those animals didn’t have enough mineral to support their immune systems.”

Injectable minerals can make a huge difference in animal health and performance. Injected trace minerals hit the bloodstream in eight to ten hours, and the animal uses these nutrients immediately. Excess minerals are stored in the liver for later utilization. The physiological benefit of Injectables may last between 90 and 120 days.

“You can put a small quantity into the animals immediately after birth for less than a dollar and it is taken care of,” Havenga explains. “These calves grow so fast, you need to give them another injection at branding time.”

Many producers with BLM grazing contracts in the rugged backcountry of Oregon and Idaho have discovered their animals ignore minerals and head for the hills. Havenga reports that some owners now inject their livestock when they offload them so they have enough mineral to last the 60 to 90 days they are grazing. When cattle come off BLM land, producers inject them again before taking them to a pasture where they have access to minerals.

It’s important to note that mineral injections should never replace an oral supplementation program. They are only for those times when livestock are experiencing physiological stress which deplete trace minerals that are vital for ruminant health, such as weaning or being trucked to a new location. Trace minerals are also critical for optimal vaccine response and disease prevention in cattle or before breeding and calving. In addition, stocked, purchased hay bales often lack vital minerals and other nutrients that cattle require. Producers may be tempted to give larger injections to sick or unthrifty cows or calves. Havenga strongly recommends that stockmen

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Cheaper Fuel

Farm income this year may benefit from cheaper fuel, which accounts for about 5 percent of expenses. Amid a glut of crude oil, the price of diesel used in tractors and harvesters is down 22 percent since Oct. 31, touching a five-year low of $2.793 a gallon on Feb. 2, motoring group AAA said.

Property values are also showing signs of easing. Lower-quality farmland has dropped about 15 percent from its peak, while prices for better land has leveled off, Farmers National Co., which manages 2.1 million acres of farms in 24 states, said Feb. 5.

Such declines may not provide much help this year to farmers who rent their land in multi-year agreements, said Pat Westhoff, an agricultural economist at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

"Many farmers are paying a lot more in rent now than they were three-four years ago, and once you take that into account, some will actually lose money," Westhoff said in an e-mail.

Livestock Profit

While crop farmers are getting squeezed, most livestock producers are making money and probably will surpass crop receipts for a second straight year, said Chad Hart, a farm economist at Iowa State University in Ames.

In 2014, revenue from chickens, cows, hogs and other animals jumped to a record $208.7 billion, surpassing crops for the first time since 2006, USDA data show.

That's prompted a shift on Don Steinbeisser Jr.'s farm and ranch near Sidney, Montana, where he has 3,500 acres of crops and grazes about 650 cattle. He is planting less corn and using it to feed his livestock rather than sell in the market.

"With corn under $4, we'll take that for the cattle," said Steinbeisser, who also grows wheat, soybeans, barley and sugar beets. "Times like these, I'm glad I'm diversified."
USDA revised up its production estimate for 2015. Beef production this year is forecast at 24.291 million pounds, 1.6% larger than what USDA forecasted in January. At this point USDA expects US production in 2015 to be about the same as the previous year. The change in output numbers was to be expected following the results of the January 1 Cattle Inventory survey, which showed larger than expected inventory numbers. The cattle inventory numbers showed both larger cow numbers and a larger supply of cattle outside of feedlots. As a result, slaughter forecasts have been revised higher. But, in its notes, USDA also indicated that “the increase in slaughter is partly offset by slower growth in carcass weights.” Weather remains a key wild card for slaughter in 2015. Last year, producers took advantage of excellent pasture conditions and were able to hold back a larger percentage of the breeding stock. Beef and dairy cow slaughter numbers were down sharply (hence the larger Jan 1 inventory). Another year of ample pastures could once again reduce the supply of cattle coming to market in the short term but it would also accelerate the pace of herd rebuilding that already is under way. USDA lowered its beef export forecast 75 million pounds (-3%) and now it expects shipments in 2015 to decline by 4.8% from a year ago. Imports were adjusted only modestly and USDA still expects imports to also decline, largely reflecting a slowdown in Australian slaughter. Ireland is cleared to ship product to the US but volumes are expected to be relatively small. Despite current changes, per capita availability is expected to be just 0.2% larger than a year ago, implying beef prices near 2014 levels.

FROM PAGE 44

JOHNE’S DISEASE

Johne’s-negative dams if needed to supplement some newborn calves.

2. Thoroughly clean the udder and teats before collection of the colostrum to avoid manure contamination.

3. Clean dam’s udder and teats following any assisted births.

C. Reduce infection spread by identifying and removing infected animals and their calves

1. Consult with your veterinarian for decisions on
Johne’s Disease

FROM PAGE 47

1. How best to use and interpret tests used for diagnosis of Johne’s disease.
2. Use a test-certified diagnostic laboratory for running your tests.
3. Identify all females and their daughters remaining in the herd.
4. Remove, or keep separate, all test-positive animals.
5. Prevent infection spread by culling, or separating, offspring of infected mothers.

FROM PAGE 43

Dirt Road Diary

ble producers and the people who cook the food.”

“Look, veggie man,” grumbled the waitress, “you are holding up the process. Tell me what you want on your burger or I will level your playing field. By the way, I grow these tomatoes myself and talk to them every day.”

“Oh, in that case, I’ll have a slice of tomato on my burger,” said Pete. “And perhaps you would like to be a charter member of a new organization I’m starting.”

“I don’t think so,” said the waitress. The cook shook his head.

FROM PAGE 45

Injectable Minerals

strictly follow label directions. “More isn’t better,” he recommends. “It could be dangerous if you overdo trace minerals. Stick to the label dose.”

Free choice minerals are the mainstay of a well-balanced supplementation program. Animals that have a good mineral program, low stress and antagonist-free water and diet don’t need injectable minerals. However, when cattle ignore minerals or face stress, adding injectable minerals to an established mineral program may reduce illness, promotes animal health and productivity. And that means more money in the bank.

“Think I’ll pass this time,” I said. I did feel a qualm of guilt though when I heard the loud sizzling of a basket of french-fries being dropped into the deep fryer.

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The global middle class of 300 to 400 million more people Blach sees as a major wave of consumption growth.

“They will have more buying power. We’re talking about a group the size of the U.S. population. It’s an opportunity,” Blach said. “The U.S. is the No. 1 beef producer in the world. Poultry? We’re first or second year in and year out. Pork? Third or fourth. We are a global player in protein production.”

Blach sees growth in some unlikely areas.

“India consumes water buffalo. We have an opportunity to improve their diets because as incomes rise, so does the amount of meat protein consumed.”

Even domestic markets are differentiating in so many ways, Blach sees opportunities for growth in those segments, too.

“From 1980 to 1998, beef demand was cut in half. The whole discussion then was to move to a value-based system putting out the products the consumers want,” Blach said. “We’re finally starting to do that. We have a long way to go, but we are responding to that demand with a whole array of products, from grass-fed to organic to antibiotic-free. If there is a market signal, someone will produce it.

“We have incredible opportunities for growth and need to take advantage of them.”
By: Emma Reeves, Virginia Tech Beef Leadership Council Reporter/Historian

On February 3rd, six students of the Collegiate Beef Leadership Council rode the cold weather in Blacksburg and made their way down to “Sizzling Hot San Antonio” for the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show. Keagan Clevenger, James Comstock, Chelsea Cook, Sam Cross, Logan Miller, and Emma Reeves spent three days in Texas meeting cattle industry professionals and learning more about opportunities and trends in the beef business today.

Council members spent a majority of the first day participating in “Cattlemen’s College” which is an event designed to accommodate the interests of attendees from all sectors of the cattle industry. Chef Mike Erickson opened the program early Wednesday morning with a discussion on his work as a chef and high school culinary arts instructor in Texas. Mike shared his perspective on beef quality, safety, and transparency from a food service standpoint and shared a short clip of his documentary film called True Beef: From Pasture to Plate. After the opening session, attendees scattered to attend presentations of their choice on topics such as rebuilding the nation’s cow herd, customer relations, ranch management, and keeping the beef story alive. The morning came to a close with lunch and a presentation by Max Armstrong, co-host of the television show This Week in Agribusiness.

The second day of Convention proved to be another early morning for Council members as they attended the 2015 CattleFax U.S. & Global Protein and Grain Outlook Seminar. In this presentation, CattleFax representatives explained how weather patterns along with supply and demand trends from both a domestic and global standpoint will affect each other in the coming year. While cattlemen from all sectors of beef production are concerned that the record high beef prices of 2014 will not last much longer, Cattlefax data showed that these high prices may be more long-lived than originally thought. The forecasted bumper grain crop and increasing global demand for U.S. beef will only support record profits in 2015 despite expansion of the nation’s beef herd on the horizon.

The sharing of knowledge and ideas amongst men and women of the cattle industry didn’t end with Cattlemen’s College and the Cattlefax seminar as other excellent speakers presented their perspectives on more than just the beef business. One of these speakers was graffiti artist and best-selling business author, Erik Wahl. Erik used paintings done on stage as visual metaphors to portray his message that being creative could help cattlemen be more innovative and successful in their businesses. He even awarded one of these exclusive paintings to a member of the audience.

The host of FOX News’ Special Report, Brett Baier, also presented convention-goers with an insightful speech. Brett shared his analysis of politics in the U.S. today before opening up to the audience.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60
Cattlemen Gathered In San Antonio For The 2015 Cattle Industry Convention

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (February 4, 2015) - More than 7,000 cattlemen and women from across the country are registered to attend the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention and National Cattlemen's Beef Association Trade Show, which kicked off today at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas. The convention, which will run through Feb. 7, is the largest annual gathering of the beef industry.

NCBA President Bob McCan said this year’s convention in his home state of Texas is will not disappoint.

“S’im happy to welcome everyone to the great state of Texas and San Antonio is a historic town full of culture and great sights. This week we will highlight some of the great successes of the past year and set the course for what lies ahead,” McCan said. “Today, Cattlemen’s College kicked off convention with over 20 different classes, kick starting a great week with many opportunities for cattlemen and women to hear directly from the experts about how to grow and improve their operations.”

This year the Trade Show will be the largest to date. On the Trade Show floor will be two education areas, including a demonstration area with live animals to provide hands-on instruction. NCBA’s Learning Lounge is back again, featuring 30-minute educational sessions to provide attendees valuable educational tips from industry experts in informal, face-to-face, technology-friendly classroom settings. Following Cattlemen’s College, exciting keynote speeches at the general sessions, and a record-breaking Trade Show, convention goers will have the opportunity to attend committee meetings and take part in the grassroots policy development.

“It’s important now, more than ever, for producers to get involved and engaged in the public policy,” said McCan. “The strong grassroots policy process is the backbone and the strength of NCBA and this week will discuss important policy issues and lay the groundwork for the year ahead.”

With so many events taking place during the convention all attendees are encouraged to download the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention app to their smart phones to see the schedule of events, locations, maps and receive alerts before, during and after the event. Visit www.beefusa.org for more information about the convention, and follow NCBA on Facebook and Twitter.
Next White House Tax Battle: Inheritance Taxes?

The battle in Washington over income inequality has a new front: inheritance taxes. The Obama administration wants to dramatically spike the number of people who pay taxes on assets they pass on to their heirs while hiking the rates paid by the nation’s wealthiest. It’s a key part of the White House’s “middle class economics” agenda. The goal is to reboot estate taxes, which Republicans successfully rolled back in recent years with so much success that few people actually pay them. Since 2001, the number of returns paying what Republicans call the “death tax” has plummeted by 90 percent, according to IRS statistics. The 99-year-old estate tax now raises so little money that customs duties are a bigger source of revenue to the Treasury. “The real issue here is that we’ve excused so many people from the estate tax,” said Beth Kaufman, a former Treasury official during the Clinton administration. “It doesn’t seem preposterous to take the position that there ought to be some kind of tax when these assets pass from one generation to another.”

The proposal, which could have those hit see levies zoom to more than 50 percent from the current 40 percent, is not likely to go anywhere fast in the Republican-controlled Congress. But it’s a central part of the message White House and Democrats aim to push heading into the 2016 presidential election: that they are the party willing to pinch the wealthy to help everyone else, a theme they believe will resonate amid concerns about middle-class wage stagnation. Democrats want to use the tax to finance a host of tax cuts for middle- and low-income Americans, and say it would correct an injustice in the code. “The estate tax has been significantly reduced from where it was just a few years ago,” said Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.). “It would address a significant inequity in the tax code that benefits people who want to pass on large fortunes tax free.”

After winning a decisive victory on the issue in the 2013 fiscal-cliff agreement, in which lawmakers agreed to permanently lock in Bush-era rates, Republicans consider the estate tax to be settled, said Charles Boustany (R-La.), who sits on the tax-writing Ways and Means committee. He said he worried about the impact of the proposal on family-owned businesses, though the administration has included special provisions aimed at addressing those concerns. “Why would somebody who has spent their entire life building a small business have it decimated by taxes?” said Boustany. Some tax lobbyists are not ruling out action on the idea, saying it could be tapped by lawmakers searching for revenue to pay for other things, such as a business-only tax reform. Unlike incoming Barack Obama’s recently scuttled plan to tax money in 529 education savings accounts, this proposal has the advantage of being both obscure and complicated. It does not actually touch the politically sensitive estate tax. It would nevertheless function as a back-door hike in large fortunes tax rate.

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paying capital gains on that $14 million profit. Assuming a 25 percent tax, that's $3.5 million in savings.

(The original purchase price is the “basis.” A basis that's increased at death is called “stepped up basis.” It's possible, though less common, to have a “step down” in basis if an asset has lost value.)

It's a long-standing and huge gap in the tax code—the Treasury forgos about $650 billion over a decade because of the break, according to the Congressional Budget Office. That makes the little-known provision about the same size as the earned income tax credit, the government's biggest anti-poverty program. The plan would require those at the very top to pay capital gains on that $14 million profit along with the estate tax. The White House in its budget request allows a deduction for capital gains paid so the hit of the estate tax and the capital gains levy would be less than their combined rate of 68 percent. Those a bit further down the income ladder, who currently escape the estate tax thanks to Republicans' efforts, would begin paying the capital gains tax. It would be assessed at the time of death, on the deceased's final tax return.

The administration estimates 99 percent of the tax would be borne by those with incomes and capital gains realized at death topping $500,000. The rest would be absorbed by those between $200,000 and $500,000, according to the Treasury Department's Office of Tax Analysis. A separate analysis released Wednesday by the Tax Policy Center, which uses different methods for calculating where the tax burden would fall, found it would be shared somewhat more broadly than the administration figures suggest. Those between $500,000 and $1 million would pay $3,838 in additional taxes, while those between $200,000 and $500,000 would pay $682 more. The plan would also hit those earning less as well, the analysis found, with people between $75,000 and $200,000 paying between $147 and $210 more. The Tax Policy Center also said that a small slice of middle-income groups with a huge amount of unrealized capital gains would be hit with very high tax bills under the proposal. About 0.2 percent of those between $75,000 and $100,000 would pay an additional $101,000, while 0.1 percent of those between $50,000 and $75,000 would pay $37,000 more.

The break on capital gains exists because lawmakers assumed inheritances would be already be dunned by the estate tax, Kaufman said. "The theory behind having a stepped-up basis was that if an estate is paying the estate tax, then it's a nasty double hit," she said. But supporters say the estate tax has been rolled back so much in recent years that it doesn't make sense to continue to allow the break for capital gains.

In 2001, when the estate tax imposed a 55 percent charge on assets worth more than $675,000, there were 108,000 tax returns paying the levy. In 2013, with a 40 percent tax on assets worth more than $5.25 million, fewer than 11,000 estate tax returns were filed. Estate and gift taxes are projected to raise $20 billion this year, according to CBO, only a little more than tobacco taxes. Customs duties will raise $56 billion.

The administration believes it can surmount a long-standing objection to closing the step-up gap — the record keeping it would require.

People inherit all sorts of things — not just stocks, but houses, businesses, artwork, fancy watches — that benefit from the tax treatment. Figuring out how much your great aunt paid for a sofa she bought decades ago could be a nightmare. Even figuring the “basis” of a house inherited from your parents can be difficult. You might be able to easily track down the original purchase price, but what about capital im-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59
Rockingham Feeder Cattle Association Scholarship Application

The Rockingham Feeder Cattle Association is a non-profit organization incorporated under Chapter 13 of Title 13 of the Code of Virginia. The Association undertakes educational and promotional work in connection with the production and sale of livestock. The Association will award one $1,000 scholarship each year. Scholarship applications from graduating high school seniors intent on pursuing a college degree in an agricultural related field will be considered eligible for the award.

The 2015 scholarship will be awarded in memory of Kenny Rodeffer. Kenneth Rodeffer was born in Harrisonburg, Virginia on January 31, 1951. After serving in the Virginia National Guard, Kenny worked for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as livestock marketing specialist and cattle grader for over 35 years. In this capacity, Kenny served the greater Northern Virginia and Shenandoah Valley area, covering livestock markets throughout the region. He also provided leadership and counsel to the new generation of agricultural marketing specialists. As an avid supporter of improved livestock production and agriculture in general, Kenny will be sorely missed.

Completed scholarship applications should be addressed mailed to:
Rockingham Feeder Cattle Association
Scholarship Selection Committee
c/o Augusta Extension
Office
P.O. Box 590
Verona, VA 24482

Applications must be a resident of the counties of Highland, Rockbridge, Augusta, or Rockingham counties. Candidates must be accepted and intending to enroll at an accredited post-secondary college or university as a full-time student (minimum of 12 credit hours). Scholarships recipients should, if at all possible, be present at the annual meeting of the Rockingham Feeder Cattle Association held on the approximate date of the third Tuesday in June. Scholarship recipients will be notified of the official date and time of annual meeting upon notification of scholarship selection.

Students of undergraduate degree programs, including two year academic programs and the Virginia Community College System are encouraged to apply, however graduate student applicants will not garner consideration. Scholarships will be awarded based on academic/scholastic achievement, involvement in agricultural youth programs such as 4-H clubs and FFA chapters, and other meritorious extracurricular activities.

Applications will be evaluated on merit by a scholarship selection committee. This committee will have all necessary powers to select a scholarship recipient, and will answer directly to the board.

Applications for 2015-2016 school year must be post-marked by April 15, 2015. Scholarship applications must be accompanied by a photocopy of the most recent available grade report to verify stated grade point average on application.

Mail by April 15th to:
The Rockingham Feeder Cattle Association
P.O. Box 590
Verona, VA 24482

Scholarship Application

Name: ____________________________ Year In School: _________
Permanent Address: ___________________________________________
State:_________ Zip Code:________________________ County: __________
Telephone:________________________ Email Address: _____________

High School Academic Information:
GPA:_________ Class size:_________ Class Rank:_________ SAT verbal:_________ SAT Math:_________

High School Name and Mailing Address:
________________________________________________________________________

Intended College:
________________________________________________________________________
Address and Admissions contact:
________________________________________________________________________

Have you applied:__________ Were you accepted/Are you enrolled:__________

Please List and Describe your involvement in agricultural related activities:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe Academic Honors:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your Work Experience:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your Volunteer work:
________________________________________________________________________

Please describe your Collegiate Goals and Career Plan upon graduation:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your extracurricular and other meritorious activities:
________________________________________________________________________

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High School Name and Mailing Address:
________________________________________________________________________

Intended College:
________________________________________________________________________
Address and Admissions contact:
________________________________________________________________________

Have you applied:__________ Were you accepted/Are you enrolled:__________

Please List and Describe your involvement in agricultural related activities:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe Academic Honors:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your Work Experience:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your Volunteer work:
________________________________________________________________________

Please describe your Collegiate Goals and Career Plan upon graduation:
________________________________________________________________________

Please List and Describe your extracurricular and other meritorious activities:
________________________________________________________________________
Selling the Sacred Cow: 
India’s Contentious Beef Industry

By Sena Gopel, The Atlantic

During the religious Hindu festival Sankranti every January, the open fields in farming villages throughout India are filled with people dressed in their best holiday attire celebrating the harvest and new beginnings. It is hard to say who is more colorful—the people or the cattle being led to the field. This is the day for honoring cattle and every household is parading its bemused bovine population: horns painted, necks garlanded, bells tinkling.

The Hindu reverence of cattle—particularly the cow—is well-known. Census data shows that nearly 80 percent of India’s 1.2 billion population are Hindu. Most Hindus worship the cow and abstain from eating beef, so it might come as a surprise that India has become the world’s second-largest beef exporter.

India’s beef industry says all its beef comes from buffaloes, a claim challenged by right wing, religious, and animal rights groups. While it’s true that cow slaughter is banned by most Indian states and the export of cow meat is against the law, the acceptance of the cow’s sacredness is not uniform throughout India and it’s likely that cow meat is being snuck out.

The debate of the sacredness of the cow is an issue even amongst India’s historians with some arguing that the “holy cow” is a relatively recent phenomenon exploited by political and religious groups. In The Myth of The Holy Cow, historian Dwijendra Narayan Jha says that ancient Hindus ate beef—the cow got its revered status around 500 A.D. coinciding with an agricultural boom on the subcontinent. Jha’s research offers copious evidence that ancient Hindu kings regularly sacrificed and ate animal products to 65 countries where its beef competes with meat from all over the world. The demand for Indian beef is especially high because it comes from free-ranging bufaloes fed on natural pastures and not pumped with growth hormones, says Santosh Sarangi, chairman of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). “India has 115 million bufaloes, more than half the world’s population, and produces about 1.53 million tons of beef every year,” Sarangi says. The debate of the sacredness of the cow is an issue even amongst India’s historians with some arguing that the “holy cow” is a relatively recent phenomenon exploited by political and religious groups. In The Myth of The Holy Cow, historian Dwijendra Narayan Jha says that ancient Hindus ate beef—the cow got its revered status around 500 A.D. coinciding with an agricultural boom on the subcontinent. Jha’s research offers copious evidence that ancient Hindu kings regularly sacrificed and ate animal products.

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Animals including cattle. Cattle, even cow, meat was not sacred during the Vedic period (1000-500 B.C.) which was the time when Hinduism’s oldest scriptures—the Vedas—were written.

Around 500 A.D., India became an agrarian economy. Cattle, cows, and bulls, became invaluable for small-scale farming that, even today, is the heart of Indian rural life. This coincided with a time when Hindus were beginning to reject animal killing and gravitate towards vegetarianism. Cattle became not only a sign of wealth, but also sacred. (Interestingly, the buffalo never achieved this revered status.)

To Hindus, the cow is now worshipped as Gaumata (mother cow) because it provides milk to everyone. It symbolizes selfless giving. There are about 3,000 Gaushalas (cow shelters) in India where old and infirm cows are looked after. The cow, to many Hindus, embodies gentleness and non-violence. Hinduism holds the belief that all living creatures are sacred and promotes the idea of ahimsa (non-violence). “In China, dogs are killed for their meat and leather,” says Poorva Joshipura, CEO, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, India. “In the United States, where they are loved and kept in homes, they aren’t killed. So when people call for cow slaughter bans, there isn’t always an ulterior or motive.”

India has a checkered past with cow slaughter bans. The Muslim Mughals ruled for three centuries and the British colonized the country for two centuries. The first Mughal emperor, Babur, banned cow slaughter in 1527 out of respect for Hindus; but some Hindu kings did not enforce the ban. The big picture today is a mixed one: On the one hand, there are Muslims and Christians who don’t eat beef out of respect for their Hindu neighbors. On the other, there are Hindus who eat beef.

According to Chetan Rajhans, spokesperson for Hindu Janajagruti Samiti—a social organization that hopes to revive Hindu values, India’s present anti-cow slaughter movement probably began with the Mutiny of 1857. The mutiny was an uprising of Indian soldiers against their British superiors for introducing pork and beef-greased cartridges for .53 Enfield rifles. The ends of these cartridges had to be bitten off before use, enraging Muslims, who don’t eat pork, and Hindus, who don’t eat beef. “The cartridges mobilized people against the British,” says Rajhans. “That was the beginning of a nationwide Cow Protection Movement uniting Hindus against the British.”

The Cow Protection Movement activists think there is little progress. “We want to completely stop slaughter of cow and bulls,” says Ashoo Mongia, who founded the Rashtriye Gauraksha Sena (Cow Protection Army) in 2010. But as the cow’s sacredness is debated, a nationwide ban is hard to impose. While some Indian states ban slaughter of any cattle, others ban slaughter of only cows, and some only ban the slaughter of milk-producing cows. States in the northeastern part of the country have no bans at all. Punishments, too, vary from minimal fines to five years in prison.

APEDA, the Indian government’s gatekeeper for exports, has stringent guidelines for beef export. Last year, APEDA introduced a requirement that exporters must prove that their beef was sourced from government-approved and registered abattoirs. But with a sizable Muslim and Christian population—14 percent and 2 percent respectively—that doesn’t worship the cow’s divinity, there is speculation that illegal cow beef is sneaking into the mix. “Meat is meat and it would be hard to tell if it came from a licensed slaughterhouse, municipal slaughterhouse, or export facility,” says Joshipura.

India’s rapidly growing beef industry is a political issue, especially during elections when the country is divided along cultural, religious, and political lines: Muslims and Hindus, left versus right, beef-eating Hindus versus non-beef eating Hindus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61
As a veterinary student, I spent several weeks at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) near Clay Center, Neb. Though students were afforded only very general descriptions of the experiments underway at the facility at the time, I was shocked to read the recent New York Times article alleging animal abuse and negligence in cattle, sheep and swine experiments at MARC. The article centers on a few of virtually hundreds of experiments conducted at MARC. While we must take this opportunity to review how research is conducted and how those projects continue to be funded, this article also underscores how a naïve media can affect public opinion and how animal rights groups take advantage of this naïveté.

One experiment described in the article is MARC’s twinning project. In this project, cattle were selected over many years for their propensity to produce twins. The project was successful, and twinning rate increased. However, most cattlemen really don’t want the management hassles of dealing with twins. In the article, the reporter described how cows in the study were having twins at a rate of about 55%; the typical twinning rate is 3%. It went on to say: “...unsettling side effects surfaced. Some 95% of the females born with male siblings had deformed vaginas.”

Of course, this “side effect” has nothing to do with the research. Cattle producers know this deformity occurs more than 90% of the time when a heifer is born as a twin to a bull. It’s known as freemartinism, but the article presented it as a ghastly, unexpected phenomenon. What isn’t mentioned is that the female, outside of being infertile, can lead a fairly normal life. Is this really “unsettling”? Within a few hours, the online comments section of the article numbered several hundred. Many referenced the twinning project and the “unsettling side effects.” Of course, animal rights groups picked up on this and exploited it. Wayne Pacelle of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) even wrote about it in his blog. With more than a $100 million annual budget, you’d think HSUS could have a staff member explain to Pacelle that freemartins are common when a heifer is born as a twin to a bull calf. Is Pacelle ignorant, or does he think his donors are ignorant?

Is The New York Times Naïve About MARC Or Intentionally Misleading?

By Dr. Dave Sjeklocha

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58
Is Oil Heading to $20/Barrel?

By Steve Meyer & Len Steiner, Chicago Mercantile Exchange

The dramatic decline in oil prices over the past few months has most observers asking just how low will — or can — they go. Prices have stabilized somewhat in February with the nearby contracts near $50 per barrel but a number of published pieces claiming that oil prices could fall as low as $20 per barrel. Those forecasts rest on three conditions. First, world oil demand is — by these observers, at least — expected to soften over time. That belief is based on relatively slow growth of the U.S. economy, ongoing problems in the EU, a return to recession in Japan and slowing growth in China. Major improvements in fuel efficiency among the world’s automobiles and trucks are the final piece of the lagging demand scenario. And all of those are true. But, with the exception of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

LUCAS FARM'S FEATURED BULLS

These Bulls sale Sat March 28 SWVA BCIA Bull Sale

LOT 19 LUCAS 9M25 3580 reg# 17780126(DDF) HIGH STATION INDEX SR ANGUS BULL ADG ratio 122 YW ratio 116

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LOT 18 LUCAS 9M25 356S reg# 17780118(DDF) THICK AND POWERFUL LOW BW 9M25 SON ADG ratio121 IMF ratio 151

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FROM PAGE 53

Inheritance Tax

promotions? Did they replace the roof? The cost of that is typically added to the original purchase price when calculating the basis. What if someone was using a room as a home office? They may have been depreciating that for many years.

Democrats tried to rescind the break once before, in 1976, only to repeal the repeal a few years later amid widespread complaints. “People in the estate-planning world went berserk,” said Ken Kies, a tax lobbyist and former head of the Joint Committee on Taxation. “Imagine you’ve owned assets for 50 years — whose got the records? The view was that this would be impossible to actually administer.”

The administration believes recordkeeping has sufficiently improved, with brokerages keeping track of stock trades, and the plan includes carve-outs for hard-to-value things. People would get a $500,000 exemption for residences, and clothing, furniture and family heirlooms would be exempt though “expensive artwork” would not. The IRS would develop guidelines for handling situations where it is impossible to determine the original value of an item. Likewise, there are various provisions aimed at shielding the middle class from the tax. Aside from the exemption for homes, the plan would excuse capital gains, and no tax would be due until both spouses have died. There are also provisions aimed at addressing complaints it could force people to sell family-owned businesses and farms in order to pay the tax. No taxes would be due until the business is sold, instead of when the person dies, and close-held businesses could pay the tax over 15 years. There is also a separate exemption for charitable contributions.

These caveats are likely not enough to satisfy Republicans. It’s a “non-starter,” Boustany said.

FROM PAGE 58

Oil Heading

Japan’s return to recession, nothing is new about any of them. And the question must be asked: How does 50 percent cheaper energy prices impact those economies — all of which are major oil importers?

Second, world oil production is — thanks to several Arab states — not declining much if at all. The Saudis have sent a clear message to newfound oil producers and to their smaller OPEC brethren: We are not reducing production and giving up market share to prop up oil prices — you get to do that this time! This is not a good scenario for continued oil exploration and development in the U.S. or for the fiscal budgets of most of Saudi Arabia’s competitors. Something will have to “give” but what price will that require? Which brings us to the final point: Marginal costs. The predictors of $20 oil point to the fact that the cost of producing oil from already established wells and fields is much lower than many believe. We have seen estimates of $10-$20 per barrel in Saudi Arabia and $40 or less in some North American fields. While new development may stop, $40 or $50 per barrel is not likely low enough to slow production by much and may actually cause production to rise in countries that need cash. The only way to stop that? Get the price below the cash cost of producing the next barrel.

FROM PAGE 58

Oil Heading

Reason Simmentals

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ence about how his son born with five congenital heart defects has taught him about the most important things in life.

The 2015 NCBA Trade Show was the largest ever held with over 330 exhibitors showcasing their products and services. Representatives from all sectors of the cattle industry were present on the trade show floor including breed organizations, equipment dealers, animal health companies, and agriculture lending firms. While browsing the trade show, attendees could pause at the Stockmanship and Stewardship Demonstration Arena to watch short demonstrations of low-stress cattle handling techniques using cattle dogs, horses, and cattle-working equipment. The NCBA Learning Lounge also provided trade show guests with informal “lightning sessions” on anything from weed control to the impact of interest rates on agriculture.

Entertainment was not hard to come by for the little downtime that Council members had during Convention week. The city of San Antonio itself provided scenes such as the historic Alamo and the five-mile River Walk through the downtown area. Convention-sponsored pastimes consisted of a film viewing of the documentary Farmland, dancing and armadillo racing at the “Nothin’ But Texas” party, and consuming an abundance of delicious Tex-Mex cuisine throughout the week. Perhaps the Council members’ favorite entertainment was the “Cowboy Comedy Club” starring Jeff Foxworthy and cowboy poet, Baxter Black.

Attending the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention was a valuable and exciting experience for members of the Collegiate Beef Leadership Council. All Council members came away with long-lasting memories and new knowledge of the cattle industry despite differing interests and career goals. Students would like to thank those who supported the Council’s silent auction at the 2015 Virginia Club Calf Producer’s sale which helped more students travel to the convention this year.

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VT BEEF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

2015 Junior Beef Roundup
Rockingham County Fairgrounds
Harrisonburg, VA

Schedule of Events

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<th>Friday, April 17</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 AM State Youth Stockmen’s Contest Barns</td>
<td>1:00 PM Beef Ambassador Contest</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 PM Farm Museum</td>
<td>Barns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 PM Chuteside BQA Training/BQA Exam</td>
<td>Barns/Grounds/Feed Bottles</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00 PM Youth Beef Showmanship</td>
<td>Main Barn Arena</td>
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</table>
| 6:00 PM Move in Youth Cattle Tie Outs | 9:00 AM Both Rings (Times and rings to)
| 7:00 – 8:00 PM Weigh in/Check in | Youth Beef Shows |
| Main Arena/Dairy Barn | Youth Angus Show  be determined after entries |
| Saturday, April 18 | Youth Brahman Show are received |
| 7:00 – 10:00 AM Youth Cattle Arrival Barns | Youth Hereford Show |
| 8:00 – 10:00 AM Weigh-in/Check in | Youth Simmental Show |
| Main Arena/Dairy Barn | Youth All Other Breeds Show |
| 9:00 AM Youth Meat Quality Assurance Training | |
| 10:00 AM State Youth Cattle Working Contest | |
| Sheep Barn | 11:00 AM Youth Commercial Heifer Show |
| 1:00 PM | Youth Steer Show |
| 3:00 PM Supreme Heifer Show | |

Virginia’s Top 10

1. BROILERS
Approximately 966 farms in Virginia raise broilers, or chickens, for meat. These producers raised 38.4 million birds in 2012 and generated $640.35 million in cash receipts.

2. CATTLE AND CALVES
Cattle production in Virginia has increased from 1.57 million head in 2012. Farmers and ranchers earned $434.29 million in cash receipts in 2012.

3. MILK
Virginia dairy farmers produced $357.55 million worth of milk in 2012. This milk may be pasteurized and sold, or used to make other dairy products, such as butter and cheese.

4. TURKEY
The number of turkey producers in Virginia has increased since 2007. In 2012, producers raised turkeys on 663 farms, compared with 572 farms in 2007.

5. SOYBEAN
Virginia farmers produced 23.1 million bushels of soybean in 2013. At 1.41 billion pounds, the harvest is equal in weight to approximately 3,145 statues of Liberty.

6. GREENHOUSE AND NURSERY
Greenhouse and nursery products include plants and flowers grown in greenhouses and in fields. This diverse commodity brought $271.85 million in cash receipts in 2012.

7. CORN
Corn production in the United States in 2014 exceeded 14.1 billion bushels. Virginia produced 55.4 million of these bushels of corn, used primarily for feed.

8. HAY
U.S. producers harvested 58.3 million acres of hay in 2013. Virginia contributed 1.24 million acres and produced 3.08 million tons of this impressive nationwide yield.

9. WHEAT
Virginia wheat production in 2012 generated $109.39 million in cash receipts for the state’s economy. Half of the wheat grown in the United States is used domestically.

10. TOBACCO
A historically prolific tobacco-producing state, Virginia growers earned $108.8 million in cash receipts from tobacco in 2012.
FROM PAGE 56

SACRED COW

eating Hindus. “Politicians take a stand on the issue just as they take a stand on any issue of public concern,” says Joshipura. “A politician’s position on the matter would determine how much support he or she would get and from whom.”

When Narendra Modi, India’s current Prime Minister, ran for office in 2014 one platform he ran on was criticizing the ruling Congress Party-led government’s “Pink Revolution”—the nickname for India’s rising beef exports. Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) blamed the Congress Party for encouraging beef trade to woo India’s 180 million Muslims, Modi promised to curb the industry, a promise he hasn’t followed through with since he became Prime Minister last May.

To give Modi credit, putting the brakes on India’s beef industry isn’t as easy as it sounds. The lack of a comprehensive, uniform law regarding cow slaughter makes it easier for people to find ways to kill cows if they want to. It is estimated that almost two million cows are smuggled across a 2,400-mile poorly-patrolled border from India into Bangladesh every year. Inside India’s borders, people dodge the law by smuggling cows to states where there are little or no penalties for cow slaughter. Rajhans says that India has about 3,600 legal slaughterhouses and 30,000 illegal ones, many of which slaughter cows.

The lucrativeness of the beef business is attracting people—including Hindus—"I have seen Hindus in the cow-slaughtering business," Rajhans laments. "They are just not aware of their spiritual responsibilities, that they shouldn’t kill cows." Two business opportunities increased in the beef industry, Rajhans explains, is the money from exporting meat to oil-rich Gulf countries and the political power held by India’s Muslim population. The Congress Party is blamed by activists for its Muslim vote-mongering, as beef is a Muslim-dominated industry and beef sales doubled between 2007 and 2012 while the Congress Party was in power.

As if the issue of beef isn’t divided enough, there is even disagreement amongst those who oppose the beef industry. “Buffalo meat isn’t beef,” says Vinod Bansal, spokesperson for Vishva Hindu Parishad, a Hindu nationalist organization. “Only cow meat is beef and India doesn’t export that. And if a Hindu eats beef he or she cannot be called a Hindu.” Others like Mongia accept that a lot of Indian beef comes from cows, though it is difficult to say how much. “India’s ‘Pink Revolution’ may have happened mostly when the Congress was in power,” Mongia speculates. “But under Modi it has become worse.”

Beef exports have increased by 16 percent since Modi came into power. “It was just a ploy to get the vote,” says Rajhans. International anti-slaughter activists like PETA say that the BJP’s push for a uniform, nationwide, cow slaughter ban itself is contradictory: The BJP wants to turn India into a revered cow country, encouraging the growth of the dairy industry. With 76 million cows, India is now the world’s largest milk producer producing 140 million tons of milk a year. Most cows, past their milk-producing age, end up being turned to leather and beef rather than living out their years in cow shelters—a retirement home of sorts for cows.

As animal-rights groups decry the terrible conditions in slaughterhouses and religious groups mourn the sacrifice of cow slaughter—urban, well-traveled Indians are developing a taste for beef. Many upmarket, chic, restaurants offer steaks on their menu—and the people ordering them aren’t always Muslim or Christian. While some Hindus might argue that the beef comes from buffalo, those who have already developed a taste for beef might not want to believe that there’s cow in their burgers. Does not knowing where beef comes from absolve a Hindu of eating cow meat? Even if so, it’s still likely supporting a booming (and illegal) cow-slaughter industry.

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For Info Contact: Joe Meek
540-674-6080 H, 540-674-5311 O

THE VIRGINIA CATTLEMEN, MARCH 2015, PAGE 61
Dead Cow and Taters

Sitting here watching the snow come down
I decide my hunger won’t wait ‘til later
So I heat up a bowl of deliciousness
Old dead cow and taters

Now my Granny cooked for the farm crew
Just as long as her body was able
In addition to beans you could count on
Old dead cow and taters

When the day work comes at branding
They’re always seconds takers
‘Cause we’re always servin’ up
Old dead cow and taters

When it’s time to get called on
To work the range of my Maker
I’m ready ’cause St Peter’s got
Old dead cow and taters

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FROM PAGE 19

CALVING DIFFICULTY

calf with one word: progression. “We need to see progression from the time calving starts. And that really means when they’re off by themselves.”

Since calving difficulty is more often a problem in heifers, Spare suggests this timeline for progression: “When I see them off by themselves starting heavy labor, I want to see that water bag in about 30 to 45 minutes. Then in another 30 minutes, see the feet inside the water bag. Then in another 30 minutes, see the nose; and 30 minutes after that, we need to have a calf.”

Spare realizes that’s a finite timetable and cattle don’t pay attention to timetables, so it will vary. But his point is this: things need to keep moving at a reasonable clip. “I’d rather have people err on the side of caution,” he says, “so at any time when progression stops, intervene.”

Beyond watching the clock, there are some signs to look for that a cow and calf need some assistance, Grotelueschen says. “If the legs present normally and the calf’s nose is there, and the calf’s tongue or nose starts to swell, that’s an indication of delayed progression.”

What do you need to do? “We get that animal up and restrained properly in a clean area where we can safely assist her,” Spare says. By safe, he means the safety of the cow as well as the safety of the people.

That doesn’t mean a rope around her horns and snubbed up tight to a fence post. A squeeze chute will work, as will any sort of safe head catch with gates that open, in an area that’s cleanable. “It can be a dirt floor that we wipe clean and throw lime on. Or it can be concrete that we wash down between animals. But we need to have access to that animal to properly examine her.”

Dealing with a bad presentation

In the examination, you’re looking for a normal presentation, with the legs present normally and the calf’s nose is there. But we need to have access to that animal to properly examine her. Dealing with a bad presentation, with the
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CALVING DIFFICULTY

A breech presentation can be a challenging dystocia presentation. But with training, producers can learn how to manipulate the fetus to make delivery easier. A calf can be delivered when in a posterior presentation, but may require assistance. If you see hooves but no head, don’t assume the calf is coming backward. The head may be back. An examination will help determine the problem. All illustrations courtesy of Oklahoma State University.

“Many times, with an abnormal presentation, particularly with a heifer, it means the birth canal isn’t big enough for the calf,” Spare says. Using a calf puller in that situation only makes things worse. That’s a situation where having a good relationship with your vet is helpful. Food-animal vets are always willing to help their clients learn what they can do in the field, Spare says. And when your vet knows you and your abilities, it can save time and calves when assistance is needed. Spare has clients who, when they bring a dystocia case to the clinic, he knows they’ve done everything they can. “We don’t even try to pull the calf. We do a cesarean,” Spare says.

How to provide assistance
Begin by properly attaching obstetrical (OB) chains with handles and pulling manually, he says. “But it’s at this point we tell people, ‘Know your limitations and know your comfort level.’ There’s a short period of time where the survivability of both the cow and the calf is a lot better if the intervention hasn’t gone beyond their ability.”

And intervention not only helps assure a live calf, but a better cow. “We’re not only thinking about a live calf, but we’re thinking about a healthy, functioning animal that will breed back,” Spare says. So when do you call the vet? “When you’ve gone to the limit of your ability to safely assist that calf,” Spare says.

Related
Calving Tips For Diagnosing And Treating Cocidiosis In Calves
How To Successfully Foster Baby Calves
If pulling manually doesn’t work, a calf puller often comes into play. While that’s a common tool, use it carefully, Grotelueschen says. “I think we’ve learned over many years and with experience that we need to approach this as assisting the delivery, and knowing that many calf pullers can exert far too much tension than is safe for the calf and the dam,” he cautions. “So we need to exercise caution and not get ourselves into positions where we exert too much force.”

Spare agrees. “When you start to pull a calf with a calf puller, know that you’re merely assisting uterine contractions to move [the calf along] the birth canal. And if there comes a point where progress has stopped because the calf appears to be too big in comparison with the birth canal, that’s probably the time to stop [using the calf puller].”

And he cautions to limit yourself to calf pullers you can control manually. That means no pickups, four-wheelers and tractors.

Birthweight genetics are better
While Spare and the other veterinarians at the clinic are assisting in more deliveries this year than in past years, they’re doing fewer cesareans. “We do 10% of the cesareans on beef cattle today than we did 25 years ago,” he says. He chalks that up to better genetics. “You can have growth genetics using top 10% birthweight bulls,” he says.

If you’re experiencing a high rate of calving difficulty, take a hard look at your bulls. With the genetic choices available today, Spare believes the accepted norm for dystocia incidence in beef heifers should be no more than 5%.

“Today, with the labor issues we have, more than ever, the last thing you need to do is be assisting a cow.” While you’ll never totally eliminate dystocia, using bulls in the top 10% of their breed for calving ease as heifer bulls will keep you between the guardrails, he says.

For clients who do that, Spare says their biggest challenge becomes helping the heifers be good mamas. And that’s a good challenge to have.
Checked OUT

By Lisa M. Keefe, The Meating Place

Talks over how to over haul the beef checkoff have fallen apart, USDA has dropped its proposal for a parallel program, and funds are rapidly dwindling. Now what?

Certainly not USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack: “I don’t want to do that,” a testy Vilsack told the National Association of Farm Broadcasters in Kansas City, Mo., in November. “There’s a simple solution to this: It’s for the beef guys to get in a room and figure out how to do it with one checkoff.”

In 2015, the beef industry will take another run at fixing the existing program, with an eye toward a long-overdue increase in the per-head assessment, most likely to $2 from the current $1. Three years after the Beef Checkoff Enhancement Working Group was created to do just that, the group — and by extension, the industry — is back where it started: same challenge, same players, same issues.

“They’ve been talking about this for three years,” Vilsack said in November. “Seriously, does that make sense? When everyone agrees that we need more money? I mean, it’s not like you’re negotiating war and peace here.”

Time’s Up

War and peace, no, but the issues are about money and people’s livelihoods, so a few raised voices are to be expected. The problem is, three years after 11 organizations representing ranchers and farmers convened to hammer out an overhaul for the program, the issue has hit a hard deadline.

Thirty years after the beef checkoff was created in the 1985 farm bill, the shrinking cattle herd and the eroding effects of inflation have rendered it a shadow of its former self; its national budget, $39 million for fiscal 2015, compares with $42.3 million five years earlier — and $52.5 million in fiscal 2005. (State-level checkoff organizations get an equal amount distributed amongst them.) At the same time, its mission of research, marketing and promotion of beef is aimed at an increasingly fragmented and fractious consumer market.

“The dynamic of the cowherd has changed dramatically: There are fewer players with fewer cattle and they’re looking for more marketing niches and opportunities,” notes Washington, D.C., lobbyist Chandler Keys, who worked for National Cattlemen’s Association (NCBA predecessor organization) when the checkoff was created. “Twenty years ago I wouldn’t have said that we would have this kind of diversity in beef production.”

“I think [the beef checkoff program] does need to be reviewed — that should be an ongoing process — but I think they’ve done as much as they can without statutory changes,” says North American Meat Institute CEO Barry Carpenter, who was working for USDA in 1985.

The checkoff assessment needs to be increased; or that there is widespread agreement. The “how” is what has jammed up the works, especially considering that the existing $1-per-head assessment was writ...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
Data from the Spring 2012 Across-Breed EPD Genetic Trends presented at the Beef Improvement Federation documents Charolais and Charolais-influenced genetics lead all major breeds compared for both weaning and yearling weights. In fact, Charolais cattle were proven to excel at adding more pounds at weaning and yearling. Every beef producer knows profitability starts with more pounds. More pounds. More profits. Simple math.

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We would like to invite anyone interested in becoming a member of our association to call one of the officers listed above.

If you are a member of our association or other Charolais breeder and would like to enter cattle in our spring sale please contact our sales manager, Dennis Adams, at outfrontcattle@gmail.com cell 979-229-4472. Mr. Adams did not send out entry forms this year. He said that you can locate a form on his website at www.outfrontcattle.com. Get your entries in soon as Mr. Adams will be coming through Virginia and surrounding areas after February 15th to screen your cattle. You may also contact Bill Thompson at MountainMeadows@HighlandComputers.com 540-968-1987.

Just a reminder that it is a new year and it is time to pay the 2015 dues if you have not already done so. Dues may be sent to our Treasurer, Walt Winkler, listed on this page. If you would like a membership form, please contact Bill Thompson (noted above).

All members of the Virginia Charolais Association are entitled to join all the sales we sponsor.
FROM PAGE 23
CHECKED OUT

that have been mentioned. Observers agree that the problems the checkoff faces now. “The more policy battles that are out there, the more people go back and stoke this fire (of distrust) and people think that something is not right,” Carper says.

Abrupt Halt

In September, even as some working group participants said consensus on way forward was close at hand, NFU quit the process. In a news release announcing its withdrawal, NFU laid out several prerequisites for its support of a checkoff revamp, including that the checkoff be refundable, that the program be subject to a regular referendum on its continuation, and other provisions that would essentially diminish NCBA’s role in the process.

The NFU’s stance won the support of fellow working group participant, the U.S. Cattlemen’s Association. Meeting the NFU’s demands, however, would have been a tall order.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

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CHECKED OUT

mean changes in the law.

“The [Cattlemen’s Beef Board] has minimal say over what they can change. They could do continuous improvement (to the program) if they weren’t hamstringed by the statute (that created the checkoff in 1985). It’s very prescriptive,” Carpenter notes.

Even as the new Congress convenes in 2015, its members face a host of higher stakes issues, such as immigration reform and Congress’s continued efforts to repeal Obamacare.

With the next presidential election cycle due in 2016, moreover, a matter such as legislative beef checkoff reform wouldn’t be expected to garner much support.

On Second Thought

Vilsack dropped his proposal for a second checkoff after Congress approved an omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal 2015 that denied the agency the funds to create it.

“We only proposed the second checkoff... to get folks to understand what was at stake, so we will see what the industry does from here,” Vilsack said in a mid-December interview with DTN/The Progressive Farmer.

“It’s unfortunate that we have no mechanism as we speak to obtain additional resources in the beef checkoff when everyone in the industry knows we have to do more ...”

Square One

The loss of a parallel checkoff proposal as a tool to bring the parties to heel means the initiative is back in the hands of the working group, which will meet with or without the NFU.

“We greatly appreciate Vilsack’s action, allowing the industry stakeholders to continue working together ...,” said NCBA President Bob McCann in a statement. “All of us involved in this process [are] mindful of the tremendous producer support of the Checkoff, and we will continue to work with the ... Working Group and our members to enhance the program.”

Perhaps with one ma-
Export value for both U.S. beef and pork reached new heights in 2014, posting double-digit gains over the previous year’s totals, according to statistics released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). Beef export value was $7.13 billion – an increase of 16 percent (and nearly $1 billion) over the previous record set in 2013. Export volume was just under 1.2 million metric tons, which was short of the 2011 record, but up 2 percent year-over-year. Pork export value totaled $6.67 billion, an increase of 10 percent year-over-year, breaking the 2012 record by 6 percent. Pork export volume increased 2 percent to 2.18 million mt. The volume record is 2.62 million metric tons, set in 2012.

Exports overcame significant challenges to reach these milestones, including market access restrictions in Russia and China, an appreciating U.S. dollar and, most recently, shipping difficulties related to a labor dispute in the West Coast ports. In December, beef export volume slipped 2 percent year-over-year to 100,270 metric tons, though value still increased 17 percent to $643.2 million. December pork export volume was down 5 percent to 183,498 metric tons, but value still achieved a slight increase to $541.3 million.

“2014 was an outstanding year for red meat exports, but headwinds continued to mount late in the year,” said USMEF President and CEO Philip Seng. “The West Coast port congestion is extremely troubling, because the delays faced by exporters in December have become even more severe in 2015. If this dispute is not resolved soon, the meat industry will have to win back long-term customers who still want our product, but have no choice but to seek alternative suppliers.” The situation is especially critical because Asian markets take a large volume of chilled U.S. beef and pork, valued at more than $2 billion in 2014. The strength in international demand for U.S. red meat was showcased in 2014, as customers paid record prices for U.S. beef and pork while still purchasing larger volumes. This is especially noteworthy because U.S. pork prices were higher than EU prices for most of the year, and U.S. cattle prices were significantly higher than prices in Australia and all other major beef-exporting countries, USMEF noted.
Simmental SimSensation Sale

Plans are underway for the 2015 Simmental SimSensation sale at Virginia Beef Expo on April 17th. If you are interested in consigning Simmental or Sim-influenced cattle, please contact sale manager Doug Parke of DP Sales at 859-987-5758. We’re looking forward to a good sale and would like to see your cattle as part of our sale offering.

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Increase In U.S. Packing Capacity Is Good News For The Beef Business

By Burt Rutherford
Beef Magazine

Obviously, packers expect to have more cattle around them in the coming years, as evidenced by regional increases in plant capacity. USDA’s Cattle Inventory report the end of January verified what just about everyone in the beef business strongly suspects—the cattle herd is on the rebound. We saw strong indications all last year, with fewer heifer placements in feedyards and a sharp reduction in cull cow slaughter. That’s good news for the cattle and beef complex, because it means we’ll eventually increase cattle numbers to a point where we won’t abuse our consumers quite so much when they pay for the product we produce. But for the short term at least, it might not be such good news for packers, because it means that a very short supply of cattle will be even smaller before it eventually gets bigger.

That makes recent developments in both the Midwest and the Northwest all the more interesting, and all the more positive for producers not just in those regions, but nationwide. In the Midwest, two packing plants will soon be online. Iowa Premium Beef in Tama, Iowa, has resurrected an existing facility and plans to process up to 1,100 head per day. Meanwhile, LimeSprings Beef in Lime Springs, Iowa, is set to fire up as well. It’s much smaller, aiming to process about 540 head per week, with the meat targeted at high-end restaurants and butcher shops in nearby cities. And then there’s the Northwest, with what looks like a brewing battle between two giants in the beef business.

In early January, J.R. Simplot Company in Boise, Idaho, announced a $100 million joint venture with Caviness Beef Packers, based in the Texas Panhandle, to build a new beef plant near Kuna, Idaho. Slated to begin operating in fall 2016, the plant will primarily process cull beef and dairy cows from the Intermountain West. Then JBS announced a $75 million project to expand the capacity of its Hyrum, Utah, beef plant. According to JBS, the plant harvests around 500,000 head per year and the expansion will increase its capacity by around 400 head per day. The expansion will, among other things, include a new ground beef facility, which clearly targets the cull cow market. JBS anticipates the expanded facility will be operational in spring 2016. While there may very well be more at play here than we know, given that the announcements came so close together, its clearly good news for western ranchers and dairy producers. And the news is equally as good for Midwestern cattle feeders, that’s not to say that all is rosy in the beef packing sector, as plant closings the past few years indicate. A proposed plant in South Dakota never came to fruition for a variety of reasons. And other regions of the country, such as the Southern Plains and Southwest, continue to battle drought. That drought will continue to be a major factor in those regions’ ability to keep up with the Midwest, the Northern Plains and the Northwest in cattle numbers. But the indications are clear. Packers expect to have more cattle around them in the coming years and the battle cries have been lifted to see who will compete for those cattle. And that’s good news all the way around for cattle producers.
Processed U.S. Beef Products Now Eligible For Japan Market

By Joe Schuele, USMEF

The leading market for U.S. beef exports is now accepting a wider range of products. On Jan. 23, Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare approved the import of processed beef products from the U.S. As with all U.S. beef products destined for Japan, processed items must also be derived from cattle less than 30 months of age and come from processing facilities operating under an approved export verification program for Japan.

It’s been two years since the eligible cattle age limit for U.S. beef entering Japan was increased from 21 months to 30 months. Japan quickly reclaimed its position as the U.S. beef industry’s No. 1 export market with exports in 2013 reaching 234,615 metric tons valued at nearly $1.4 billion. Demand for U.S. beef continued to grow last year, with exports (through November) up another 3% in volume and 13% in value. U.S. market share also made impressive gains during this time, increasing from 32% in 2012 to 43% last year. Australia is still Japan’s leading beef supplier, but its market share fell from 55% in 2012 to 47% in 2014.

The addition of processed beef products creates exciting opportunities for exporters serving Japan, according to Philip Seng, president and CEO of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). He notes that one of the most promising venues for U.S. processed beef items is Japan’s enormous convenience store sector.

“This sector is aggressively targeted by food suppliers across the globe, and with good reason,” Seng explains. “There are five major convenience store chains in Japan operating a total of about 55,000 outlets, making up a $90 billion industry. There are great opportunities for packaged convenience items, but also major convenience entries that we can serve as a replacement for home meals.”

Meat processors in Japan already use U.S. raw materials to produce processed beef items, and Seng says this practice will certainly continue. But having the ability to export finished processed products allows U.S. exporters to choose product options that best meet their customers’ needs.

“When we look at products such as beef jerky, brats, sausages, pastrami and salami – these are not only versatile and convenient, they are also an important driver in terms of added value,” Seng says. “When we export these items, we are utilizing U.S. seasonings, spices and other ingredients, not to mention the use of U.S. labor, equipment and packaging. These are very positive contributions to the American food industry and to the overall economy.”

He adds that because of the size of the Japanese market, U.S. companies are not limited to simply exporting product lines already on the market. Japanese buyers have a long history of collaborating with U.S. suppliers to develop products and concepts that specifically appeal to their customers.

“Photo highlights from Cattle Industry Convention Cattle producers from across the country are gathered in San Antonio, Texas, for the annual Convention & Trade Show. Browse photo highlights here.”

Duties on processed beef vary by product, ranging from 10% to 50%. Within a tariff rate quota, imports from Australia will now face tariffs ranging from 8% to 36%. Last year Japan imported $29.4 million in processed beef from Australia.

“There is a difficult business climate in Japan right now, especially with the U.S. dollar strengthening significantly against both the Japanese yen and the Australian dollar,” Seng says. “So for us to continue to be successful in reclaiming market share in Japan, we need the ability to ship a wide range of items. Processed beef is an important addition to our product mix.”
The 1-2-3’s Of Testing For BVD

By Jill J. Dunkel

“Prevention of Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) virus must focus on preventing the creation of persistently infected (PI) calves from a herd. Control of BVD in a herd must focus on finding and removing PI cattle.”

That was the word from the Academy of Veterinary Consultants in a technical brief in 2006. Since then, producers around the country are implementing BVD testing in cow herds, stocker cattle and feed yard animals. For those who are new to BVD testing, the process is not difficult if a few important steps are followed.

1. Find a reliable lab.
“Talk to the lab about the samples and what they need to run the test,” suggests Bill Hessman, DVM, with Central States Testing. “If you don’t know much about BVD testing, that’s the best place to start. Different types of tests can identify PI animals in a herd, and each test works differently. Some are more delicate than others, some require blood and some require ear notches. Recent vaccinations can impact certain tests, so finding out from the lab exactly what it needs to produce the most accurate result is important. Most labs will send everything needed to test, including tubes for each sample and instructions.

2. Obtain a sample.
For the Antigen Capture ELISA test (ACE test) used at Central States Testing, a simple ear notch provides enough tissue for PI testing. Hessman suggests disinfecting the ear notcher (as well as other processing equipment like deworming wands, ear taggers, etc.) by dipping the equipment in a bucket of Nolvasan or similar disinfectant.

“You don’t want to transmit any disease process from one animal to the

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The squeeze on U.S. farmers is getting worse as low crop prices and rising costs erode incomes that not long ago were the highest ever.

Illinois grower Jason Lay said he will buy 30 percent less fertilizer for his 2,500 acres of corn and soybeans, and 7 percent fewer seeds for spring planting. After his most profitable year ever in 2012, Lay said he upgraded his combine, tractor, sprayer and planter. With crop futures now near five-year lows, he has no plans to buy any new equipment.

“You spend when times are prosperous so you don’t need to when they’re not,” Lay, 41, said by telephone from outside Bloomington, Illinois. “That’s how you make it through.” He estimates his profit is down by a quarter from its peak.

Farm income in the U.S., the world’s top agricultural producer and exporter, is poised to drop for a third straight year in 2015. While raising livestock remains profitable, as tight meat supplies keep prices high, growers of corn, soybeans and wheat saw crop and land values fall faster than many of their costs. That’s pinching sales for equipment maker Deere & Co. and seed and chemical producers including DuPont Co.

“The budget picture for corn and soybeans is as negative as we’ve seen in a long time,” said Brent Gloy, an agricultural economist at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. “You will see some farmers not able to cover their production costs.”

USDA Forecast

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expected to report today at 11 a.m. in Washington, probably will forecast 2015 net-cash income from all farm activity at below $100 billion, which would be the lowest since 2010, Gloy said.

Last year, cash income dropped 17.5 percent to $108.2 billion, as expenses jumped to a record $370 billion and crop receipts tumbled 11.5 percent, USDA data show. Even a 14 percent increase in livestock receipts, which topped crop revenue for the first time in eight years, wasn’t enough to prevent a 2014 decline in overall farm profit.

The agriculture industry has boomed over the past decade as record land and crop prices boosted sales of seed and farm equipment. Net cash income touched a record $137.1 billion in 2012. Land values have kept rising, up 8.1 percent last year to an all-time high of $2,950 an acre, while beef and pork prices were the highest ever.

Crop Slump

Record-high crop prices in 2012 helped fuel a surge in global output, creating a surplus that sent futures tumbling. Corn traded at $3.9 a bushel by 2:40 p.m. Seoul time on the Chicago Board of Trade, down 54 percent from a record in August 2012, and soybeans were at $9.78 a bushel, down 45 percent from their all-time high.

Bumper crops weren’t enough to prevent crop receipts last year from dropping to $193.5 billion, the lowest since 2010, USDA data show. At the same time, seed costs rose 2.7 percent and rents paid by farmers on land they didn’t own rose 2.9 percent. That’s eroding Farm Belt income that the USDA says insulated rural areas from the worst of the recession that lasted from the end of 2007 to mid-2009.

Moline, Illinois-based Deere, the largest manufacturer of agricultural machinery, said last month it will lay off 910 factory workers as profits fall for a second straight year. Monsanto Co., the world’s top seed seller, said last month there will be fewer U.S. corn acres planted this year, which will be a drag on the St. Louis-base company’s profit.

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BVD TESTING

next,” says Hessman. “It’s not so much for the quality of the test sample, but to prevent transmission of viruses from one animal to the next. Notching without disinfecting does not really affect the antigen capture ELISA test, but it can interfere with PCR testing. Plus, disinfecting is good animal husbandry.”

3. Preserve the samples until shipment. Once the sample is in the vial, either refrigerate or freeze it. Hessman says samples can be safely kept in a refrigerator for four to five days. However, freezing is recommended if samples are held more than a week.

4. Submit the appropriate paperwork and use a well-insulated container. The lab needs to know what they are getting, who to contact, etc., says Hessman. Surprisingly, many samples are received with no basic information.

Samples should be placed in a well-insulated container with cold packs. “The container is often overlooked. People put a freezer pack in a cardboard box and think it will be okay. By the time we get the samples, the freezer pack is 95 degrees. It can really get hot in the back of a UPS truck,” he says.

5. Overnight the shipment. “The biggest problem we see in testing is tissue quality,” Hessman says. “The results and accuracy are dependent on the samples we receive. Heat can be an issue, especially in the summer. We need quality tissue to have accurate results.” In the winter and in some parts of the country, heat is not as big a problem.

Overnighting samples also speeds up the entire process. Once the samples are received, results can be available within 24 hours, depending on the type of test.

6. Know which animals to test. Hessman says it’s important for cow-calf producers to realize they don’t have to test every single heifer on their place to determine if they have a problem within their herd.

“The most economical way is to ear notch the calf. If the calf is negative, its dam is negative. So just test all the calves, any cow that did not produce a calf and the bulls,” he recommends.

BVD is known to cause abortion, thus the importance of testing barren cows. Bulls can also transmit the disease, but generally there is a conception issue if a bull or cow are infected, Hessman states. If a positive calf is detected, Hessman recommends retesting the calf, as well as its dam.

Stockers and feed yard operations should test every animal in order to eliminate any PI calves that could infect a pen of cattle.

7. Follow good biosecurity. Biosecurity is most important in trying to retain a clean herd, Hessman states. “If you purchase additions, quarantine them until they are tested. Another animal producers often forget is the replacement heifer. If you’ve tested and get 100% negative results, you follow good biosecurity and utilize good herd health management, those are the best things you can do to minimize BVD being introduced into your herd.”
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