

Pine Ridge Ranch



Thoughts Regarding the U.S. Beef Industry How to Reach More Consumers

Let's visit about beef and the beef consumer. The beef industry must produce healthy, enjoyable and cost efficient beef products for the customer. Consumer tests show that the most important factor is flavor. The primary source of flavor is intramuscular fat. An additional factor is juiciness, also created by intramuscular fat.

Beef needs intramuscular fat to obtain an enjoyable meal. However, the leading consumer complaint is lack of tenderness. Tenderness has only a 5% correlation to intramuscular fat. The management of beef production is most important in achieving tenderness, although genetics are very, very important. Management systems that improve tenderness include: harvesting calves and feeding them at an early age, the feedlot climate, type of forage fed, aging the beef carcass after harvest, and electro stimulation.

Basically, connective muscle tissue causes toughness and management systems may be utilized to weaken the connective tissue. One important management tool is to use photo sensors in the production line. *Beef that is sensed to be tough should never reach the consumer as whole meat.*

Genetics and Tenderness. The seed stock producer is a most important element in developing tender beef. Cattle genetics can help determine tenderness. DNA testing of breeding stock has vastly improved in recent years. Thus, seed stock breeders are able to provide tender beef through ***predictive science***. In addition, seed stock breeders may harvest their steers to obtain quality grades and shear tests to study tenderness. Tenderness is somewhat heritable. So breeders should test, measure and use the genetics with the most tender beef. They should test, measure, test and use the good ones.

How to Reach More Consumers Worldwide?

Several problems exist in producing quality, tender beef that is acceptable worldwide. About 75% of the potential domestic and export markets for U.S. beef either will not consume, or limit beef consumption due to generally negative analysis/perceptions of growth promotants. Growth promotants are known to reduce the quality grade for beef and also make beef less tender. Promotants are marketed for use to reduce the cost of production and provide a higher percentage of muscle in each carcass. Growth promotants are efficient but basically perceived as a detriment to the successful marketing of beef.

Continued

Pine Ridge Ranch



...Reaching Consumers Worldwide

Secondly, USDA, university medical experts and health organizations have stated that red meat contains an unhealthy fat, basically, a 30-year message is that beef is unhealthy. Despite the medical factor, the beef industry continues to strive to produce high fat products, while advertising the actual and wonderful benefits of lean beef. USDA has currently approved six cuts as lean and all of these cuts are Select beef – never Choice or Prime.

A Suggested Solution

The U.S. beef industry should harvest approximately 25% of its production, low to mid-Choice and very tender beef *without* the use growth promotants. This product would be a flavorful domestic and export product. *(Congratulations to Nolan Ryan's tender aged beef and Laura's Lean that address both production management and genetic testing to produce, growth promotant free, tender, Select beef).*

The beef industry produces a consumer product. BEEF IMPROVEMENT should concentrate on additional tenderness and reduced saturated fat for a more healthy meal – thus, an improvement for the consumer.

In warm climates, the primary suggestion is to concentrate on Brahman cross livestock. Brahman cross cattle tend to have less marbling with less tenderness. Eliminating growth promotants from these high heterosis growth cattle should increase quality grades about 1/2 to 2/3 of a quality grade level. The additional income from improving the quality grade should help offset the opportunity loss of not using growth promotants. The hot weather beef producer would furnish the customer higher quality and a more tender beef.

Regarding profits, increased demand and the improvement in both quality grade and tenderness should offset the anticipated reduction in carcass growth. And it would provide beef that is acceptable to a new large group of domestic and international consumers.

Implementation of this suggestion still leaves 75% of U.S. beef production to benefit from growth promotants. It would still maintain a broad production climate of freedom for producers and consumers.

And more customers could and would enjoy U.S. beef.

- Article by Bill Travis