

Angus Productions Inc.'s coverage of the



Producer Education Committee

by **Brooke Byrd**

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DENVER, CO (Feb. 3, 2006) — During the Producer Education Committee, Bill Mies gave a review of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program and its development through the years. In 1986, the Beef Safety Task Force was created to address the problem of chemical and pharmaceutical residues in carcasses. At that time, 4% of beef samples had some kind of residue. In 1988, that number fell to 0%, he said, and it has stayed there. Because of other quality problems, the group became the Beef Quality Assurance Advisory Board.

In 1990, the biggest problem with carcass quality was injection-site lesions. At that time, 22.3% of “top butts” had lesions. Due to BQA efforts, that number quickly dropped to 2.5% as producers switched to giving injections in the neck.

As a result, Mies said, producers realized the industry needed to audit itself, and the board began a push for producer education regarding injection-site lesions. The board obtained funds from the beef checkoff and, in 1991, the first beef quality audit was performed.

“We solved a problem, and we moved on to the next,” Mies said.

It was decided that national beef quality assurance systems needed to be decided on a state-by-state basis, coordinated on the national level. Feedlot states were the first to take part, followed by cow-calf states. State coordinators met to share materials and techniques. In 1989, only three states had BQA programs. In 2006, Mies said, only three states *don't* have BQA programs.

Mies said the BQA has produced two important accomplishments. Beef producers became “quality conscious,” he said. They weren't forced to do it; “they did it because it made a quality product.”

Secondly, a network of 40-plus state coordinators was created for producers to tap into. Now, he says, there are about 45,000 BQA-certified producers and other affiliates across the country. “Producer education is the heart of what BQA is all about,” he explained.

Information dissemination

Later in the meeting, Bonnie Long from Bell Ranch in New Mexico, introduced a new white paper written by Tom Field, Colorado State University (CSU); Henry Gardiner, Gardiner Angus Ranch; Ron Lemenager, Purdue

University; Long; and Heidi Herring-Suttee, CSU.

The centerpiece of the project, she said, is the finding that the gap between knowledge and adoption is widening. The paper addresses the central question of whether the current state of information dissemination is adequate to producers' information needs.

Since the Beef Industry Long-Range plan includes the need to "promote information accessibility," she said information dissemination methods must be improved to "birth a knowledge society."

"As America is changing, as agriculture is changing ...

information changes, too," she said. In a study, she said, most people thought information was most credible when paid for (for example, from a veterinarian). "Those things we treasure," she said, "will not survive the brokering of information."

Local knowledge and grassroots innovations get ignored by those whose only aim is to solve a problem, she noted. Producers themselves "need to direct production agriculture research," she said.

Finally, Long emphasized the need for a systems-based approach to interpreting and applying information.



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