

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show

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Sale Barn Savvy

Take a proactive approach to selling at the sale barn.

by **Troy Smith**

NASHVILLE, TENN. (Jan. 31, 2007) — During this well-attended Cattlemen's College session, members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's (NCBA's) Livestock Marketing Council addressed ways that auction markets can help producers add value to consigned cattle. Featured speakers included Tod Fleming of the Wisconsin-based Equity Cooperative Sales Association, Jennifer Houston of East Tennessee Livestock Center, and Mark Harmon of Missouri's Joplin Regional Stockyards.

Fleming said his firm serves a four-state area through its 12 auction markets in Wisconsin and Iowa, offering a variety of specialty auctions featuring feeder cattle, cattle for harvest, seedstock or dairy cattle. Also provided are in-house commodity marketing and risk-management services. Fleming said the future will see greater emphasis on sales of age- and source-verified cattle, plus programs to educate producers regarding buyer preferences and marketing strategies.

Jennifer Houston said her family's Sweetwater, Tenn., market conducts weekly auctions plus 21 special sales annually. Since

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— **Mark Harmon**

1983, video sales have taken place in conjunction with weekly and special sales. In collaboration with the Smoky Mountain Feeder Calf Association and the University of Tennessee, the East Tennessee Livestock Center created its grade feeder-calf sales, offering uniform lots of commingled calves that were raised according to a standardized protocol.

“Producers are learning that marketing starts at the farm with genetics, nutrition and health programs,” Houston said. “Their practices add value, making their cattle worth more to the next owner.”

Mark Harmon said Joplin Regional Stockyards markets in excess of 450,000 head annually, including commingled calves sorted for sex, weight and hip height.

“We started our program when we realized that our fall sales were weak because buyers were going to northern and northwestern sources for calves backed by good health programs,” Harmon explained. “Urging our consignors to implement preconditioning programs and the buyers came. Now buyers are wanting age and source verification, so we're helping our producers provide what the buyers want.”

Fleming, Houston and Harmon presented their comments Jan. 31 during the Cattlemen's College® session “MA201: Sale Barn Selling: Taking a Proactive Approach” at the 2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and NCBA Trade Show in Nashville. The Cattlemen's College is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health. PowerPoint presentations for the session are posted to the www.4cattlemen.com newsroom. Audio files will be available within two weeks of the conference.



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