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# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY GENETICS: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE SOUTHERN STYLE

## A Cattle Marketer's Perspective

by Micky Wilson



Mark Harmon of Joplin Regional Stockyards discussed how producers could help satisfy the 21st century consumer through age, source and process verification.

CHOCTAW, MISS. (April 19, 2006) — Mark Harmon, Joplin Regional Stockyards marketing director, gave a marketer's perspective on how to satisfy the 21st century beef consumer during the opening general session of the 2006 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) annual meeting. The April 19 session was themed "Where do I, as a cow-calf producer, fit in retail and consumer targets?"

With an average herd size of less than 50 head, Harmon's customers seek out a place that can help them effectively market their cattle and keep up with constant change in the industry.

"Agriculture's future will be driven by fast change in technology," Harmon said. "You've got to help people that want to help themselves."

Looking down the road, Harmon said he urges his customers to keep records to document management and health programs so cattle can be age-, source- and process-verified. This will help enhance profits for the entire beef production chain. Joplin Regional Stockyards offers cattlemen an economic incentive for the additional management by hosting source-specific sales. He urges producers to remember that

"it's not always the price per pound, it's the amount of the check."

Going into more detail, Harmon said, "verification is the means to provide claim to a product, but also a method of exchanging information with the ability to trace the product in the production distribution system to the end user."

When producers hear about verification, often the first thing to come to mind is identification.

"EID and animal identification is not a problem, but an opportunity," Harmon stated. "Animal ID is not traceability; ID merely enables traceability."

Harmon said while much of the value of the beef industry is currently concentrated in the cow-calf sector, he looks for this trend to shift as the industry nears the lower end of the cattle cycle. He urges cattlemen to incorporate management practices that improve communication, products and marketing.

"Management practices along with genetic choices ... will be the backbone of the calf crops sold in the future," Harmon said. "Those who produce and market beef should realize the end product they sell is simply not meat. It's taste, tenderness, safety and wholesomeness."

**"You've got to help people that want to help themselves."  
— Mark Harmon**