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

# NBQA Reveals What's Right, Wrong

by *Shauna Rose Hermel*



Oklahoma State University's Brad Morgan presented preliminary results of the 2005 NBQA.

CHOCTAW, MISS. (April 19, 2006) — The National Beef Quality Audit (NBQA) serves as a grade card to benchmark, trait by trait, how well the industry is doing in meeting consumer demand for quality and value. Funded by the dollar-per-head beef checkoff, the third audit is under way.

Oklahoma State University's Brad Morgan presented a preliminary report during the opening general session of the 2006 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) annual meeting in Choctaw, Miss. The results are preliminary, as phase II of the study — which includes additional face-to-face interviews, in-plant audits and economic assessments — is still under way. Final results are expected to be released in Fall 2006.

### NBQA results

By surveying different sectors of the industry, the NBQA provides insight as to what each sector sees as the most challenging obstacles to beef quality. Morgan summarized the varying viewpoints of the production, packer, restaurateur/supermarket and government sectors. For detailed lists, see the proceedings.

The audit also includes summaries of actual industry statistics and a strategy workshop. At the workshop, industry representatives offered suggestions re-

garding strategies, tactics and goals for reducing quality defects and nonconformities. They ultimately identified the industry's top 10 quality challenges as:

1. lack of traceability/individual animal ID/source & age verification/chronological age;
2. low overall uniformity of cattle, carcasses and cuts;
3. need for implementation of instrument grading;
4. inappropriate market signals;
5. segmentation of groups within the beef industry;
5. carcass and cut weights that are too heavy;
7. yield grades that are too high/low cutability;
8. inappropriate ribeye size (too small and too large);
9. reduced quality grade and tenderness due to the use of implants; and
10. insufficient marbling.

On the other hand, the 2005 audit also pointed out several things the industry is doing right. Among them are developing "story" beef, reducing *E. coli* O157:H7, merchandising quick-to-prepare beef, merchandising new beef value cuts, reducing excess fat cover at the end-user level, developing brands, increasing beef demand and making the industry profitable. 