2007 Beef Improvement Federation
39th Annual Meeting

Coverage by Angus Productions Inc

www.bifconference.com

Beef Improvement Federation
1967 - 2007
40 Years of Innovation
June 6-9, 2007
Ft. Collins, Colorado

Common Currency

by ***Eric Grant***

FORT COLLINS, COLO. (June 8, 2007) — While advancements in DNA technology are rapidly changing the beef production landscape, there are also monumental challenges in ensuring the technology complements existing genetic evaluations, is useful by both producers and researchers, and can be validated through coordinated efforts of DNA companies, breed associations, researchers and government.

"Just like the European Union has tried to make business more efficient with a common currency, we need to make beef cattle selection more efficient by having a common currency," said Mike Tess of Montana State University. Tess made his comments during Friday's Emerging Technologies Committee meeting at the 2007 Beef Improvement Federation BIF annual conference in Fort Collins, Colo.

The industry's primary goal should be the development of DNA tools that can more efficiently produce genetic change, especially when coupled with genetic evaluations to produce EPDs, he continued.

Researcher advocates greater coordination when it comes to DNA and genetic evaluation.

"We need to ask for DNA technologies that can achieve genetic change at a more rapid speed, lower cost, with more control and more choices," he said. "And somehow, this technology needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the future. It's possible that we could build a system with the info we have today that five years from now it could be unusable because the tech is changing so quickly."

Tess suggested the industry take a team approach toward "common currency" that includes a structured effort by genomic companies; breed associations; the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); state experiment stations; and the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC), an organization of university animal breeding researchers.

This system would need to catalog existing data that's already collected and to store this information in a centralized database. The system would also need capabilities to validate and assess information compiled by DNA research to ensure DNA markers actually have effects on production qualities. A third component would be educating the industry — from researchers to producers — about the use of DNA technology and coupling of it with existing genetic evaluation technologies.

"This is not rocket science," Tess said, "but we need a single estimate of breeding value that's based on all the information we have available — DNA scores, pedigrees and phenotypic. And we need a single measure of accuracy that goes with it. That will give us higher accuracies for breeding values of animals much earlier in life."

► **"We need a single estimate of breeding value that's based on all the information we have available — DNA scores, pedigrees and phenotypic," Montana State University's Mike Tess told the Emerging Technologies Committee.**

Look for the PowerPoint and audio file for this presentation in the newsroom.