

2007 Beef Improvement Federation 39th Annual Meeting

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Are Customers the Focus?

Panel addresses question: Does the seedstock industry focus on the needs of commercial cow-calf producers?

Story & photo by **Troy Smith**

FORT COLLINS, COLO. (June 7, 2007) — “Successful purebred breeders have always focused on the needs of commercial producers, but the needs of commercial cattlemen have changed over time,” said Ashland, Kan., seedstock breeder Mark Gardiner, leading off Wednesday morning’s roundtable.

For years, Gardiner said, his customers sought maternal ability along with growth. Maternal ability remains important, but more recent concerns include moderating cow size, improved efficiency and increased end-product value. Customers seek genetics that better enable the capture of added value through value-based marketing programs. They also expect more service after the sale, so Gardiner increasingly wears the hat of a customer-service representative.

Buyers expect bulls to be guaranteed and increasingly rely on seedstock suppliers for help in marketing cattle. By sponsoring feeder calf and replacement heifer sales, offering buy-back programs and fostering retained ownership arrangements with feedlots, many seedstock suppliers are helping their customers be more profitable, Gardiner explained.

According to seedstock producer Steve Radakovich, Earlham, Iowa, the seedstock industry has usually given the commercial industry what it wanted — often in excess. However, what producers want may not be what they really need.

“The one big injustice of the seedstock industry is evaluating and supplying over-managed, overfed, fossil-fuel-dependent



► Thursday afternoon, a panel of producers discussed how seedstock providers are addressing the needs of commercial cow-calf producers. Panelists included (from left) Steve Radakovich, Earlham, Iowa; Mike Kasten, Millersville, Mo.; Mark Gardiner, Ashland, Kan.; and Chip Ramsey, Ashby, Neb.

bulls to cow-calf producers forced to survive on solar energy and low-cost production,” Radakovich stated.

Commercial producer Mike Kasten, Millersville, Mo., said he believes seedstock suppliers have strived to produce high-quality genetics that fit varying environments and serve the wants of beef consumers. The latest challenge they face is helping their commercial customers adapt genetics to production systems that must change due to higher feed costs.

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“We need accurate whole-herd reporting in the seedstock industry, accurate across-breed EPDs and accurate estimates of heterosis benefits.”
— Chip Ramsey, Rex Ranch



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“The commercial cow-calf producer needs the truth,” said Chip Ramsey of the Rex Ranch, Ashby, Neb. “We need accurate whole-herd reporting in the seedstock industry, accurate across-breed EPDs (expected progeny differences) and accurate estimates of heterosis benefits. We need these services for as low a cost as possible, which means less overhead costs.

“Those forward-thinking people in the seedstock industry that try to do the right

thing and are willing to take the risk in the near term are usually rewarded with long-term success rather than a short-term opportunistic profit,” he added.



The PowerPoint for Mark Gardiner's presentation and the audio for the panel discussion will also be available in the newsroom. Visit the "Symposium Papers" page for proceedings to these presentations.



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