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21ST CENTURY GENETICS: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE SOUTHERN STYLE

Producer Applications Committee

by Troy Smith

Committee considers QSA and PVP programs, as well as feed-intake monitoring systems.

CHOCTAW, MISS. (April 19, 2006) — USDA-approved verification programs and feed-intake monitoring systems took center stage at the Producer Applications Committee meeting during the 2006 Beef Improvement Federation meeting April 19.

Iowa State University Extension Educator Darrell Busby shared information regarding application of a USDA-approved Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) program to the Iowa-based Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity. Busby explained that implementation of QSA is required to meet beef export verification (BEV) specifications for all foreign markets.

"It's all about documentation to ensure traceability," Busby stated.

Requirements include documentation of procedures for meeting BEV for the specific country targeted for export sales. And steps taken to carry out those procedures must be documented, including training of owners and employees of feedlots where animals are fed and farms or ranches of origin.

According to Busby, USDA also requires that 10% of Futurity consignors be audited annually to monitor compliance with approved management procedures, verify documentation of birth dates of calves and ensure individual animal identification.

North Dakota State University Extension Beef Specialist Kris Ringwall reported on Calf-AID, a Process Verifica-

tion Program (PVP) initiated by the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association to help producers qualify for value-added marketing opportunities.

"Most producers aren't ready for it. Maybe half of them, at most, have registered for premise identification, and that's a necessary first step," Ringwall said. "Many of them struggle with the idea of doing things differently and are reluctant to change from doing business as usual. They struggle with the concept of managing animals as individuals instead of in groups. Many don't comply with documentation requirements and resist the notion of accountability."

Iowa State University Beef Specialist Daryl Strohhahn discussed feed intake monitoring systems that have evolved over the years. The need to measure feed efficiency is desirable, Strohhahn said, when you consider that feed cost represents 60% of the total cost of finishing a steer, and at least 63% of the total cost of maintaining a beef cow.

"Selection for improved feed efficiency can lower production costs, but [it] also can impact the environment," Strohhahn added. "It will lower methane production (thought to contribute to global warming) and reduce levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in manure."

Strohhahn urged the audience to attend Thursday's general session to hear more in-depth presentations on genetic evaluation for feed efficiency. 