

Pros and cons about Beef Referendum

Amer. Angus Assoc. backs Beferendum

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — Beef producers will soon have the opportunity to register and vote for a beef checkoff program that will enable our industry to sponsor beef research, foreign market development and, most important, to provide consumers with accurate information about beef, stated Dr. C.K. Allen, Executive Vice-President of the American Angus Association.

The following ideas reflect Allen's feelings and those of the association he represents concerning the upcoming beef referendum:

"The days that are scheduled for producer registration and voting may be the most important days in the future of the beef industry.

Almost all informed cattlemen support the Beferendum. Unfortunately, most producers assume it will pass, an assumption we can't afford.

Every person who is eligible should make a point to register and vote for the Beferendum.

There is organized opposition to the Beferendum although not nearly as much as there was in the last election. On the surface, it is difficult to understand some of the opposition but on closer evaluation, most of the opposition falls into two or three categories.

First of all, some people disagree with one or more minor points on how the Beferendum is organized or will be handled.

The National Cattlemen's Association solicited the input from many diverse groups before writing and developing the mechanics and they have done an admirable job in incorporating these suggestions.

People who oppose the Beferendum because it is not exactly the way they would do it are little different than the child who takes his ball and goes home if others won't play by his rules.

There is another group opposed to the Beferendum and they are usually organized. This group is made up mostly of organizations that represent farmers in general or, in some cases, other cattle or livestock groups.

Some of these groups apparently are opposed to the Beferendum because they are afraid it will weaken them. They put the welfare of their organization above the welfare of beef producers and the beef industry.

The few cattlemen who oppose the Beferendum because they oppose centralized authority and fear government intervention are probably very rational in their approach.

I encourage anyone in this category to study the Beferendum closely because I believe they will find their fears are unwarranted.

The funds raised by a checkoff will be administered by a Beef Board that consists exclusively of

cattle producers and this Board will be responsive to beef producers because they are nominated by certified industry associations and because individual producers can get their funds returned if they are unsatisfied.

Have you ever asked why we have all the fanatical attention to fat in the diet?

Have you ever wondered why Senator McGovern's nutrition committee became so involved in developing dietary goals for this country?

Have you ever wondered why someone elected to the Senate would believe that this country didn't have time for research on dietary goals and that we should formulate dietary goals even if they weren't based on sound research?

There is one situation that answers all the questions above. The producers of margarine, cooking oils, and other polyunsaturated synthetic products have spent tens of millions of dollars annually promoting the concept that animal fat is harmful, that cholesterol in the diet causes heart disease and that animal fat are a possible cause of cancer.

This media blitz has formed prejudiced convictions and attitudes about nutrition among legislators and consumers.

No research has verified any of the advertisement claims and numerous researchers are reporting that not only are their claims false but there is a real possibility that polyunsaturated fats are harmful.

Who is going to tell the consumers that animal fat is better for them than vegetable fat, that beef contains the best form of iron available for human consumption, that many vegetarian's diets are protein or specific amino acid deficient and could lead to mental retardation, disease or death, especially in the young?

I can only think of one group willing to undertake this task and we can do it only if the Beferendum is passed.

And this type of information and advertising program can work.

The American Egg Board since 1977 has halted a long term decline in per capita egg consumption. Bolstered by their "Incredible Edible Egg" advertising campaign, egg consumption in the U.S. is up 25% this year.

Have you heard of "turkey ham" or "chicken dogs"? They are just two of the numerous new products that have been developed that are helping to increase consumption of poultry dramatically.

Much of the increased consumption of poultry in this country is a direct response to new product research paid for by the poultry industry.

New product research develops new ways of preparing, merchandising, or presenting a product. There have been many changes in eating habits of Americans as we adopt changes in our way of life, like a greater percentage of housewives working.

One such change that we can all relate to is a decrease in demand for pot roast because roast takes more cooking time.

New product research will help us develop new products or modify old products so we can at least maintain beef consumption at current levels and with successful new product research increase the demand for beef.

How much is the beef industry spending on new product research today? You guessed it — practically nothing. What is worse is our competitors are very active in the new product research area.

Yes, there are many reasons why we should support the Beferendum. The character and indeed the survival of the beef industry are at stake.

You can do your part by making sure that every cattle owner in your household registers and votes for the Beferendum. Even better, encourage other cattlemen to register and vote for the Beferendum."

WASHINGTON D.C. — The National Grange, at its last Annual Meeting, held in November, voted to continue its support for a beef referendum which would permit producers to vote on a check-off for the funding of promotional programs, research and consumer information on beef and beef products.

P.R. Smith, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing, announced today that beef producers will be asked to register for the referendum between January 28 and February 6. They'll vote by secret ballot February 19-22.

Ray Fitzgerald, administrator of the department's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service said his agency will conduct the referendum. The department's Agricultural Marketing Service would monitor the program.

Rules for registering and voting in referendums have changed, noted Fitzgerald. He said the department determined that 10 days (8 working days) would be sufficient for all producers to register and that the four day voting period would result in a more efficient voting procedure and reduce administrative costs.

A similar order, issued in 1977, although favored by 56.4 per cent of voting producers, did not receive the required two-thirds approval. Since that time, the Beef Research and Information Act has been amended by Congress so that a majority of producers will be sufficient for approval of the order.

Edward Andersen, Master of the National Grange, urged that all Grange members who are cattle producers or dairy farmers should vote in the referendum.

Brother Andersen said, "The Grange was not totally satisfied with the legislation as it pertained to the method of assessing the check-off but that should not stop Grangers, who are eligible, from voting in the referendum. I urge you to do so, and it is important to

remember that it will be conducted like a regular election — you have to register before you are eligible to vote. So be sure to register."

Producers may register and vote at local ASCS offices. Registration and voting can be completed by mail if information and ballots are requested in advance.

The order, issued by U.S.D.A. authorizing the program, provides for a beef board of up to 68 producers to administer the program. There would be as many as five non-voting consumer advisors to the board.

Each state or geographic area would be represented on the board in proportion to

its share of the U.S. cattle industry.

The program would be funded by assessments based on the value of cattle sold. During the first two years of the program, assessments could be up to two-tenths of one percent of the value of cattle sold (20 cents per \$100).

After two years, the board could recommend an increase up to five-tenths of one percent.

As sellers in the marketing chain would be assessed. The buyer at the point of slaughter would deduct the total assessment forward it to the board. Any producer could request and receive a refund of the assessment paid.

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