



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

You can't teach an old meats judge new tricks

The USDA is at it again. They're trying to drive every college meats team alumnus over the edge by trimming down and revamping their meat grading quality standards for carcass beef and slaughter cattle.

Believe me, it was tough enough learning how much marbling had to be in that cherry red loin eye to rank the prestigious title of Prime when the standards allowed fatter cattle. Now they're asking me to forget everything I learned after spending "I'd rather be somewhere else"-weekends with Professor Glenn Kean and four other shivering ag students as we admired and scrutinized rail after rail of cattle, hogs and lambs in damp, freezing meat coolers.

Really, it was an honor and a challenge to be a member of the Penn State meats judging team and I practically memorized the federal government's meat grading handbook. While I didn't have the team's best eye, placing cattle carcasses never seemed to be a difficult task (there were times when the official judge needed a few lessons in placing, though).

Back then there was a world of difference between a Prime ribeye and one that would only grade Choice. My biggest problem came when it was time to decide between a Low Choice and a High Good grade. Were those flecks of fat I was seeing or were my glasses just a bit fuzzy?

Well, if I had trouble choosing between the two grades then, I would probably find it next to impossible now since the grading standards have been lowered, allowing less finished beef to sneak into the Choice grade.

Even though it seems like just yesterday that the grading standards were lowered, the USDA is proposing to lower them again.

According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Agriculture John Ford, "the proposed changes should allow leaner beef to qualify for Prime and Choice grades but not significantly lower the palatability of either grade. Beef in the Good grade would be leaner with lowered palatability."

Here's what USDA proposes:

- That the minimum marbling requirements for the Prime, Choice, and Good grades in A maturity (cattle up to approximately 30 months of age) would be reduced to minimum, moderate, typical slight, and minimum traces, respectively;

- That all young beef not meeting minimum requirements for the Good grade would be graded Utility;

- That the Standard grade would be eliminated;

- That the rate of increase in marbling requirements in B maturity (cattle approximately 30 to 42 months of age) would be doubled; that the marbling to maturity relationship be increased from 1:1 to 2:1;

- That quality grade requirements for bullock beef also would be changed so they would still be the same as those for steer, heifer, and cow beef in A maturity. Bullock beef would still be identified for class;

- That related standards for grades of slaughter cattle would be changed to reflect changes made for grades of carcass beef; and

- That no changes would be made in yield grade standards.

Okay, so we can sigh a breath of relief because they're not requiring any less external finish for a Yield Grade 1 rating. They're simply not doing anything with the grading standard which measures the area of the rib eye and the fat covering the beef animal is carrying.

And it's good news for cattle producers who are trying to earn a living satisfying a dieting nation to learn that their grass-fed beef might merit the Choice roller as it swings past the federal inspector's gaze when before it would have passed by as a mere Good.

Packers have been telling us for a few years now they don't want overfinished cattle — so cut out feeding for Primes. As a matter of fact, some packers have discounted the price a producer receives if the cattle come in with too much fat since it just gets trimmed off anyway.

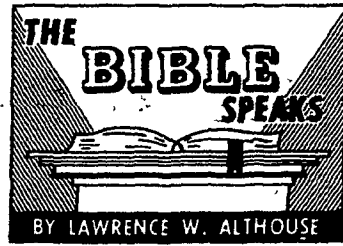
Yet, cattle feeders want the better price that Prime and Choice grade cattle bring. So now they can have the higher quality rating without the extra cost of feeding for more finish.

It's also good to know young, efficient bullocks won't be penalized by the federal grading system any longer. More cattle producers are feeding bulls these days because of their faster rate of gain and leaner carcass. And as long as they're slaughtered at a young age, there's no reason to discriminate against the meat, likewise with heifers.

The grading changes will be a benefit to today's beef producers, and they will give the consumers what they are clamoring for — lean beef.

Of course, I prefer the old ways of grading beef. Nothing looks better to me than a steak loaded with marbling just before it hits the barbeque grill. And nothing tastes better than a thick, juicy bite of Prime beef.

So, even though this 'old-time' meats judge will stick to her Coach Kean-standards, the new beef grades will be a bonus for beef producers and a blessing for packers.



COMMANDING THE SPIRITS

March 7, 1982

Background Scripture: Mark 1:21-45.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

When I was a seminary student in the mid-1950's, the miracles of Jesus were a problem for many of us. The reason: All of us were well-grounded in the basic principles of science and those principles seemed utterly unaccommodating to believe in miracles, at least not as the Bible presented them to us. Some of us found the solution in rationalizing the miracles: Jesus didn't really multiply the loaves and fishes, he simply shamed the crowd into sharing what they had with each other. Sharing is no small miracle, we reasoned.

Others of us decided that we could resolve the conflict by maintaining that Jesus lived in another "dispensation," a time of supernatural events, while we live in another age, the age of reason and science. Some, following the lead of theologian Bultmann, decided that the miracle stories were simply "myths," and could not be accepted on a literal basis. And still others avoided the conflict altogether by never thinking about it.

Beyond What We Know

Today, the miracles of Jesus need no longer be a stumbling block. New scientific perspectives have helped us to see that as St. Augustine explained it, "a miracle

is not contrary to science, but only to what we know of science." Some of the miracles performed by Jesus are being studied by serious scientists and many act as that at one time might have been labeled "impossible" are now regarded as simply "beyond our present knowledge."

Actually, wonderful as the miracles of Jesus are, they are not really as difficult as perhaps as some of Jesus' other feats—acts not regarded as "miraculous". For example, Mark tells us of Jesus' remarkable power to command "unclean spirits."

"What do you do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" they cried. "Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." And the crowds grasped the significance of this recognition and exclaimed: "With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

The Spirits Came Out

The obedience of the "unclean spirits" to Jesus' command was certainly impressive. Mark gives us the impression that these spirits obeyed, not willingly, but because they could not withstand the power of Christ. He commanded and they had to obey. They could not say no.

More difficult, however, was Jesus' ministry to people. Instead of commanding, instead of compelling people to follow him, Jesus used the much more difficult means of persuasion. The "unclean spirits" he commanded and they had to obey. But Jesus appealed to the crowds—"Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men"—and no one had to obey him. Commanding the spirits was an impressive feat, but calling disciples is always a much more difficult accomplishment. Yet, Jesus possessed that power—"they were astonished...for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."

Farm Calendar

Saturday, March 6
Elizabethtown Young Farmers,
6:45 p.m., Hostetter's Dining
Hall, Mount Joy.

Dean Showers residence,
Allenwood.

Sunday, March 7
Heart of Penn Goat Club, 2 p.m.,

Monday, March 8
Poultry Servicemen's Seminar,
Holiday Inn, Lancaster, Rt. 501
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NOW IS THE TIME

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TO BROADCAST LEGUMES

Alfalfa and red clover growers who are planning to broadcast the seeds into a stand of winter wheat or barley should be preparing their seed now. Research and experience have both proven that early March seeding will give the best results. It's the time of year when the ground freezes and thaws frequently, creating a "honeycomb" condition to the top soil. This is an excellent way to give the seeds a light covering of top soil. If the broadcast seeding is made in March, this condition may not prevail.

The seeds should be of top

quality and be inoculated with legume bacteria before seeding.

TO CREEP FEED LAMBS

The Easter season is approaching when the price of spring lambs is usually the highest of the season. Sheep growers, who have early lambs, can add extra pounds by feeding the lambs some extra grain. A mixture of cracked corn and oats is suggested in a place where only the lambs have access.

Since the lambs are still nursing the ewes, no extra protein should be needed. Another thing that may add extra weight on the lambs is to feed extra grain to the nursing ewes; this will increase milk flow

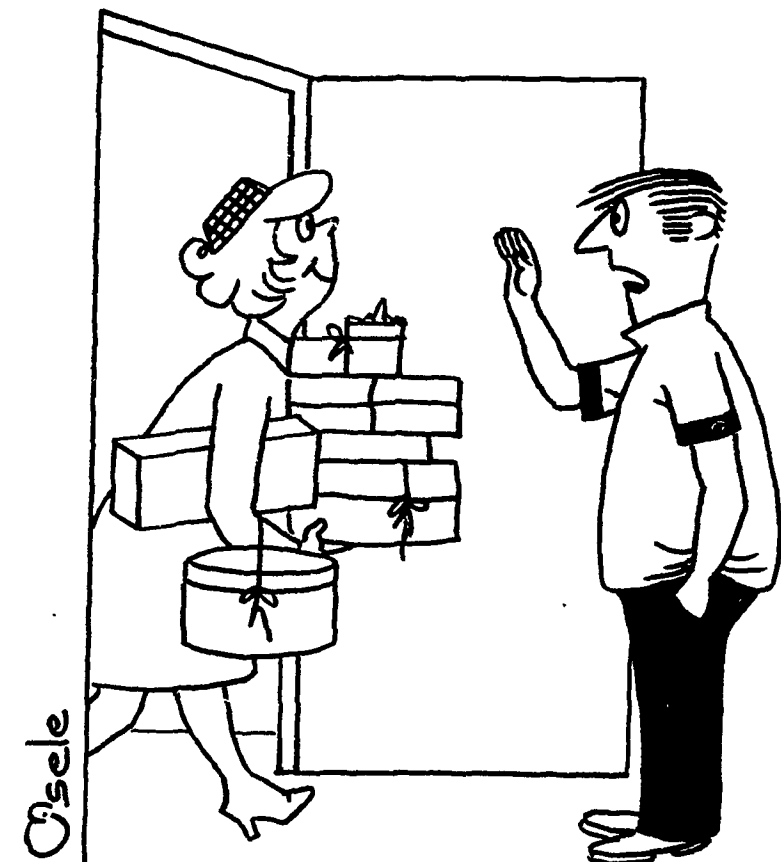
and result in heavier lambs.

TO MEND PASTURE FENCES

Pastures can provide cattle a lot of good, nutritious forage and it's a place for them to get fresh air, exercise, and sunlight. Before too long, we will be turning our cattle out to pasture, but let's not turn them out too soon, cautions Glenn Shirk, our dairy agent. He advised farmers to let the sod develop and the ground firm up. Spend time now to get the fences in order and to pick up trash and debris before the grass gets too tall and before you get tied down with spring field work.

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HAY HAWS



"Don't tell me — you hatched our nest egg."