

## New Program

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dustry toward eliminating the "outliers" to improve the averages which translates as consistency for the consumer. The 1995 audit revealed that beef was viewed as inconsistent with excess waste and problems with palatability and tenderness.

Slayton encouraged producers to focus on isolating and getting back the money they are losing because of quality issues. For instance, he noted that in Pennsylvania, one out of every five beef carcasses is outside of the ideal yield grade category of 3.5 or less; 11 percent weigh more than 900 pounds, 6 percent less than 600 pounds; 9 percent are no-rolls; 19 percent have ribeye areas greater than 15 or less than 11 square inches; and 22 percent had liver condemnations.

As far as quality grades, Pennsylvania does better than the national average; however, there is still a deficit between consumer demand for the branded beef products that come from these cattle and the number of carcasses which actually make the grade here.

This industry is positioned for exciting times, said Slayton, and he foresees greater utilization and consumer recognition of the NCBA industry "quality mark." State beef quality assurance programs are recognized to use the mark in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and Texas. Blueprint organizers want to see Pennsylvania on that list.

"We need to position ourselves for the changes coming along in the marketplace in order to be profitable," Comerford said, listing industry consolidation, ranch, to retail alliances, branded beef programs, and source identification as the harbingers of the future.

Beef value is determined by grade, finish, weight, sex, and color, Comerford acknowledged. However, grading is intended as a way to categorize products for commercial, not consumer trade. While USDA

grading is respected worldwide, is nationally correlated, does an accurate job of predicting palatability, tenderness is becoming the next genetic and technological focus of the industry.

"The problems is, we don't know it's tender until it's dead, unlike marbling," he said, noting that Texas A&M researchers believe they have found the candidate genes for tenderness, "the pinpoint in the ocean that says these are the genes which influence tenderness, and that technology is up for sale. What happens when someone buys that technology, and puts their name on that product?" he said.

Comerford suggests that grading will continue to be used for verification of branded products; however, commodity beef will have less value on this market. "Producers will be asking themselves: 'If I'm not producing into one of these categories, who's going to buy my cattle?'" said Comerford. These programs prove that "It's not just beef, it's somebody's beef, a mark consumers can rely on."

Instead of focusing energy on the things they can't change, such as the market, Comerford encouraged producers to focus on taking steps at home first. "The difference, at any given time, between the most and least profitable steer in the feedlot is about \$300," he said, holding a fist full of 300 \$1 bills and counting them into piles according to nine profit centers associated with producing the typical 750-pound Choice steer carcass... or not. Profit, Comerford reminded the audience, is measured in the difference between return and cost. "Where's all the money? It's out there in your feedbunk and the decisions you make."

To participate, request a visit, or find out more about the Blueprint for success, contact Wendall Landis at (717) 702-2015 or e-mail: wlandis@das.psu.edu. Information can also be found at the website address: www.das.psu.edu/xlivestock.cfm.

## Perry County Farmers' Market Seeks Vendors

LOYSVILLE (Perry Co.) — The recently formed Perry County Farmers' Market offers a variety of goods, including fresh vegetables, baked goods, fresh meats, and

other items.

The market is open to new vendors. The market is located near Loysville along Rt. 274 and operates every Friday from 9 a.m.-8

p.m. and every Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Year-round space is available.

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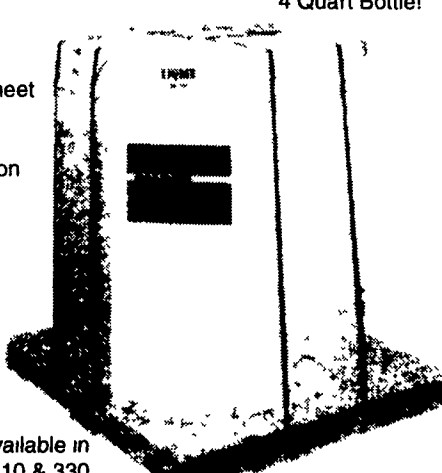
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