

Media Beef Coverage Focuses On Safety

DENVER, Colo. — Stories about safety accounted for 57 percent of all consumer media coverage of the beef industry in fiscal year 2001, according to national media monitoring data collected for the Cattlemen's Beef Board by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

The total number of beef industry stories also increased by more than 1,000 over year 2000.

The national media monitoring program, funded by the beef checkoff, covers major market newspapers, wire services, national news and business publications and major network and cable news broadcasts. Data are compiled for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 and ending Sept.

30. Media coverage favorability ratings between 45 and 55 are considered balanced, or neutral.

"Beef safety stories typically account for around 40 percent of total coverage in a year, but 2001 was extraordinary," said Christina Pope, NCBA's director of issue research and analysis, who manages the media-monitoring program. "In 2001, BSE was mentioned in almost 1 out of 3 (29 percent) of all stories about the beef industry."

The increased number of safety stories also bumped up the total number of U.S. stories mentioning beef issues to 7,261, an increase of 16 percent over the fiscal year 2000 total of 6,255.

"The BSE outbreaks that began in Europe in late 2000 resulted in a sub-

stantial increase in U.S. media coverage of that issue topic that lasted into the spring of 2001," Pope said. "In fact, BSE coverage was up more than 200 percent over the previous year, with 2,093 stories that mentioned beef and BSE compared to only 676 last year."

Within the heavy BSE coverage, another topic also was frequently mentioned, Pope explained. New variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (nvCJD), the human disease linked to BSE, together with classic CJD was the sixth most mentioned specific issue topic in 2001.

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) also was a prominent topic in 2001 media coverage, Pope added. "Foot and mouth disease didn't even show up last

year," she said. "This year, even though U.S. coverage didn't begin until February, it was the fourth leading issue topic mentioned in 1,365 stories, accounting for 19 percent of our total coverage."

"The beef industry's intense efforts to get accurate information out about BSE and FMD is reflected in the neutral media favorability rating of 46 for the safety issue overall and 45 for BSE specifically," Pope said. "It could easily have been portrayed in the media as a highly negative food scare. We calculated that, in the first six months of calendar year 2001, NCBA staff and spokespersons conducted about 600 media interviews just on BSE and FMD."

In addition," she said, "consumer surveys conducted during the times of heavy media coverage showed consumer confidence in the safety of U.S. beef actually increased."

Economics was the second leading 2001 media coverage issue category by volume, mentioned in 2,830 stories or 39 percent of the total coverage.

Foreign trade was the leading topic in economics and the second leading topic overall with mentions in 1,707 stories. Favorability for the economics category averaged a 48 rating.

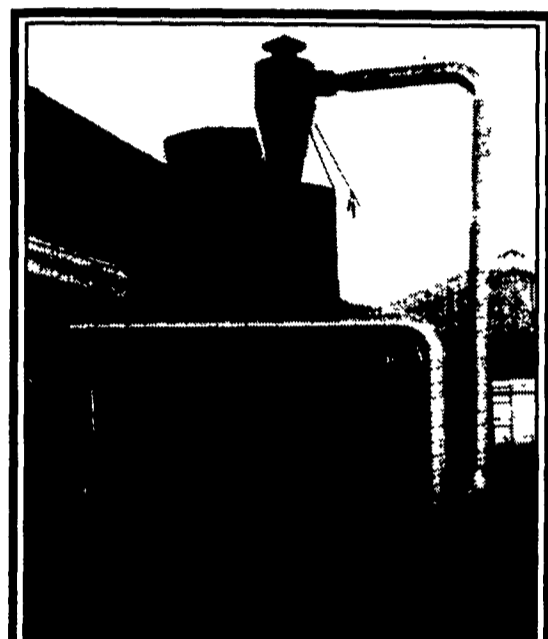
The category of Reinvent the Chuck/Round, which includes beef recipes and new product news, came in third by volume

with 1,600 story mentions and the highest favorability rating of 62, strongly positive.

Nutrition and Health had 1,582 story mentions, fourth by volume, and accounted for 22 percent of total coverage. The nutrition coverage was at the upper end of the neutral favorability range at 55, but the topic of beef & fat/leanness had a positive rating of 59 and mentions of beef & cholesterol were strongly positive with a 62 favorability rating.

"The two smallest categories of media coverage by volume are environment and animal rights/welfare," Pope said. "The amount of U.S. media coverage on the issue of cattle and the environment continues to dwindle from its high of about 45 percent of total coverage back in 1995 to its current level of only 7 percent of the total. The 480 media story mentions of cattle and the environment were solidly neutral with a favorability rating of 49."

Animal rights/welfare coverage typically is the smallest category by volume, Pope said. "The animal rights coverage also has dwindled over the years. Back in the early 90s, this category accounted for 11 or 12 percent of total coverage and often had favorability ratings at 40 and below. In 2001," she said, "the 474 articles mentioning cattle and animal rights accounted for only 7 percent of total coverage and generated a slightly unfavorable rating of 43."



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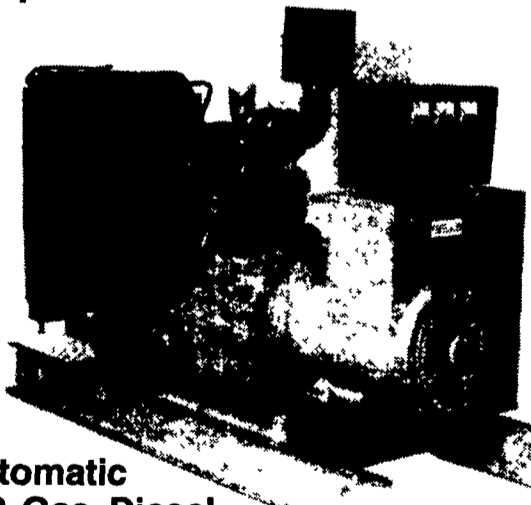
Farm Show has become a premier event for *Lancaster Farming*. The Farm Show issue, scheduled Jan. 5, will feature an event schedule, exhibit maps, the annual FFA Keystone Degree recipient biographies, exhibitor family features, and loads of information about the annual event that draws thousands to the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg Jan. 5-10. Don't miss it!



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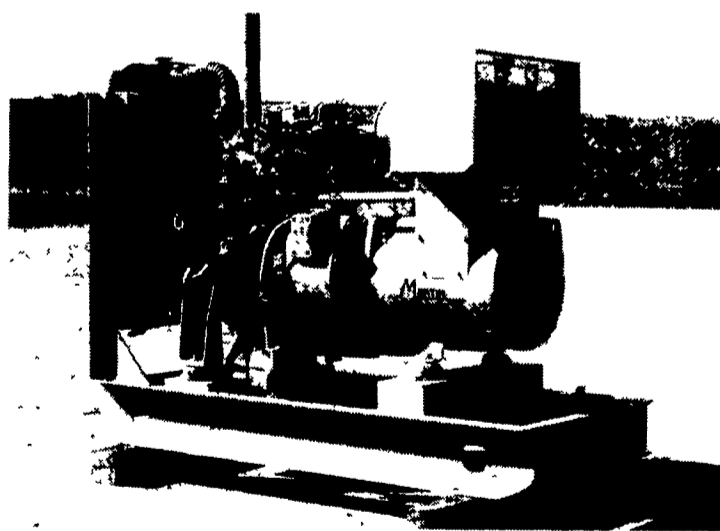
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