

COOL — Hot Topic At Cattle Feeder's Day

(Continued from Page A1)

kets, small volume food stores and exports.

The marketing administrator said they are in the process of establishing voluntary guidelines that will provide a framework for the mandatory guidelines which are to take effect October 2004. The key issues involved are the defining the products with the mixed ingredients and the methods of notification.

Without the slides that accompanied his talk, Sessions would probably been engaged in a real exercise in futility. The slides denoted the specifics in the COOL program and explanations of the terminology, which his audience could follow along with his comments.

Getting down to the specifics on labeling beef products, the congenial Sessions was barraged with comments and questions. He reminded his audience that he was "just the messenger."

The beef animal must be born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S. for the product to carry the U.S. label of origin, Sessions said. A verifiable record keeping audit trail would be required. Identification of each animal from birth to slaughter would be necessary.

In answer to one question, Sessions responded that a beef carcass imported from Canada and fabricated into cuts in the U.S. would have to be labeled a product of Canada. Also, ground beef would need to have all its components identified, namely that imported lean ground stuff from other countries (that was considered a good thing).

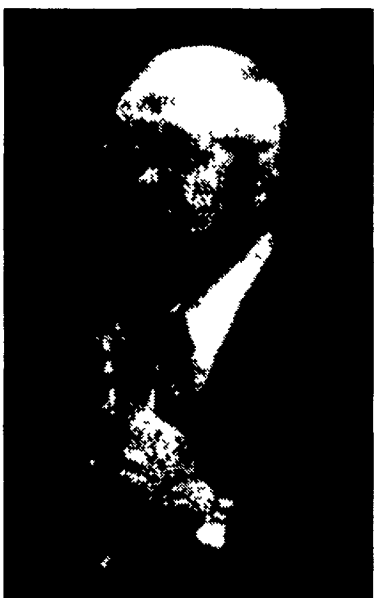
And so it went, one scenario after another questioned. The approximately 100 cattle feeders (out of 150) who remained for the entire program are now not so sure that COOL is a good thing for U.S. beef producers.

Sessions said there is an extended comment period on the COOL voluntary guidelines. It will end April 9. Cattle feeders can respond with comments to: William T. Sessions, USDA/AMS, Room 2091-S, 1400 Independence Ave., Washington, D.C. 20250; or <http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool>

Moore's Upbeat Outlook
Penn State ag economist Lou Moore opened this year's annual Cattle Feeder's Day program,



William Sessions



Al Kober

with his always popular cattle industry analysis as he has been doing for more than 45 years.

With the aid of projected charts and his detailed lists, Moore presented the positive and negatives in the general economy as well as the agricultural economy with his perennial good humor.

Assessing the current cattle market, Moore said 2003 will be a better year for beef. The conditions are more upbeat than they have been in the last five years for the cattle business, he said.

USDA Market Reporting
Taylor Cox, officer in charge of the USDA's Market News Office in New Holland, gave a detailed account of compiling a

market report and explained its terminology, including trends, demand, activity, and also the quality grades and yield grades.

Cox talked about mandatory packer reporting (MPR) from its beginning in 1999 and the necessary adjustments that were made to include more reported prices. He said the livestock reports are sent from the St. Joseph, Mo. market news office and the meat reports from the Des Moines office.

To supplement the mandatory reports, Cox said the USDA has returned to some voluntary market price reporting with reporters manning the phones to contact buyers and sellers for information. They began Monday, Feb. 3, phoning contacts in Texas and Nebraska with the possibility of going to other areas.

For marketing information, Cox said producers can call his office at (717) 354-2391 and/or the MPR office at St. Joseph, Mo., (816) 238-0678.

Retailing, Consumer Trends

Al Kober, retail director, Certified Angus Beef (CAB), spoke on consumer trends in the beef business and the changes in retailing that have taken place, namely consolidations, buyouts, and foreign owners. Kober is well-known to area producers as the retired meat man at Clemens Markets.

The number one change and the one having the greatest impact on the beef business is Wal-Mart, Kober said. He addressed this at some length. He also talked about food safety and the use of irradiation.

In ending his discussion, Kober stressed producing a quality product, and he told the beef producers, "We are all in the food business, one bite at a time every time."

Other topics at Cattle Feeder's Day included: An update by Scott Wright on the Pennsylvania Beef Council's Beef Quality Assurance program and the Blueprint for Success program; John Comerford, Penn State extension beef specialist, speaking on Marbling and Beef Quality



Taylor Cox

in place of Robbi Pritchard, South Dakota State University, who was grounded by airline complications; and Jay Smoker, Lancaster County extension, who briefly spoke on his field of expertise, West Nile Virus.

Chet Hughes, livestock extension agent, chaired the program and acknowledged the following members of his planning commit-

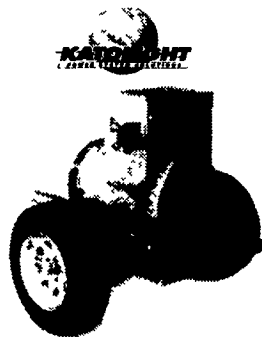
tee: John Comerford; Jim Hogue, Agri-Basics; Bob Livingston, South Branch Farms, York Co; Bill McCoy, McCoy Cattle Company; Bernard Nissley, Nissley Bros. Feedlot; Paul Slayton, Pennsylvania Beef Council (PBC); Steve VanLannen, Pack-erland Packing; and Scott Wright, PBC.



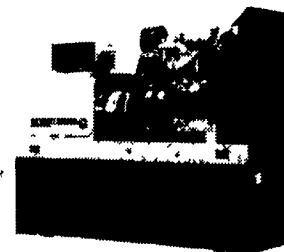
Large dairies often require a huge labor force. How do dairies deal with communication management issues involving Hispanic labor? What are the challenges other producers have faced and what are their suggestions? See the next issue of *Lancaster Farming's Dairy Plus*, geared toward large-scale dairy operations, in the Feb. 15 issue. Also scheduled: news from the Penn State Hispanic Workforce Management Conference and what's required for the survival of the Northeast dairy industry.

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