

Changing the Narrative



A graduate student at West Texas A&M University uses her experience to advocate for the fed-beef industry.

Story & photos by Lindsey Sawin, editorial intern

Agriculturists often keep their heads down, work long hours and interact with those also involved in the industry. This leaves the door open for others to create their own stories about what really happens.

The fed-beef industry is often criticized by media and a disconnected population, which pushes cattle feeders to become closed off and quiet with their work, says Anna Kobza, a Nebraska native and graduate student at West Texas A&M University (WTAMU). She's trying to change that by using the power of social media, knowledge from the classroom and real-world experiences.

Life outside of ag

As a young child, Kobza stood on the outside of the agriculture industry. Her only direct tie was her grandfather's feedlot, but he retired from feeding cattle before she was born. She did, however, have the book he

wrote for his family about the trials and tribulations he faced as a feedlot owner.

"He wrote a little autobiography for all his kids and grandkids to read, and he talked a lot about his feedlot in that book. I have read it multiple times over, and I think about him a lot in my day to day," says Kobza.

Once she was old enough to join 4-H, she began showing cattle and horses. Even though her private school didn't offer FFA, she joined the David City FFA chapter at the local public school.

Between 4-H, FFA and her grandfather's legacy, she found her way to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) to study animal science and pursued minors in Nebraska Beef Industry Scholars and Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship. During her time at UNL, she took out a Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan and bought a few cows of her own.

The Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship

Anna Kobza is trying to change consumer perspectives of the cattle-feeding industry using the power of social media, knowledge from the classroom and real-world experiences.

program spurred her interest in social media, and she developed her platform: Ag Acknowledged.

"She doesn't sit on the sideline and be frustrated by the world. She actually engages, and I think she has done a good job with social media and has created an awareness," says Tom Field, director of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program at UNL.

Becoming an advocate

In the Engler program, Kobza says, she was struggling to monetize a business model surrounding agriculture education and experiences, leading her to develop a social media page to advocate and educate. The channel started as a way to teach consumers about ranching and beef in general.

Kobza is extremely self-aware, seeing beyond the immediate view of the industry, says Field. "She was always one of those students who could see beyond the horizon."

This awareness drove her to see the need to advocate for the feedlot industry. As she became more involved, it became more evident that the fed-beef industry didn't have a lot of people advocating for it, says Kobza.

"I noticed the lack of representation of the fed-cattle industry," she observes. "There's a lot of representation for the cow-calf producers, and even the farmer, but there really was not a ton of people giving the feedlot industry a voice."

Kobza is continuing her education and growing her knowledge through her master's work in animal science with a focus in ruminant nutrition.

She says her current position allows her access to a multitude of knowledgeable faculty and the WTAMU feedlot. That gives her a hands-on position from which to advocate and be a positive voice for the cattle-feeding industry.

"That has become the focus of my page, dispelling myths in the feedlot industry and

trying to be educational, not only just for consumers but for producers, as well, trying to give them resources and information to use in their own operations,” says Kobza. “Really, it’s a platform I can use not only to advocate for my way of life, but to build a bridge with consumers.”

Kobza uses social media as an interactive environment for her followers, explaining aspects of the fed-cattle industry.

In one post she talks about feedstuffs, breaking it down for the reader, saying, “High-moisture corn is another one of the several ways we can feed corn to cattle! High-moisture corn (HMC) can be fed to cattle to achieve the same feed conversions and gain as dry corn, without incurring the expense of grain drying.”

Humanizing the industry

Kobza doesn’t consider herself a typical “influencer” or content creator. She writes her posts as topics arise, as she receives questions from her followers or as she finds something she is passionate about, rather than batching a bunch of content.

She interacts with her 13,000 followers in many ways, allowing them to ask questions. This engagement helps her gauge her audience’s knowledge of the industry and evaluate common themes.

Kobza is a constant learner, which is reflected on her social media page, says Field. She reads a variety of scientific publications and uses this research in her posts, but she tries to explain topics in a way that is easy to understand for everyone.

“I like posting simple things consumers might not know, that we assume they do,” says Kobza.

Her goal is to make cattle feeders seem more welcoming for people who have questions or want to learn.

“I think it’s important to humanize the industry, letting people get to know me, wearing my heart on my sleeve, and telling the truth, bar none, so they can start to



Kobza’s current role at the WTAMU feedlot gives her access to knowledgeable faculty and staff while serving in a hands-on position from which to advocate and be a positive voice for the cattle-feeding industry.

trust me and know they can trust other producers,” Kobza says.

Kobza’s voice on her platform is authentic due to her willingness to directly address what is happening in the agriculture industry, while rolling up her sleeves to get things done, says Field.

Her authenticity comes from her willingness to share everything from her personal life to the feedlot.

In some posts, she breaks it down to the basics. She uses Instagram Reels — a form of video — to answer the question “What is a feedlot?” and gives her followers the breakdown of the purpose of feeding cattle in a feedlot.

In other posts, you will find her back in Nebraska sharing about her time at home.

“I was at Verizon the other day getting my new phone activated, and my Dutch Bros. coffee became a talking piece with the store worker. He asked what my usual was. I told him, and we continued our small talk. At some point, I said I’ll be sad when I move because we don’t have these in Nebraska. He replied with, ‘There isn’t anything in Nebraska.’ I just laughed and said, ‘You’re just not looking in the right places,’ because this isn’t nothing to me.”

With this inside view of her life and the fed-beef industry, she says, she hopes to see future generations reconnect to agriculture and preserve the way of life associated with it for future generations.

Down the road

Kobza was set to finish her master’s degree at WTAMU in December and then plans to begin a doctoral degree at UNL in January before hopping into a career as a feedlot nutritionist.

She plans to continue advocating for the fed-beef industry and intends to expand it to more in-person opportunities for consumers. Kobza says she would like consumers to have the opportunity to participate in feedlot tours and get a better feel for what happens on a day-to-day basis.

She also sees the need to reach the school systems.

“I would love to see more ag education and exposure to animal agriculture in schools. I have noticed the lack of education and exposure to any kind of ag production in schools, even in heavily ag-influenced states,” says Kobza.

Today, she uses her social media presence to advocate, but she plans to use it as a resource to grow her clientele and visit with producers in the future.

Her goal, she says, is to have a website and an email list geared toward providing producers resources they might need — from things they might need to prepare for in weather extremes during the summer and winter months, to ways to improve their bottom line.

Once looking at the industry from the outside, Kobza now stands on the inside. She’s picking up the pieces her grandfather once held and has added the role of advocate.

“Being an advocate for our industry is taking an active role in the preservation of this lifestyle; for ourselves, yes, but more importantly, for the generations that come after us,” says Kobza. “This industry serves more than the consumer; it provides jobs for a large mass of people in rural communities.”

To see how Kobza is using her voice as an advocate for the fed-beef industry, visit her Instagram page, @ag.acknowledged, or her website, www.agacknowledged.com/. ABB

Editor’s note: Lindsey Sawin was the 2022 summer intern for *Angus Beef Bulletin*.

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