

State Beef Councils Create Alliance

California, Nevada join forces to better promote beef.

When the national Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 Farm Bill, the checkoff was assessed at \$1 per head on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle. States retain up to 50¢ of the \$1 and forward the other 50¢ per head to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board (CBB), which oversees the national Beef Checkoff Program.

Checkoff revenues are used for promotion, education, research and public information programs to improve the demand for beef.

More than 20 years since its inception, the beef checkoff is still assessed at \$1 per head. In today's economy, it takes about \$1.90 to get the purchasing power, due to inflation, that \$1 gave the checkoff when it was initially created.

"A dollar just doesn't buy what it did two decades ago," said Bill Dale, executive director of the California Beef Council (CBC). "The decreased buying power of the checkoff dollar, coupled with using the same budget that was established in the 1985 Farm Bill, forces us to become a little more creative with our programs and partnerships."

State beef councils are faced with the major challenge of funding projects that will increase beef demand, using limited

resources. This challenge is causing beef councils to re-evaluate their current programs and budgets.

The Nevada Beef Council (NBC) was faced with this challenge in fall 2008. The acting executive director left the council to pursue other opportunities. Lucy Rechel, chairperson of the NBC, stepped in to assist with the daily duties of the NBC. A major hurdle in hiring an NBC executive director is the fact that beef checkoff dollars in Nevada are in short supply. Decreases in cattle numbers and escalating costs of doing business make running an efficient state beef council increasingly difficult. With an annual budget of \$120,000, the tasks of hiring an executive director, renting an office and covering overhead expenses left little money for effective beef promotion projects in Nevada. After much thought, the NBC looked at alternative options.

Rechel decided to pursue an opportunity with the California Beef

Council (CBC). The CBC already had results-driven programs she believed could be expanded into Nevada with some effort. In addition, the CBC had an experienced staff of five in program areas such as retail, foodservice and public relations. Partnering with California would significantly help Nevada programs gain efficiency in those areas.

"The NBC is looking forward to the possible opportunities with this partnership. California has very strong programs," Rechel said. "Contracting with the CBC enables the NBC to do more with our checkoff dollars than is possible as an individual state beef council."

On Jan. 1, 2009, under contract with the NBC, the CBC started running NBC's programs. The CBC will use Nevada beef checkoff dollars, in Nevada, to run some additional programs that are similarly structured after California programs. Funds that would have been committed to overhead expenses for the NBC will be

used for these new programs. The NBC will still be in the position of overseeing Nevada beef checkoff dollars, and will hire a person in Nevada to represent the NBC at events such as Agriculture in the Classroom, and state and county fairs.

"This is an exciting time for the California and Nevada beef industries, with many opportunities before us. Beef producers can create significant influence when they join together and work to meet the challenges of our industry," said Rob von der Lieth, chairperson of the CBC. "Partnerships like this allow us to work together to build a stronger beef industry and increase consumer demand for our beef products."

There is a new toll-free NBC phone number and mailing address for all correspondence: 1-877-554-2333; Nevada Beef Council, P.O. Box 340310, Sacramento, CA 95834-0310. For more information about the NBC, call, visit www.nevadabeef.org or e-mail askus@nevadabeef.org. For more information about the California Beef Council, visit www.calbeef.org, or call 916-925-2333 or e-mail askus@calbeef.org.

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— Rob von der Lieth

Editor's Note: This release was provided by the California Beef Council.

