



Back to Basics

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Your dollar checkoff well-spent

Everyone can probably agree that sometimes it is hard to sit down and have a good home-cooked meal. I'm talking about the nice beef roast with potatoes, carrots and all the fixings, just like Mom used to make. There is just no time to fix a meal like this after work.

Today's average consumer is no different than you or me; they work, take the kids to ball practice, and don't get home in enough time to cook a big meal.

Convenience products

In the early 2000s, your beef checkoff dollars went to work to accommodate the fast-paced lifestyle of today's consumer. Your dollar-per-head contribution was invested with industry partners to help develop "beef convenience products."

Convenience products are not considered TV dinners, but meals the whole family can enjoy. They are complete precooked, heat-and-serve dishes. Examples of these products include beef pot roast, stew, roast beef and even steaks.

These precooked products can be heated in the microwave and still have that fresh, home-cooked taste with a fraction of the time it takes for traditional meal preparation. They are perfect for a family on the go.

There are also other prepared beef products that are not complete meals but only take a fraction of the preparation time to cook and can be used in many different ways. These include ground beef crumbles, steak strips and shredded beef, which can be used to make tacos, stir-fry, sandwiches and many other dishes.

Beef convenience products can be found in most major grocery stores. They are usually located in the fresh or frozen meatcase. Remember that these convenience products are not shelf stable; if not eaten right away, they need to be put in the freezer.

These products are manufactured by several different companies with many options from which to choose. Check with your local grocery store and ask about the beef convenience products it carries.

After the successful completion of research and coproduct development, the beef checkoff eased out of the picture of complete convenience meals and is now concentrating efforts and producer checkoff dollars toward research and development of beef "handheld" products.

These products will satisfy consumers as snacks and can be used for appetizers. The target audience will be members of the younger generation, who enjoy and consume handheld snack items the most, and people on the run with no time to eat a big meal. This will give them the opportunity to get a nutritious serving of beef for a snack or meal appetizer.

The new National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Beef Innovations Group (BIG) will be the leader in the new product development. Their mission is to inspire beef and veal product innovation and facilitate success by bringing information, insight, ideas, science and tools to industry influencers and stakeholders. Quantitative consumer testing is currently being conducted on 55 different product concepts. The top product concepts from the research will be further developed and then put through a consumer sensory test in the near future. To learn more about BIG and new beef product development, contact the Nevada Beef Council or visit www.beefinnovationsgroup.com.

Just for kicks

Just for kicks, the next time you are grocery shopping, purchase one of the many beef convenience products located in the meat display case at your local supermarket. I think you will agree that these convenience products take little time to prepare while providing a pleasant eating experience.

You will also discover that today's consumers are willing to pay for convenience and taste. The only way to capture that added value is to develop and market products that meet today's consumer needs. Your checkoff dollars have done that. Your checkoff dollars have also identified new cuts of meat that add value to each carcass. These efforts are in addition to the many marketing and promotion efforts your state and national checkoff dollars have done. It is obvious that the dollar checkoff is money well-spent.

If you have questions related to your checkoff dollars or how your money is being spent in Nevada, do not hesitate to contact Landon Harris, Nevada Beef Council coordinator, at (775) 738-5776. As always, if you would like to discuss this article or simply would like to talk cows, do not hesitate to contact Ron Torell at (775) 738-1721 or torellr@unce.unr.edu.

Beef checkoff: \$1 or \$2?

How much would the dollar-per-head checkoff need to be increased in order for it to have the same spending power in 2007 as it did when the checkoff was initiated in 1985? In other words, how much has inflation during the last 22 years eroded the dollar?

The authors went to www.measuringworth.com/calculators/compare/ for the answer. Using the consumer price index method, which is the most commonly used method for this type of comparison, it looks like a case could be made to raise the checkoff assessment from the existing \$1.00 per head to \$1.82 per head.

The \$1.82 figure would give us the same spending power today that we had in 1985 when the \$1.00-per-head assessment was initiated. Given the checkoff's track record of increasing consumer demand through promotion, product development and research, the authors suggest we double the checkoff to \$2.00. After all, wouldn't it make more sense to have a \$2.00-per-head checkoff vs. a \$1.82-per-head checkoff? The \$1.82-per-head assessment would only equal what we had in 1985.

The last few years have been great relative to marketing our calves and yearlings. Much of this nice market has to do with increased demand for our product, which can be largely credited to the checkoff efforts. If we want to continue to enjoy this growing beef demand, it is paramount that we continue to collectively support our promotion, research and development efforts. There is more work to be done and more market share to capture. This work requires money.

What better way to do this than to collectively support the \$2.00-per-head checkoff? It is certainly food for thought. The authors wanted to plant the seed in the minds of cattlemen today in the hope that the \$2.00-per-head assessment would be a reality tomorrow. In spite of the fact a few issues related to the checkoff need to be ironed out and revisited through a referendum vote by all U.S. beef producers, it is hard not to recognize the success and track record of the dollar checkoff.

That is enough of my rambling for this month. If you would like to discuss this article or simply would like to talk cows, do not hesitate to contact me at (775) 738-1721 or torellr@unce.unr.edu.

— by **Ron Torell**

*Citation: Samuel H. Williamson, "Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790-2005," MeasuringWorth.Com, 2006.