

NCBA Summer Meeting Concludes

More than 700 of the nation's cattle industry leaders wrapped up a summer business meeting in Denver mid-July, with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) board of directors formally adopting policy positions on issues like international trade, tax reform and modernizing the *Endangered Species Act*.

"It's been a great week for America's cattle industry, and meetings like this allow us to network, share best practices across the beef supply chain, and come together to adopt the policy positions that we'll fight for in Washington, D.C.," said NCBA President Craig Uden. "I'm proud of everybody who took the time away from their busy operations to help set our industry's direction for another important year."

Highlights of the week included the announcement of results of the checkoff-funded 2016 National Beef Quality Audit (NBQA) and the celebration of six regional finalists for the 2017 Environmental Stewardship Awards.

Joint committees and subcommittees met to develop proposals for 2018 checkoff-funded research, education and promotion programs. Also on Friday, NCBA policy committees met to determine priorities and discuss strategies for 2018.

"NCBA is the cattle industry's oldest and largest national organization, in large part because we remain a grassroots-run association where our members come together to set our direction," Uden said. "In the coming year, we will remain committed to expanding our access to markets around the world to securing a full and permanent repeal of the onerous death tax to protecting our access to public lands, and to securing funding for a foot-

and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine bank in the *2018 Farm Bill*."

The group's next large-scale meeting will be the Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2018, in Phoenix, Ariz.

Charting the industry's course

Data from the 2016 NBQA suggest the beef industry continues to improve the quality of its products, but there is still room for improvement.

Funded by the National Beef Checkoff Program, the audit has been conducted every five years for the past quarter century, and provides a set of guideposts and measurements for cattle producers and others to help determine quality conformance of the U.S. beef supply. NBQA results through the years have helped lead to improvements in cattle and beef production, including reductions in carcass blemishes and fewer lost opportunities related to branding and other practices.

Among the positive findings in the 2016 NBQA are a significant increase in Choice and Prime carcasses; a high mobility score for cattle entering packing plants; and the fact the number of blemishes, condemnations and other attributes that impact animal value remain small.

Among areas for possible improvement are the fact that there was more bruising (although bruising was less severe) and the fact that more than 30% of livers harvested did not pass inspection and were condemned.

"The research proved the beef cattle industry has a great story to tell, but also suggests we aren't getting that story to as many people as we should," said Josh White, executive director of producer

Ranchers applaud Wild Horse and Burro Management

The Public Lands Council (PLC) and the NCBA applauded the adoption of an amendment to the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill that would allow for humane euthanasia of wild horses and burros. The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah), would rein in burdensome regulations that failed to allow for proper management, the groups said.

"As a native of Utah, I'm very proud of the leadership that Congressman Stewart has exhibited," PLC president and Utah rancher Dave Eliason said. "He has seen firsthand the destruction that the overpopulation of wild horses has had on our rangelands and truly understands the issues faced by ranchers in the west and deserves credit for his work on this important issue."

Uden says this is an important milestone for western ranchers.

"Horse and burro populations on BLM lands have long exceeded Appropriate Management Levels and are damaging to ecosystem health," Uden said. "Their population has an average growth of over 20% each year, and it is imperative that Congress continue to take steps to mitigate this issue."

Overpopulation of wild horses and burros negatively impacts native wildlife, rangeland ecosystems and rangeland access. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) uses science to monitor rangeland vegetation, soils, water and wildlife habitat to determine appropriate management levels (AML) for wild horses and burros. The BLM estimates the current population of wild horses and

education for NCBA, a contractor to the National Beef Checkoff Program. “Utilizing the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program and its principles more uniformly throughout the industry could not only enhance industry commitment to better beef, but would help increase consumer confidence and encourage greater beef demand. This research suggests that carrying the BQA message throughout the industry would benefit every beef audience.”

Environmental stewards honored

Six families were honored July 13 with regional environmental stewardship awards during the 2017 Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting. The Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) recognizes the nation’s best cattle and livestock operations and their stewardship and conservation efforts. This year’s regional winners will compete for the national award, which will be announced during the Annual Cattle Industry Convention in Phoenix, Ariz., in February 2018.

This year’s regional winners include Blue Lake Farm LLC, operated by Rusty and Jessie Thomson, Sharon, S.C.; SFI Inc., Seth and Etta Smith, Nemaha, Iowa; Sterling Cattle Co., Jimmy and Theresa Sterling, Coahoma, Texas; Flying Diamond Ranch, Scott and Jean Johnson, Kit Carson, Colo.; Jim O’Haco Cattle Co., Jim and Jeanni O’Haco, Winslow, Ariz.; and Munson Angus Farms LLC, Chuck and Deanna Munson, Junction City, Kan.

“The desire to leave the land better than they found it is a common trait among cattle raisers,” says Dave Owens, beef marketing specialist with sponsor Dow AgroSciences. “You certainly see that in action in the families that are being honored with this award. They’re all making a real, on-the-ground difference in protecting and improving the environment.”

Established in 1991 by NCBA to recognize outstanding land stewards

in the cattle industry, ESAP is sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Cattlemen’s Foundation.

Uden echoed the sentiments of Owens, explaining that cattlemen and women across the nation take their commitment to the land, air and water resources in their care very seriously.

“The men and women who raise livestock in this country are the original stewards of the land. We know that we are only successful when we take the best possible care of the natural resources with which we’ve been entrusted,” said Uden. “We understand the importance of improving those resources and leaving them better for future generations. Each of the families being honored are outstanding

examples of what is possible for the beef industry, and they serve as an inspiration for producers everywhere to continue improving their stewardship practices now and in the future.”



Editor’s Note: This article is compiled from releases provided by NCBA and the Cattlemen’s Beef Promotion and Research Board.

Amendment

burros exceeds 72,000, well above the maximum AML of 26,715.

Eliason emphasized that NCBA and PLC have long expressed concerns about wild horses and burros on federal land and will continue to support humane and ethical management practices of these animals.

“While this amendment does not solve the whole problem, and there is still a great deal of work to do, the language would add one more tool to the toolbox and would provide the Bureau of Land Management more flexibility to manage this unsustainable population,” Eliason said.

— **National Cattlemen’s
Beef Association**