

The Iowa Beef Center

*To enhance the vitality, profitability,
and growth of the Iowa beef industry*

Leveraging the Advantages

The Iowa Beef Center leverages multiple beneficial beef resources by coordinating ISU research, outreach, and service programs with the efforts of commodity organizations, cooperating academic institutions, state and federal agencies, and other allied groups. Extensive use of electronic and traditional technologies enhances these programs and improves access to all Iowans. The IBC works closely with ISU Extension livestock, farm management, and agricultural engineering field specialists, and campus faculty and staff members in the agricultural and biosystems engineering, animal science, agronomy, economics, and veterinary diagnostic / production animal medicine departments, as well as several county extension education directors. By mobilizing multi-disciplinary expertise, the IBC secures external funding from a variety of sources including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The IBC also has a formal working relationship with the Iowa Cattlemen's Association (ICA) and the Iowa Farm Bureau.

Program Areas and Overarching Goals

The Iowa Beef Center will work across most program areas, but will have the greatest impact on:

- Animals and their systems
- Plants and their systems (predominantly forages)
- Economics, markets, and policy
- Natural resources and the environment
- Food and non-food products
- Food safety

The Iowa Beef Center will address many of Iowa State University Extension goals, specifically:

- Economic Development: Agriculture
- Natural Resources and Environmental Stewardship
- Growing Iowa's BioEconomy
- New Agricultural Enterprises, Opportunities, and Linkages
- Beginning Farmers and the Next Generation of Agriculturists
- Food Safety and Security

Priorities: 2007-2011

1. Increase effective use of grain coproducts
2. Improved environmental stewardship by beef feedlots
3. Adopt quality management systems to improve cost control and market access
4. Improved beef cowherd production efficiency
5. Expand intergenerational transfer

Accomplishments

IBC has an active and evolving seedstock evaluation program. The Iowa Progeny Tenderness Demonstration Project, completed in 2002, evaluated more than 381 progeny from 59 Iowa sires. Progeny were tested for feedlot performance, carcass traits, and tenderness. While all progeny were acceptable for tenderness, a difference in tenderness was noted across sires. The program evolved into the Iowa Sire Profit Comparison Test. Sponsored cooperatively by the IBC and the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity, this program evaluated over 289 sires to identify those with the greatest value to both the cow-calf and feedlot sectors. The latest addition to the seedstock evaluation program involved partnering to develop an electronic feed intake monitoring system to cost-effectively evaluate feed efficiency in bulls.

Iowa leads the nation in ethanol production and this industry is growing rapidly, as is the amount of co-products to be fed. Hundreds of producers have attended IBC meetings focusing on proper management of corn co-products in cattle diets and pricing co-products relative to alternatives. Often these meetings are sponsored by new ethanol plants to educate producers about the product. Five new publications on co-products were developed and distributed in recent years.

Runoff from open feedlots contributes to water quality problems in Iowa. Numerous environmental conferences and field days have been held across Iowa to provide examples of effective feedlot effluent control. These meetings included participation by staff from NRCS, Iowa DNR, ICA, and ISU Extension to answer questions for producers on system design and management, environmental regulations, and USDA cost-share programs. Numerous publications on the practical environmental management for small feedlots were prepared and DNR funded research on alternative technologies for effluent control is underway.

The IBC continues to be a national leader in the creation of decision-management tools for producers. In January of 2004, BRANDS (Beef Ration and Nutrition Decisions Software) was launched, and by the end of 2005, 250 units had been sold and the software, in conjunction with Montana State University and the University of Missouri, was customized for producers in other regions. In 2005, a totally renovated version of the Estrus Synchronization software was launched, and 625 copies of the Estrus Synch software were sold in 2005 alone.

Iowa's cow-calf producers continue to be challenged by limited land resources, environmental regulations, and tight margins. The IBC continues to sponsor and assist with numerous events throughout the state, including Grazin' Days (partnering with NRCS), pasture walks, and 'Cow-Calf Risk Strategies', a grant from USDA-RMA to educate cow-calf producers on risk, and strategies in production, market, and financial risk management. In addition, the Pasture Management Guide, updated in 2005, continues to be the premier, comprehensive resource for any and all pasture and forage management issues.

In the winter of 2005, the Iowa Beef Center in conjunction with Iowa Cattlemen's Association surveyed Iowa cow-calf and feedlot producers regarding their current operation, plans for the future, how they receive information, and what they saw as the greatest opportunities and obstacles for the state's cattle sector. This information will help direct and prioritize IBC future programming.

Resources

Extension 21 funds totaling \$153,023 per year have been allocated to the Iowa Beef Center in addition to the legislative allocation of \$93,485. The Extension 21 funds are targeted at value-added and precision-agriculture beef production, management, and marketing. These new funds enable ISU Extension staff with beef responsibilities to develop special projects and innovative educational and service programs for beef producers across Iowa. Additional external funding for applied environmental research and education totaling \$107,000 was secured.

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... and justice for all

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