

Iowa Beef Center, Iowa State University
Director: John D. Lawrence

Mission statement: to enhance the vitality, profitability, and growth of the Iowa beef industry.

Iowa State University Extension to the beef industry. Developed and delivered by campus faculty from 5 departments in 2 colleges and 15 extension field specialists across the state.

Current and recent activities

Adding Value

- **Grid marketing project:** This 2-year demonstration project involved more than 5200 head of Iowa cattle. IBC staff analyzed the carcass data and compared the cattle on 4 packer grids. Data indicated the animals would have averaged a \$20/head premium over the available cash market. In addition to providing direct assistance to these farms, the data were developed into educational materials and presented to thousands of producers across Iowa. Current estimates are that 5% to possibly more than 10% of Iowa cattle are now sold on a grid where the vast majority receives a premium over the cash market.
A second product of the project was the Grid Market Calculator spreadsheet that producers can use to evaluate complex marketing alternatives. It is available for download from the IBC web site at no cost. This tool and the data collected were used in the Iowa Cattlemen's Grid Committee to negotiate a grid with Excel that is estimated to have produced over \$1 million in premiums to Iowa producers in the first 10 months of 2000.
- **Tenderness project:** Beef industry research indicates that 1 out of 4 consumers have had an unsatisfactory beef eating experience, and lack of tenderness is a significant reason. It is estimated that 25-30% of tenderness is genetically determined. The Iowa Beef Center is in the second year of the Iowa Beef Tenderness and Carcass Evaluation Project to evaluate progeny of Iowa owned sires. This project will educate all producers about factors impacting beef quality and position Iowa breeders at the forefront on this trait.
- **Missouri Producer Tour:** The Iowa Beef Center worked with counterparts from the University of Missouri to arrange opportunities for Missouri cow-calf producers to tour Iowa feedlots and meet Iowa cattle feeders. Iowa feedlots are uniquely positioned to provide cow-calf producers performance and carcass information on their cattle. Once established, these farmer-to-farmer relationships will lead to more cattle feeding in Iowa, thus increasing economic activity.

Addressing Emerging Issues

- **Drought ICN:** Dry conditions early in the growing season left beef cowherds in southwest, south central, and west central Iowa with significantly less forage than normal. The Iowa Beef Center hosted an ICN conference June 14 at 32 sites attended by 275 producers. The inter-agency informational meeting provided an update on government programs and management strategies for dealing with the dry conditions.
- **Environmental Issues:** The EPA and Iowa DNR are stepping up enforcement of regulations for open feedlots. The Iowa Beef Center is working with Iowa Cattlemen's Association, Iowa DNR, NRCS, EPA, and others to find practical ways for producers to protect water quality, comply with state and federal regulations, and remain viable.
- **Feedlot Conference:** The Iowa Beef Center held a feedlot conference November 1-2 to address feedlot design, environmental regulations, and other emerging forces in the beef industry. Over 100 producers attended. A new feedlot design manual describing alternative facilities for Iowa and evaluating their animal and economic performance was developed. The materials and publications are posted on the Iowa Beef Center web site and additional meetings are planned for this winter.
- **ICA/Excel beef plant:** The Iowa Beef Center continues to provide information and technical assistance when asked by IDED or ICA. The IBC analyzed the economic impact of the new plant on Iowa's economy and assisted the Iowa Quality Beef Supply Network grid committee.

Direct Assistance to Iowa Producers

- **Web site:** Iowa Beef Center web site, iowabeefcenter.org, is a one-stop entry to Iowa State University information for beef producers and allied industries. In addition to publications, links to other universities, government agencies, and market reports, there is a bulletin board on which producers can interact and compare notes.
- **Standardized Performance Analysis:** The Iowa Beef Center SPA records provide the most comprehensive cowherd performance, business analysis and benchmarking program in the US. Iowa producers using SPA records documented \$14,573 improvement in annual returns in 5 years.
- **Education and consulting:** Iowa Beef Center members provide education and direct service to Iowa producers. From October 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000 the Iowa Beef Center served producers by:

	Contacts	Producers
Conferences/meetings	167	8,073
Field days	59	2,345
Invited presentations	75	2,956
Consultations (phone, email)		6,569
Consultations (farm or office visit)		1,420