



Desire Beef

An Angus producer promotes beef safety to Japanese housewives through advertising.

by Stephanie Veldman

Abbie Nelson is a woman who fills many roles. She is a wife, mother, cattle producer and an articulate spokesperson for the cattle industry, according to Bruce Berven, California Beef Council. These were the roles that the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) wanted to portray in a recent international advertising campaign in Japan.

The advertising campaign, called 'aisareru' beef, or desire beef, was developed after the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a Japanese dairy herd in September 2001. The goal of the campaign is to deliver the messages of safety, taste and nutrition to Japanese mothers who have children living at home because it is they, primarily, who make the decisions on meals.

Nelson is one of three women featured in the advertising campaign. The USMEF's goal is to portray all segments of the cattle industry and

to promote safety at each level of production.

The three women involved in the campaign are: Nelson, who is a seedstock producer and owner of Five Star Land and Livestock, Wilton, Calif.; Gina Bellinger, president of Food Safety Net Services Inc., a food safety testing laboratory in San Antonio, Texas; and Leann Saunders, vice president of marketing and communications for PM Holdings LLC, a beef processor based in Kansas City, Mo.

"The campaign is about beef safety in different venues," Nelson says. "The whole point is that American women feel that American beef is safe for their families.

"At our ranch, the focus was on the care and management that the animals get," Nelson says. "And that they have a nice environment with a lot of grazing area, fresh water and shade. We want the Japanese housewives to feel secure that the animals are raised in a very comfortable manner."

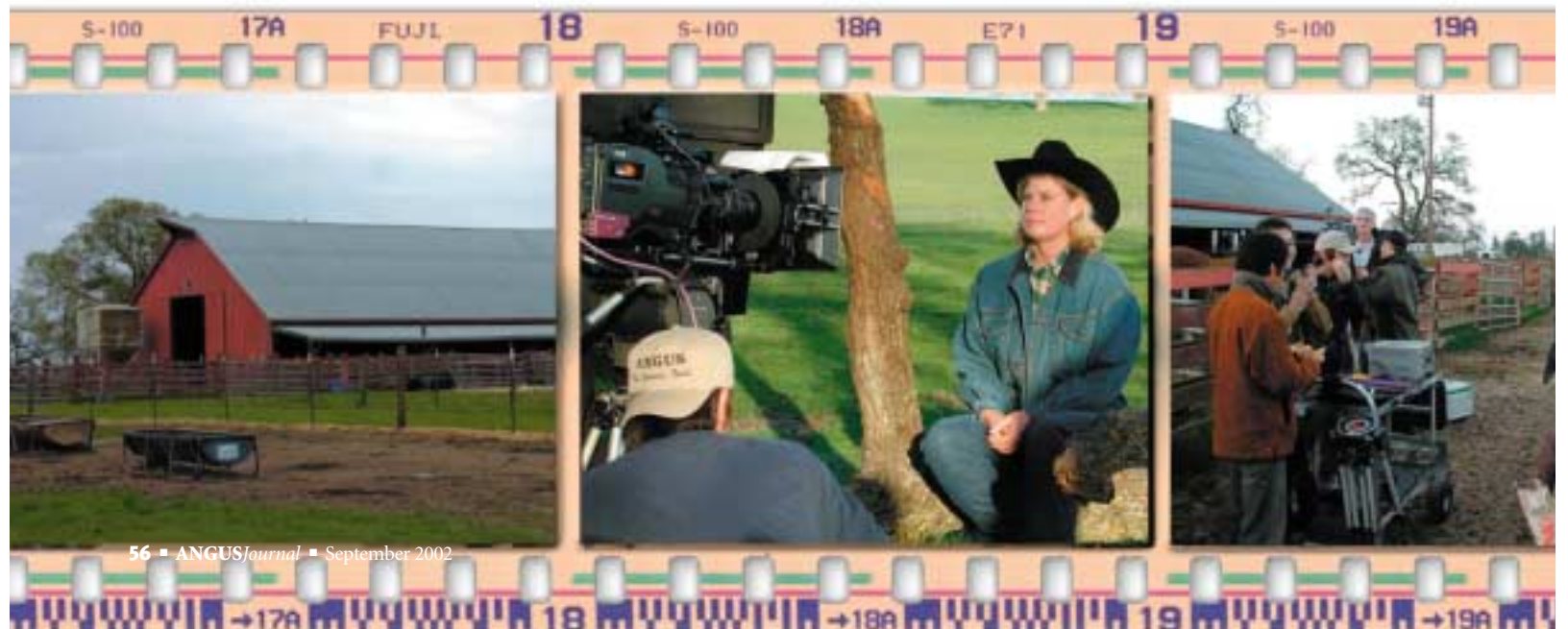
Choosing the participants

Lynn Heinze, USMEF vice president of information services, says the women who participated in the advertising campaign were chosen based on the areas in which they work.

"We were trying to show these three parts — the producer, the processor and the science that oversees it all," Heinze says.

Nelson was asked at the last minute, Heinze says, to fill the role of the producer. They had planned to visit a producer in Montana, but had to cancel due to a late-winter blizzard.

"When we had scheduled to go to Montana, the image our public relations agency wanted to capture included the Old West cowboy in the mountains with pristine grass all around," Heinze says.

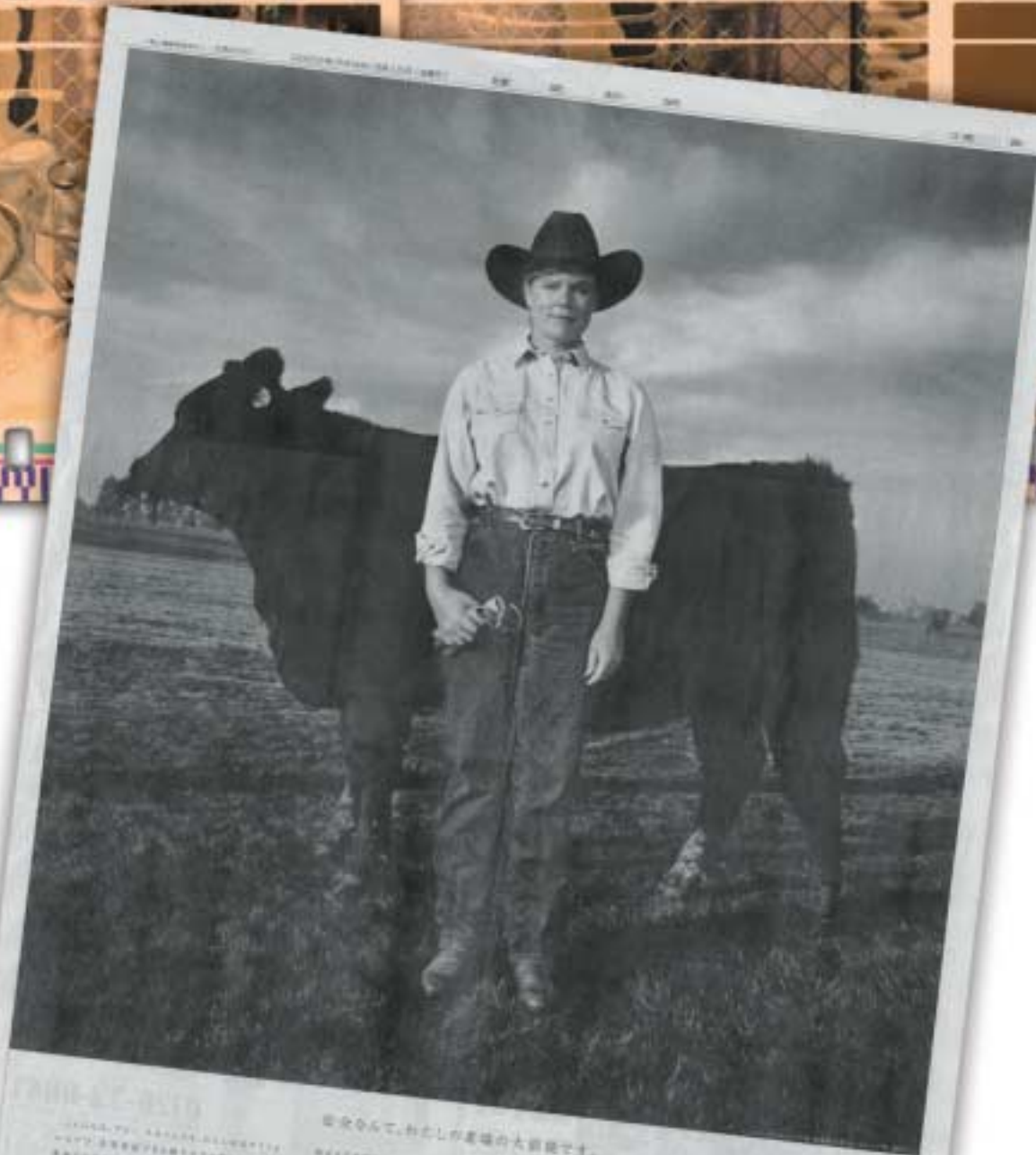


Instead, Heinze called Berven in California and asked him to identify a producer who would fit the overall message they were trying to communicate, but who was located in a warmer climate.

“They were looking for a female who was a mom involved in the beef industry, who could be an articulate spokesperson for the beef industry,” Berven says. “It didn’t take long for Abbie to come to mind, because she fits all of those criteria very well.”

Nelson didn’t have a lot of time to prepare for the commercial and photo shoot. She was in Saint Joseph, Mo., at an American Angus Association Board of Directors meeting, Feb. 26 to March 1, when she first

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spoke with Berven about doing the advertising campaign. She also spoke to Heinze several times during that week, and he explained what would be expected from her during the campaign shoot.

Heinze says that Nelson was wonderful to work with on short notice, and she was willing to take the time needed to successfully complete the advertising campaign.

The production process

The 18-member film crew, four members of the HakuHodo Inc. public relations agency and Heinze arrived at Nelson's ranch the afternoon of Saturday, March 2, a short three days after Nelson had agreed to do the campaign. She says the first thing the film crew did at the ranch on Saturday afternoon was check out potential locations to film.

"They mainly chose areas for obvious scenic beauty. We have

two ponds that they used as backgrounds," Nelson says. "They took some film of me on my horse, riding through the cows."

Nelson was filmed saddling and unsaddling her horse and moving the cattle around on horseback. The film crew also took still pictures of her in front of a show heifer. One of the images was used in a full-page ad in the main Tokyo newspaper (see page 57).

Nelson says that the

representatives from HakuHodo were very particular about the clothes she wore, and they were adamant about her wearing a cowboy hat and a pair of gloves.

"I wear gloves so I can have some sort of protection so, when I dress up to go to town, my hands aren't totally destroyed, but finding the hat was pretty funny. We couldn't find a hat that would fit," Nelson says.

She adds that she normally doesn't wear a cowboy hat, and all of her husband's hats were

USMEF reinvents approach to Japanese beef market

No single overseas market has been more important to the U.S. beef industry than Japan — our No.1 beef export market. On Sept. 10, 2001, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered on a dairy farm in Japan. Within weeks after the discovery, beef consumption dropped 50% to 80% at both retail and restaurant levels.

The U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) had been researching the Japanese markets before the outbreak of BSE, and they moved quickly to launch an advertising campaign last fall in response to the negative effects BSE was having on the beef export market. They diverted \$1.7 million from other programs to help implement the first part of the campaign.

"The discovery of BSE in Japan had such an immediate impact on the normal trade and normal consumption of beef in the country that producers, packers and our members really saw the need to do something that was significant, as far as the market was concerned, because it is our No. 1 market," says Lynn Heinze, USMEF vice president of information services.

Imports of U.S. beef fell by 33% in the weeks that followed, and Heinze says the USMEF knew it had to take aggressive action to win back the export market.

Heinze says that food safety had been an issue among Japanese consumers even before the discovery of BSE in Japan. He also learned through research that women were the primary decision-makers, just as they are in the United States, when it comes to deciding what is for dinner.

"One of the things we found after the outbreak of BSE was that she (the Japanese housewife) had doubts," Heinze says. "She felt the responsibility of what was going on the dinner table, and she had doubts about beef. Not U.S. beef, not Australian beef, not domestic beef, but just beef."

Heinze says another obstacle they ran into was the perception the Japanese had about U.S. beef vs. Australian beef.

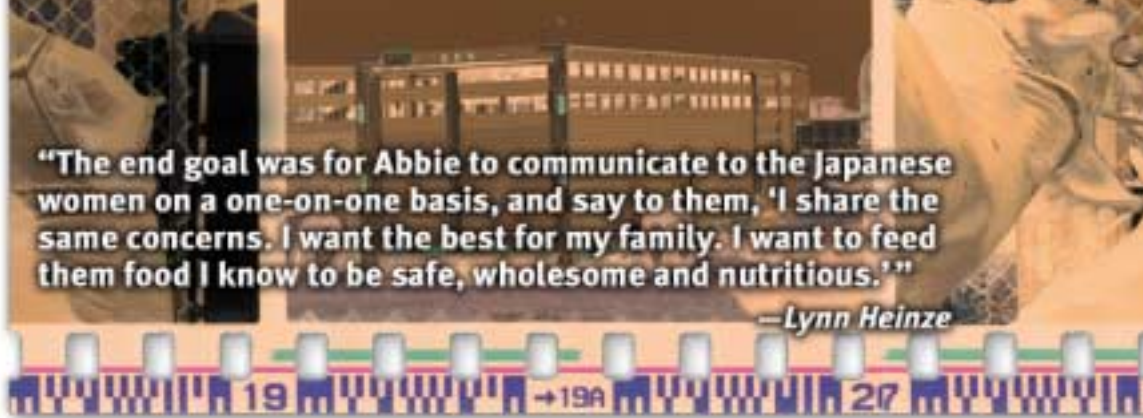
"The images that Australia typically uses for advertising in Japan are very pristine-looking fields and pastures. So Australians actually have a better reputation as far as safety is concerned than the United States does," Heinze says. "So it was key that we talk about care, safety and handling."

One important finding, Heinze says, was that the Japanese women wanted someone to whom to relate. In other words, they wanted to talk with women.

"They felt more comfortable," he explains, "because they had stopped trusting government officials. Most government officials are men and, as far as they were concerned, they had been lied to."

With that in mind, the USMEF set out to find three women to represent different parts of the beef industry and to effectively communicate with Japanese women. The ads feature: Abbie Nelson, Five Star Land and Livestock, Wilton, Calif.; Gina Bellinger, president of Food Safety Net Services Inc., San Antonio, Texas; and Leann Saunders, vice president of marketing and communications for PM Holdings LLC, Kansas City, Mo.





too big. They finally had to settle on using an old black felt hat that belonged to her son, Ryan.

Filming the commercial

Before filming footage for the commercial, two representatives from HakuHodo and Heinze sat down with Nelson to interview her and get background information on her role in the cattle industry. Nelson says they wanted to get her story in her own words to use in the commercial.

“One of the interesting things about the way that HakuHodo worked is instead of writing a script and giving it to Abbie, they actually worked with Abbie to create her story,” Heinze says. “The end goal was for Abbie to communicate to the Japanese

women on a one-on-one basis, and say to them, ‘I share the same concerns. I want the best for my family. I want to feed them food I know to be safe, wholesome and nutritious.’”

The film crew had Nelson perform a variety of activities for the commercial, including leading the horse, feeding hay to a herd bull and patting it on the head, and driving the cattle around one of the ponds.

“After driving the cattle around the pond, they filmed me talking about how our cattle are cared for and that they are a safe and quality product,” Nelson says.

Besides filming Nelson, the crew also focused on Ryan and on Abbie’s husband, Mark.

“They had Ryan with his bull, working with and leading him out of the barn. They had him cleaning the trailer with the pressure hose and driving the ranch truck as if he were feeding hay. As the sun was setting one evening, he and Mark were driving up the pasture and I was filmed meeting them at the gate, waving at them,” Nelson says.

Nelson says that on the afternoon of the final day of filming, HakuHodo wanted to film a traditional family meal, but her family was gone — Ryan was at school and Mark was working. Instead, Nelson brought in a few friends, including John Dickinson, an American Angus Association regional manager, to fill the table.

“I actually made the stew we ate for lunch, and they filmed the preparation,” Nelson says. “I have seen a picture of the meat in a pan, along with different kinds of vegetables that went with it.”

She adds that while they filmed the stew cooking, the vegetables had to be a certain color and the steam had to be coming out of the pan just right. The film crew wasn’t happy with the way the steam looked the first time they filmed it, so after lunch, they had Nelson reheat the stew so they could redo the steam shots.

It’s a wrap

The filming wrapped up at 5 p.m. on Monday — two and a half days after they arrived at Nelson’s doorstep.

Heinze says that Nelson made an excellent spokesperson for the campaign because she was very genuine in her dedication to the beef industry.

“It was clear that all three women loved being a part of the industry,” Heinze says. “They appreciated not only the roles they played, but also the role of the industry in providing protein and other nutrients to the diet. They all understood how important it was that they do their jobs well so everybody benefited.”

Nelson says that she was honored to be involved in the campaign, and she hopes she was able to effectively deliver a very important message to Japanese consumers about the safety and nutritional value of American beef.

“I strongly believe in every detail of this campaign,” Nelson says. “It is based on the facts and truly represents our commitment to the beef industry.”



Working with public relations agency HakuHodo Inc. from Japan, USMEF created and launched the largest single advertising campaign in its 25-year history on March 15, 2002.

The print ads were featured in two major Japanese newspapers in March and April and targeted women’s magazines April through June. Commercial advertising is being featured on selected television networks April through September, according to a news release by USMEF.

“The ads themselves are great,” Heinze says. “The only mixed reaction that we’ve gotten when we have talked to people is the documentary concept. These ads are created to allow Abbie and the other women to speak in their own words, with subtitles so the Japanese can understand what they are saying.”

Heinze says that the campaign was a cooperative effort, with all segments of the industry pulling together to raise \$8.4 million for the campaign.

“It really does speak to the fact that the industry can pull together the resources when called upon and effectively use them to regain the market,” Heinze says.

Phil Seng, president of USMEF, says his organization’s quick and steady response seems to be paying off.

In a press conference in May, Seng said that they have seen a reversal in the trend for consumer confidence since commencing the campaign last fall. “We’ve seen the market recover. It is back about 50% from its low. That means we have another 50% to go, but we’re in the midst of this campaign.”

To find out more information on the recovery of the export market to Japan, and other major U.S. export markets, logon to www.usmef.org.