

from the office

LEAD IN

by Dr. C.K. Allen
Executive Vice President
American Angus Assn.

Soon beef producers will have the opportunity to register and vote for a beef check-off program that will enable the industry to sponsor beef research, foreign market development and, most important, to sponsor promotion and provide consumers with accurate information about beef.

The days that are scheduled for producer registration and voting may be the most important days in the future of the beef industry.

Almost all informed cattlemen support the Beeferendum. Unfortunately, most producers assume it will pass, an assumption we can't afford. Every Angus breeder should make a point of registering and voting for the Beeferendum.

The Angus association has a supply of brochures about the Beeferendum and will send these to anyone requesting them. In the rest of this editorial, I plan to focus attention on two or three of the main reasons to support the Beeferendum, but these aren't the only reasons. Contact the Beeferendum Advisory Group, P.O. Box 834, 1001 Lincoln St., Denver, Colo. 80201, Ph: (303) 832-1664, your state or National Cattlemen's Assn. or the American Angus Assn. if you have questions or need additional information.

Opposition

There is organized opposition to the Beeferendum although not nearly so much as there was in the last election. On the surface, it is difficult to understand some of the opposition. But on closer evaluation, most of the opposition falls into two or three categories.

First of all, some people disagree with one or more minor points on how the Beeferendum is organized or will be handled. The National Cattlemen's Assn. solicited the input from many diverse groups before writing and developing the mechanics, and they have done an admirable job of incorporating these suggestions. People who oppose the Beeferendum because it is not exactly the way they would do it are little different from the child who takes his ball and goes home if others won't play by his rules.

There is another group opposed to the Beeferendum, and they are usually organized. This group is made up mostly of

organizations that represent farmers in general or, in some cases, other cattle or livestock groups. Some of these groups apparently are opposed to the Beeferendum because they are afraid it will weaken them. They put the welfare of their organization above the welfare of beef producers and the beef industry.

Study It Closely

The few cattlemen who oppose the Beeferendum because they oppose centralized authority and fear government intervention are probably very rational in their approach. I encourage anyone in this category to study the Beeferendum closely, because I believe they will find their fears are unwarranted. The funds raised by a check-off will be administered by a Beef Board that consists exclusively of cattle producers, and this board will be responsive to beef producers because they are nonimposed by certified industry associations and because individual producers can get their funds returned if they are unsatisfied.

Have you ever asked why we have all the fanatical attention to fat in the diet? Have you ever wondered why Sen. McGovern's nutrition committee became so involved in developing dietary goals for this country? Have you ever wondered why someone elected to the Senate would believe that this country didn't have time for research on dietary goals and that we should formulate dietary goals even if they weren't based on sound research?

There is one answer to all the questions above. The producers of margarine, cooking oils and other polyunsaturated synthetic products have spent tens of millions of dollars annually promoting the concept that animal fat is harmful, that cholesterol in the diet causes heart disease and that animal fats are a possible cause of cancer. This media blitz has formed prejudiced convictions and attitudes about nutrition among legislators and consumers.

Unverified Claims

No research has verified any of the advertising claims, and numerous researchers are reporting that not only are their claims false but that there is a real possibility polyunsaturated fats are harmful. Who is going to tell the consumers animal fat is

better for them than vegetable fat, that beef contains the best form of iron available for human consumption, that many vegetarians' diets are protein- or specific amino acid-deficient and could lead to mental retardation, disease or death, especially in the young? I can only think of one group willing to undertake this task, and we can do it only if the Beeferendum is passed.

And this type of information and advertising program can work. The American Egg Board since 1977 has halted a long-term decline in per capita egg consumption. Bolstered by their "Incredible Edible Egg" advertising campaign, egg consumption in the U.S. was up 25% in 1979.

Have you heard of "turkey ham" or "chicken dogs"? They are just two of the numerous new products that have been developed that are helping to increase consumption of poultry dramatically. Much of the increased consumption of poultry in this country is a direct response to new product research paid for by the poultry industry.

New Product Research

New product research develops new ways of preparing, merchandising or presenting a product. There have been many changes in eating habits of Americans as we adopt changes in our way of life, like a greater percentage of housewives working. One such change we can all relate to is a decrease in demand for pot roast, because roast takes more cooking time.

New product research will help us develop new products or modify old products so we can at least maintain beef consumption at current levels and with successful new product research increase the demand for beef. How much is the beef industry spending on new product research today? You guessed it—practically nothing. What is worse, our competitors are very active in the new product research area.

Yes, there are many reasons why we should support the Beeferendum. The character and indeed survival of the beef industry are at stake. You can do your part by making sure every cattle owner in your household registers and votes for the Beeferendum. Even better, encourage other cattlemen to register and vote for the Beeferendum. 