

# NCBA Members Set Policy Priorities for 2004

**N**ational Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) members set priorities and outlined policy for their national organization during its annual meeting at the 2004 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show in late January. Thousands of cattle producers joined government officials and cattle industry representatives at the event in Phoenix, Ariz.

During policy committee meetings, producers had a chance to discuss political priorities for the year, listening to fellow producers and talking one-on-one with policy officials and NCBA staff from Washington, D.C.

After days of committee meetings, regional meetings and group forums, NCBA members passed resolutions that address specific concerns. Numerous resolutions were developed in response to the Dec. 23, 2003, identification of a single imported cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

Policy initiatives passed, renewed and amended at the convention serve as a road map for NCBA staff, members and state affiliates. Following is a summary of some of the top initiatives passed and renewed.

## Cattle health

► The members resolved that NCBA officially supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) actions to 1) ban downer animals from the food chain, 2) implement a "test and hold" procedure for all animals tested for BSE, 3) define specified risk material (SRM) consistent to Canada's definition for all animals based upon age category, 4) broaden the rules for advanced meat recovery product from animals more than 30 months (mo.) of age, 5) prohibit the use of air-injection stunning, and 6) expedite the implementation of a national animal identification (ID) system.

► NCBA recognizes the need for an animal ID plan that is an effective disease surveillance and monitoring tool, which serves the needs of its producer members. NCBA members voted to support adoption of the U.S. Animal Identification Plan (USAIP) as the national animal ID program. NCBA recommends other components of the plan — such as ID device distribution, hardware and system certification — be managed by the private sector, with decisions regarding animal data management for disease surveillance purposes to be resolved on a state-by-state basis.

► NCBA will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Agency (APHIS), state animal health agencies, and producers secure the necessary funds to properly implement the USAIP.

► NCBA members noted that while 30 mo. of age is the currently accepted earliest threshold for expression of BSE in cattle, dentition is not a highly accurate method for determining age.

NCBA resolved to assure that producers can use verifiable individual birth records as proof of age in lieu of dentition and encourage research to develop a more accurate method to determine the age of cattle at harvest.

► NCBA will demand that USDA require Canada to harmonize its bluetongue and anaplasmosis regulations



► **Above:** Angus Productions Inc. displayed its publications, *Angus Beef Bulletin* and *Angus Journal*, during the 2004 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show Jan. 28-31 in Phoenix, Ariz. The trade show is considered the largest beef cattle industry trade show in the country, with more than 250 exhibitors.

► **Right:** American Angus Association Regional Manager Rod Wesselman helps a trade show participant fill out a card requesting a subscription to the *Angus Beef Bulletin*.



► Kelly Flynn of Hidden Hollow Hideaway, Townsend, Mont., explained nature tourism and wildlife management to participants of the "Wildlife for Fun and Profit" session during Cattlemen's College®, sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health.



► Cattlemen's College participants enjoy in-depth, educational sessions focused on production, management and marketing prior to the convention.

prior to allowing additional beef products or live cattle imports from Canada. NCBA will make every effort to facilitate negotiations to harmonize all animal health regulations to allow year-round trade in cattle and beef.

► NCBA will continue to support vector-borne research, including surveillance, on diseases of economic importance to U.S. beef producers.

► Since current live-animal inspection methods are not sensitive enough to differentiate diseased disabled cattle from non-diseased disabled cattle, NCBA will support policies to prohibit the harvest of disabled (downer, non-ambulatory) cattle from the commercial food supply.

### Ag policy

► NCBA members resolved to fight for cattle feeding operations to be included in the definition of "agriculture" for purposes of USDA programs.

► Since government programs on specific commodities all have economic side effects, NCBA will ask for full preliminary impact studies by USDA on any new farm legislation relating to side effects on other segments of agriculture.

► NCBA members resolved to support the concepts included in President Bush's immigration initiative that attempt to provide immigrants legitimately working in various occupations to remain in the country, while ensuring that illegal immigrants return to their home countries.

► The trespass of Mexican cattle and entry of illegal immigrants from Mexico poses very serious animal health problems for cattlemen along the U.S.-Mexico border, including the possible outbreak of animal diseases. Therefore, NCBA resolved that property owners be reimbursed for damages caused by illegal immigrant activities, and that the Department of Homeland Security should do whatever possible to get such border situations under control.

► NCBA strongly opposes the use of Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds to augment Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or U.S. Forest Service (USFS) appropriations. NCBA says the funds should be used for individual landowner contracts.

### International markets

► NCBA shall continually monitor international trade issues to assure U.S. beef producers have fair and equal access to the markets of competing exporting countries.

► NCBA will continue to ask for full funding of the Market Access Program (MAP), or any successor program, and

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## Bylaws change gives every NCBA member the right to vote

Members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Jan. 31 concluded their annual meeting in Phoenix by transferring power on policy decisions back to the rank-and-file membership. By changing the bylaws of the national organization in separate unanimous votes, NCBA members and the board of directors verified a system that ensures policy decisions begin and end with the members at home.

The bylaws change approved at the convention ensures that NCBA members will see an official policy ballot in the February issue of *Beef Business Bulletin*. The ballot will include all new or amended policy passed by the NCBA board of directors and ratified or amended during the annual NCBA Membership Meeting at the Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show.

For the mail ballot election to be valid, there must be at least a 20% return rate of the ballots, and that must include a 20% return rate from four of the seven NCBA regions.

Under the new bylaws, the NCBA board of directors can approve, reject or amend policy with a simple majority vote. Proposals that pass the board must be approved in the membership meeting with a simple majority vote. Policy passed by the board can be amended in the membership meeting with a 2/3 vote. Also, policy rejected by the Board can be brought back for consideration with a 2/3 vote, and then passed by a simple majority.

The final policies that emerge from the membership meeting then will be forwarded to the entire membership by mail ballot. For mail ballots to be valid, they must be completed and returned within 30 days to NCBA's auditors, Ehrhardt, Keefe, Steiner & Hottman, PC.



► Certified Angus Beef LLC staff members John Stika (right), director of supply development and packing, and Rod Schoenbine (second from right), coordinator of producer programs and data services, serve samples of *Certified Angus Beef*® during the trade show.



► Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman addressed participants Jan. 29 during the opening general session of the 2004 Cattle Industry Annual Convention. Veneman declared 2003 a landmark year for U.S. agriculture, noting record cattle prices and a strengthening economy, as well as the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy within its borders.



► Gene Kranz, keynote speaker during the opening general session, told the crowd gathered in the Phoenix Civic Plaza that "failure is not an option." As the leader of the team of flight directors who brought the Apollo 13 space crew safely back to Earth in April 1970, Kranz compared the teamwork and leadership needed in that situation to the requirements of the beef industry today.



► Susan Rhode, director of communications and public relations for the American Angus Association, answers questions regarding Association services. Rhode and other Association staffers fielded Association-related questions from visitors during the trade show.

strongly favors making funds available for export promotions of beef and beef products.

► Members will continue to lead U.S. beef producers in facilitating marketing channels to encourage exports of source-verified, hormone-free beef by working to resolve international inspection inequities and other technical barriers and to prevent additional barriers from developing.

► NCBA members resolved that all products in all sectors should be included in trade agreements negotiated by the United States. They agreed that the United States should not allow provisions that would exclude products or similarly limit negotiators' flexibility since it establishes a dangerous precedent in trade agreements. Such a precedent could allow foreign governments to negotiate trade agreements that do not provide complete liberalization for U.S. beef exports.

### Live cattle

► Cattle producers renewed policy on mandatory price reporting, resolving that NCBA take appropriate action with the USDA and Congress to require that any U.S. packer annually controlling or harvesting 50,000 head or more be required to report within 24 hours the price and terms of purchase of all cattle purchased. Members requested immediate mandatory volume and price reporting be achieved for boxed beef, beef imports and beef exports.

► NCBA voted to renew its support for reform of the Jones Act to allow the use of foreign-owned or -built livestock carriers to ship cattle between Hawaii and the U.S. mainland.

► Members voted to support an increase in the daily price limit in live and feeder cattle futures from \$1.50 per hundredweight (cwt.) to \$2 per cwt. They resolved to support that after two consecutive limit closings in the same direction, the subsequent day's limit should be set at \$3 and remain at \$3 until there is no limit move, at which time it would revert to \$2.

► NCBA resolved to support the American Trucking Association in efforts to standardize truck length and weights for vehicles used on federal, state and county public roads that are constructed with federal funds to allow gross weights of more than 80,000 pounds (lb.).

► Members of NCBA agreed that their president will appoint a commission on animal ID, and this commission will report to NCBA's

appropriate policy committees, responsible for: 1) establishing guidelines to help producers comply with any mandatory government ID program, 2) identifying and establishing standards for an audit process for ID goods and services that companies wish to present to NCBA for a "Beef USA" seal of approval, 3) studying the need and usefulness of a USDA process-verified or International Organization for Standardization (ISO)-approved producer certification, 4) providing strategic counsel for a producer education program for animal ID, and more.

### Knowledge and research

► NCBA encourages USDA and the industry to pursue the development of a National Center of Excellence for Beef Cattle Education and Research.

### Federal lands

NCBA members renewed many resolutions on the detailed principles of federal lands grazing management and grazing policy, wildlife programs, fencing requirements, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), public land agencies, water permitting, range monitoring, wild burros and more.

► Members resolved to work with agencies to amend requirements for fences, to allow all livestock fences to be built up to a 52-inch (in.) height, and to oppose policy requiring permittees and private landowners to construct and maintain fences to exclude livestock from riparian areas without consultation and cooperation.

► NCBA voted to oppose the proposal in

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► **Left:** Henry Gardiner (seated, right) of Gardiner Angus Ranch, Ashland, Kan., poses with his family. Gardiner was named the national winner of the 2004 Vision Award during the final evening of the convention. The award, sponsored by Ford Motor Co. and the National Cattlemen's Foundation, recognizes beef industry leaders who take innovative steps to make their operations more profitable and efficient.

► **Roy Ash (front, left) and John Wilkins (back, left) of Llangollen Farms, Middleburg, Va., were among land stewards from seven ranching operations recognized at the convention as regional winners of the 2004 Environmental Stewardship Award Program, sponsored by Dow AgroSciences. Llangollen won the award for Region I after being nominated by the *Angus Journal*. Work Family Ranch, San Miguel, Calif., won the overall award.**



► **Left:** Jan Lyons, an Angus producer from Manhattan, Kan., became the 2004 NCBA president during the Stakeholder's Congress on the last day of the convention. Lyons addressed voters and participants of the meeting and shared her outlook for the beef industry.

► **Below:** Four universities competed in the 2004 National Cattlemen's Foundation American Society of Animal Science Academic Quadrathlon during the last day of the trade show. Colorado State University students (on right) beat other teams from Iowa State University, Texas A&M and the University of Connecticut.



HR 3446 to manage bison in Yellowstone National Park.

► NCBA policy supports a voluntary shared stewardship program and seeks to include permittee/agency monitoring, and pooled forage arrangements for grazing that give priority to existing ranching operations, new ranchers or associations of ranchers, and seeks to include stewardship contracts for grazing and collaborative stewardship of public lands.

► Members resolved that existing wilderness areas/study areas should be re-examined and only those that meet the criteria specified in the Wilderness Act of 1964 should remain wilderness or wilderness study areas. All other areas should be released back to multiple-use management.

### Tax and credit

► NCBA members made numerous renewals to existing tax policy priorities dealing with general permit process, tax code changes, unemployment issues, budget and more.

► They renewed their fight for permanent elimination of federal estate taxes.

### Property rights

► NCBA members renewed policy on property rights, including NCBA's position on wildlife services programs, animal feeding operations (AFOs), Reclamation Act, Global Climate Treaty, livestock manure, wetlands, disaster relief, animal damage control, Mississippi National River Recreational Area (MNRRA) Plan, Rails to Trails, universal soil loss equation, emergency replacement and repair of private property, federal lands acquisition, open range and more.

► NCBA renewed its promise to work toward the use of EQIP money for all sizes of operations for the best use of the funds available and/or the development of new cost-sharing and technical assistance programs that would allow for the participation of all sizes of livestock operations.

► NCBA will continue to encourage every state beef cattle association to maintain an active position on their state's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) coalition steering committee.

► NCBA continues to oppose including public access to private property as a condition of, or in the prioritization process for, receiving federal cost-share funds for conservation and other farm programs.

► NCBA will seek the creation of a National Sage Grouse Scientific Review Team



► Doc Blakely entertained convention-goers with his presentation, titled "To Soar With Eagles," during the Cattle Industry Awards Program lunch Jan. 31. Blakely encouraged participants to rise above challenges using the principles of faith, service, wisdom and the life of action.



► John and Robyn Kleiboeker, California, Mo., won four Certified Angus Beef steak fillets in a drawing at the API booth. Agriculture Secretary Veneman drew the winning subscription request from more than 80 entries from new subscribers that day.



► Angie Denton, API director of Web marketing, posts an article onto [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com) — API's Web site containing real-time coverage of the convention and trade show. The Web site contains proceedings papers, audio files, PowerPoint® presentations and articles covering convention meetings. The site is sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc.



► Bill Beal, animal scientist at Virginia Tech, used volunteers to explain the estrus cycle of a cow to attendees of the "Beef Cow Reproduction" session during Cattlemen's College. He said to be a successful producer, you must first understand the estrus cycle of a cow.

to provide information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to aid the service in its review of the petitions to list the greater sage grouse on the endangered species list. NCBA shall seek the active participation and assistance of the USFWS in the creation of western state greater sage grouse conservation plans.

► Regarding endangered species, NCBA voted to insist that scientific data be presented and/or studies be conducted that conclusively demonstrate what the species historic range was, how the demographic of that present-day historic range has changed and if it is still suitable habitat for the species in question. NCBA will urge federal agencies to work as partners with the states in developing measurable recovery goals for every listed species in order to ensure a higher likelihood of program success.

► USDA is currently contemplating the reorganization and merging of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Rural Development Agency. NCBA members strongly oppose closing USDA field offices, which would adversely affect the ability of

members to have access to USDA programs. NCBA very strongly opposes the cojoining of computer technology functions, which can compromise confidentiality of private information.

For more information on the Policy Resolutions and Directives from the Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show, contact the NCBA Washington, D.C., office at (202) 347-0228 or visit <http://hill.beef.org>.



**Editor's Note:** This summary of policy initiatives was provided by NCBA. For real-time coverage of the event provided by Angus Productions Inc. (API), visit [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com). The Web site is sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc., and includes audios, PowerPoint® presentations and proceedings of many of the presentations, as well as photos and summaries of the winners.