BEEF BUSINESS

by Julie Mais, editor

In this month's "Beef Business," we present remarks about record-setting semen sale numbers, international transparency initiatives and government actions for the protection of the U.S. food supply.

NAAB reports record sales

The National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) members report annual units for the categories of domestic sales, export sales, custom collected, and imported units for dairy and beef breeds. With 95% of the U.S. artificial insemination (AI) industry represented by NAAB members, these annual statistics give an unprecedented reflection of U.S. cattle semen sales.

The U.S. bovine semen industry had a record year in 2018 as it achieved more than 60 million total units reported for all categories combined. This exceeded the previous record amount established in 2017 by 3.7 million units representing an overall annual increase of 6.5%. The total number of dairy units increased by 1.68% establishing a new record with 49.1 million units while beef units also set a new record reaching 11.7 million units. Dairy and beef exports along with domestic beef units made significant contributions to the new annual record.

The domestic dairy units reported for the U.S. declined by 5.7% or 1.3 million units with a market size of 21.8 million dairy units. However, domestic beef units sold in the U.S. increased by 1.5 million units representing an increase of 59%. While custom collected dairy units declined by 228,909 units, the custom collected beef units increased by 975,671 units for a net gain of 746,762 total custom collected units.

New records were set for both dairy and beef exported units. Just over 24.5 million units of dairy semen were exported representing an increase of 2.5 million units for an 11.4% increase over 2017. Additionally, beef semen exports reached 3.97 million units for a 12.4% increase. Top three export markets for total units in 2018 were Brazil, China and Mexico.

Source: NAAB

Virtual reality beef ranch tours gain global audience

In an effort to share more about beef farming and ranching with audiences across the globe, Beef. It's What's For Dinner. is making its virtual ranch tours available in Korean, Japanese and Spanish.

The project, made possible by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) and National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), contractors to the Beef Checkoff, and Iowa Beef Industry Council, will offer a variety of new audiences an opportunity to virtually experience the U.S. beef industry and production practices.

"International customers are very interested in the story behind U.S. beef, but most live in large cities and have never seen the clean open spaces where cattle are raised," said Dan Halstrom, USMEF president and CEO. "These videos allow international audiences to feel like they are right in the middle of daily life on a family ranch or farm, and a key component of that story is the tremendous care that goes into raising the animals. From genetics to grazing and feeding practices to environmental stewardship, these families make the investments necessary to raise the finest beef in the world."

The three translated 360-degree videos virtually transport the viewer to a ranch to learn more about how cattle are raised, including the ways beef farmers and ranchers care for the environment and their animals.

The 360-degree videos debuted in English last year at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen. They are available on the Beef. It's What's For Dinner.

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website at *www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/raising-beef/360-videos.*

Source: Beef Checkoff

USDA and FDA to jointly oversee cell-cultured food products

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced March 7 a formal agreement to jointly oversee the production of human food products derived from the cells of livestock and poultry.

FSIS and FDA released a formal agreement to address the regulatory oversight of human food produced using this new technology. The formal agreement describes the oversight roles and responsibilities for both agencies and how they will collaborate to regulate the development and entry of these products into commerce. This shared regulatory approach will ensure that cell-cultured products derived from the cell lines of livestock and poultry are produced safely and are accurately labeled.

Under the formal agreement, the agencies agree upon a joint regulatory framework wherein FDA oversees cell collection, cell banks, and cell growth and differentiation. A transition from FDA to FSIS oversight will occur during the cell harvest stage. FSIS will oversee the production and labeling of human food products derived from the cells of livestock and poultry.

Last October, FSIS and FDA held a joint public meeting to discuss the use of cell culture technology to develop products derived from livestock and poultry. The public meeting focused on the potential hazards, oversight considerations, and labeling of cell-cultured food products derived from animals.

Source: USDA

USDA protections against African swine fever

The USDA announced March 6 additional steps to keep African swine fever (ASF) from entering the U.S., even as the disease spreads internationally. These steps strengthen the protections announced last fall after the deadly swine disease reached China. The goal remains to protect the nation's swine industry from this disease. ASF does not affect people, nor is it a food safety issue.

In coordination with the pork industry, USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Greg Ibach has identified and shared enhanced activities to intensify multi-agency efforts to prevent ASF's entry into the U.S.

ASF is a highly contagious and deadly viral disease affecting both domestic and feral pigs in all age groups. It is spread by contact with the body fluids of infected animals. It can also be spread by ticks that feed on infected animals. For more information, visit the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service ASF website at *www.aphis.usda.gov*. AJ

Source: USDA

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