

# Setting the PACE

by Susan Waters, director of communications and public relations



## The back-to-school basics of FOOD SAFETY

The last leg of summer is upon us, and before we know it, children will be heading back to school, which means moms and dads across the country will be packing lunches as youngsters head out the door. Today's hectic family lifestyle results in parents and children both thinking less about food safety. Many parents are gone to work before the school bus arrives, leaving kids holding a bag full of perishable lunch foods.

As producers of food, safe food preparation and handling are important issues for cattlemen. Make it a priority to educate a group of consumers in your area



about food safety before the school year begins. Here's a refresher course on the dos and don'ts of brown bagging it:

- Always keep it clean. Make sure your hands, food-preparation surfaces and utensils are clean. Use hot, soapy water to effectively get rid of bacteria. Teach children to wash their hands before they eat and to wash fruits and vegetables before packing them in a lunch.
- Keep hot foods hot by using an insulated bottle. Fill the bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Empty the bottle and fill with piping-hot food. Keep the lid on until lunchtime.
- Cold foods should stay cold, so invest in a freezer gel pack and an insulated lunch box or bag. Freezer gel packs will keep foods cold until lunchtime, but they are not recommended for all-day storage. Any perishables not eaten at lunch should be discarded.
- True "brown baggers" should include a cold source in the sack, such as a freezer gel pack or a frozen sandwich. Because brown paper bags tend to become soggy or to leak as cold food thaws, be sure to use an extra paper bag to create a double layer, which will insulate the food better, too.
- Tell children to use a refrigerator at school, if available. If not, make sure they keep their lunch out of direct sunlight and away from radiators, baseboards and other heat sources in the classroom.
- Keep a supply of shelf-stable foods for easy packing, including fresh fruits and vegetables, crackers, peanut butter sandwiches, packaged pudding and canned fruits.
- Freeze single-sized juice packs overnight for use as a cold source.
- If sandwiches are made the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until it's time to head out the door.

### Stellar STEWARDS

Any news that involves farmers and ranchers and the environment is always of interest to consumers. Mainstream media often cover the negative aspects of agriculture and the environment. I ran across some good news and wanted to pass it on to you.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) commissioned a survey of 1,000 producers about on-farm environmental practices. Results indicated:

- 91%** conduct soil tests;
- 85%** have areas on their farm or ranch that support wildlife;
- 85%** control brush and weeds;
- 82%** incorporate a grazing-management program;
- 79%** monitor range conditions;
- 71%** leave cover for wildlife;
- 68%** have man-made stock ponds;
- 64%** provide food for wildlife during the winter;
- 62%** plant native grasses;
- 46%** manage or protect riparian areas;
- 40%** monitor surface-water quality;
- 40%** plant feed for wildlife;
- 38%** have planted trees in the past five years;

- 37%** have wetland areas;
- 31%** delay hay harvest until after nesting season for waterfowl and upland game birds; and
- 24%** keep land for wildlife habitat.

Do these figures surprise you? Probably not, but they may surprise many consumers who view beef production as unfriendly to the environment. Cattle producers care about the land that supports their livelihood. Keep up the good work and, more importantly, go out and spread the good news about cattlemen's efforts to preserve the environment.

### Producer kits AVAILABLE

Jump-start your PACE efforts with a producer-information kit. The kits are available free of charge from the Association's public relations department and contain information on nutrition, beef safety, environmental stewardship, consumer statistics, and many other facts and figures that will help you promote beef in your area.

These kits will supply you with great ammunition for interviews with the media, letters to the editor, presentations to all age groups or a chat with your representative about legislative issues. Don't be afraid to pitch in your part in setting the PACE.

To request a kit, call the public relations department at (816) 383-5100 or contact me via e-mail.

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### The Last WORD...

The statistics on sanity are that one of every four Americans is suffering from some form of mental illness. Think of your three best friends. If they are OK ... then it's you.

—Anonymous