

2021 BIF Symposium

Iowa hosts 53rd Annual Beef Improvement Federation Research Symposium & Convention.

by Shauna Hermel, Angus Beef Bulletin editor

Nearly 400 cattlemen, academia and industry affiliates gathered June 22-25 at the Des Moines Convention Center, Des Moines, Iowa, for the 2021 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Research Symposium & Convention. The 2½-day event featured a full day of tours in addition to educational programming focused on beef cattle breeding and genetic improvement.

Each full day featured a morning general session focused on broader issues, followed by an afternoon of technical breakout sessions focusing on beef production and genetic improvement organized by BIF's working committees.

Angus Media provides online coverage of the event at www.BIFconference.com, providing summaries of the sessions along with links to the recorded presentations in the Newsroom, as well as photos and announcements of this year's award winners on the Awards page. The site also features an Archive to coverage since 2002.

Symposium highlights

This year's event kicked off Tuesday afternoon, June 22, with a Young Producer Symposium designed for networking and to

equip young cattle producers with essential knowledge to grow their role in the business. Ranching for

Profit School Instructor John

Locke offered insights on profitability, and Ranch House Designs' Rachel

Cutrer provided tips on building a brand.

Brian McCulloh

moderated a panel

composed of three

fellow cattlemen — Steve

Radakovich, Bart Jones and

Mary Ann Kniebel — to address

“Breeding for Profitability: Keeping Balance for the Long Haul.”

The National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) symposium hosted Tuesday evening examined the increase in “beef-on-dairy” programs, in which dairy cows are bred to beef bulls or implanted with beef embryos. Alta Genetics' Don Trimmer gave an overview of current artificial insemination (AI) statistics. Lynn Boadwine of Boadwine Farms Inc. shared how and why his dairy is using the beef-on-dairy strategy. Randall Grimmus of Grimmus Cattle Co. shared insights on his calf-rearing/bull-service program for dairy producers.

Wednesday's general session — “Beef Industry: Where is it going?” — featured presentations by Michael Uetz, Midan Marketing; Jim Pillen, Pillen Family Farms; and Dan Thomson, Iowa State University Department of Animal

Science chair. Uetz shared consumer research pre- and post-pandemic, offering insight into five categories of beef consumers. Pillen offered a detailed look at how the now large integrated swine operation makes genetic progress. Thomson shared opportunities for increasing beef demand and selling more beef in today's marketplace.

Thursday's general session focused on precision livestock technology, with Alison Van Eenennaam starting the day with a discussion of gene editing and its role in the future. Precision Livestock Analytics' Justin Sexten addressed the broader role of technology in the beef industry, then moderated a panel of three individuals with specific examples of new technologies being applied. Pat Wall, Iowa State University Extension specialist, shared a smart-feed system being used to collect feed efficiency and animal health information in a research setting. Reiss Bruning of Bruning Farms provided insights on an individual animal monitoring system to record animal behaviors, and Cody Jorgensen of Jorgensen Land and Livestock shared his farms' experience with a virtual fencing system.

BIF committees presented six technical breakout sessions, covering topics ranging from “Milk: Benefit or Burden” to “Low-pass Sequencing Reveals Functional Genomics Affecting Cow Weight and Productivity.” Angus Genetics



Inc. (AGI) President Kelli Retallick-Riley presented the ramifications of ultrasound on body composition expected progeny differences (EPDs) in the “Advancements in End Product Improvement” breakout.

Special recognition


Gene Rouse and Doyle Wilson were recognized with the BIF Pioneer award for their contributions to the development of ultrasound and establishing its use in characterizing body composition in live animal evaluations. Galen Fink and Van Eenennaam were also presented Pioneer awards. Lee Leachman and Jane Parish were presented Continuing Service Awards.

Angus member Maci Mueller was awarded the 2021 Baker Cundiff Scholarship Award for her essay,

“Gene Editing as a Tool for Genetic Improvement of Beef Cattle.” Mueller is studying under Van Eenennaam at the University of California–Davis. Eva Hinrichsen, also an Angus member who is active in the Association’s junior program, received the undergraduate Wallace Memorial Scholarship for undergraduates. Gessica Franco, who attends Texas A&M University, won the Wallace Memorial Scholarship for graduate students.

Two Kansas ranches won producer-of-the-year honors, with Cow Camp Ranch of Lost Springs winning seedstock honors and W&S Ranch Inc. of Smith Center claiming the commercial title.

Angus member Matt Perrier, Eureka, Kan., was introduced as the 2021-2022 BIF president. Joe

Epperly, Albion, Neb., is the new vice president. AGI President Kelli Retallick-Riley and American Angus Association Commercial Industry Relations Director Troy Marshall also serve on the BIF Board of Directors. Angus member Gordon Jones, Lafayette, Tenn., also serves on the board. 

Editor's note: For comprehensive coverage of the event, visit www.BIFconference.com. For more information about BIF, visit www.beefimprovement.org.

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