

Cattlemen's College Opens



PHOTOS BY MIRANDA REIMAN

Educational program focuses on ways to improve profitability, productivity and sustainability.

by National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Education was the focus for the first days of the 2017 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show, with more than 1,250 cattlemen and women on hand for the 24th edition of Cattlemen's College®, sponsored by Zoetis Animal Health. The educational sessions focused on providing opportunities for participants to improve the profitability, productivity and sustainability of their farms and ranches.

"The focus of Cattlemen's College is to provide real-world solutions and ideas that participants can take home and apply to their operations. The information that panelists are providing at this year's event will provide ideas that can be applied right away," said Josh White, National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) executive director of producer education. "We have an impressive array of speakers representing every segment of the beef community. With five different educational tracks, participants can focus on their specific areas of interest. From changing consumer attitudes to topics focused on succession planning and specific animal

management information, each session was developed to help move our industry ahead."

The Cattlemen's College event began Tuesday afternoon with two sessions, "Turning Loss into Gain: Managing Risk to Improve Fertility," featuring Alison Van Eenennaam and Megan Rolf, who presented new research on cow herd fertility and its impact on profitability. A concurrent session featured Kent Andersen of Zoetis, who examined the use of genetic tools for building more productive cow herds and adding value to feeder and fed cattle.

Wednesday morning, Cameron Bruett, head of corporate affairs for JBS USA, spoke to a packed room about the changing consumer expectations for beef. He emphasized the need for every segment of the beef supply chain to better understand their customers to meet the needs of a changing industry. He also emphasized the significant challenges posed by competing proteins, an uncertain political environment and its impact on labor in the United States.

"Today, it's very difficult to find someone

to work in a packing plant," said Bruett. "Much of our labor force is comprised of first-generation immigrants, and they're great people, but we still face significant turnover and unplanned absenteeism among our workforce, and that makes it difficult to run



Cattle Industry Convention



► **Above:** More than 1,250 cattlemen and women attended the 24th edition of Cattlemen's College®, sponsored by Zoetis Animal Health. The educational program was hosted Jan. 31-Feb. 1 in conjunction with the 2017 Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville, Tenn.

► **Below** "Sustainability is much more than any single production practice," said Cameron Bruett, head of corporate affairs for JBS USA. "In order to evaluate the sustainability of the product, the profitability, social and environmental aspects must be considered equally."



a business. Ultimately, it makes it difficult to get our product out the door. That impacts the cattlemen and women who depend on the packers to supply beef to the consumers. The bottleneck in our industry isn't in the number of animals any more. The bottleneck is a labor shortage in the plant, and it's a major problem."

Bruett, who has played key roles in the beef sustainability movement, also spent time defining beef sustainability and illustrating the importance and benefits of the industry's path of continuous improvement.

"There are a lot of labels out there, but those labels aren't about sustainability," said Bruett. "Those labels are about a production practice, but sustainability is much more than any single production practice. In order to evaluate the sustainability of the product, the profitability, social and environmental aspects must be considered equally. Something may be good for the environment, but if it's not also profitable, then it's not sustainable.

"There's a great deal of concern that there's going to be a mandate about practices, but that's not what sustainability is about; it's about the end product. If that product is profitable, contributes to the social landscape and has positive environmental benefits, then it becomes sustainable," Bruett said.

That message resonated with the 200-plus collegiate Cattlemen's College participants in attendance at this year's event.

"It's encouraging to see so many college students in attendance," said White. "These students represent the future of the beef industry, and I'm proud that we've been able to put together an event that is providing them with information that they will be able to take forward and apply to their future careers. Ultimately, Cattlemen's College is designed to benefit and improve our industry, and I'm confident that these collegiate participants will help to create a bright future for our industry."

Presentations from the 2017 Cattlemen's College are available online. Cattlemen and women who were unable to attend the event in Nashville can take advantage of this online option at www.beefusa.org.

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Editor's Note: This article was provided by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. For more information, contact Ed Frank at 202-879-9125 or efrank@beef.org, or Shawna Newsome at 202-879-9138 or snewsome@beef.org.

Angus Media team coverage of Cattlemen's College.

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GENETIC SELECTION

Managing Genetic Risk to Improve Fertility

Reproduction has been called the single most important economic trait in beef cattle production. In recent years, numerous genetic defects have been identified as causes of reduced cow fertility or reproductive failure. Genetic defects may cause early embryonic death or abortion and, in some cases, an affected calf may be carried to term but die soon after birth. In any case, there are consequences to animal welfare and producer profitability.



► Lethal defects result from "broken genes," explained Megan Rolf, Kansas State University. To be affected, an animal must receive two copies of the allele associated with a specific defect, with one allele contributed by each carrier parent.

"Turning Loss Into Gain: Managing Genetic Risk to Improve Fertility" was the title of a Cattlemen's College® session during the 2017 Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville, Tenn. Talking about a management tool for avoiding or managing the mating of carriers of lethal recessive genes were geneticists Megan Rolf, assistant professor in the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry at Kansas State University, and Alison Van Eenennaam, cooperative extension specialist in animal genomics and biotechnology at the University of California-Davis.

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