



Consumer Focus

► by **Walt Barnhart**, National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Beef industry boosting 'Families in Motion' digital campaign

State beef councils continue to step up to extend digital advertising and promotion for beef across the country. Focusing on a new national "Families in Motion" campaign from the Beef Checkoff Program, they are delivering a message about beef's nutrition, versatility and ease of preparation to a more specific — but very critical — audience.

Focusing on millennial parents

The campaign is designed to reach millennial parents ages 25-34 and was launched in late June. It is targeted to cooking and/or health enthusiasts who are open to inspiration about their meals and seeking assistance on what to prepare, and how. Digital media purchases for the campaign will continue through October.

Included in the campaign are cooking techniques, nutrition information and recipes to meet the demands of these important consumers. The messages are promoted through a wide variety of digital platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, as well as Google search and banner advertising.

It also includes partnerships with online food sites Food52 and TasteMade, which provide helpful food and meal suggestions to many millennial consumers. Food52 will provide nearly 28 million impressions for beef, while TasteMade will feature full-length YouTube videos and shorter teasers.

The goal of the campaign is to get parents of young children to include beef in more meals by helping them see how beef's versatility and unique combination of nutrients gives each member of the family what they need to get through the day. Videos associated with the campaign inspire beef usage and inform consumers about beef's health benefits.

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landing page on the *Beef. It's What's For Dinner* website (www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/). Sixteen percent of visitors continue to other pages on the site.

States step up

Among state beef councils extending the campaign is the Michigan Beef Industry Commission (MBIC), which is extending the pre-roll video campaign on YouTube from August into October.

"We're pleased to extend the messages to the consumers in Michigan we're trying to reach," according to George Quackenbush, MBIC executive director. Results so far have been outstanding, Quackenbush says, with several thousand views in just the first few weeks.

Some states are pooling funds at the regional level to create some of the same kinds of benefits. State beef councils in Kansas, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska, for instance, are enhancing the reach of the campaign.

The additional effort in these four states will generate at least a half million video views of checkoff messages across the states.

According to Reid Blossom, executive vice president of the Illinois Beef Association

(IBA), this results in a particularly efficient use of checkoff dollars.

"It's a good deal for Illinois producers," Blossom says. "We can leverage our checkoff dollars across the four states and reach some critical high-population areas in our state."

Kevin Thielen, executive director of the Kansas Beef Council,

says producers on his beef council board recognize the efficiencies of joining forces.

"The fact that several states are going together makes a difference; it helps you get a better buy," he says. "We're increasing the reach of the national buy and extending the message into our own markets."

That means being able to focus on big markets such as Kansas City, he adds, "to get our cost per reach down."

In addition to extended reach, state beef councils also see value in using the effective messages the campaign conveys.

"The Families in Motion campaign really resonates with people," according to Thielen. "It continues to tell the message that beef fits into a balanced, healthy diet."

"It's a targeted approach," says Quackenbush. "It allows us to target who our videos will reach. About 80% of the audience we're reaching is identified as parents. That's important to know. We're focused to get our message to the right audience."

Blossom agrees that a focused approach is critical, and says the digital campaign makes sense from a number of angles.

“The fastest-growing segment of consumers is millennials,” Blossom says. “This campaign allows us to spotlight that demographic, which is extremely effective. Farmers know about efficiency; it’s what we try to emphasize when we’re running our farms.”

Meghan Pusey, senior director of integrated communications for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), a beef checkoff contractor, says focus definitely plays an enormous role in the new campaign.

“This program is creating a holistic, rather than a scattered, approach,” she says. “We’re also pooling dollars to have a bigger reach. It’s helping us increase the visibility of the message.”

Cost is just one reason the beef industry has adopted a digital approach. “Consumer research shows that this is the way we should be delivering the information,” Blossom says. “Over the course of the last three years, the Illinois Beef Association has changed our approach so that we are only doing consumer marketing through digital.”

This isn’t to say that other forms of marketing don’t have value, Blossom says. “Often, other forms of promotion are more shotgun in nature. This is definitely a rifle approach.”

Another reason state beef council executives and their boards value partnering in campaigns like this is because they get direct feedback on how well they work for the producers funding them.

“Not only can we utilize a focused strategy through our digital platforms, we have good state metrics for them to analyze their results,” Pusey says. “It’s the best of both worlds.”

“It’s exciting to know we have numbers to measure our success,” says Quackenbush.

State councils have weighed in on both the development and the implementation of the campaign. The national team, for instance, received significant feedback from the Federation Advisory Council, which is a group of executives representing state beef councils on the Federation of State Beef Councils. Webinars for council staffs and direct contact between staffs at the national and state levels help broaden the collaboration.

Producers seeing value

In addition to its digital extension to specific consumer audiences, Blossom says IBA is utilizing the Families in Motion videos at in-store grocery promotions

and showcasing the campaign videos to producers in the northern and southern parts of the states. This not only increases beef promotion, it helps demonstrate how producer checkoff dollars are being spent.

Even so, bringing some producers into the digital age can sometimes be a challenge, admits Quackenbush.

“Our producer leaders realize, though, that we are not the consumer we need to be reaching,” he says. “The consumer has changed, and their purchasing decisions have become more complicated. They’re looking for information using

smartphones, tablets and computers. Our producer leaders know we need to meet the consumer where they are.”

In addition to the videos and partnerships, there are numerous tools and forms of assistance available to state beef councils that allow them to extend the campaign while coordinating promotion programs in their own states. Banner ads, social media posts and imagery, and video commercials in a variety of lengths fit the theme and can be used in a state’s campaign. New radio advertising is also being made available through the national Beef Checkoff Program, while planning assistance is offered to help coordinate and maximize the state/national promotion effort. Additional materials are in production.

Just beginning

The Families in Motion video campaign

runs into October, but that won’t be the end of the effort at either the state or national level. MBIC, for instance, will continue to utilize Families in Motion in its blogs and on Facebook, and it is working with a retailer that is using campaign materials in their store promotions. Blossom says they plan to invest in a future round of the video campaign.

Pusey says there is also much more in store for the campaign nationally.

“It’s just the beginning,” she says. “Through checkoff-funded research we’ve developed more direct creative ideas and content. We will leverage what’s created well into the spring and apply learnings for new creative approaches for years to come.

“The bottom line is we have a checkoff investment that is giving us a chance to generate tremendous visibility for beef;” she says, “as well as quantifiable touchpoints with those consumers who buy and prepare our product.”



Editor’s Note: *The Federation of State Beef Councils is a division of the NCBA, which is a contractor to the National Beef Checkoff Program. The program is administered by the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, with oversight provided by the USDA.*

The National Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. The checkoff assesses \$1 per head on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle, in addition to a comparable assessment on imported beef and beef products. States retain up to 50¢ on the dollar and forward the other 50¢ per head to the Cattlemen’s Beef Promotion and Research Board. Walt Barnhart is director of federation communications for the NCBA.

State beef councils are boosting the beef industry’s digital advertising and promotion nationwide.