

# Producer Confidence In Beef Checkoff Growing



Independent study finds five-point positive shift in producer attitudes toward checkoff.

**A** survey of 1,200 beef and dairy producers nationwide was conducted in late December 2010 and early January 2011 by the independent firm Aspen Media & Market Research. This research found that producers' attitudes toward the beef checkoff program are quite favorable and have improved noticeably in the past year.

Currently, about three in four approve of the program, a five-point positive shift in the past 12 months. There only has been one other time in checkoff history when approval levels have increased by at least this amount in a one-year period. The last time approval levels were this high was in 1994.

Producers have consistently tended to rate the checkoff positively. In the past five years, approval levels have ranged between 68% and the current level of 74%.

"Knowledge about the checkoff continues to predict favorability toward it," says Wesley Grau, a cow-calf farmer from Grady, N.M.,

and chair of the Joint Producer Communications Committee (JPCC).

"Producers who are 'very' or 'somewhat' well-informed are more likely to approve of the checkoff, particularly among those who say they are very well-informed," he said. "Among this group, 86% approve of the program (51% of them strongly), while only 10% disapprove. This finding marks a significant 8% positive shift in the past year. This tells me producers are not only getting to know their checkoff, but are also very satisfied with what they learn."

To that measure, the underlying value of the checkoff remains strong: a large majority (81%) feel the checkoff program has helped contribute to a positive trend in consumer demand for beef; a similar number (80%) believe the program has value in weak economic conditions or are confident (77%) it is on their side during a crisis.

And, when it comes to their own operations, many producers believe the

program has benefited them. A large majority (68%) believe it helps contribute to the profitability of their operations, up sharply from a year ago.

"A key goal as identified by the JPCC is that farmers and ranchers have a positive view of the way the checkoff is being managed. They trust in the leadership and the decisions being made about their checkoff investment," says Grau. "This research shows that management of the checkoff is viewed favorably, with 66% saying they believe it is being managed well."

A copy of the research report is available online.

For more information about your beef checkoff investment, go to [www.mybeefcheckoff.com](http://www.mybeefcheckoff.com).



**Editor's Note:** The above article is adapted from a news release provided by the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board.

## Cattlemen Honored for BQA Efforts

*Beef and dairy award winners recognize importance of BQA principles on their own farms.*

Two producers were honored during the 2011 Cattle Industry Convention with the annual national Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Award, created to recognize outstanding beef and dairy producers from across the country who incorporate BQA principles as part of the day-to-day activities on their operations. The winners were selected based on their commitment to BQA while operating sustainable cattle operations.

Winning the 2011 beef award was Mike Milicevic of Lykes Bros. Inc., Okeechobee, Fla. John Ligo, LiTerra Farms of Mercer, Pa., won BQA honors for dairy.

The Lykes Bros. story began more than 100 years ago with Howell Tyson Lykes. Today, Lykes Bros. Inc. is still family-owned and continues to build on the foundation laid by previous generations.

The Lykes Ranch encompasses 337,000 acres in Glades and Highlands counties, Fla., and is one of the largest contiguous pieces of land in the state. The property is a tapestry of farmland, forests and pastures, woven together with wetlands and wildlife corridors.

Since the property covers many different land types, Lykes employs multiple land-use practices to make the most efficient, economical and appropriate use of the land. And, with more than 17,500 head of cattle, the Lykes Ranch currently is the fourth-largest cow-calf operation in the United States.

The ranch stresses environmental, social and economic sustainability in all of its operations, realizing that all three have become necessary for long-term success. Lykes Bros. employs best management practices for water quality throughout its entire operation. It also recently completed a greenhouse gas inventory of all its operations to determine its carbon footprint.

Innovative BQA practices employed by Lykes Ranch include:

- ▶ Selection of bulls for a docile disposition in order to reduce handling stress, increase employee safety, carcass quality and feeding efficiency.
  - ▶ Proper nutrition and a vigilant health program ensure a hardy calf. Ranch hands ensure that custom mineral is available to the cattle at all times.
  - ▶ Forage analyses along with soil samples are taken periodically to maximize forage growth and nutritional value.
  - ▶ The calves are age- and source-verified and shipped with comprehensive BQA documentation.
  - ▶ Lykes management saw a need for a universal BQA training program encompassing proper cattle handling techniques to reduce stress and health problems with the intent to produce a consistent product from all units on the ranch. Through training, training and more training, and with the help of University of Florida staff, local veterinarians, pharmaceutical representatives and in-house staff, they have made the BQA system a part of the operational culture at the ranch.
- "It does not cost much to implement this program, but it pays huge dividends to the industry as a whole," says Milicevic. "Our only regret in the application is that we ran out of space to go into detail on all of the little things we do on a daily basis. BQA practices should be considered a model for the rest of the world and can be considered a long-term solution to sustainable livestock production."

The National BQA award winners are selected annually by a committee of representatives from universities, state beef councils and cattle industry groups.

For more information about the beef checkoff or BQA program, visit [www.bqa.org](http://www.bqa.org), [www.dbqa.org](http://www.dbqa.org) or [www.mybeefcheckoff.com](http://www.mybeefcheckoff.com).

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