



Next Generation

► Postcard from an NJAA director and state spotlights

Life is a highway

“Life is a highway; I want to ride it all night long. If you’re going my way, I want to drive it all night long.”

— *“Life is a Highway,” written and recorded by Tom Cochrane, remake by Chris LeDoux*

My friends all know that I’m a big country western fan, so they weren’t surprised by my response to a question asked of me during the 2007 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Annual Meeting. I remember feeling nauseous, nervous and very uncertain during my speech and the first impromptu question.

Then I was asked what my theme song was. In that instant a huge load was lifted from my shoulders, my heartbeat slowed and I became relaxed and confident. My response was “Life is a Highway,” because this is truly how I see life.

Looking back over the last 12 years of my membership in the NJAA, I’ve been



Brandon Creamer

extremely successful, but don’t let that fool you. There have been a few bumps along life’s highway, and there have been a few detours. I’m a survivor; I don’t let the past dictate the future, and if it gets too rough I’m not afraid to take an alternate route and try something different.

For instance, I thought my world had come to an end when I was 10 years old

2008 National Junior Angus Show Contest Winner

Senior Division Prepared Public Speaking

The Good, Bad and Ugly of Biofuels

by *Rachel Bartholomew, Archie, Mo.*

“I believe that to live and work on a good farm, or to be engaged in other agricultural pursuits, is pleasant as well as challenging; for I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life and hold an inborn fondness for those associations which, even in hours of discouragement, I cannot deny.”

Some of you may recognize this as being the second paragraph of the *National FFA Creed*. When thinking about the current status of American agriculture, this statement rings true for many producers. The tremendous changes occurring in agriculture today are greatly affecting the livestock sector of agriculture. More specifically, the production of ethanol, biodiesel and other biofuels is currently having an immense impact on every individual engaged in the beef industry.

As with most changes, there are numerous consequences, and the current changes in agriculture are no exception. It’s important to look at a situation from multiple angles, and when thinking about the impact of biofuels to the beef industry, the consequences can be broken into the good, the bad and the ugly.

The good

An eternal optimist, I’d like to start with the good. Admittedly, the surge of interest in and production of biofuels has added

numerous challenges to beef producers nationwide. However, this surge has also led to greatly increased research into capitalizing on opportunities for profit. One such opportunity is the use of beef tallow to produce biofuel.

Tallow is a rendered fat extracted from beef adipose tissue. Using a process similar to that of using plant oils, biodiesel can be made easily from tallow. One major advantage of using beef tallow in biofuel production is that it is cleaner and more efficient than plant oil when burned in diesel engines.

However, biodiesel from beef tallow also has its disadvantages that tend to make it impractical in certain climates. Obviously, beef tallow is not the final answer to repairing the relationship between the beef industry and biofuels. More research is needed, but this is just one possible way to add value to the beef rendering process, and one way the beef industry may be able to benefit from the biofuel revolution.

A second bright spot in the beef industry and biofuels relationship is the great increase in research involving alternative feedstuffs in feeding and finishing cattle.

As we all know, corn has been the traditional ingredient in feed rations for most feedlots in the U.S. Today, research on

the efficiency and practicality of alternative feedstuffs is being conducted in industry and on numerous university campuses. These feedstuffs include wet and dry distillers’ grains, corn coproducts such as corn gluten, and other lesser-known products.

Some argue that these feedstuffs do not yield the energy or efficiency of corn in beef finishing diets. It can be assumed, though, that the more research and effort to create economically sustainable alternatives will only serve to enhance and benefit beef production practices.

The bad

It is undeniable that when discussing this issue, we can all see the “bad” ways in which biofuels are impacting the beef industry. Increased costs of production, particularly of feed due to corn and soybeans, are driving down profits for all stakeholders in the beef industry and having drastic impacts.

The June 20 *Cattle-Fax Update* estimated that the cost of production, focusing purely on the live cattle side, has increased 56% in just three years. As a specific example, in 2005 the cost to raise and finish a fed steer was \$726 per head, compared to an estimated \$1,131 per head in 2008.

This begs the question that many producers are already asking themselves — “How is the average beef producer with less than 40 head going to be able to stay in business?” Many producers are already realizing that they can’t. According to the latest reports by USDA, cow

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and my family moved to the western slope of Colorado. This was certainly not a path I wanted to go down; I wasn't ready to leave the friends I had known since preschool.

In the last Rocky movie, Rocky Balboa says to his son, "You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain't how hard you hit; it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward." So with that in mind, I put all my energy and time into preparing my Angus heifer for an upcoming show. It was at that show I met a young lady who was preparing to run for the NJAA

Board that summer. She sparked my interest in the NJAA. And that path led me to where I am today.

One of the greatest road trips I've taken has been this past year serving on the NJAA Board. I have met so many wonderful people, visited places I've never been before, and acquired knowledge and skills that will serve me for the rest of my life. None of this would have been possible without the support of my parents, friends, teachers, American Angus Association staff and Board members and Angus breeders who took the

time to give this road warrior directions and helpful advice.

I challenge all of you to try new routes; don't be afraid to ask for directions along the way. Don't worry about hitting a bump or even a big pothole, because these rough spots on life's highway build character. And keep in mind, if you just set the cruise control, you may miss opportunities along the way; sometimes you need to slow it down a bit and enjoy the moment.

— **by Brandon Creamer, Colorado**

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slaughter is already up 0.5% over last year, which was the largest cow slaughter on record. Additionally, heifer placements in feedlots have already increased 6.5% over last year.

For the first time in years, livestock producers are being featured in primetime news due to these very same issues just discussed. Consumers are beginning to see increased prices at the grocery store and are asking why.

The June 20 *Cattle-Fax Update* also reported that much of the increased production cost, to this point, is being absorbed along the production line. In fact, retail beef has only increased 29¢ per pound (lb.), or 8%, since 2005. If consumers were seeing the total brunt of increased production costs fall on their shoulders, beef prices would have to increase at least 20% and average near \$4.36 per lb.

Consumers can plan to see costs continue to rise, but they won't be bearing the brunt of the load. In a *CBS Evening News* report on July 2 of this year, Steve Foglesong, vice president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and owner of Black Gold Ranch in Illinois, presented the fact that increased production costs must result in a trickle-down effect to consumers in the grocery store. Foglesong stressed that, in order to stay in business, producers must, unfortunately, push some cost on to consumers.

The ugly

To bring this discussion of the beef and

biofuels relationship full circle, we must face the "ugly" impacts. All those engaged in, and affected by, the beef industry must face that today our industry can essentially be described as treading water. We continue to circle the same problems, with one problem leading quickly to another.

Increased production costs are obviously decreasing profits in each sector of the industry. Many cow-calf producers can't seem to make things balance economically and are forced to sell most or all of their herds or look for more-cost-effective strategies for finishing cattle, such as backgrounding calves longer. Herd reductions decrease the overall supply of beef and an increase in backgrounding cattle longer will eventually lead to decreased forage quality and availability.

The current economic situation in the United States is leaving many consumers feeling the crunch, especially at the grocery store, where all food prices are continuing to increase. When will we ever see light at the end of the tunnel?

With so many factors of the current situation out of our control, producers are seeking ways to increase profits. In an article released by CattleNetwork in June, there are management practices that cost little or nothing to implement, but can have significant financial benefits. A few of these practices include enrolling in a source- and age-verified program, such as Angus Source®; dehorning calves prior

to weaning; castrating bull calves prior to marketing, which can result in sale price increases of nearly \$3.50 per hundredweight (cwt.); culling open cows; pulling bulls or culling later-calving cows; producing calves to fit a predetermined market; and keeping records to make management and marketing decisions. These practices sound and are so easy to implement, and producers should take them under serious consideration when looking to stay afloat.

The impact of biofuels on the beef industry is multifold and, like most issues, there are good, bad, and ugly consequences. No one knows what exactly the future has in store, but one thing is certain, change will be necessary to continue producing safe and abundant beef to feed the world.

Increased research into alternative fuels and opportunities for profit within the beef industry may enhance our industry in ways no one has even imagined. For now, we are facing increased production costs that seem to create an impact on everyone involved from pasture to plate.

Those involved in the beef industry will find ways to adapt and remain one of the largest economic sectors of the agricultural industry. Just as the FFA Creed says, we know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life.

Editor's note: *The Angus Journal will be including the winners of the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) prepared speech and creative writing contests with the "Next Generation" column in the coming months.*

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▶ Ozark Empire Fair Jr. Angus Show, July 25, Springfield, Mo.



▶ Southwest Missouri Jr. Angus Ass'n members presented **Don Laughlin** (center, behind chair), Guilford, Mo., with a Grand Champion Angus Regional Manager director's chair for his years of service.



▶ Receiving special awards from the Southwest Missouri Jr. Angus Ass'n are (from left) **Caleb Sayre**, Stotts City, Mo., Member of the Year and Cow-calf Pair of the Year; **Erica Atkinson**, Walnut Grove, Mo., Bred-and-Owned Heifer of the Year; and **Samuel Wallace**, Stotts City, Mo., Owned Heifer of the Year and Show Bull of the Year.



▶ **Jordan Hunter**, Fair Grove, Mo., received the Earl K. Nau Memorial Scholarship. Pictured are (from left) presenters Tom Kisse and Eric Nau; Hunter; and presenters Nancy Bright and Larry Ellison.

▶ Maryland Jr. Angus Preview Show, West Friendship, June 1



▶ Officers of the Maryland Jr. Angus Ass'n are (front row, from left) **Taylor Clarke**, Rocky Ridge, communications director; **Christina Ritter**, Laytonsville, secretary; **Jessica Clarke**, Rocky Ridge, membership director; **Robert Velisek**, Gaithersburg, vice president; **Brittany Full**, Mount Airy, president; **Kelsey Stabler**, Gaithersburg, liaison to the adult board; (back row, from left) **Trevor Whiteside**, Queenstown, reporter; **Jimmy Full**, Mount Airy, treasurer; and **Victoria Ritter**, Laytonsville, historian.

▶ Pennsylvania Angus Breeders' Jr. Show, July 3-5, Huntingdon

▶ **Right:** The top five girls in the livestock judging contest are (from left) **Andrea Foore**, Seven Valleys, first; **Lindsay Upperman**, Chambersburg, second; **Kate Livingston**, Dover, third; **Alexis O'Boyle**, Newport, fourth; and **Elizabeth Trowbridge**, Meshoppen, fifth.



▶ Placing among the top five boys in the livestock judging contest are (from left) **Kyle Livingston**, Dover, first; **Richard Hannum**, Oxford, third; **Logan Foore**, Seven Valleys, fourth; and **Eugene Trowbridge III**, Meshoppen, fifth.

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▶ Pennsylvania Angus Breeders' Jr. Show, July 3-5, Huntingdon, continued



▶ **Kate Livingston** (left), Dover, receives Bronze and Silver awards from David Mullins, Association regional manager.

▶ Montana Junior Beef Expo, Lewistown, June 20



▶ **Above:** The Montana Jr. Angus Ass'n board of directors includes (from left) **Benjamin Van Dyke**, Bozeman, past president; **Jena Wagner**, Billings, reporter; **Emily Kading**, Billings, president; and **Allison Dubs**, Billings, secretary.

▶ South Dakota Jr. Spotlight Show, July 26, Huron

▶ **Right: Sydney Geppert** (right), Mitchell, receives Bronze and Silver awards from Vern Frey, Association regional manager. The Bronze and Silver awards are the first two levels of the NJAA recognition program. Youth must apply for the awards, based on their junior Angus activities and leadership involvement.



▶ Western Idaho Fair Jr. Angus Show, Twin Falls, Aug. 15



▶ **Christine Bradshaw**, Twin Falls, was crowned Idaho Angus Queen.

