



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

# NEWSLETTER

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**Livestock Experts Are Busy Knocking Down Misinformation CBS News Put Out** on the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.

On Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, the *CBS Evening News* featured exceptionally long reports (approximately 14 minutes combined) by Katie Couric that were obviously designed to cause concern that using antibiotics in livestock and poultry production threatens human health. But the reports' central message and multiple inaccuracies have not gone unchallenged.

Particular strong rebuttal came from Dr. Scott Hurd, senior epidemiologist at Iowa State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Hurd, who is also a former USDA deputy under secretary for food safety, prepared a written report to counter the CBS broadcasts. Whereas CBS reported that "no one is really monitoring" the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture, Dr. Hurd points out that FDA regulates antibiotic use in both humans and animals, inspects feed mills that produce medicated feed and evaluates the safety of antibiotics used in animals for human safety.

Dr. Hurd also stated: "The drug-resistant infections referred to here (by CBS) have little, to no, relationship to any antibiotic use in animal agriculture. The types of drug-resistant infections that are lethal are often associated with hospital-acquired infections – and the antibiotic used in those facilities.

"According to the FDA, resistance in food-borne illness is stable to declining over the last several years. Scientific risk assessments conducted by myself and others have shown a person is more likely to die from a bee sting than have a few extra days of diarrhea due to a resistant infection acquired from on-farm antibiotic use."

To read more of what Dr. Hurd had to say and to see the CBS reports, go to [http://www.tcfa.org/Newsletter/antibiotic\\_use\\_links.html](http://www.tcfa.org/Newsletter/antibiotic_use_links.html). This link will also take you to information sheets provided by the Beef Checkoff and NCBA about antibiotics use and regulation.

Key points to remember include:

- To understand why antibiotics are used in cattle raising, you should begin with a simple principle: Healthy cattle produce healthy beef.
- Antibiotics are medicine to prevent or treat bacterial infections in cattle.
- It is against the law to give antibiotics to cattle unless the antibiotics have been cleared for such use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Before FDA approves an antibiotic for use in cattle, there is a lengthy, rigorous review process.
- All use of antibiotics in feedyards is under the supervision of veterinarians.
- By law, cattle producers must ensure that all cattle harvested for beef are safe from any antibiotic residue and are safe for human consumption.
- NCBA instructs cattlemen to limit antibiotic use to disease prevention or control and to never use antibiotics for the sole purpose of enhancing an animal's growth.
- TCFA developed the first beef safety and quality assurance program in 1986, which includes guidelines on the safe use of antibiotics.

**NCBA Files Petition Asking EPA to Reconsider Endangerment Finding.** NCBA, in conjunction with the Coalition for Responsible Regulation Inc. and several mining and energy companies and associations, filed a petition with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson asking the agency to reconsider its finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger public health and welfare and stay any further regulatory actions or rulemaking based on this finding. Specifically, the petition calls into question the "science" used to determine the finding, referencing new studies and public disclosures, which came to light after publication of the finding, that show leading climate scientists manipulated data to bias the results. NCBA and its partners are also challenging the endangerment finding in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

Likewise, 12 House Republicans and 17 associations and companies this week filed a similar lawsuit in federal appeals court. The *Bureau of National Affairs* reports that the lawsuit was filed by the Southeastern

Legal Foundation on behalf of the members of Congress and the organizations, most of which are based in Georgia. The Atlanta-based foundation also filed a petition for reconsideration of the finding with EPA in December and is filing a supplemental petition that, according to the foundation, includes disclosures of scientific errors and fraud in the finding.

As previously reported, legislation has been introduced in the Senate to overturn the endangerment finding, and U.S. House Ag Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), along with U.S. Reps. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) and Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.), have introduced legislation (H.R. 4572) that would prohibit EPA from regulating carbon emissions by amending the Clean Air Act to state that the term air pollutant shall not include the following compounds as they relate to global climate change: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbon and sulfur hexafluoride. *Brownfield* quoted Peterson as saying that he has "no confidence in the EPA" to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act "without severe harm to all taxpayers." TCFA appreciates the efforts of Reps. Peterson, Skelton and Emerson and will encourage other Members of Congress to cosponsor the bill.

### **TCFA Chairman-Elect Bo Kizziar And TCFA Government Relations Director Josh Winegarner**

participated in the 2010 Texas Agriculture Summit this week in Bastrop. The summit, sponsored by the Texas Department of Agriculture, was a forum for agricultural producers and experts to exchange information and ideas regarding legislative and regulatory topics including water policy, environmental issues, the farm bill, legislative redistricting and the future of Texas agriculture and rural communities. The summit's goal is to develop winning strategies for Texas agriculture and establish an annual working session between Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples and agricultural producers. U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) kicked off the two-day summit with a speech about the importance of agriculture to our state and our nation. Prior to the summit, TCFA representatives met with Cornyn to discuss federal issues including climate change, water policy, immigration, health care and animal activists.

**Support For Beef Checkoff Holding Steady Despite Tough Times:** A survey of 1,200 beef and dairy producers nationwide was conducted in late December and early January by the independent firm Aspen Media & Market Research. Despite finding that seven in 10 producers said the economic recession had impacted their operations negatively, their approval of the Checkoff increased from 68% in 2009 to 69% in 2010. While not a 'significant shift,' researchers noted the economic impact on producer support of the checkoff has been small.

"Knowledge about the checkoff continues to be a predictor of favorability toward it," said Wesley Grau, a New Mexico cattleman 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. Among this group, 78% approve of the program (45% of them strongly), while only 16% disapprove. When you factor in the tough times all farmers and ranchers have been facing, this is encouraging news."

The underlying value of the checkoff remains strong: a large majority (77%) believes the Checkoff has contributed to a positive trend in consumer demand for beef; a similar number believe the program has value in weak economic conditions or are confident 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 (61%) believe it helps contribute to the profitability of their operations, although this is down 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. That they trust in the leadership and the decisions being made about their checkoff investment," said Grau. "This research shows that management of the checkoff is viewed favorably with 62% saying they believe it is being managed well."

For more information about your Checkoff investment, go to [MyBeefCheckoff.com](http://MyBeefCheckoff.com). A copy of the research report is available by going to <http://www.beefboard.org/library/files/Jan%202010%20PAStoline.pdf>.

**TCFA Chairman Mike Engler Was Interviewed By USA Today** for an article that described the beef industry's multi-faceted, aggressive effort to combat *E. coli*. The article reviewed efforts to develop vaccines for pre-harvest intervention and also explored more exotic approaches such as using bacteria-eating viruses.

To read the full article, go to [http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/life/20100208/beeftech08\\_cv.art.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/life/20100208/beeftech08_cv.art.htm).

*USA Today* has published several articles in recent months on the issue of food safety. NCBA has worked hard to make sure that industry perspective has been represented in the series.

West Texas A&M Animal Science Professor Guy Loneragan is also quoted in the most recent article.

**FSIS Is Rethinking How Older Animals Such As Dairy Cows Are Used When It Comes To Beef Products**, according to *Meatingplace.com*. At the National Meat Association's Annual Convention, FSIS Administrator Al Almanza told participants in a roundtable discussion on food safety reform that meat processors should evaluate whether the savings received from buying older animals outweighs any risks. Asked by Tyson Foods' Quality Assurance and Food Safety chief Dean Danielson whether FSIS might treat older beef animals like the poultry industry treats spent hens and divert them for use in cooked or canned end product, Almanza said, "I think you're on the right track."

**Assuring The Safety And Quality Of Food Purchases Made By The National School Lunch Program** and other food and nutrition assistance programs is the stated goal of several new initiatives announced by USDA. The initiatives include:

- Implementing new food safety purchasing requirements for beef suppliers. USDA-AMS will continue its zero tolerance for Salmonella and *E. coli* O157:H7 for its products and use onsite meat acceptance specialists and other control measures.
- A National Academy of Sciences (NAS) review of the ground beef purchasing program. This review will include benchmarking AMS vendor requirements against recognized industry leading programs that supply product directly to consumers.
- AMS will increase information sharing with other agencies in order to better monitor vendor performance and identify potential food safety issues in the process. Information on in-plant enforcement actions, positive pathogen test results, contract suspensions, recall notifications, and more will be better shared between USDA agencies.

To read more about the initiatives, click to

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/ s.7\\_0 A/7\\_0 1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0052.xml](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/ s.7_0 A/7_0 1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0052.xml).

**The Decision By Yellow Tail Wine To Donate \$100,000 To HSUS** has earned the company a negative response from many livestock producers who know that HSUS is nothing other an extremist animal rights group masquerading as an organization devoted to making life better for abandoned or abused pets.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance sent a letter to Yellow Tail seeking reconsideration of the company's donation to "a group that is not affiliated with local animal shelters." As the letter explains, HSUS actually "uses its considerable budget to threaten America's hardworking farmers and ranchers – the very people that produce the steaks and cheese that pair so well with your wines ... hundreds of farmers, ranchers, hunters, and pet lovers have utilized social media to urge you to reconsider your choice. While wanting to help animals is indeed a noble goal, we urge you to instead pledge your money to local shelters, which often are underfunded but provide much-needed services to homeless pets."

In a reply letter, Yellow Tail expressed appreciation for the Alliance's input, which the company said prompted it to restrict how its donation is to be used. "We'll still honor our monetary commitment to the HSUS, but now we are specifically directing our \$100,000 donation to HSUS' Animal Rescue Team," which yellow Tail is convinced is "a leading disaster response agency for animals, contributing millions of dollars to rebuild animal shelters destroyed in natural disasters, responding to floods, fires, and other disasters."

To read more on the Yellow Tail donation, go to

[http://animalagalliance.org/current/home.cfm?Section=YellowTailAndHSUS&Category=Current\\_Issues](http://animalagalliance.org/current/home.cfm?Section=YellowTailAndHSUS&Category=Current_Issues).

**Cargill Has Begun Piloting A Remote Video Auditing (RVA) Program As A Food Safety Tool** in its North American beef plants, the company announced this week. Cargill already is using RVA to monitor animal welfare practices and is finishing up the installation of the technology at its 10 beef harvest facilities in North America. Based on what Cargill describes as positive results in the animal welfare area, the RVA technology is being extended to monitor food safety practices in a pilot project at beef facilities in Fresno and Milwaukee. By watching near real-time video, third party auditors monitor how consistently employees perform their work and provide constructive statistical feedback to plant management. For the food safety pilot, RVA will be used to review the stages in the process where workers clean and sanitize their knives and other pieces of equipment. Additionally, Cargill will apply the technology to monitor dressing procedures to ensure proper techniques are followed to reduce the potential for *E. coli* and Salmonella contamination.

**A New "Climate Service" Will Be Created By The Obama Administration**, the U.S. Commerce Department announced this week. The Climate Service will consolidate elements of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) already working on issues related to climate change. Unifying NOAA's climate capabilities under a single climate office will integrate the agency's climate science and services and make

them more accessible to NOAA partners and other users, the agency said. NOAA has also unveiled a new website, called the Climate Portal, to serve as a single point-of-entry for NOAA's climate information, data, products and services. The site can be accessed by going to <http://www.climate.gov/>.

**Closing Arguments Have Been Delayed In The Lawsuit Filed Against 11 Arkansas Poultry Companies**

by Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson. *The Tulsa World* reported that the judge had suffered an illness, and the closing arguments scheduled for Feb. 11 were postponed until Feb. 18. The case involves Edmondson's claim that the Illinois River Watershed has been degraded because the companies' contract growers have excessively applied poultry litter in fields.

**TCFA Dues Rebates Available.** If you fed 10,000 head or more in 2009, you may apply for a dues rebate. The rebate is based on the cumulative number of cattle fed by a single feeding entity. Rebate applications must be completed and returned to the TCFA office by **April 15**. For more information or to request an application, call TCFA at (806) 358-3681 or contact Trent Tyson at [trent@tcfa.org](mailto:trent@tcfa.org), or Kaci Barclay at [kaci@tcfa.org](mailto:kaci@tcfa.org).

*Please note: All links are still available at <http://www.tcfa.org> under This Week's Newsletter links.*