



# Texas Cattle Feeders Association

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**Bo Kizziar**

**TCFA Annual Convention 2011**

**Chairman Speech**

Good Morning and welcome to Amarillo.

I am so proud of TCFA. Over the past 3 years I have learned a lot about the work the association does. I am really grateful for the opportunity I have had. Ross and his staff do an exceptional job and we owe a lot to their dedication and commitment to our industry. Not only are their efforts important, but we as volunteers have a huge role that impacts the overall success.

I want to talk about three items this morning that I think are important to TCFA, the industry and us as individual cattlemen and women. I will talk about the importance of passion as it influences the outcome of our endeavors. I want to talk about cows and encourage all of us to face the possibilities of a lot fewer cows in region VI and I will talk about the importance of engaging like we have never before in the coming elections and battles with regulatory agencies.

Passion is described as a strong or compelling feeling or emotion. Other words for this extreme devotion include affection, anger, distress, excitement and fear. The cattle industry is facing new challenges every day. As I look at the source of those challenges and the people behind them, I realize they all have one thing in common – and that is passion.

I think that when we talk about RCALF, HSUS, PETA and the Sierra Club, those guys are emotionally engaged. We have the science and we can throw it at them all day and in the end we are right, but too often their passion wins out with the public. We old guys have trouble getting passionate. My wife will attest to that. But you can teach an old dog new tricks.

While we have to focus on making a living, animal rights activists wake up every day with the sole purpose of putting animal agriculture out of business. Their goal drives them to stand on sidewalks wearing nothing but lettuce to promote veganism while the more serious ones spend their time in the halls of the capitol. They go to extreme measures to stand up for what they believe in. The environmentalists bring all guns to bare, every day, and they are working to get dust regulations, water regulations, and species listed as endangered. That limits our resources and production capabilities.

We just fought off a particulate matter standard, for now, that would have been hard for feedyards to comply with. If EPA expands the definition of waters of the U.S. to include ponds and ditches on your property, the permitting requirements to your operation will get a lot more intrusive. If you are like me, you have trouble putting the effects of endangered species into perspective. To my knowledge, I've not been directly impacted by the spotted owl, dunes lizard, or the golden-cheeked warbler. Others have and are being affected.

The couple in Bastrop who's house burnt in the recent fires have the proper perspective. They were told they would have to move the location of their house when they rebuild because the current location was more hospitable to the Houston Toad. The oil company who had to pay \$500,000.00 in fines when rains washed loose dirt from their drilling location into a stream that was habitat to an endangered mussel – they have perspective.

What will they find on your property to list, reducing your ability to operate and produce a product? If Fish and Wildlife Service decides to list the lesser prairie chicken as endangered or threatened, my feedyard and other feedyards in this region will be affected. These threats are happening to real folks and they are not going to stop coming at us. The reality is that at some point the regulations and restrictions limit our ability to produce the food that feeds our nation and the world.

Joe Parker TSCRA President said it well, "Ranchers aren't opposed to helping endangered species and, in fact, many ranchers have implemented pasture management and conservation programs to promote healthy habitats for wildlife and cattle. Americans, however, need to ask themselves if moving forward with policies based on lax science is worth severely damaging an industry that provides them with food."

Overregulation seems to be the current buzzword in more than just agriculture. And rightly so. This administration has proposed or published more than 1,100 regulations. NCBA has produced YouTube videos about government overreach and the impact that it is and can have on our industry. And that leads me to one more point, social media is vital to communicating about cattle feeding, feedyards and beef. If you haven't already, go 'like' Texas Cattle Feeders Association on Facebook and Twitter and see what the Association is doing to have a presence. We have some great things planned.

I'm proud of my operation and our industry. We have a great story to tell and we should tell it. We are environmentalists, we are humane stewards of our animals and we provide a very nutritious and healthy part of the diet. Maybe it is time to find a way to

share our love of the cattle business with the world. There is no one better suited to tell that story than us. Too many times I have listened to and read the half-truths and outright lies about our industry and beef and didn't respond. We need to correct those every time. We need to be telling our side of the story – that cattle are well taken care of day in and day out in our feedyards. We've got nothing to hide, but we're private people and like many of you I'm still hesitant to open my operation up to scrutiny. I'll commit to work on that, if you will join me.

Our opponents win because they are emotionally engaged. We must have that passion – it has to be a part of it.

Aside from people, Mother Nature has shown her passion this year with frigid cold in February, extreme heat this summer and a drought throughout the southwest. I was asked recently what I thought the biggest threat to our industry was. I gave my best deer in the headlight expression but failed to answer. I knew the answer; I have known the answer for a while.

We've been talking about the age of our ranch owners, land selling for recreational purposes and the rising costs of ranching for several years. We've called it the diminishing cowherd. Last year we talked about a cowherd that was the lowest since 1962. We have since moved cows from our area, region VI, at a record breaking pace due to the drought. We are not sure what the number is today, and won't have an official number until the annual inventory report next January. This drought goes far beyond diminishing the cowherd, it has devastated the cowherd in our area. The issue of cow inventory is and will be very critical to feedyards in Cattle Feeding Country. Where is our supply going to come from?

That is a question we must passionately answer both individually and collectively. We have to plan where the next turn of feeders will come from and we need to begin the work of restoring the cows to our area. Economics will bring some cows back but economics is not the only answer. TCFA is and will play an important role in our future and they will need a lot of help from those of us in this room.

Although we face some pretty serious fundamental challenges from the supply side, the demand side is wide open. We have to open our minds to the world and remove the constraints of our borders and domestic consumption. Thanks to efforts by NCBA on free trade agreements to improve market access and USMEF on market development, we have some amazing opportunities when you consider that in 50 years the population is going to require us to double our food output and beef can be and should be a major part of that.

Our exports are growing and that tells me that although our industry is mature, there is an opportunity to grow but we can't do it by doing the same old thing. We are going to have to utilize new science and technology if we are to keep up. While the world's population is growing, the Earth is not. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the population of the world will rise from 6.8 billion today to 9.1 billion in 2050 – that means there will be a third more mouths to feed than there are today. Demand for meat worldwide will need to almost double, most of which will be consumed in developing countries.

We won't be able to do that alone. Our best practices and business as we know it won't take us there. That will only happen through the joint efforts of all the partners up and down the chain. Let's realize that cow-calf producers, stockers, feeders, packers and retailers are partners in the beef industry. Let me say that again, cow-calf producers, stockers, feeders, packers and retailers are all partners in the beef industry

If we can recognize the benefits of aligning our operations with some of those entities that we may have considered adversarial in the past, we can increase opportunities and more easily address challenges.

Back to people passion – that feeling that spurs action comes from somewhere – be it love, fear, frustration or anger. Given the mess in Washington, I'm guessing you're probably experiencing more than one of these emotions, probably not love, but don't know what to do about it. The answer is simple. Get involved. Get involved with TCFA, NCBA or other groups.

Our staff does a great job representing us at the state and federal levels, but they're only as successful as the support they receive from the TCFA membership. The TCFA staff routinely provides us with the information we need to engage, but we have to do it. Whether it's calling and writing your elected officials, attending face to face meetings with your elected officials or talking to the media, we have the responsibility to educate these influential people.

Those in power make the rules. It is important that we make sure the right ones get elected who understand and support our industry.

And, while I know none of us like it, elections require money and the amount continues to increase. BEEF-PAC, TCFA's political action committee, allows us to support likeminded candidates, but it's only effective if we have PAC money to spend. But, even a strong PAC can't do it alone. It's going to take a combination of PAC money and individual contributions to candidates – just like we did last night with Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Roberts.

The new minority in this country are farmers, ranchers, cattle feeders and other rural Americans. We don't have the votes of our urban and suburban cousins or the money of the animal welfare and environmental activists. We must put some of our differences aside and form alliances with other agricultural groups. We need to pool our resources – financial, human, public relations and political.

I'm not saying we won't sometimes have disagreements – we'll probably never agree with the corn industry on ethanol subsidies, and we'll probably never agree with R-CALF, U.S. Cattlemen's Association and National Farmers Union on the GIPSA rule, packer ownership, COOL or animal identification. But, I hope we can agree that those issues aren't going to matter much if HSUS, PETA and the environmental activists succeed in putting us out of business. The more time and money we spend fighting each other the less we'll have to fight our common foes.

Now, a little more on engaging and telling our story. Groups like U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, the Hand That Feeds US and others have begun to unify agriculture as a whole by leading a nationwide dialogue about farmers and ranchers commitment to continuous improvement and best production practices. Americans have a lot of questions about how food is grown and raised, the impact on our health and the health of the planet.....and USFRA has accepted the challenge to help the average person understand why we do things the way we do them.

NCBA has been very active in the development and direction of the group along with more than 50 other leading agriculture organizations. In late September, USFRA held their first town-hall style discussion in Washington, D.C.; New York City, Davis, California; and Fair Banks, Indiana as well as online. This was the beginning of a long-term commitment to helping consumers understand how their food is grown and raised. Each of us are encouraged as producers, large and small, to answer questions that consumers have, talk to people at the coffee shop and share our stories through social media. And at TCFA, we continue to build upon and improve our Beef Quality Assurance and animal care practices, which you will hear more about later today.

Finally, we in the industry have a demanding job – we care for cattle and that is a 24/7 occupation. We must, however, become aware of how critical it is that we all engage in the battles confronting our nation and our industry. Numbers and voices matter, maybe as much and in some instances more than sound science, logic and reason. We all have a part to play in helping this industry. Find your passion – whether it be fueled by excitement or frustration – and let your voice as a cattleman be heard.

Thank you.