

Trees, People, Cattle, Graduates: All Important Industry Elements

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A successful beef industry equals cattle plus people and the ability to err. As a relatively small industry in comparison to the world, when frustration hits any part of this equation, the component that expands is the error term.

Recent industry new releases are reminiscent of the old days when the picture of a bull meant more than his ability to perform. Today, one thing the cattle industry cannot afford is a division in the house causing time, effort and money to be wasted.

Given the spring the north central states are having, I cannot help but pause and think about bigger things than the beef industry. Annually, thousands of trees are planted, each to stand and add strength to this wonderful world, a tree for everyone.

The common cottonwood adorns the prairies of North Dakota, simply to add green beauty to the grass prairies. Not known for lumber, the cottonwood assures ample nesting spaces where no others would stand and infinite climbing space for kids of all ages.

The ornamental crabs are furious with blooms only a hive of honeybees could count. The caragana, meek with gentle, yellow flowers, is so rich in honey that even the slightest tongue can glean a lick. The plum trees are barely keeping up with the apple trees, but fruitful nonetheless, along with choke cherry, June berry and sand cherry, each knowing the best fruit is in the jar, yet to be made. Honeysuckle and lilac fragrances fill the air, competing with only your imagination for the freshest part of the day.

The hardwoods such as ash, maples and oaks, boast a trunk of steel even the most seasoned furniture would treasure. Their leaves, gracefully emerging in the spring air, assure another season, another ring adding a line worthy of only the master carpenter.

Stepping aside for this wonderful spring show, the pine, spruce and cedar pause to regroup, following winter duty. These are the local trees. If only one could whip up another mulberry pie, fresh mulberries and cream or maybe even a pecan pie, it would be great. But those trees, not for here, are as diverse as people.

Like the trees and cows, beef producers need to be reminded that there are many reasons and many purposes in life. The gnarly old cedar whose roots hold the side of the hill intact is vastly different from the young willow whips offering protection to the side of a new pond.

Like trees, we are each different and unique. Today, I like to think of the diversity of the trees, the diversity of cows and the diversity of people as very positive influences on a world so dependent on food. Yet, in the midst of this diversity, beef producers must select a course of unity. None of us can offer to be lifeless peas in a pod, but instead a forest of living and caring producers.

As the annual graduation run is made, the graduates look young and inexperienced, but full of excitement, much like today's beef industry. Perhaps it is time to say goodbye to the old, even spend some time mourning the past knowing tomorrow will be another day where people will be giving birth to babies. These new babies will never see the good old days, as they will simply create their own.

As the graduate's roots begin to grow and their branches stretch out, we hope our roots are a little deeper, our branches a little fuller. Are we ready to serve and accept the vastness and change associated with the future?

There are no misplaced trees or misplaced people, only those departing the final curtain to go their chosen way. In the process, may each of us give some good advice, take some good advice and then give the keys to the graduates and graciously say farewell, knowing full well that the circle continues.

May you find all your USAIP ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0198.

The Circle Continues

