

## Sound Production Practices – Animal Identification and Waste Management

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The Dickinson Research Extension Center hosts several agriculture student groups from different universities throughout the school year. It is always interesting to ask the groups or at least get a feel for how they respond to some of the work the center is doing.

Student responses are very similar to how their parents respond. As in most educational settings, the teachers know more about the families of their students than they really want to admit. The college setting is no different and students generally reflect their individual upbringing.

Pride always shows. In fact, the students will pop their shirt buttons when allowed to relay their experiences about the farming and ranching business they come from. Students also bring with them the conservative nature of farming and ranching and the perpetual resistance to change.

This past month, I asked visiting students what they thought about two very “in your face” issues, which are individual animal identification and new waste management regulations. The students’ reactions and reflections by their looks and actions indicated there is knowledge about the two issues, but there is a general lack of response. The students were reminded that these issues are here. The issues are not going away and it will require action by the students and their family operations.

In regard to the individual identification of livestock, unless a major backtracking of regulations occurs, livestock will be individually identified in the very near future. The same is true for livestock waste management. The regulations are real and need to be addressed.

Putting our heads in the sand is not going to work. Even the ostriches are going to get an electronic identification device, whether their head is in the sand or not.

Like many, the students reflect an attitude of “how can this possibly be done?” Producers need to realize times have changed. The vast majority of consumers have no connection, no desire to connect and no willingness to establish a connection to the food they eat. They simply want food delivered to them with the total assur-

ance it is wholesome.

The dependence on the food industry, which is the huge process between the livestock producer and consumer, simply overwhelms the efforts of producers and consumers. Things are changing is the discerning bottom line.

Occasionally, having made a statement like that, I will be stopped on the street and told that if only more of us would get on the same page, these issues would go away. Life can then return to normal. As I told the students the other day, good luck because going on the defensive is going to be tough.

Think about it for a moment. In regard to animal identification and environmental impacts, the industry that is marketing the product we produce to individual consumers will market the product as wholesome back to the point of production. The defensive position would be one of nondisclosure.

“What are you hiding,” would be the immediate response. In the marketing world, there is only one answer, which is, “We are hiding nothing!”

The question then becomes one of cost. In the free market, supply and demand are major players in prices and costs are left to the producer to manage. That being said, back to class, stretch the mind and let’s go on the offensive.

Now is the time to develop a sound production plan that integrates with the food industry for maximum consumer confidence and satisfaction. Appreciate the past and use it for positive future growth.

May you find all your NAIS-approved ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://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](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0268.

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**Production and Food Industry Must  
Integrate for Maximum Consumer  
Confidence and Satisfaction**