

## Our Industry's Future Rests With New Generations

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With the holiday season upon us and the year ending, an assortment of thoughts comes to mind. Foremost among them is the question: Where do we go from here? The assortment of topics that must be covered to address that question is huge; the outcomes real; and the subsequent impact may be life-changing.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center routinely sells cows and heifers at this time of year. Most are bred, but a few are open as well. Last Tuesday, the bred heifers were up for auction and I enjoyed a walk through the cattle pens prior to the sale.

Lots of good solid cows and heifers were on the block, destined to calve in new lots this spring. What struck me was the fact there was a cow to fit every conceivable operation: big cows, little cows, medium cows, purebred cows, crossbred cows, red cows, white cows, black cows, thin cows, fat cows, short faced cows, early-calving cows, late-calving cows, open cows, dairy cows, yellow cows, black-and-white cows, red-and-white cows, tall cows, short cows, stubby cows, horned cows, scurred cows, polled cows, one horned cows, ornery cows, tame cows, mean cows, happy cows, and one very long-faced sad cow.

They all had two eyes and a tail, well at least part of a tail. The cows ranged in ages from heifers, to cows whose age was probably most easily measured in terms of their time remaining on this earth. Common sires represented Angus, Hereford, Charolais, Simmental, Red Angus, Gelbvieh, Loala and various composites.

None of this is news to the beef industry. These are observations from a typical stock cow and bred heifer sale. It was a nice walk with time to literally breathe in the beef business.

I wonder just how many producers have stopped in and said thank you to the management and staff of their local cattle auction barn, because without them, I'm not so sure who would make sense of this business. By the end of the day, the whole lot of cows and heifers will be very orderly sorted into uniform, saleable lots and on their way to a new home. Buyers will be anxious to get their new cattle home, sellers will be anxious to pick up their checks, and the staff will be cleaning up for another sale day.

Once home or as the crowd thins, producers and staff discuss the big news in the beef business: source verification, country of origin labeling, packers and other topics like the price of grain or trying to guess when the market is going to turn. It will be a lively discussion. Some may even pick up an old BeefTalk column and reread my perpetual litany of the need for records and attention given to details to assure profit.

Meanwhile, time will be allotted to proper management of new arrivals and a little extra rest will be briefly awarded, as the empty pens don't need to be fed today. And the industry will move on. Next week's sale is just around the corner, and the cycle will repeat. Perhaps that is the comfort in the fact that the cycle really does repeat, business is still honest, and your yearly income can be entrusted with no doubt of a respectable, timely settlement.

If there is a barb, at least in regards to the current state of affairs, it is that the concept of local trust and acceptance needs to be replaced with tracking, electronics and radio frequencies we can't even see.

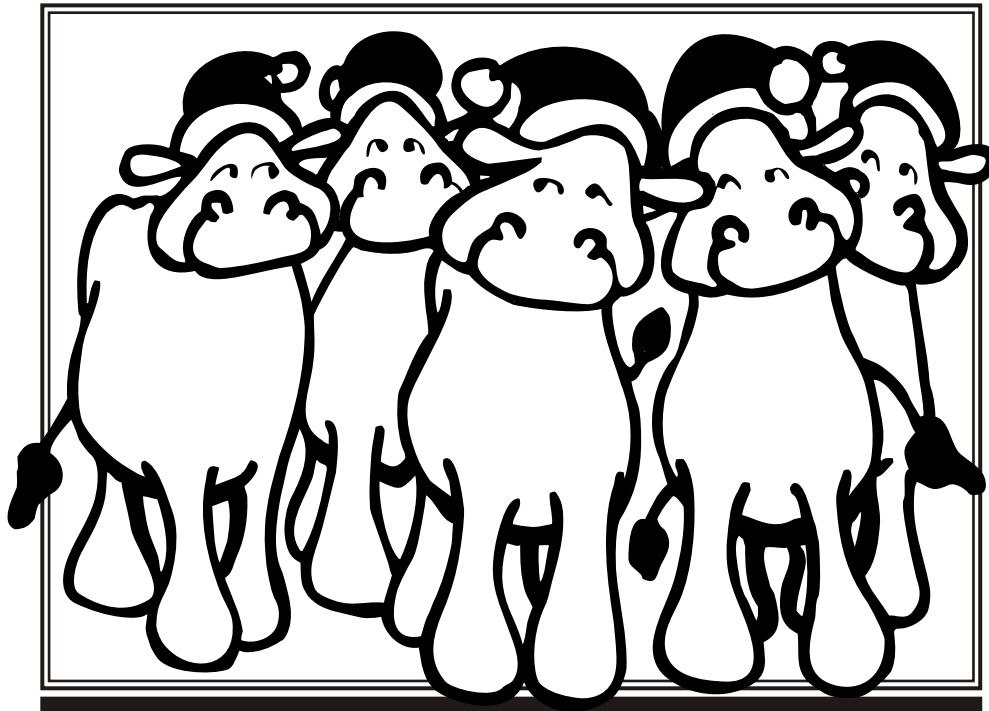
In closing, one of the best parts of my job, is the association with young cattle producers. Here at Dickinson State University and North Dakota State University, they come from many states and Canadian provinces, asking for a little education, an acquaintance or two, and perhaps just a smile in passing. Above all they're looking for a little trust, a little friendship and a little respect.

If they receive those, the cattle business will pass on to good hands. The moral of the story, the future of the cattle business is not a matter of legislation, but of new generations well-received.

Merry Christmas and may you find all your 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 BT0175.

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**It's a cow party!**