

The Future Starts with Common Sense

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There is a future – and it is bright.

During the past few weeks, several BeefTalk columns were based on an article titled “The Future of Animal Agriculture in North America” found in the electronic “Choices” magazine (<http://www.choices-magazine.org>, Volume 21, No. 3, 2006). “Choices” is published by the American Agricultural Economics Association.

The series of articles identified issues that ultimately will shape our industry and included issues such as markets, structure and competition; value of integrated markets and consumer demand; global competitiveness; environmental concerns and regulations; community concerns and labor; food safety and animal health; and the welfare and care of animals.

However, the issues are not the future because the future is not simply a compilation of litigated issues. The future is much more than we, as individual producers or groups of producers, can fathom at times.

The future ultimately evolves as a very slow process that converts issues to change and involves three fundamental principles. For any futuristic action or solution to become reality, the action must be sensible, sustainable and reflect good stewardship.

Starting with the principle of sensible, before all else, our thoughts must be rational. These thoughts need to be budding in some floating space we call the future and be strongly rooted in our past through our parents, grandparents and all those who have come before us.

Recently, there was an attempt to develop a national animal identification system. Many components of the system simply made no sense. Because of that failing, change did not occur. The concept never became clear to the average producer and commonsense caused them to balk at the forces that triggered the issue.

That does not mean that the issue was not real or that the issue will not resurface. However, for the time being, the details of the national animal identification system simply made no sense, a concept that is most

often overlooked when decision-makers become too heavily focused on the greater good, without a connection to the greater good.

The second component of converting issues to real change is the need for the issue and resulting change to be sustainable. Often new gimmicks will entertain an industry, but will not change an industry. These gimmicks could be deeply rooted in technology.

One does need to remember that once people discovered fire, they cooked meat. A well-done roast was just as well-done following a few attempts at cooking over an open fire when fire was discovered as it is today roasted over the backyard barbecue pit. Chances are the roast tasted the same and one could conclude that fire was sustainable, but needed change.

Technological gimmicks may not have quite crossed that line, but branding irons utilizing fire did. The practice made sense and, at least in the short term (100-plus years), seems to work.

The last of the three components of a solid future is good stewardship. Essentially, no ship will be able to sail into the future without the present generations taking good care of the resources entrusted to them.

Many of today’s beef production issues involve care of the animal and the environment in which animals are grown. Good stewardship must encompass issues in a manner that are sensible and sustainable. Many times, as a meeting room fills, issues and concerns start to ferment and an outpouring of energy results. However, in the end, nothing is accomplished because the issues never came to the floor with solutions that are sensible, sustainable and reflect good stewardship.

Never be afraid to express commonsense. It is a big step to the future.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.COM> on the Internet

Beef Industry Solutions Must:

- **Be Sensible**
- **Be Sustainable**
- **Reflect Good Stewardship**