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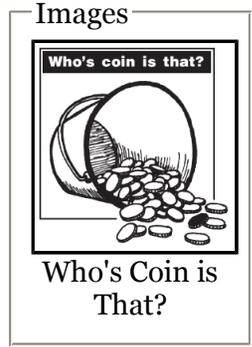
BeefTalk: Coins or Calves, I Guess It's the Law

The application of mandatory country of origin labeling is changing the way we do business.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist NDSU Extension Service

The daily work of doing business is always challenging, particularly with the current issues facing the financial world. With the increasing complexities of the business, one wonders if the compensation for a day's work is fair.

The stark reality is that those who manage natural resources and market livestock and/or grain don't have much choice. If we have to wait in line at an elevator to unload grain or line up at a fall calf sale, we do it.



For decades, if not centuries, those transactions were consummated with a handshake. With the advent of faster trailers, laws and rules that provided some level of protection for producers slowly came into being.

These laws and rules require marketing agencies to be bonded. Despite the fact that the cattle are already down the road, with only a bit of dust left in the air, the producer does have some assurance that the check is good and life goes on.

Cattle have come and gone. Producers get along quite well with the existing marketing options. Cattle producers will continue to build relationships with modern, progressive livestock auctions and marketing agencies.

However, a significantly different twist has arrived in the marketing process. It came through a change in the law and associated administrative rules. The application of mandatory country of origin labeling (often referred to as mCOOL) is changing the way we do business.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center produces and markets cattle. The cattle are not unique and are destined to travel the same road as any other calf would. Ultimately, the calf ends up on the harvest line and then on a consumer's plate. The center's cattle also are impacted by these recent laws and rules.

The handshake, along with all the other standard, normal or firsthand recordkeeping processes involved with producing and marketing cattle, now will be acknowledged through a signed affidavit process. The center's first "continuous country of origin affidavit/declaration" has arrived.

I was asked to sign the documents and return them to the source. One could question, procrastinate and even become somewhat frustrated, but I guess it's the law.

The challenge with these documents is the expectation that the documents would be signed and returned with the indication that these very broad, quite generic documents would remain on file. Whoever signed the documents would be responsible and auditable for providing assurances that the cattle involved in the marketing transactions would meet the stated purpose of the law, which is providing country of origin proof.

I asked myself if I should sign or not. I guess it's the law, I deduced.

However, I can't help but think about the sealed box we passed around the neighborhood. We asked

everyone to place whatever American coins he or she had in his or her pockets into the box.

Each household responded happily and was responsible for dropping the box off at the next neighbor on the list until the entire neighborhood contributed. The box sat on a table at the local community room waiting to be opened and the funds then distributed to the needy.

All of the households in the neighborhood had signed an affidavit that only American coins were put in the box. The box was opened so that the coins could be tallied and wrapped. It was then that a Canadian coin was found.

How could that be? All the households signed an affidavit that all the coins were American.

For beef producers, there are new rules. From the center's perspective, significant documentation will be attached.

The center's calves will be noted, including individual identification, brands and tags. This data will be released to the flow of the market.

Whether coins or calves, it doesn't make much difference, but I guess it's the law.

Good luck, but a little bit of rear-end protection never hurts.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Attachments



PDF - Who's Coin is That?
(bt100208.pdf - 19.49 Kb)



EPS - Who's Coin is That?
(bt100208.eps - 250.82 Kb)