

BeefTalk: No Spirit, No Peace



Beef Producer - Net profit is good but are not our lives greater than the coins in our pockets? Being a caregiver and providing food to sustain others is part of being a cattle producer.

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Successful beef production begins with the identification of goals and objectives.

Why am I doing what I am doing? Is it to support family, to fulfill my own needs, to help feed those who cannot produce food, to have camaraderie with others, to gain a place in life?

So often, we simply add the words “net profit” and continue. But are not our lives greater than the coins in our pockets? As food producers, we are keepers of others, providers for those without. Is not our journey more complex than often noted? Is this our obligation or something we only dream about? Should not our dreams transcend our goals, our objectives and our desire to do so? Once that desire is known, would not our path be better defined?

We have so many questions at year end. As the year ends, what is our path? Like nature and the seasons, we need to ponder potential change within the world. Pondering about the very world we live in, this very large world, large beyond our own capacity to comprehend, is good. We must be careful to avoid being crushed by the sheer weight of something we cannot see, hear or even touch: simply put, the weight of the world.

We all face challenges. Do we work at narrowing our world, whittling away pieces that we can handle? Or do we strengthen ourselves to go forth, bearing as much of the world as we can?

I can surmise that by whittling away the “difficult to bear” pieces, only temporary peace awaits because the world never ceases to challenge. Trepidation is inherent in challenging the world, but failure to do so causes us to succumb to perceived weakness and never gives ourselves a chance.

So often, we see the challenges as strength-building, focusing on the physical rather than the spiritual. We can force our way through life and still at the end ask why. How often do we come across the saying “no pain, no gain”? How about “no spirit, no peace”?

The immensity of the spirit, which is very much alive, is astounding. We need to brush among our fellow citizens to expand our thinking. This can challenge us. Like being a caregiver who provides for others, this is an act not taken for granted.

At year end, red and black may not be the color of cattle but rather the color of numbers, some good and some not so good for the cattle business. Should these numbers set our goals, our objectives? For those who love the life they live, they have more. The opportunity to be caregivers, the desire to provide food for the sustenance of others, the words “love of life” certainly are part of their essence.

I recently came across two quotes. One was by Rabbi David Wolpe: “Receiving love gratefully is as vital as giving love selflessly.” Iris Murdoch noted: “Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real.” Is this not the love of agriculture? Is this not the beef producer, nurturing, feeding, caring, bringing new life through calving for the purpose of providing for others?

The love of others is not something to be taken for granted or simply demanded. Love has two sides: receiving and giving. This transformation of openness to acceptance of this world is real. We produce beef. We strive to make the world a better place by providing nourishment for those who cannot raise the food they need. We take unusable resources and transform them so the world continues.

Perhaps the world is challenged, but for this time, those challenges are not insurmountable. But, more importantly, as producers, we identify our individual goals and objectives that set our tone, the tone of our work, of our desire, of our purpose: no spirit, no peace.

For many, we are well-fed, happy and looking forward to closing the year. But let me quote Johnathan Foer: “It is always possible to wake someone from sleep, but no amount of noise will wake someone who is pretending to be asleep.” We each need to know our path, set our course, produce beef but always remain alert to the world. It is a challenging world, a world that in many aspects can cause us to question what we do, but no, we keep going.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “He (farmer) stands close to nature; he obtains from the earth the bread and the meat. The food which was not, he causes to be.” As farmers and ranchers, as beef producers, we are the ones who obtain “from the earth the bread and the meat.” The source is the land, the world. It is a world we are thankful for: the soil, crops, grass, cattle and ultimately the harvest. As caregivers, as ones who love the work, as ones who provide for others, we stand tall and give thanks.

May you find all your ear tags.