



..... **STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH**
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This is the 15th year of a program that has become near and dear to my heart since coming into Extension. It has become a highly effective and respected seminar for cattlemen and others across the region. I will simply call it the “Cow/Calf College”. I write about this program for several reasons, but in particular this year because this year’s seminar becomes even more special as my daughter has agreed to be one of the presenters. She has worked hard and long and is passionate about agriculture and especially ag literacy for youth - as well as consumers. I think you will see her passion come out!

The annual Farmers and Ranchers “Partners in Progress – Beef Seminar” will be held at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) and Great Plains Veterinary Education Center near Clay Center on January 20 with registration, coffee and donuts from 9:00 a.m. -9:30 a.m. The seminar itself will begin at 9:35 a.m. with a welcome by Dr. John Pollak, Director of the USMARC and Dr. Dale Grotelueschen, Director of the Great Plains Veterinary Education Center. There will be a special award presentation by Dr. Brent Meyer of Merck Animal Health to Dr. Gary Rupp, long time GPVEC Director just prior to the seminar. This award will be housed at the GPVEC. My hat goes off to Dr Rupp, as it is well deserved!

Chad Engle, USMARC Livestock Operations Manager, will kick off the seminar with his presentation of “MARC – The Real Story.” USMARC, which employs scientists that are world renown in their fields, has received a lot of attention from media sources in the last year. Chad's presentation will give a unique opportunity to hear what goes on every day at MARC on the ground level to carry out experiments and ensure land and livestock resources at MARC maintain a viable and sustainable research environment. It will be nice to hear from one of the many dedicated, caring and passionate employees.

Deanna Karmazin, Independent Consultant on Ag Literacy and Curriculum (who is my daughter) will explain what she sees as “The Issues Surrounding Animal Agriculture.” You might be surprised at how our young people, their parents, as well as consumers all across our nation view agriculture and especially animal agriculture. There is a good chance you will come away from this session upset, perhaps a little angry, but certainly with the knowledge that there are things happening all around us that can have a debilitating effect on the livestock industry and especially on your livelihood.

If you are going to be proactive instead of reactive you need to know what you are up against. You can't fight a battle if you don't know what you are fighting. We will then break into a rotation system during two noon sessions featuring a follow up by Karmazin with split sessions on: “Cattlemen – Telling Your Story.” In order to offset the challenges brought to us in animal agriculture we need to "Build Bridges, Correct Misinformation, and Be Influential." You will learn how you, as a producer can do that. We all must be cognizant of a huge challenge: speaking up for animal agriculture in a year when Americans, most without any connection to agriculture, vote! You will be able to learn how you as a cattleman can act as an “Advocate” and how you can make a difference in addressing the issues that will be discussed before lunch.

The afternoon session will start with a presentation by Dr. Michael Apley, Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine, who is nationally renowned on antibiotics and pathologies of livestock. With the firestorm on “super-bugs”; antibiotic resistance; consumer concerns for the safety of the food they provide to their families; and misinformation on animal health across the nation; Dr. Apley's presentation on “Animal Health, Antibiotics and VFDs” is right on target to address some of these critical health issues that face beef producers. For our beef producers, Dr. Apley will also inform us on how to comply with the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) as well as other feed and vaccine protocols.

Dr. Kip Lukasiewicz, Sandhills Cattle Consultants Inc., will lead you through “The Basics of Stockmanship.” One of the major talking points for animal activists, and consumers alike, is animal welfare and particularly the handling of livestock. Dr. Kip focuses more on cattle care and low-stress handling with far less focus on emphasizing treatments. His primary emphasis is on preventive health, disease prevention and animal well-being. Dr. Kip spends significant amounts of time training pen riders, hospital and processing crew members, and stresses that if cattle and the crew are put first, many of the cattle health management issues will be minimized. Here is your chance to learn from the best!

As it has become tradition, all presenters will then join on stage to pull everything together, give their final thoughts and considerations and then avail themselves for a coffee-shop style panel discussion during which cattlemen can ask questions and get answers on topic questions that came to them during the day's sessions. A chance for door prizes will be awarded to those that stay for the entire event. For those that are interested, the USMARC and Nebraska Extension will once again join forces to offer a tour which will start immediately after the program. It will highlight the integrated crop beef systems research that is ongoing at the center. They have the results of last year's steer project and will introduce a new heifer project. There is a good chance you can see both steers and heifers grazing on cover crops, which is a rare opportunity.

Dr. Mary Drewnoski (UNL Beef Systems Specialist), Harvey Freetly (Research Leader- Nutrition and Environmental Management Research Unit), and Kristin Hales (USDA Research Animal Scientist) will be guiding this special tour and explaining what they are doing and finding with their research. It is asked that when you register for the Seminar that you also register for the tour if you are interested. You will find this a valuable addition to the seminar. See you at USMARC!!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer, which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email: dlienemann2@unl.edu or on the web at: <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>