



Views from VanDeWalle

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Gate to Plate Reflection

Recently at our Farmers & Ranchers College program we had Michele Payn speak on the importance of advocating for agriculture. While it is frustrating that we need to advocate for just doing our jobs, it seems necessary to educate others about the agriculture industry. If it wasn't for our farmers and ranchers, we would have a hungry world. Michele founded Cause Matters Corp. in 2001, which is a company designed to build connections around the food plate. Cause Matters Corp. focuses on addressing food myths, developing science communication, and connecting farm to food.

At the recent program she delivered in Fillmore County, she explained to participants the importance of connecting with consumers on a personal level rather than just spewing facts and statistics at people. When we are able to connect with others on a personal level, it allows us to share our stories with them and understand where they are coming from with their potential concerns. She has also extensively researched social media trends and encouraged participants to share their messages on social media, especially Instagram which is extremely popular with the younger generation. Engaging in dialogue is important to spread the message of agriculture.

Michele's book, *Food Truths: From Farm to Table* highlights 25 food truths to shop and eat without guilt. Some of them I've decided to highlight include:

- Hormones are in everything.
- Antibiotics have benefits.
- Animal welfare is an hourly concern on farms and ranches.
- Housing is used to protect animals – and your food – from nature.
- Organic farming is about production methods, not nutritional value.
- Food costs are a shared concern.
- Local is not always better for the environment.
- Chemicals are naturally in food and needed to protect it.
- Soil is a farm's greatest asset.
- The media isn't the best source of information about food.
- Food is an amazing science from farm to table.

I decided to share the food truths above due to the recent disasters we have in Nebraska. Those unfamiliar with the agriculture industry may not know that our farmers and ranchers care greatly for their animals and the loss of animals due to the floods and blizzards is sickening to them. Some gave up many evenings to help bring baby calves into the world only to see them taken away by powerful surges of water. Farmers and ranchers were already struggling with the low commodity prices and this will cause an additional burden making it difficult for some to survive. That being said, if you are in the agricultural industry or know about agriculture, share with others how hard our farmers and ranchers work and the good they do in feeding our hungry and growing population.

Disaster Resources



If you have had livestock losses, beyond normal, you need to call the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office within 30 days of the storm event. The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) is offered by FSA to provide producers an avenue to recover financial losses of livestock but inventory records are needed. For more information, contact your FSA office or go to: <https://go.unl.edu/livestocklip>

Nebraska Extension is pushing out information to help. Please use or share the website <https://flood.unl.edu> It's a key resource full of science-based information. If you are in the situation of dealing with flood cleanup or are volunteering to help someone who now has access to a flooded home or business, a great resource

is: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/floodpub/index.html>

Knowing the legal rights, benefits and resources available to low-income survivors of a disaster is crucial to recovery. Legal Aid of Nebraska can help. Apply online at disaster.legalaidofnebraska.org/apply, or call the Disaster Relief Hotline at 1-844-268-5627.

When disasters occur, there are always people who try to profit off of the needs of others. Fraudulent funding schemes are popping up on the Internet. To find a legitimate agency for monetary and other goods and services donations, contact 211 (simply dial 211 or dial 866-813-1731).