



# E-Newsletter

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## "Like" TBBA on Facebook

Become a fan of the TBBA Facebook page and connect with Brangus breeders around the world. Click on the icon below to be directed to the page.



## Suggestions?

Help our marketing efforts meet YOUR needs. Any suggestions to the

## Letter from the President

Fellow TBBA Members,

I sincerely hope you all have your pipes wrapped, hay out and are fully prepared for this uncommonly cold blast we are currently in the clutches of! Yes it is cold, but thankfully dry... at least around our area.

I would like to extend a very Happy & Prosperous New Year to all and my prayer for you is to have a year blessed with good health, happiness and favorable market conditions.

I heard from the Miss America Sale Committee this past weekend and it appears they have secured some quality animals to be offered for sale in Salado, March 28/29 from TBBA Breeders. I am looking forward to seeing you there, more regarding the details of the sale and annual general meeting in the next newsletter.

I found a couple articles this past week in the Western Livestock Journal [www.wlj.net](http://www.wlj.net) that are interesting. One is about the 2013 Farm Bill (and Congress' inability to get anything passed) and the other article stating hay prices in 2014 should be less than 2013! Any way we can improve our input costs is a blessing!

Until next time...stay warm!

Joe Dillard, TBBA President

## Brazilian Beef

To the consternation of many U.S. beef producers, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) says it will pursue the long-anticipated move of allowing fresh (chilled, frozen) beef from Brazil into the U.S. Previously, only thermally processed (cooked) beef

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from Brazil was allowed into the U.S due to concerns over foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Following a two-month comment period that ends Feb. 21, APHIS hopes to begin final arrangements for the importation, under certain conditions, of fresh beef from 14 Brazilian states free of FMD. These states include Bahia, Distrito Federal, Espirito Santo, Goias, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Parana, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Rondonia, Sao Paulo, Sergipe, and Tocantis.

APHIS says it has conducted a risk analysis of the proposed exporting region regarding the status of FMD. The analysis found that "Brazil has the infrastructure and emergency response capabilities adequate to effectively contain FMD in the event of an outbreak, as well as meet all other import requirements."

In a regulatory impact analysis published in April 2013, USDA estimated that annual imports of fresh beef from Brazil would average about 40,000 metric tons (MT) annually, about two-thirds of which would displace beef that would otherwise be imported from other countries. APHIS says those 40,000 MT of beef from Brazil would increase total U.S. beef imports by less than 1%, and would drop the wholesale price of beef, the retail price of beef, and the price of cattle (steers) in the U.S. by 0.11%, 0.04%, and 0.14%, respectively.

While USDA estimates that annual volume from Brazil could range from 20,000 to 60,000 MT, just how much beef would head north is one question. Steve Meyer and Len Steiner of the CME Group point out that USDA published a similar notice in the Federal Register on Jan. 5, 2007, pertaining to beef imports from the Patagonia South region of Argentina.

"It was the first time that USDA had considered approving beef imports from a region of a country that had FMD. Six years later, we have yet to see any beef enter the U.S. from that region," Steve Meyer and Len Steiner report in their Dec. 31 edition of Daily Livestock Newsletter.

Another question among U.S. beef producers is safety. According to an online poll of beefmagazine.com readers, U.S. beef producers appear to be highly cynical of the plan. A huge majority (84%) of more than 175 poll respondents called it "a risky move," with most centering their concern on the risk posed to the U.S. industry by

Brazil's long FMD history and its traditionally porous borders with neighboring FMD areas. Another 13% are okay with the USDA move, saying that it's part of the responsibility of operating within free trade; and another 3% didn't know.

Part of engaging in free trade is abiding by trade rules, and the U.S. and Brazil are both committed to "science-based rulemaking," says a USDA statement. APHIS says the imported beef would be "subject to regulations that would mitigate the risk of FMD introduction, including movement restrictions, inspections, removal of potentially affected parts and a maturation process."

But the stakes are astronomically high, and there's no room for error. A U.S. case of the highly virulent FMD virus would devastate the U.S. beef industry overnight. In fact, a recent report from Australia indicated that their industry could lose as much as \$50 billion over 10 years if FMD entered their herd, Meyer and Steiner point out.

"There is a wide range of groups that are opposed to the opening of the U.S. market to Brazilian beef, a country that does have FMD but controls it through vaccination. Those groups need to be convinced that the science guiding the USDA analysis is sound," the duo says.

The public is invited to comment on the proposal until Feb. 21, 2014. Comments can be submitted to the Federal eRulemaking Portal, or sent to: Docket No. APHIS-2009-0017, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

-Release by Joe Roybal for BEEF Magazine.

## **TSCRA 2014 Convention & Expo**

Registration is now open for the 2014 Cattle Raisers Convention & Expo, April 4-6, in San Antonio. The schedule is packed full of must-attend events, including the School for Successful Ranching and the largest livestock expo in the state. TSCRA suggests that you register early for maximum savings and the best room rates. [Click here to learn how to register.](#) Early registration ends Friday, March 21, 2014.

-Release by TSCRA

## **The Importance of Advocacy**

OKAWVILLE, Ill. - Add one more item to the list of chores that Larry Hasheider has to do on his 1,700-acre farm: defending his business to the American public.

There's a lot of conversation about traditional agriculture recently, and much of it is critical. Think genetically modified crops, overuse of hormones and antibiotics, inhumane treatment of animals and overly processed foods.

This explosion of talk about food - some based on fact, some based on fiction - has already transformed the marketplace. Slow to respond and often defensive, farmers and others in agribusiness have for several years let critics define the public debate and influence consumers. Now, the industry is trying to push farmers and businesses to fight back, connecting with those consumers through social media and outreach that many in agriculture have traditionally shunned.

"We didn't think anyone would be interested in what we were doing," Hasheider says.

Like a lot of other farmers, he was wrong.

Take the issue of genetically modified foods. There has been little scientific evidence to prove that foods grown from engineered seeds are less safe than their conventional counterparts, but consumer concerns and fears - many perpetuated through social media and the Internet - have forced the issue.

Makers of the engineered seeds and the farmers and retailers who use them stayed largely silent, even as critics put forth a simple, persuasive argument: Consumers have a right to know whether they are eating genetically modified foods.

The GMO debate

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, a well-known critic of food companies and artificial and unhealthy ingredients in foods, has not opposed genetically modified foods, on the basis that there's no evidence they are harmful.

Still, director Michael Jacobson says, the issue has taken on a life of its own to the general public.

Companies like Monsanto Corp. "try to argue back with

facts, but emotions often trump facts," Jacobson says. "They are faced with a situation where critics have an emotional argument - a fear of the unknown."

Perhaps no one understands this dynamic better than Robert Fraley, who was one of the first scientists to genetically modify seeds and now is executive vice president and chief technology officer of Monsanto. He says the company was late to the public relations game as critics worked to vilify it, even holding marches on city streets to protest Monsanto by name.

About a year ago, in an attempt to dispel some of the criticism, the company started addressing critics directly and answering questions through social media and consumer outreach. The company is also reaching out to nutritionists and doctors, people whom consumers may consult. Fraley himself is personally tweeting.

#### Reaching out to mothers

At a recent conference of meat producers, David Wescott, director of digital strategy at APCO Worldwide, told ranchers they needed to do a better job connecting with - and listening to - mothers, who often communicate on social media about food and make many of the household purchasing decisions.

"It's a heck of a lot more convincing when a mom says something than when a brand does," he says.

Other farm groups, like Illinois Farm Families, are inviting moms to tour the fields. Tim Maiers of the Illinois Pork Producers Association says the group has found that consumers generally trust farmers, but they have a lot of questions about farming methods.

One of the moms, Amy Hansmann, says that though she remains concerned about the amount of processed foods and chemicals in the food supply, her experiences touring conventional farms with Illinois Farm Families changed her thinking. She was particularly amazed by the big farmers' use of technology and attempts to be sustainable.

Hansmann says that before the tour, her perception from the media was that these big farmers were "evil capitalists" who focused only on their businesses and not on the care of the land or animals.

"What I found couldn't be further from the truth," she says.

Chris Chinn, a blogger and a fifth-generation farmer and mom from Clarence, Mo., is trying to reach out to others like Hansmann, too. Chinn, 38, carves 20 minutes or more out of her schedule every day to get on Twitter, comment on online articles and update her blog.

"We've been late to the game, and we realized that if we don't start sharing, people are going to start forming opinions about you," says Chinn, who is working with the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, formed by more than 80 farm groups to try to improve agriculture's message.

Dialogue isn't enough

Some critics say dialogue isn't going to be enough, arguing that the companies will have to make some real concessions in addition to defending what they do if they are going to win over consumers. They point to Monsanto's expensive campaigns against mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods in California and Washington state. The company won both fights.

Fighting the mandatory labels has "made it look like big ag has more to hide," says Gary Hirshberg, a co-founder of the organic yogurt company Stonyfield Farm. He has worked in the past few years on the labeling campaign. Hirshberg and other critics have argued that Monsanto and retailers should just accept the labels and move on.

Some farmers have decided that responding to consumer preference is the smartest route for their businesses. Nestled in low hills along the Missouri River just west of St. Louis, John Ritter has a 1,500-acre farm and a herd of 200 cattle. His wife, Heidi, recently created a Facebook profile for their cattle ranch, and the two have worked with the Missouri Beef Industry Council to reach out to consumers.

They say they are shocked by some of the misconceptions about agriculture on the Internet, like the assumption that most cattle operations are so-called "factory farms."

At the same time, they realize they are somewhat powerless in the conversation.

John says he stopped using growth hormones in his cattle. "We don't do it because we don't want to have to explain how we do it," he says.

-Release by Southern Livestock

## The Latest on Zilmax

(Reuters) - The U.S. beef industry's dependence on the muscle-building drug Zilmax began unraveling here, on a sweltering summer day, in the dusty cattle pens outside a Tyson Foods Inc slaughterhouse in southeastern Washington state.

As cattle trailers that had traveled up to four hours in 95-degree heat began to unload, 15 heifers and steers hobbled down the ramps on August 5, barely able to walk. The reason: The animals had lost their hooves, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture documents reviewed by Reuters. The documents show the 15 animals were destroyed.

The next day, the hottest day of the month, two more animals with missing hooves arrived by truck. Again, the animals were destroyed, the documents show.

The animals' feet were "basically coming apart," said Keith Belk, a professor of animal science at Colorado State University. Belk said he reviewed photos of the lame cattle, though he declined to say who showed them to him.

The 17 animals had a factor in common, according to an examination of U.S. government documents and interviews with people who had direct knowledge of the events. In the weeks before the cattle were shipped to Tyson's slaughterhouse, outside the city limits of Pasco, all had been fed Merck & Co Inc's profit-enhancing animal feed additive, Zilmax.

The day after the hoofless animals were euthanized on August 6, Tyson told its feedlot customers it would stop accepting Zilmax-fed cattle. After Reuters reported the existence of a videotape of apparently lame Zilmax-fed animals - shown by an official of meatpacking giant JBS USA LLC at a trade meeting in Colorado - Merck itself temporarily suspended sales of the drug in the U.S. and Canada. The rest of the nation's leading meatpackers soon followed Tyson, the largest U.S. meat processor.

Merck, in a statement to Reuters, stressed the safety of its product. It said the company investigates all reports of adverse reactions to its drugs, and did so after the deaths near Pasco.

"Several third-party experts were brought in to evaluate the situation, review the data and identify potential causes for the hoof issue," Merck's statement said. "The findings from the investigation showed that the hoof loss was not due to the fact these animals had received Zilmax."

Merck declined to identify the names of the third-party investigators or provide more detail on the research findings.

After temporarily halting Zilmax sales, Merck continues to state Zilmax is safe when used as directed, with no welfare concerns discovered in 30 research studies since the product was introduced in the United States in 2007. In addition, Merck said, the company is planning more field evaluations of Zilmax, using "a well-designed collection and analysis of data by third-party industry experts." A "prominent" epidemiologist and veterinarian will oversee the work, Merck said.

Tyson Foods spokesman Gary Mickelson said his company doesn't know exactly what happened to the small group of cattle that were destroyed at the plant near Pasco. Some animal health experts have told Tyson the use of Zilmax is a possible cause, he said.

Tyson had seen some cattle mobility issues in the past, but "the issues at Pasco this summer were more severe" than the company had seen before, Mickelson said.

#### QUESTIONS ARISE

Scientists say they have yet to determine whether Zilmax causes ailments so severe that cattle must be euthanized. One theory is that the federally approved feed additive may compound the effects of common feedlot nutritional disorders such as acidosis, which can affect animals that consume too much starch (primarily grain) or sugar in a short period of time. Heat and animal genetics, too, may be factors.

Regardless, the episode at the Tyson plant - which hasn't been publicly disclosed until now - is coming to light at a time of growing concern over risks to animal and human

health posed by the increased use of pharmaceuticals in food production. Livestock pharmaceuticals use is expanding as part of the push to produce more meat at lower cost.

Earlier this month, in an effort to combat antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threatens human health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration rolled out new policies to phase out the use of antibiotics that make cows, pigs and chickens plumper. The FDA has said that meat produced from cattle fed with Zilmax is safe for human consumption.

The cases of hoofless cattle also raise ethical questions about whether the drive by modern agriculture to produce greater volumes of food, as cheaply as possible, is coming at the cost of animal welfare.

Of the more than 30 million beef cattle slaughtered in the U.S. annually, most move smoothly through a mechanized system that is among the most efficient in the world.

To read more, [click here.](#)

-Release by Reuters

## **TBBA Business Card Ads**

TBBA members have the opportunity to advertise their farm or ranch through the new business card advertisements to be launched on the TBBA website soon. If you would like to purchase a business card ad, e-mail [mollie@txbrangus.org](mailto:mollie@txbrangus.org) for more information. Business card ads will cost \$50.

## **Call for Cattle Photos**

The TBBA is constantly looking for ways to improve our social media sights. If you have photos of your Brangus cattle around the farm or ranch that you would like us to share on the Facebook page, please e-mail those in .jpg format to [mollie@txbrangus.org](mailto:mollie@txbrangus.org).

To view the current "Around the Farm and Ranch" album, [click here.](#)

## **Jan./Feb. Calendar of Events**

**January:**

**15th:**

TBBA Miss America Sale Consignment Deadline

**25th:**

Junior Brangus Show- Fort Worth Stock Show, 8 a.m.

**February:**

**4th:**

NCBA Convention and Trade Show- Nashville, TN

**7th:**

San Antonio Open Show Check-In

**9th:**

San Antonio Open International Brangus, International  
Red Brangus shows

**11th:**

San Antonio Junior Red Brangus Check-In

**12th:**

San Antonio Junior Brangus Check-In

**13th:**

San Antonio Junior Red Brangus Show- Judge: Deb  
Core, IA

**14th:**

San Antonio Junior Red Brangus Show- Judge: Deb  
Core, IA

**12th:**

San Antonio All Breeds Sale

\*Are you a TBBA member with an upcoming sale or field day? E-mail [mollie@txbrangus.org](mailto:mollie@txbrangus.org) to have it listed on the website and E-Newsletter calendar\*

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*Sincerely,*

*Texas Brangus Breeders Association*

Serving and promoting the interest of its members specific to the breeding, raising, and marketing of Brangus cattle.