

# An Inside Look at the Beef Checkoff Program



By JaCee Aaseth for the N.D. Beef Commission

The N.D. Beef Commission (NDBC) has the important role of appropriating the \$2-per-head beef checkoff investment every state cattle producer makes each time cattle change ownership. This is done through state and national beef promotion, research and education programs aimed at enhancing beef demand by strengthening consumer trust.



Mark Wagner  
NDBC Chair

“Each time a consumer takes a bite of beef, we want to make sure it’s the best eating experience possible,” says Mark Wagner, a Monango, N.D., beef producer and NDBC chairman. “We also want to make sure we earn the trust of consumers in our state, country and around the world by doing our job of producing safe, delicious and nutritious beef in the very best way possible.”

## State Checkoff

Serving on the NDBC board for five years, Wagner just completed his first year as chairman. He, his wife Val, and their four sons run a third-generation diversified farm including cattle, small grains and row crops. He became involved in the NDBC because he values its grassroots voice in promoting the product they raise.

“We have to give consumers a reason to buy our beef by proving it’s a high-quality protein source,” says Wagner. “And that is what the beef checkoff program does.”

NDBC collaborates with more than 15 partners on beef promotion projects around the state, nation and globe. Some of these projects include international marketing efforts in Japan, NDSU BBQ bootcamps, and military appreciation picnics at the N.D. State Fair and Grand Forks Air Force Base.

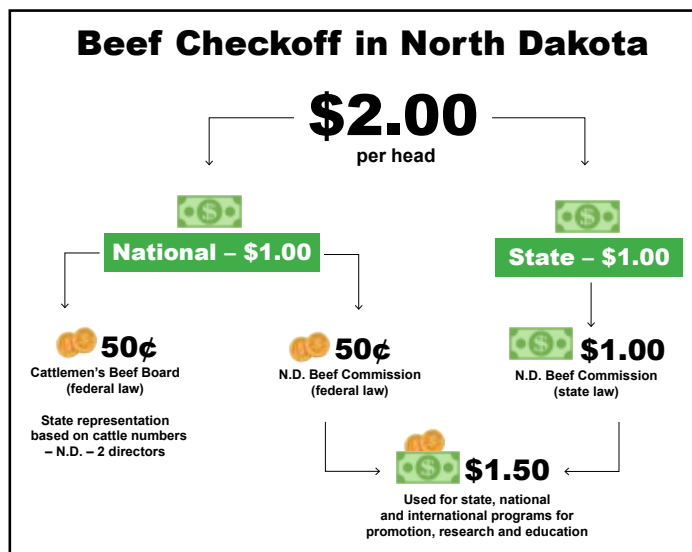
“These promotional efforts are an opportunity to educate consumers and help dissolve any mistruths they may hear about beef,” says Wagner.

NDBC also partners with numerous entities to provide additional education programs, such as supporting the N.D. Beef Quality Assurance program and speaking to tens of thousands of students annually through Living Ag Classrooms, 4-H, FFA, and other events.

“The second checkoff dollar, implemented in 2015, provided new opportunities to extend the reach of NDBC’s

efforts,” says Wagner. An example is NDBC’s partnership with the U.S. Meat Export Federation to market American beef overseas, more specifically in Japan retail grocery stores, which resulted in the sale of more than 3.5 million pounds of U.S. beef by participating retailers.

Wagner is excited the additional state beef checkoff dollar has also allowed NDBC to invest in more research. “Since 2015, we’ve invested more than \$1.3 million in 17 research projects related to beef in human health, beef product development and beef quality,” he says.



## National Checkoff

NDBC works closely with the Federation of State Beef Councils, which is the checkoff arm of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA). As one of several contractors to the national beef checkoff program, NCBA implements programs targeted at increasing consumer trust in beef, ensuring beef safety and promoting beef’s nutritional benefits.

“The national program allows us to increase our impact by marketing beef and educating consumers in highly populated areas,” says Wagner.

NCBA has specifically helped NDBC broaden its reach through several national programs aimed at instilling consumer trust in beef products.

“North Dakota cattle producers reap the benefits of both the state and national checkoff,” says Wagner. “The checkoff program provides a high rate of return for our producers.”

