

Youth Education a Priority for ND Beef Commission



By JaCee Aaseth for the N.D. Beef Commission

The N.D. Beef Commission (NDBC) has five strategic priorities that support its mission to enhance beef demand by strengthening consumer trust and exceeding consumer expectations. One of these priorities is growing consumer trust in beef and beef production. The NDBC works to achieve this priority by reaching out to consumers with educational programming as well as building a network of beef advocates.



Fred Helbling,
NDBC Board
Member

One of the target audiences is North Dakota's youth.

Participation in programs like 4-H, FFA and the Living Ag Classroom provide the opportunity to reach children with important information on where beef comes from and its nutritional value. At the same time, communicating the beef community's commitment to safe and healthy beef is a key objective. Messaging for these programs includes the value of beef in a healthy diet, the care beef farmers and ranchers provide for their cattle, the land and the environment, and their role in bringing a safe and delicious product to children and their families.

"NDBC partners with the 4-H and FFA programs to get young people excited about beef, including everything from the farm gate to their plate. We need young leaders to tell our story and any help we can give them is very important," says Fred Helbling, NDBC board member and N.D. beef producer. "The Living Ag Classroom activities in Bismarck, Minot and Fargo also allow us to be front and center with more than 4,000 4th grade kids each year in a learning environment that allows them to ask questions and learn about why beef is important in their diet and what

by-products we also get from cattle."

Helbling and his brothers, Jim and Wayne, run a registered Hereford operation southwest of Mandan. They sell registered bulls and bred heifers and also background approximately 150 steers each year. In addition to his role on NDBC, he has served as a N.D. Stockmen's Association board member and the N.D. Ag Coalition chairman.

In addition to the Living Ag Classroom, 4-H and FFA partnerships, NDBC supports meat-science-related scholarships at N.D. State University, a beef grant program for Family and Consumer Science and Ag Education programs, and provides funding to the North Dakota CattleWomen for youth education projects.

"The young people NDBC is educating are going to carry this beef knowledge with them for life. We have to remember the majority of students these days do not have agriculture backgrounds; therefore, beef education is a necessity," says Helbling. "It is important we also tell them what we do so they develop trust in the beef industry. After all, they are our future beef consumers."

NDBC also supports the development and implementation of youth-focused beef checkoff programs at the national level. Pooling checkoff dollars with other state beef councils greatly extends the reach to youth across the nation. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the beef checkoff, also provides numerous educational resources to state beef councils, including virtual ranch tours, the Rethink the Ranch video series and beef nutrition, recipe and cookery resources.

To learn more about the N.D. Beef Commission and its youth and consumer outreach efforts, visit www.ndbeef.org or the NDBC Facebook page.

