

A FARM PROGRESS PUBLICATION MIDWEST GROUP EDITION



MISSOURI DIRECTOR of Agriculture Fred Ferrell points out beef prices at a Japanese grocery store. The price for this product was 1,000 yen — the equivalent of \$8.77 in the United States — for 7.7 ounces of beef.



**Rally for property rights**  
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# Mission for beef

By JERILYN JOHNSON

### Key Points

- MDA conducts 12-day trade mission to Japan and Taiwan.
- Goal is to market Missouri's quality beef and QSA program.
- Plans under way for foreign meat buyer visit, tour in May.

**W**HEN it comes to quality and safety of imported beef, Japan has some of the toughest standards in the world.

Fred Ferrell, director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, saw a window of opportunity for Missouri beef and decided to make the most of it. Ferrell and Mark Hitt, international marketing coordinator with MDA, set out on a 12-day trade mission to Taiwan and Japan in late January. The state ag leaders met with meat buyers, media and other stakeholders to discuss Missouri's beef industry and Quality Systems Assessment program. Accompanying Ferrell and Hitt were Mark Akin and Jeff Windett of Circle A Angus Ranch, Iberia.

"We are pleased that

Director Ferrell took the initiative," Windett says. "It was an enlightening experience. The Japanese want quality beef, and they expect us to deliver what we promise."

Missouri is the first U.S. state to offer its producers the opportunity to market cattle through QSA, a program USDA uses to verify that cattle meet the age and source requirements for export.

Timing was perfect for a stop in Taiwan. On Jan. 25, Taiwan lifted the ban on U.S. beef imports, and Missouri-raised beef was among the first sold.

Just a few days before Ferrell and his trade team left for the Orient, however, Japan re-enacted its ban on U.S. beef due to the discovery of a shipment of veal with spinal material — a violation of the trade agreement to protect against bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Still, Ferrell was confident Japanese meat buyers would be more interested than ever in a QSA-backed beef supply.

"Our mission to Japan and Taiwan was to inform those potential customers of Missouri beef [and] of Missouri's QSA protocol that utilizes third-party age and source verification," Ferrell says. "By visiting those countries, we've shown them that our QSA identification system can now follow high-quality Missouri cattle from the farm to the feedlot and on to Japan and Taiwan."

The Missouri mission

was well received. "We have branded Missouri beef as high-quality and shown the Japanese and Taiwanese the superb genetics that our cattle possess. We have also identified future buyers for our state's beef, pork, soybean and cotton products," Ferrell adds.

It's been reported that the Japanese vice agriculture minister is considering taking steps to import U.S. beef from only 10 processors that Japanese officials have already inspected.

Ferrell and Hitt met with the USDA's agricultural minister-counselor in Tokyo.

"Missouri's QSA program just might be the vehicle we use to show them that Missouri beef is safe, quality beef," Ferrell says.

Ferrell and Hitt extended an invitation to Japanese and Taiwanese meat buyers to visit Missouri in May.



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