

Group explores beef products

By FRAN O'LEARY

THE Cattlemen's Beef Board is working hard to promote consumption of beef among consumers of all ages.

Of the \$1-per-head beef checkoff collected from the sale of each beef animal, the beef board receives 50 cents, with the other 50 cents remaining with the state beef councils. This works out to an annual promotion and research budget of \$52 million for the beef board.

"A beef animal turns over on average two and a half times during its lifetime, for a combined checkoff expense averaging \$2.50 per animal," explains Monte Reese, chief operating officer of the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board.



REESE

"The dairy check-off, on the other hand, collects \$25 to \$35 per year per dairy cow," notes Gary Sharp, beef board member and South Dakota dairy and beef producer.

"Fifty-two million dollars sounds like a lot of money, but the annual dairy checkoff budget is about \$400 million," Sharp says. "That's a lot more money than what beef has to work with."



SHARP

In late 2003 and all of 2004, the beef board focused its efforts and resources on restoring consumer confidence in beef after the discovery of a dairy cow that tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy in Washington state.

In 2005, the board's focus changed. "We didn't have as many dollars to promote beef consumption then because we were pouring our resources into BSE," Sharp says.

Convenience is key

According to the beef board, during the past five years nearly 2,600 new beef products have been developed. You'll find most of the new items in your grocer's freezer.

"Many of the new beef products are convenience foods," says Jay O'Brien, vice chairman of the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board. O'Brien says that's because the average consumer today has less than 30 minutes to spend on meal preparation. "Most have more like 15 minutes," he notes.

A couple of the new products that have been introduced include veal bacon, which has the great taste of pork bacon but with 50% less fat and 30% fewer calories; and cheeseburger fries. Cheeseburger fries look like small fish sticks with breading on the outside and



O'BRIEN



BEEF FOR KIDS: The Cattlemen's Beef Board hopes cheeseburger fries — breaded cheese and hamburger that looks like fish sticks — will be a hit with kids.

Key Points

- The Cattlemen's Beef Board receives 50 cents from the sale of each beef animal.
- About 2,600 new beef products have been developed since 2000.
- The beef board partners with the dairy industry for promotion and research.

hamburger and cheese inside.

To help checkoff promotion dollars stretch further, the beef board partners with the dairy industry on some research and promotion projects.

"Even though all dairy producers are beef producers, there was a time when dairy producers were shunned by beef producers and dairy producers didn't really think of themselves as beef producers," Sharp says.

That's all changed. Sixteen of the 104 members on the Cattlemen's Beef Board are dairy producers.

Metabolic edge

A checkoff-funded study shows that a protein-rich diet helps people who exercise lose more weight and fat, not muscle. According to the study by the University of Illinois, a group of women

using the protein-rich diet lost a high percentage of fat — nearly 100%. In a group of women using the high-carbohydrate diet and the same exercise program, as much as 25% to 30% of the weight loss was muscle.

"Both diets work because when you restrict calories, you lose weight," says Donald Layman, food science and human nutrition professor at the University of Illinois and lead researcher of the study. "But the people on the higher-protein diet lost more weight. Some people refer to this as the metabolic advantage of a protein-rich diet."

The beef board is investing \$800,000 this year in targeting beef promotions to kids and their mothers. They're also trying to get their message about healthy, nutrient-rich, high-protein diets out to schools.

"We want to show them how to balance school lunches with beef," Sharp explains. "We aren't obligated to do it, but we want beef to stay on the center of the plate rather than some of the competition. We're encouraging schools to make lunches healthier with beef."

O'Leary is a Farm Progress editor.

Dairy producers could see victories from pending ag-appropriations bill

A \$100 billion agriculture appropriation bill, which passed the House and Senate, is waiting to be signed by President George W. Bush. The bill includes several items the National Milk Producers Federation worked on:

- An amendment to the National Dairy Promotion Act that permits the National Dairy Board to authorize — only in fiscal year 2006 — funds to be expended on environmental and public-health issues. This language would then permit the NDB to vote to authorize \$6 million to fund air-quality research as part of the new consent agreement with EPA.
- Funding for the national Johne's disease program at a level of \$13.2 million.
- Funding for the Market Access Program at \$200 million, and Foreign Market Development at \$34.5 million.

The appropriations bill did not include two key items that NMPF had been working to get attached to the legislation:

- Dairy-plant regulatory language that addresses a loophole in milk marketing orders affecting sales of milk in state orders from federally regulated regions.
- Language excluding animal livestock from CERCLA (superfund) and EPCRA environmental statutes. That means dairy operations remain subject to a series of environmental regulations, including these and the clean-air and water acts.

Additional items that were included in the legislation were:

- A delay in the implementation of country-of-origin labeling for meat. Originally inserted into the 2002 Farm Bill, mandatory meat labeling has been delayed several times. This appropriations bill postpones it again until 2008.
- A provision relaxing organic food production regulations that allows synthetic substances to be used in organic products, including dairy foods. The measure also relaxes the organic feed requirement for dairy farms.

Beef tallow finding outlet as additive in diesel fuel

Key Points

- Preliminary studies of beef tallow show it has promise as a diesel-fuel additive.
- Tallow, or excess fat trimmed from beef, is available in large volume.
- Utilization of tallow in biodiesel creates marketing opportunity, reduces waste.

By ROBERT THOMAS

THE tallow that meat processing plants trim to give you a leaner steak may have a new use as a diesel-fuel additive.

Based on preliminary research, a small amount of animal-fat tallow added to a tank of regular diesel fuel may help the fuel industry meet impending lower sulfur standards while providing the needed lubricity, says Leon Schumacher, University of Missouri agricultural engineering professor.

Big supply

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mandated that by June 2006 diesel fuel must have a sulfur level of 15 parts per million, down from the current permissible level of 500 ppm. Lower sulfur levels reduce fuel lubricity and require an additive to prevent premature failure of the diesel-injection system.

Tallow may be a substitute for various additives now on the market.

There is a ready supply of tallow. More than 1.8-billion pounds of it were produced last year, according to USDA figures.

"American consumers have become more conscious of fat intake in their daily diet," Schumacher says. "Packing plants have responded by removing excess fat from beef. This has produced a large volume of tallow that must be disposed of each day.

"Packers have searched for value-added ways to dispose of the tallow," he explains.

Liquid fat

Successful utilization of beef tallow in biodiesel would create a new marketing opportunity and reduce waste in the processing industry, he says.

One way to dispose of the tallow would be to heat it to a liquid state and mix it with petroleum-diesel fuel.

Early tests show liquid tallow remains in suspension with new low-sulfur diesel fuel down to a temperature of 10 degrees F. Diesel fuel in the tank seldom reaches this temperature under normal operating conditions, making it unlikely that the tallow would separate from the fuel, he says.

As little as 1% of tallow mixed with petroleum-diesel fuel may provide the needed lubricity.

Tallow is used in cooking and in the making several products such as animal feed, bird food, soaps and candles.

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