

Independent Cattlemen of NEBRASKA

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PROUD TO SUPPORT

**R-CALF
USA**

ICON...

Solid as a
windmill...
Always working
for the
independent
producer.



WELCOME TO ICON

Not only have the winds of Mother Nature been blowing, so have the winds of change in the cattle industry.

Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska (ICON), has been in a whirlwind since filing for Articles of Incorporation and By-laws the end of January. From the outset of our first press conference in North Platte, to releasing the news of our new organization at the National R-CALF USA annual convention in Denver, ICON has grown rapidly in membership.

The ICON board of directors would like to say THANK YOU and hats off to our 600+ new members. As charter members, (our charter member list will continue through the end of 2005) it will be your voice that drives the direction in which ICON pursues the issues at hand and the future of our industry.

Becoming a state cattlemen's affiliate with the national cattlemen's organization, R-CALF USA, is one reason for the fast rate of membership growth in ICON. Since the end of January and through March, Nebraska has held ten R-CALF/ICON calf auctions and six meetings across the state. Over \$125,000 has been raised in this short amount of time, the majority going to R-CALF. This amount is more than Nebraska raised the entire year of 2004.

Again, a big THANK YOU to the

cattlemen who contributed their hard earned dollars at these events. This is certainly an indication that rural Americans are beginning to stand up and make their voices be heard.

It is important as we address issues concerning our industry that we get involved and communicate with our legislators. Making calls and writing letters to our congressmen and senators with our concerns not only educates them on issues pertaining to us and rural Nebraska, but assures them we do want to be heard.

ICON will tentatively be in McCook, Ne. on May 5 presenting our views on several issues. On May 21 ICON will be in O'Neill, Ne. hosting a State fund raising event with R-CALF USA in honor of Tom Whitehill. Featured speakers for this event will be Leo McDonnell, President of R-CALF USA and David Domina, lead attorney in the ongoing Pickett vs. Tyson legal battle concerning packer ban on ownership of cattle. Several items will be auctioned off. A free hamburger feed is scheduled for that evening along with entertainment from a local band. More information will be provided at a future date.

Hope to see you all in O'Neill May 21.

Chris Abbott
President, ICON

INDEPENDENT CATTLEMEN OF NEBRASKA
.....working for the independent producer

How Does The Board Feel About A State Beef Checkoff?

The US Supreme Court is considering whether the National Beef Checkoff is constitutional. In Nebraska, Senator Kremer introduced LB 150 which institutes a mandatory state checkoff should the national checkoff be ruled unconstitutional.

ICON's Board of Directors is not opposed to a checkoff on beef, but we feel that the format developed by Senator Kremer is unfair, cumbersome and perhaps unconstitutional.

Kremer's bill requires each individual selling cattle to pay an upfront fee, similar to the national program. A refund is available to the producer if he files the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner. This format is referred to as an "opt-out" format. The ICON Board supports an "opt-in" format, in which the producer is asked to participate at the point of sale. By agreeing to participate, the checkoff is collected and forwarded to the Nebraska Beef Industry Development Cash Fund.

Senators have been told that the small producer will not participate in an "opt-in" format, and therefore it is imperative that a mandatory refundable checkoff be instituted to force small producers to ante up. Senators need to realize that it is the large producers who have the greatest incentive to file the appropriate paperwork and ask for a refund of their checkoff dollars. LB 150 will insure that the burden of operating a Nebraska checkoff will fall on small producers.

It is foolish for Senators to waste precious time on this issue when the Supreme Court has yet to rule on the constitutional nature of the national checkoff. Senators need to hear from producers like you who agree with the position taken by the Board of Directors.

Bob Rothwell/Al Davis
Directors

ICON Signs On To Amicus Brief

Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska (ICON) is supporting R-Calf by filing an amicus (friend of the court) brief with the Ninth Circuit Appellate Court. The amicus group is composed of several organizations which are concerned that USDA wants to overturn U.S. District Judge Richard Cebull's decision to keep the Canadian border closed to the import of live cattle.

ICON has also become a stakeholder group in Cattlemen's Competitive Market Project (CCMP) which leads the effort. CCMP generates revenue through the use of a voluntary checkoff of 50 cents per animal sold. CCMP hopes to sign up 400,000 cattle in the next six months. CCMP's field of interest includes the problems of packer concentration, unfair trade, captive supply, country of origin labeling and mandatory animal identification, but the focus of the next few weeks will be the amicus brief.

The Domina Law firm in Omaha has been retained to prepare and file the amicus brief.

USDA's appeal will be heard by the Ninth Circuit Appellate Court in May. If the Court rejects USDA's appeal, the case will be scheduled for court trial proceedings in Billings, Mt. on July 27, 2005.

Facts from north of the border...

The total number of Canadian feedlots which listed their capacity---185

The total listed one time capacity in Canadian custom feedlots---740,810

The total number of feedlots with Alberta addresses----75

Percentage of Canadian custom feedlots in Alberta-----48%

The total listed capacity of Alberta custom feedlots----- 531,630

Percentage of one time capacity in Alberta custom feedlots-----71%

The average listed capacity of Alberta feedlots-----7088

The number of Alberta feedlots with over 10,000 capacity----14

The average listed capacity of the Alberta over 10,000 lots----21,071

Percentage of Alberta capacity in feedlots over 10,000----55%

Canadian one time capacity in feedlots over 10,000----47%

Statistics taken from the Canadian Cattlemen Magazine

Did you know...

**96% of the world's population live
outside the United States?**

Did you know...

China has 1.281 billion people

India has 1.050 billion people

The U.S. has 287 million

Did you know...

**The average income for the world
was 7,140 in 2002**

**Only 20% of the world's population earned
over \$22,000.**

**Of the 20% with incomes over \$22,000, the U.S.
accounts for 24% with an average
income of \$34,100**

**Over 80% of the world's population earned
less than \$3,580**

Did you know...

**The average 2002 income for Central America
and South America was less than \$7,500**

Did you know...

**Only 29 countries have an average income
over \$20,000.**

**Maybe Congress should be working on
developing free trade agreements with
countries that can afford US beef, rather
than with those who can't.**

**Please send your
e-mail address to
independentcattlemen@yahoo.com**

**It's important that
we stand together...
to honor our past, to
protect our present,
and to provide for
our future.**

**ICON MEMBERSHIP ALERT****Help Needed in Raising Priority of Resolution of
Disapproval**

We need help from ICON members to ask our three Nebraska representatives, Congressmen Osborne, Terry and Fortenberry to co-sponsor and urge the House leadership to allow a vote on H.J. Res. 23, a Resolution of Disapproval of the USDA rule that prematurely opens the U.S. border to Canadian beef and cattle.

The livelihood of ranching and farming families depends on H.J. Res. 23 being a top priority for our representatives. This Resolution passed on March 3 in the U.S. Senate, and we are hoping for a House floor vote on the issue prior to May 7.

It has become very obvious that the U.S. could get Japan and other important export markets to resume beef imports from the U.S. if these nations did not have the excuse of the Canadian BSE problem to deny our exports. Our present Administration and some organizations support a science based decision to open the Canadian border because it sends a message to countries like Japan that North American beef is safe. Have we become a North American beef industry? We hope not!!

Taiwan, Egypt, Philipines and Tahiti recently opened their markets to U.S beef again, but prohibited shipping them any Canadian beef imported into the U.S. More importantly, we could jeopardize the health of our cattle herds and the safety of the American people by opening the border to Canada too quickly, when Canada is not complying with world standards for BSE.

U.S. beef is the safest beef in the world. We have high standards for beef in the United States, and must not be forced to lower our standards. Cattlemen and consumers deserve to be protected NOW.