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Good evening ladies and gentlemen. First, I want to compliment Oklahoma State University and their staff for staging the National Steer Symposium to discuss the direction of our steer shows, some of the benefits of them, and some of the problems that we are facing today. Dr. Totusek, in his opening remarks admonished us to keep our eye on the steer, search out the problems, try to maintain integrity in this youth program, and to try to define and establish landmarks with regard to weight, grade, dressing percentage, yield grade, and to try to tie down what is the ideal steer. He also indicated that the role of the steer project and the development of youth was of prime importance.

Harlan Richie did an excellent job in talking about the history and the development of the beef industry. He pointed out some very important facts concerning costs of maintenance in the production of beef and indicated the shortest possible days would be the most efficient way to produce our beef. He felt that height measurements would seek their level, that weight ranges for carcasses should be between six and eight hundred pounds, live weight between 900 and 1350 pounds, and that the cattle should have enough marbling to finish at the top end of the good or choice grade. He pointed to the fact that selecting animals for extremely trim shallow bodies might be getting away from capacity that is needed for animals to convert roughages and grains into beef efficiently.

Danny Fox did an excellent job of discussing frame size, growth rate, and efficiency, indicating that frame size might be independent of efficiency in beef production. Gary Smith and Bob Long both pointed out that body composition should receive more emphasis than it has in the past. Gary Smith indicated that consumer acceptability was of prime importance as far as the goals of producing beef are concerned. Bob Long also indicated that muscle can play an important factor in dressing percentage, as well as fat. Industry previously has associated with thickness of fat with dressing percentage much more than heavily muscling in a beast.

The judges, Bill Jacob, Bill Able, Gary Minish, all did an excellent job in describing some of the problems that judges face when judging steer shows today. They pointed out that the judge, in many instances, dictate the type and kind of cattle that come to the shows. Judges who were looking for the long, tall, slim, trim kind would certainly receive their share of those kind of steers at the shows they were judging while other judges who are looking for thicker, meatier, beefier cattle that are not so extreme in height and length and trimness would receive those kinds of steers at the shows that they judge. It was also pointed out that many times steers are not present that suit the judge from the standpoint of being ideal for the beef cattle industry.

Show managers pointed out their problems. They feel that the steer shows are popular and they would like to make them as educational as possible with as few problems, from the standpoint of integrity, as possible. Bob Volk at the Ak-Sar-Ben pointed out that youth were the main purpose and focus on their show. They have done away with the breeds and are classifying the steers all according to weights. Steers must gain two pounds a day. They weighed in April 1, in order to qualify for the Ak-Sar-Ben show. Ken Hartman of the National Western in Denver indicated steer shows are important. They provide an excellent experience for youth

help to broaden their perspective of the industry, and teach them to be good competitors. He pointed out that at the 1983 Denver show, steers would be classed according to their height. He did point out that steers from the premium sale were hard to merchandise because there were too many of them that graded below choice on the rail.

Bob Hillier pointed out that breeding was so important. The cattle have to have the bred-in ability to gain. He also indicated that the feedlots are having difficulty with the cattle that finish at too heavy a weight and that are too tall and long and stringy. He warned that these extremes would not fit the industry to advantage in the future. Bill Harrison of MBPXL said their box beef trade call for choice carcasses with cutability of 3 or less that the consumer demand was for a leaner product, that the carcasses that suited him were carcasses from 670 to 700 pounds.

Some speakers indicated that training experiences in steer shows and projects was not practical and that the steers from projects just simply do not meet the demands of the trade because of the low quality of the carcasses; therefore, the value of the steer projects and steer shows was very questionable from the standpoint of value to the industry.

Harry Thomas, Jerry Robbe, Rod Boling and I have discussed the activities which have taken place and have listened to all of the presentations. We feel that the meeting has been somewhat negative from the standpoint of the steer shows and their value to our industry. I would like to point out that we are living in America, a free country, a country that has put a man on the moon, a country that has the resources and the power to do about whatever we want to do if we decide to do it and are together on accomplishing those goals. For that reason, I would point out that the steer shows should not be criticized except in a constructive way, that if there are things that are wrong, we should go about to correct them and make changes so that they will be beneficial, first of all, to our youth and then to the industry. Profit has been pointed out a great many times during the course of events and prices paid for steer prospects have been cited as being unrealistic and, I am sure that in many cases this is true, but on the other hand, the experience of youth working with animals, learning to associate with them, and being responsible for their care and treatment is in itself a character developing process. Many a young man and young lady have been stimulated by the competitive program of a steer project and steer shows to become great achievers in the industry in later life. Research and development have shown us the heritability of the economical, important traits of cattle. We should follow this research and teach our youth to exploit those traits in 4-H steer projects. If it means that performance information should be provided at the time of the show to be constructive, it should be done. It means if you want to set realistic standards as far as perfection of the champion steer is concerned, this should be done realizing that from one show to another we are not always going to have the exact same specifications on a steer that happens to turn up champion. Maybe we should set 2 square inches of loin eye per hundred pounds of carcass weight and a requirement of yield grade 3 or better realizing that those steers that have a yield grade of 2 or better and still grade choice are superior as far as carcasses are concerned. I think that there is one thing that we must bear in mind concerning the grading of 4-H steers at terminal shows and that is the various environments involved with the steers that are exhibited at a show like Denver. They come from all over the United States. They come from small farm lots, improvised sheds, from modern facilities, and each has had a ration that is different from the other. Some have crowded their cattle hard, some have held them back. Some have put undue

stress and exercise on the animals before coming to the show. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to find cattle that are slaughtered at the steer shows with all the different backgrounds and environments and rations and handling procedures to see them not grade as well as those that might come out of a commercial feedlot that have been handled on a standard ration without stress and under excellent management conditions. Don't take me wrong. I think we should strive to improve the grading of the steers that come to the steer shows but I also know that there is no way in the world that a judge can tell what the marbling will be when he is judging them alive on an individual steer. This was pointed out very explicitly by the judges committee this morning.

In summary, I think the steer shows are here to stay. I think we can do with them whatever we want to do. I think if they are not properly conducted and if steer projects are not properly conducted it is the fault of planners. The grand champion steer is important. He helps to set the show window for the industry. He should be a steer that is compatible with all segments of the industry--the cow calf man, the grower, the finisher, the processor, and the consumer retailer. The steer show is one of the best means of promoting beef in our entire industry.

At this conference, we have had show managers, breeders, packers, feeders, extension people, breed associations, and agribusiness people to discuss where we are going in the steer shows. It is important for us to remember that our country is large and that shows that work in certain parts of the country will not be managed in the same way as they are in other parts of the country; therefore, I don't think that we ought to have, or try to determine or dictate how steer shows should be run per se in various sections of the nation. I do feel that we can have some guidelines concerning the kind of steers that we would like to see win at those shows and I think in reality, there isn't that much difference of opinion of the judges that judge our major steer shows in this country. I know that at times, we do see some extremes that occur and that probably should not occur but I would say this is more the exception rather than the rule. It is important to remember that the steer show does not guide the beef cattle industry on exactly the kind of cattle that will be produced in the future. The market place, the commercial market place, is what really guides the kind of beef cattle that we are going to be producing in America and we are going to have to do it efficiently and effectively if the beef cattle industry is to be competitive, profitable, and maintain the status it now holds. The future of our youth is so important to the future of our industry because they will become the industry leaders of the future; therefore, it behooves the adults that work with the youth in projects and at competitive events such as the steer show that integrity be taught as a highly important factor to be implemented in their project and at the show, as well as in their personal lives, if they are to be successful in the future.