



Canadian Beef Breeds Council celebrates successful hosting of the 2008 Beef Improvement Federation Annual Research Symposium & Annual Meeting.

They came to Calgary to learn about producing the best beef product. More than 400 delegates from Canada, U.S., Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom participated in the 2008 Beef Improvement Federation annual event, held this year in Calgary from June 30th to July 3rd.

The yearly event is North America's leading forum to showcase and discuss genetic advancements and innovations in beef production. Delegates heard from leading researchers and producers as they discussed beef production innovations and advancements happening in the U.S. and Canada—and, explored shared opportunities for the two leading beef producing countries.

Many renowned industry experts were featured in the extensive program line-up. Presentation materials are available on-line for both those who attended and others with an interest in the leading-edge content.

Dr. John Pollak, Director of the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium, Cornell University, opened the event with his presentation: *Keeping the Genetic Doors "Open" between Canada and U.S.* It was a fit to the conference theme of *Beef Beyond Borders* and Dr. Pollak did not shy away from the cross border access challenges between Canada and the US, inherent competitiveness and, perhaps more importantly—mutual opportunities. He urged industry across North America to work together, share information and find ways to strengthen beef production and marketing opportunities. Dr. Pollak was the closing speaker too, providing an insightful synthesis of the knowledge and insights shared by speakers throughout the event.

Conference speakers and topics included:

Dr. Mike Tess, Montana State University – *Emerging Technologies in Genetic Improvement – Convergence of Quantitative and Molecular Tools*

Dr. Gary Smith, Colorado State University – *Trends in Value-Added Marketing Challenges & Similarities Branded Product Focus on Animal Welfare*

Julie Stitt, Consultant – *Canadian Tractability in the Supply Chain*

Dr. Kee Jim, Feedlot Health Management Services; Chair, Canada Beef Export Federation – *Global Marketing Perspectives and Opportunities*

David Nichols, Nichols Farms – *Integrated Producer Perspective*

Bern Kotelko, Highland Feeders – *Producer Perspective*

Brad Wildeman, Poundmaker Feedlot; President, Canadian Cattlemen's Association – *Information Channels: Access to, and Benefits from, Enhanced Data Protocols*

Dr. Bob Church, past University of Calgary, - *Emerging Technologies/Producer Initiatives – Delivery to Consumers*

Kent Andersen, North American Limousin Association Foundation – *Collaboration between Canada & US – Financial, Data Flow, Analysis*

Dr. Bob Kemp, RAK Genetic Consulting Inc. and partner Sean McGrath, Creo Episteme – *Collection and Application of Genetic Information from a Canadian Perspective*

Dr. Mark Enns, Colorado State University – *New Trait Development*

Dr. Denny Crews, Lethbridge Research Station – *Traditional & Marker Assisted Evaluation*

CBBC's Executive Vice President, Herb McLane and Duncan Porteous, Project Manager of the organization's Purebred Risk Assessment Project shared an update on the project's findings regarding business risks faced by purebred producers and highlighted the current phase of the project which is leading the collaborative development of risk mitigation strategies and tools for producers.

"Our guest speakers represented many of North America's leaders in beef improvement and our delegates were fortunate to receive such leading-edge and insightful, innovative, and perhaps at times controversial information and ideas," said CBBC's Herb McLane. Highlights from presentations include:

Dr Bob Kemp, RAK Genetic Consulting Inc., noted that *linking pedigree and performance at both the level of seedstock and commercial industries along with genomic information will provide a tremendous opportunity to move genetic improvement to a new level.*

Dr. Bob Church, past University of Calgary, commented that *in addition to providing genetic production trait markers DNA testing will provide, in the future, a basis for screening test for healthy livestock. He feels breed associations have a pivotal role to play as they have amassed an incredible resource of accurate pedigree data and 'thousands' of DNA samples in storage.*

Dave Nichols, Nichols Farms, cautioned *all those farms, ranches, especially purebred, seedstock, and agriculture industries who ignore their customers' real or perceived values, and lack the guts to control costs are doomed to the trash can of history.*

Brad Wildeman, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, President, shared that *CCA is focusing on CBA (Canada Beef Advantage) – providing a platform for information sharing among stakeholders and alliances in the beef cattle industry.*

Dr. Kee Jim, a veterinarian, and then-chair of Canada Beef Export Federation, reminded the audience *that while genetic improvement programs are important to enhance efficiencies in the beef cattle industry, wealth in the beef cattle industry is based on trade and that access to markets based on sound science is crucial... and that has not/is not always the case.*

In addition to keynote addresses, the Beef Improvement Federation held highly-attended workshops to share the current work of their various key interest committees through several collaborative presentations: Mark Thallman - *Genetic Prediction*; Robert Williams - *Live Animal, Carcass and End Point*; Bob Weaber and Jane Parrish - *Producer Application*; Mark Enns - *Cowherd Efficiency and Adaptations*; Darrah Bullock and Bob Weaber - *Selection Decisions*; and Bill Bowman - *Emerging Technologies*.

Beef Improvement Federation Awards are also given during the conference and this year's recipients included many Canadians. Pioneer Awards recognizing lasting contribution to the improvement of beef cattle were bestowed on: Dr. Bob Church, Harry Haney, Louis Latimer, and Don Vaniman. Continuing service awards were presented to: Doug Fee, Dale Kelly, and Duncan Porteous. Canadian Cattlemen Magazine was honoured with the Ambassador Award. TC Ranch of Nebraska was named Top Seedstock Producer of the Year; Kniebel Farms & Cattle Company of Kansas was named Top Commercial Producer of the Year.

The Canadian Beef Breeds Council (CBBC), in partnership with Canadian beef breed associations and with the support of government and industry, staged the event for the second time following their successful hosting in 1998.

"A Conference of this size is not possible to stage without significant contributions of money, expertise, and support," noted Don Mackenzie, Chair of the BIF 2008 Steering Committee and President of CBBC. "Our federal, provincial and municipal governments and numerous breed association and industry

sponsors supported this event financially and through promotion and volunteerism—all essential to our successful hosting.”

The Conference theme of *Beef Beyond Borders* was established to highlight the opportunities and benefits Canada and the US may experience through cross border cooperation in research and development of genetic partnering, with scientists and producers, through better understanding and accurate development of emerging technologies including DNA trait selection tools and evaluations.

Alberta’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development George Groeneveld addressed a large audience at a formal dinner held at Calgary Stampede and spoke of his government’s commitment to the beef cattle industry. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development has announced a re-think of the provincial beef cattle industry in a national and international context and is planning new strategies to address new approaches, policies and programs to support the industry.

A day-long breed tour visited several Alberta purebred and commercial beef cattle producers and a feedlot: Cattleland Feedyards Ltd., Soderglen Ranches Ltd., and Hamilton Farms; 123 Conference participants took part in the breed tour; a spousal and guest tour to Calgary’s renowned Heritage Park included 16 participants.

The Beef Improvement Federation was formed in the U.S. more than 40 years ago as a means to standardize programs and methodology and to create greater awareness, acceptance and usage of beef cattle performance concepts.

Conference presentation materials are available on-line:

<http://bifconference.com/bif2008/symposiumpapers.html>

Audio Recordings: <http://www.bifconference.com/>

Photographs, via the Conference name: www.showchampions.com

CBBC: www.canadianbeefbreeds.com Beef Improvement Federation: www.beefimprovement.org

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Media inquiries/more information:

News Releases for all Award winners are available by request.

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