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## Beef Cattle Institute Links Beef Industry and Public with Timely University Research, Information

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**Beef Cattle Institute links beef industry and public with timely university research, information**

Last year, Kansas produced 5.4 billion pounds of beef — enough to supply the roughly 300 million Americans living in the U.S. with 72 quarter-pound burgers each for an entire year.

“Our economy is dependent on being the best at producing beef,” said Dan Thomson, Jones professor of clinical epidemiology at Kansas State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine and director of the university’s Beef Cattle Institute.

The institute was founded in 2007 to help Kansas continue to be the best at beef production. Its goal is to tackle tough issues facing the beef industry through education, research and outreach.

Clayton Huseman, executive director of the feedlot division at the Kansas Livestock Association, said one way the Beef Cattle Institute has helped the industry is by streamlining the flow of information and knowledge from the university to the field. It has brought together resources from every college on campus, allowing producers to

get information on issues such as business, economics and beef production — all with just one phone call to the institute.

While the institute works face-to-face with beef producers at regional workshops, it also offers an online training platform. Animal Care Training contains more than 300 training modules in both English and Spanish and covers all segments of the beef industry.

Thomson said their research has shown the Beef Cattle Institute improves the knowledge base of industry workers by 27 percent with a five-minute audiovisual module. More than 8,000 producers and industry workers have gone through the online training modules.

Thomson also serves in an advisory role to companies like Cargill Inc. The institute acts as a third-party information source, offering science-based facts on hot-button issues like animal welfare and food safety.

The institute essentially operates like a small business, according to Thomson. Aside from his own salary, the institute’s staff and graduate student salaries, along with operating funds, are generated by service revenue.

“We have created tools that have value to the beef industry,” Thomson said. “If our tools aren’t needed, we don’t have a business.”

The institute has conducted international symposiums that have addressed beef cattle welfare and antibiotic usage in cattle. More than 800 stakeholders attended the international symposium on welfare in 2010, with an additional 500 watching by live webcast from 27 states and six countries. Thomson said the institute plans to hold a symposium next year on the relationship of the environment and our carbon footprint to beef production.

*By Bethany Sanderson, K-State Research and Extension*



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