

The Littlest Christmas Tree

*The littlest Christmas tree,
lived in a meadow of green,
Among a family,
of tall evergreens,
He learned how to whisper,
the evergreen song,
with the slightest of wind,
that came gently along.*

*He watched as the birds,
made a home out of twigs,
and couldn't wait till,
he too was big.
For all of the trees,
offered a home,
the maple, the pine, and the
oak,
who's so strong.*

*"I hate being little",
the little tree said,
"I can't even turn colors,
like the maple turns red",
"I can't help the animals,
like the mighty old oak",
"He shelters them all,
in his wide mighty cloak".*

*The older tree said,
"Why little tree you don't
know?
The story of a mighty king,
from the land with no snow?"
Little tree questioned,
"A land with no snow?"
"Yes!" said old tree,
"A very old story,
from so long ago".*

*"A star appeared,
giving great light,
over a manger,
on long winters night.
A baby was born,
a king of all kings,*

*and with him comes love,
over all things."*

*"He lived in a country,
all covered in sand,
and laid down his life,
to save all of man."*

*Little tree thought of the gift
given by him,
then the big tree said with the
happiest grin,
"We're not just trees,
but a reminder of that day,
there's a much bigger part,
of a role that we play!"*

*"For on Christmas eve,
my life I'll lay down,
in exchange for a happier,
loving ground.
And as I stand dying,
they'll adorn me in trim,
this all will be done,
in memory of him".*

*"Among a warm fire,
with family and friends,
in the sweet songs of Christ-
mas,
I'll find my great end,
then ever so gently,
he'll come down to see,
and take me to heaven,
Jesus and me".*

*"So you see little tree,
we are not like the oak,
who shelters all things,
beneath his great cloak.
Nor are we like the maple
in fall,
who's colors leave many,
standing in awe".*

*"The gift that we give,
is ourselves, limb for limb,
the greatest of honor,
in memory of him".*

*The little tree bowed,
his head down and cried,
and thought of the king,
who willingly died.
For what kind of gift,
can anyone give?
Then to lay down your life,
when you wanted to live.*

*A swelling of pride
came over the tree,
Can all of this happen?
Because of just me?
Can I really bring honor?
By adorning a home?
By reminding mankind,
that he's never alone?*

*With this thought, little tree,
began singing with glee,
Happy and proud,
to be a true Christmas tree.*

*You can still hear them sing-
ing,
even the smallest in height,
singing of Christmas,
and that one holy night.*

Courtesy of : Amy Peterson

*Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year*

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KCA Annual Ballots Have Been Mailed to All Voting Members

The KCA Ballots have been mailed out to all KCA voting members. Please take the time to fill out the ballot and return it to the KCA office by December 15, 2014. Every voting member receives a ballot by mail to allow each person the opportunity to vote. Producer members decide the direction of the organization, and KCA looks forward to providing resourceful information, great customer service, and advocacy for your issues.

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Letter from the President.....Perry Owens

Hello Fellow Cattle Producers:

As I sit here, there are a lot of things going on in the world right now. I won't even begin to talk about all of the riots and the looting that I see on the news. That could be a conversation of its own, but I will leave that for another day.

For those of you who do turn to my article first (and I do know that is most of you), there are not a lot of articles in this paper. That is intentional. We want to acknowledge all of those companies that supported us throughout the year. These companies help us to stay in business and do the work you need us to do. However, the few articles that are in this paper are important. Please read them, and PLEASE, SUPPORT THOSE THAT SUPPORT KCA.

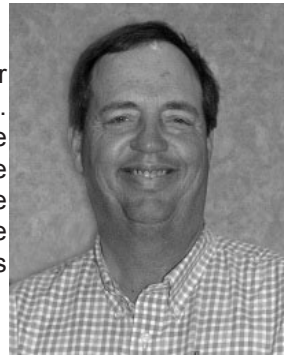
If you missed the KCA Convention and Trade Show, you really missed out on a great event this year. We had dynamic speakers, and it was truly the biggest event KCA has ever held. One of the best items that was in our auction this year was the Declaration of Independence. I think about how symbolic that is, especially with the current events in the country. There was a lot of work that went into this year's convention and a lot of commitment by our sponsors and vendors to support us as independent cattlemen. All of the vendors are listed in the paper this month. Please let them know you appreciate their involvement by doing business with them or by simply giving them a call.

Don't forget to fill out your ballot. I received mine. It came in booklet form this year, and it's long, but we need your input. I hope you take the time to complete it and send it back.

The Advent season is upon us where we prepare to celebrate

the birth of Christ and give thanks for our many blessings that we have received. You know as long as you have food on the table, a roof over your head, and all are healthy, the rest is just bling. So be sure to give thanks and pray for those who are without, or sick, for you know none of us really deserve it. It is all a gift from God. Merry Christmas!

-Perry L Owens



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Along with its own comments, KCA collected and submitted more than 175 producer comments regarding the EPA's Waters of the U.S. proposed rule. KCA addressed the overreach of the agency and its attempt to control private property. KCA is proud to stand up for producers against the iron fist of the EPA.

During a November visit to Washington D.C., the KCA Board of Directors and staff met with representatives from Senators Moran's and Roberts' offices. KCA addressed such topics and as support for COOL, the over regulation of the EPA, various water issues, price reporting, the need for competition in the marketplace, and the implementation and enforcement of the packers and stockyards act through the funding of GIPSA rules.

After the general elections, KCA reached out to all elected officials to offer its congratulations. As well, KCA is developing new relationships and expanding existing relationships with legislators. KCA staff is already preparing for the 2015 state legislative session and has already started working on legislative bills.



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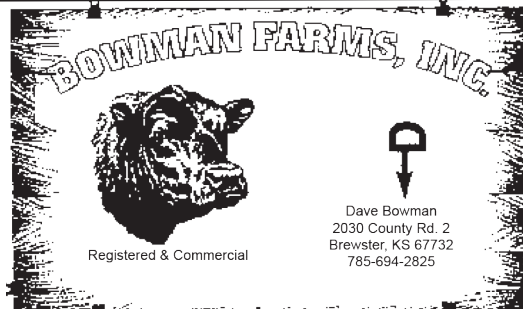
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KCA Visits with USDA to Support Checkoff Reform

With word that USDA is making moves to create another beef checkoff program, earlier this month, Kansas Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors and executive staff went to Washington D.C. and had a sit down one on one meeting with Under Secretary Edward Avalos.

While other groups are blasting USDA for wanting to implement another checkoff, KCA took the time to have a genuine conversation to address the need for reform. Although KCA supports a mandatory yet refundable producer controlled program, there are many problems with the administration of the current system. USDA does not have the authority to change the current beef checkoff system, as the only way to address the problems would be for more than 92,000 producers (operations) to sign a referendum to demand change. Many producers may not see the problems that exist, not because they do not want to know, but because much information is closely guarded. Therefore, if producers want to address the problems within the beef checkoff, the only way to go about it is to support a checkoff that takes the control out of the hands of lobbying groups and gives it back to the people that pay into it.

While in the meeting with Under Secretary Avalos, KCA addressed some of the current flaws in the system. State beef councils use producer money to buy Federation seats with checkoff funds. Yet, the Federation is a division of the policy group National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). Essentially, all producers are funding NCBA. Although monies can only be used for approved programs, research, and education, it provides leverage for the policy group which also lobbies against the interests of the producers paying into the checkoff. On a national level, both the Federation and the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB – an independent group of producers administering the checkoff on the national level) elect 10 members from their respective organizations to sit on the Beef Promotion Operating Committee (BPOC). This 20-member committee makes final national checkoff decisions. Although the Federation is given 50% of the decision making power, the Federation does not contribute 50% of the funds, and there is a clear conflict of interest with the fact that the Federation is a division of NCBA, and NCBA is the largest contractor, receiving almost 90% of checkoff funds; the Federation should not be given the power to direct programs to its own affiliate. Another major concern is that

beef checkoff funds may be used to promote USA beef in foreign countries but not allowed to be used to promote USA beef within our own country. In the meeting with USDA, KCA addressed these issues to bring light to the need for reform.

On the state level, there are many flaws as well. With no state law to oversee any state beef checkoff, when trying to address administration of funds left in the state of Kansas, the Kansas legislature defers to the USDA. When addressing those same issues with USDA, producers have repeatedly been told that USDA defers to Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), the administrator of beef checkoff funds left at the state level. Kansas Beef Council (state qualifying beef council) bylaws indicate that the Kansas Livestock Association Executive Vice President appoints the Kansas Beef Council (KBC) members, with the exception that if you serve on CBB, you automatically receive a seat on the KBC. KBC by-laws indicate that all decisions by the Beef Council must be approved by the KLA Board of Directors. This creates an environment in which a policy organization dictates how checkoff funds and programs will be implemented, leaving no fire wall, biases, and even if checkoff funds are used appropriately, it creates an environment where a lobbying group may subsidize its budget with producer checkoff funds. Kansas Beef Council co-mingles its funds with the KLA. This is evidenced in the non-profit IRS form 990 in which the KBC does not file an independent form. As indicated by the 990, KLA supplements its revenue with checkoff funds by using staff, resources, and programs for both entities. Although this may be legal, it also leverages the lobbying group to free up its own funds to lobby for policy that would not be advantageous for the producers that are paying into the checkoff. There is a lack of transparency at the state level in Kansas. According to USDA and the Kansas Attorney General, beef checkoff information is not subject to the open records act because it is held by a private entity. On multiple occasions, KCA has asked the Kansas Beef Council and KLA for more transparency as to where checkoff money is being used. The only information shared with other groups and producers is a pie chart indicating how much is being spent on promotion, research, education, and administration. KCA believes that true reform would provide more transparency and less leverage to any policy group.

Kansas Cattlemen's Association and thousands of producers across the great state of Kansas believe that cattle producers deserve better than a system that is easily corrupted. The current beef checkoff system has an \$11.20 return on investment. However, the producers paying into the program deserve that return, not any policy organization. In visiting with USDA, KCA expressed its wish for true reform. Although no details have been given as to how the program might be laid out, since the meeting, USDA has asked producers for comments regarding several beef checkoff questions. Comments will be accepted until December 10. KCA has put together a paper outlining its vision for a new beef checkoff program and will be submitting that by the December 10th deadline. All producers are encouraged to also share their support for true checkoff reform.

*Note: Details of the notice of inquiry appeared in the Nov. 10, 2014, Federal Register. Comments may be submitted online at www.regulations.gov or sent to Beef Promotion, Research, and Information Order; Research and Promotion Division, Room 2096-S; Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program; AMS, USDA, STOP 0249; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-0249; telephone number (202) 720-5705.



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Hot Topic COOL Thoughts

Vigilant and steadfast, KCA continues to promote COOL. Disappointed that the USDA sees no regulatory fix for COOL, KCA continues to urge Congress to move forward to proactively enhance the COOL law. With one party controlling Congress, there are sure to be some major changes taking place in early 2015, including a new chairman of the ag committee. Through these changes, KCA will continue its mission to promote USA BEEF and to encourage Congress to do right by the American people.

KCA Honors First President

At the 2014 Annual Convention, the KCA Legacy Award was bestowed upon the late Larry Brack from Leoti, Kansas.

Dave Bowman, serving on the first Board with Larry and a co-founder of KCA, accepted the award on behalf of Larry's wife, Carlotta.

Larry was the first KCA president and helped define KCA as an organization. Larry continuously gave back to his community and selflessly worked to improve the cattle industry.

KCA honors Larry Brack as the 2014 Legacy Award recipient.



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