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Veterinarians are most popular source of information utilized by cow-calf producers

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VETERINARIANS ARE MOST POPULAR SOURCE OF INFORMATION UTILIZED BY COW-CALF PRODUCERS

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Introduction

Sources and channels of information used among agriculturalists have long been important issues in Cooperative Extension. A source is an entity that originates a message. By understanding from whom producers receive messages, there exists a better framework to deliver information. Moreover, when considering the demographics of today's producers, as well as the sources of information utilized, the industry can work toward better educating and understanding the concerns of these individuals.

Experimental Procedures

Surveys were administered to cow-calf producers in the spring of 2006. A panel of experts at Kansas State University completed content validity testing. Participants were selected from a mailing list of cow-calf producers with more than 100 cows. *BEEF®* Magazine provided the mailing list and a random sample of 1,000 producers was selected. Three mailings were sent to each participant over a two-month time period. Non-respondents received a fourth mailing to further encourage response. Mailings included: 1) pre-notice letter, 2) survey packet and cover letter, 3) postcard thank you/reminder, and 4) replacement questionnaire with monetary incentive. Data were collected by Prism Business Media, Inc., and analyzed by both Prism Business Media, Inc., and Kansas State University.

Results and Discussion

A total effective mailing of 972 resulted in 522 completed surveys for an effective response rate of 53.7%. Producers from 41 states responded to the survey, with 77.8% of respondents being over the age of 45 and having an average herd size of 160 head.

The objective of the study was to understand how producers received information. More than 63% of cattle producers reported membership in a beef cattle organization. State or local cattlemen's groups made up the largest set of respondents, with 47.3% reporting membership. Breed associations and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association were the second highest selected categories, with each group receiving 20.3% of responses. Nine percent of respondents cited membership with the Rancher's and Cattlemen's Action Legal Fund (Table 1). The top five breed associations reported by producers were the American Angus Association, American Hereford Association, American Simmental Association, Red Angus Association of America, and American Charolais Association, respectively.

Data on sources of information utilized by producers data showed the importance of veterinarians as a source. Producers cited veterinarians as their number one source of information for their beef operations. "Other cattle producers" and "farm and feed dealers" were also frequent responses (Table 2). Although 63.6% of cattle producers reported membership in some type of beef cattle organization,

producer utilization of these organizations as a source of information was relatively low. Private consultants received the least responses by a large margin with a median response of 0.

Implications

Producers greatly value the opinions of veterinarians, as well as those of other cattle producers and farm and feed dealers, when using/seeking sources of information.

Table 1: Are You a Member of Any of the Following Organizations?

	Number Reporting	Percent Reporting*
State or Local Cattlemen's group	247	47.3%
Breed Association	106	20.3%
National Cattlemen's Beef Association	106	20.3%
Ranchers and Cattlemen's Action Legal Fund	47	9.0%
Other	32	6.1%
No answer	190	36.4%

N = 522.

*Percentages may reflect multiple answers.

Table 2: How Often Do You Use the Following Sources of Information in Your Beef Operation?

(0 = Never use and 5 = Always use)

	N Valid	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Veterinarian	504	3.70	1.211	1
Other cattle producers	462	3.19	1.335	2
Farm and Feed dealers	475	3.03	1.381	3
County Extension agent	463	2.28	1.560	4
Beef industry organization	413	2.16	1.624	5/6
University specialists	438	2.16	1.665	5/6
Private consultant	409	1.03	1.477	7