

11/17/2003 Entry: "LMA WILL TAKE 'LEADERSHIP ROLE' IN SHAPING NEW BEEF PROMOTION, RESEARCH, EDUCATION PROGRAM, PRESIDENT SAYS"

NEWS FROM LIVESTOCK MARKETING ASSOCIATION

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LMA WILL TAKE 'LEADERSHIP ROLE' IN SHAPING NEW BEEF PROMOTION, RESEARCH, EDUCATION PROGRAM, PRESIDENT SAYS

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Once Livestock Marketing Association wins its legal battle with the mandatory beef checkoff, the trade association “intends to take a leadership role in shaping the future of beef promotion, research and education in this country,” LMA President Billy Perrin said here Nov. 15.

“Yes, we are still in court over the checkoff,” Perrin told a meeting of the North Carolina LMA. Reminding his audience that two federal courts have found the checkoff to be an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment, Perrin noted, “The Supreme Court of the United States is the last stop for supporters of the current program. Of course, there’s no guarantee their appeal will even be heard by the Court.”

The bottom line, he said, is “We believe we will finally prevail.”

LMA’s role in the future of beef promotion is a logical one, Perrin said. “That’s because LMA has always supported, and today supports, the goals behind the current checkoff. We were one of the first, and strongest supporters of that program.”

LMA supported it so strongly because “We believed it would help the industry, and in some ways, it did. But it became a program we couldn’t support – and that’s why we took the action we did.”

The Oklahoma market owner said the marketing sector has had a vital role in checkoffs, going back “well beyond the current program. Our members have

been the unpaid 'bankers' for the beef checkoff for decades, going all the way back to the voluntary program under the National Live Stock and Meat Board."

And, Perrin said, "It's widely known that America's livestock markets have always collected the majority of dollars for the beef checkoff. So as we enter a new era of checkoffs, let's be clear about the past: markets have been an indispensable part of their operation.

"And let's be clear about the future: no new, voluntary program can succeed unless it has the backing and support of America's livestock markets.

"That's not bragging, that's just fact."

Perrin said it was too early to go into the details of any new program, "beyond the basics: it'll have to be voluntary, it'll have to be put in place by a majority of cattlemen voting, and it'll have to be easy to get refunds."

Beyond these basics, Perrin said, "We have a whole range of concerns that we'll be bringing up – not only on behalf of markets, but representing the thousands and thousands of America's grassroots producers, that we serve every day of the year."

He promised, "You'll be hearing more about our concerns in the weeks and months ahead."

Of immediate concern to LMA, he said, is the move by more and more states starting to pass their own checkoff laws, as they see the "end coming for the mandatory checkoff."

LMA has been working in Texas and Oklahoma to shape state legislation. "As we will at the national level, at the state level, we are working to make sure any new legislation addresses the concerns of markets and grassroots producers."

He urged all producers, and state marketing associations, to get involved "in this important issue. If there's going to be a beef promotion program in your state, you should be at the table when it's put together.

"That's where LMA will be when a new national beef program is developed," he pledged.