

# BEEF & DAIRY

THE NEWS

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2023 | PAGE 5C

## 'It's a tradition, it's in your blood, it's a way of life'

Washington County Cattlemen's Association: promoting beef and cattle production

BY CHERYL ALLEN

The News

WELLMAN

On a warm day at the end of May, The News caught up with Stephanie Sexton, Secretary of the Washington County Cattlemen's Association, to talk about the organization of local beef producers and what they do.

Sexton herself raises "about 150 mama cows," and it's a lifestyle that she is passionate about.

"For my husband and I, we both grew up on a cattle farm. It's a tradition, it's in your blood, it's a way of life," she said.

"Realistically, it's a hard life," she continued. "It's a gamble every day. It's dealing with Mother Nature. It's dealing with the fluctuations of the market and the input costs.

But it's a passion for folks that do this as a business, and there's no better way to raise kids than in agriculture."

Encouraging the involvement of kids in cattle production is one of the missions of the Washington County Cattlemen's Association. Some kids are born into that life, but others get exposure to it outside of their families; 4-H and FFA provide opportunities for kids to learn about raising cattle if they are interested.

"We have to develop and encourage new people into the cattle world, and we also need to cherish the foundation and the passions of those kids that had it instilled in them since they were born," Sexton said.

The WCCA awards scholarships to high school students, and this year started a young rancher scholarship in addition. "That's for somebody

that is coming back to the production cycle and wants to get a start, so we'll sponsor that person as well," Sexton explained.

Another mission of the WCCA is to promote beef, which it often accomplishes by attending local events and cooking it up.

"We do an awful lot of grilling events," Sexton said. "We host the Saturday kitchen at the church, usually in January," she said, indicating the free sit-down meal at 11:30 a.m. every Saturday at the United Presbyterian Church in Washington. "We're all kind of proud of that one."

In addition, you may have seen the WCCA booth at the Farmers' Market on Thursday evenings in Washington, and at Ridiculous Days and Kidzfest, also in Washington. You'll find them at the Wash-

ington County Fair as well.

"Our responsibility is to our membership, to provide resources in line with advocating beef production and consumption, and promoting beef within Washington County," Sexton said.

"At the Iowa State Fair, we help serve, usually on the first Saturday of the fair. Our group sends 20-25 people up there and we'll help serve for the Cattlemen's Beef Quarters. We will do lot of grilling events here in the county to promote beef. We try to get as much positive exposure out there as we can."

As Sexton indicated, raising cattle isn't easy work. The last year has been abnormally dry, and that has meant lower yields in the fields. With less feed grown on their own land, cattle farmers have had to purchase more to feed their animals. With more of what

did grow going to feed, less is available for bedding and general animal husbandry. Getting consumers that plate of steaks or burgers has been a little more challenging of late.

If you'd like to show your support for the WCCA, "We're always looking for sponsors for our Field and Friends event in February," Sexton says of the party they host annually with the Washington Keokuk County Corn and Soybean Growers. "If there's a business that wants to sponsor cattle production here in the county, they can always reach out to us."

Keep your eyes open for the many opportunities to enjoy locally-raised beef and support cattle-raising families this summer.

As Sexton said, "The hay is made and the corn is planted, so life is good."

### IOWA FARM BUREAU, FAREWAY LAUNCH 'SIZZLIN' SUMMER GIVEAWAY'

Iowa Farm Bureau's Sizzlin' Summer Giveaway kicks off May 24 in partnership with Fareway Meat and Grocery, giving Iowans a chance to win a \$200 Fareway meat gift card from each of the grocery stores' 113 locations in Iowa. Additionally, one grand prize winner will receive a Traeger Pro 22 Smoker Grill, a \$500 Wagyu meat bundle, a Grizzly soft-sided cooler and other backyard barbecue gear.

Iowans can enter for a chance to win by visiting [www.iowafarmbureau.com/SizzlinSummer](http://www.iowafarmbureau.com/SizzlinSummer) and answering five multiple choice questions about how farmers provide nutrient-dense meat, dairy and eggs, while also caring for their animals and the environment. One entry per email address is allowed; contest ends June 25.

"This contest is part of our Real Farmers. Real Food. Real Meat. initiative which celebrates the nutritional value of animal protein and the farmers who provide it," says IFBF President Brent Johnson. "Summer in Iowa is the perfect time of year to gather with friends and family, while grilling or smoking the real meats Iowans love and our local farmers are proud to raise. Livestock farmers continue to find ways to focus on sustainability while promoting animal care, and this contest is a great way to show that commitment."

Animal-based proteins are high-quality, complete proteins, according to Dr. Ruth MacDonald, professor of food science and human nutrition at Iowa State University. Meat, eggs and dairy are the only natural source of Vitamin B12, which promotes brain development in children and proper nervous system function. Red meat and poultry also provide the majority of zinc in American diets to support immune health.

"Fareway has long recognized nutritious meat comes from dedicated, responsible farmers," says Fareway Vice President of Market Operations Jeff Cook. "This contest not only celebrates the hard-working men and women in our state who bring food from gate to plate, but it also celebrates food as an experience. Good memories are made around the grill, and Fareway is humbled to be a part of that."

### USDA OFFERS ASSISTANCE TO HELP ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS COVER COSTS

On May 19, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced assistance for dairy producers with the new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP). ODMAP is established to help mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs, and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. Specifically, under the ODMAP, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is making \$104 million available to organic dairy operations to assist with projected marketing costs in 2023, calculated using their marketing costs in 2022.

"Organic dairy producers have faced significant and unique increases in their marketing costs, compounded by increases in feed and transportation costs and the limited availability of organic grain and forage commodities," said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. "Without assistance, many organic dairies, particularly small organic dairies, will cease production, which not only impacts the domestic supply and consumption of organic milk but also the well-being of many rural communities across the country. This program will keep our small organic dairies in operation as they continue to

weather a combination of challenges outside of their control."

FSA is accepting applications from May 24 to July 24, 2023. Eligible producers include certified organic dairy operations that produce milk from cows, goats and sheep.

To apply, producers should contact FSA at their local USDA Service Center. In Washington County, the Farm Service Agency Office is located at 1621 E Washington St, Washington, (319) 653-2138. In Johnson County, the Farm

Service Agency Office is located at 51 Escort Lane SW, Iowa City, (319) 354-1074. To complete the ODMAP application, producers must certify to pounds of 2022 milk production, show documentation of their organic certification, and submit a completed application form.

Organic dairy operations are required to provide their USDA certification of organic status confirming operation as an organic dairy in 2023 and 2022 along with the certification of 2022 milk production in hundredweight.

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