

Profile of U.S. cattlemen

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Highlights

A national study took a broad and thorough look at American cattlemen to assess not only the basic demographics, but also their values, community engagement, leadership activities and their management practices.

America's cattle farmers and ranchers differ widely in terms of age, size of operations, acres managed and other variables, but they share some important commonalities: Strong family and religious values, a commitment to community, support for the democratic process and a generous spirit of giving - of their time and of their money - to important causes. Most prominently, their love of their land and their animals translates into a dedication to producing safe and affordable beef, providing good care for their animals, making production of safe food a high priority and emphasizing environmental stewardship to ensure their operations are sustainable.

Introduction

Surveys of U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers typically have focused on basic demographics such as type and size of operation, number of years in the cattle business and, depending on the purpose of the survey, other characteristics such as where they get information and their knowledge of and perspective on various industry issues or programs. However, an innovative checkoff-funded report designed to tell the story of the nearly 1 million U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers whose work and values are the foundation of the U.S. beef industry demanded a different analysis – a study that focused on a deeper and broader profile of American cattlemen.

Background

As part of the beef industry report *The Cattlemen's Stewardship Review: Connecting our Vision and Values*, a national survey was conducted of 791 cow-calf operators, stocker/backgrounders, seedstock operators, farmer feeders and feedlot operators to develop a profile of cattlemen characteristics ranging from basic demographics such as age, education and type and size of operation to characteristics such as values, community involvement, volunteer service, leadership activities and practices regarding animal welfare, the environment and production of safe food.

Telephone interviews were conducted with cattlemen by Aspen Media & Market Research with the number of interviews proportionate to 2007 Agricultural Census region population numbers. Interviews were conducted with a sample of 628 cow-calf operators, seedstock producers and stocker/backgrounders, 122 farmer feeder/finishers and 41 commercial feedlot operators.

The sample of cow-calf/seedstock/stocker/farmer feeders was randomly drawn from the Farm Journal database to reflect a greater proportion of "professional cattlemen" or those who depend on cattle for a substantial percentage of their livelihood. These cattlemen tend to be more engaged in their operations, subscribe to at least one farm publication and are not as likely to be raising cattle as a secondary interest. As a result, average herd size, age and other data differ from the 2007 Ag Census data which accounted for all operations classified as beef cattle operations. Feedlot operators were sampled from the CattleFax list of commercial feedlots. The resulting findings were used throughout *The Cattlemen's Stewardship Review* to help tell the story of American cattlemen.