

Association Outlook



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The Real Competition

As Shorthorn breeders and livestock producers need to take note of actions currently taking place across the country, specifically in Colorado, that could have a major impact on animal agriculture nationwide. Colorado's Governor, Jared Polis, proclaimed a "meat out" day in March which asked his constituents to give up meat for a day and thus promoted vegan products. The nationwide reaction of the cattle industry was immense with thousands of Facebook posts supporting beef - real beef - not fake meat products and supporting the ranching families that produce it. However, many of these supportive social media posts were only seen by other livestock producers as we have a habit of preaching to the choir.

Make no bones about it, these new vegan products are the real competition - just look at the dairy industry and the rise of "milk" made from almonds, oats and who knows what else. Yes, we compete against the other beef breeds for the bull market and show heifer market, but if there is no demand for beef - real beef from the cow - then those markets will eventually dry up.

The State of Colorado is considering the 'Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation' - or 'PAUSE' Act. It's gaining strength and its backers hope to get it on a ballot to become Colorado state law. This act would make it a felony to breed a cow AI, pregnancy check a cow through rectal examination, collect semen from bulls or castrate bulls. The people behind this act are declaring these processes as sexual molestation of animals. They do not understand or care about animal agriculture and the safe animal husbandry practices that we employ. And they're getting ready to take our livelihood away. It's easy to say or think, "This is in Colorado; it won't happen in our states." I beg to differ with

you. If this gains steam in Colorado, it will move to other states. What can we do? First be united, and work with other industry organizations to defeat initiatives like PAUSE. Second, be aware of the changes taking place among consumers who want to continue eating beef; they want to know our cattle are well cared for, that we take care of the land, that we raise livestock responsibly. We need to work hard to inform consumers about the safe practices we use on a daily basis animal husbandry. The gentle nature and disposition of Shorthorn cattle make our breed ideally suited for telling this story. Indeed, the Shorthorn breed is the Family, Friendly Breed - and this is the basis of our future and the real opportunity. It's a breed that children can care for with their junior projects. For ranches across the land, it's also a breed that combines genetic advancements to improve production attributes and beef quality. Indeed, Shorthorns offer everything modern ranches are looking for - low birth weights, structural soundness and easy fleshing. The breed has the performance to convert feed and forage into protein easily and efficiently. Also, the beef we produce is both nutritious and delicious.

These are not really things we consider sharing when reaching out to customers to purchase a Shorthorn rather than another breed, but it is relative. If Shorthorn cattle are looked on as a

more efficient converter of protein, it will represent a different view to the marketplace while also maintaining a happy life in the pasture. This is our story - one that began 150 years ago. Today, we are closer to consumers, their wants and demands, than at any time in our history. We need to pay attention and promote a little different image of the breed that the consumer will embrace. Will this change things immediately? Probably not, but over time, the breed will start to take on a new image directed at our real consumer and market competition from other breeds. It is time to think outside the box and take Shorthorns to a special place in the market chain.

The breeders of Shorthorn cattle are special people who keep their animals' interests a priority. As a breed, we are proud of the taste of Shorthorn beef and the nutritious value it has. Are we selling a branded product? The answer is yes. But it is not branded like you think of the other brand programs out there. Through our continued hard work, we're going to create an industry-leading Shorthorn brand for having special traits and being associated as a consumer-friendly product from the Family, Friendly Breed! By doing this, we'll play a role in helping our industry stay vibrant and strong, to defeat the efforts those who stand against the livestock industry. 📧

