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Sdsu Beef 2020 Increases Beef Industry Knowledge for Participants

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Objectives

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the SDSU Beef 2020 program on increasing participant knowledge and impacting production practices. Unlike the pork or poultry industries, the US beef industry is not vertically integrated and as a result the beef supply is managed by producers in a variety of roles. While these producers are knowledgeable about their specific sector, some may not be as familiar with the other aspects of beef production. South Dakota State University hosts an Extension program entitled Beef 2020 with the goal of bridging this knowledge gap.

Materials and Methods

Beef 2020 was a 3-d Extension program that was targeted to cattle producers, beef purveyors and allied industry representatives and addressed the management factors that influence beef carcass traits. Topics included live market cattle evaluation, health and disposition in relation to carcass quality, genetics, feeding and management, and a presentation on new value-added beef cuts. Beef 2020 also provided the opportunity for participants to view market animals live and participate in a mock auction to determine the purchase price. They observed the harvest process and then participated in a hands-on fabrication of their beef carcass. Information gathered from fabrication was used to calculate the value of the carcass they purchased. We hypothesized that the program improved participant knowledge of the beef industry and resulted in changes in participants' operations to improve carcass quality. Participants (n = 113) were asked to complete a survey at the conclusion of the program where they rated each topic session, indicated their knowledge of the industry before and after the program, and answered other open-ended questions intended to improve the program year after year. Session ratings were scored on a scale of 1 (not valuable) to 10 (highly valuable). Prior and post program knowledge was evaluated on a Likert scale of 1 (none) to 10 (highly knowledgeable). Data were compiled from survey responses from 2013 to 2018. Statistical analysis was conducted on participant previous and post industry knowledge using a one tailed t test and significance was indicated at $\alpha < 0.05$. Mean ratings and standard deviations were reported for all other data.

Results

Participation in Beef 2020 improved participant knowledge by 2.3 points (5.4 vs. 7.7, $P < 0.0001$). Participants also indicated that sessions were valuable with average scores ranging from 7.2 ± 2.1 (Natural and Organic Production) to 8.9 ± 1.2 (Pre and Post Weaning Strategies to Improve Carcass Traits). Additionally, 84% of the respondents indicated they will implement strategies presented during the program in their own operations, while another 11% indicated they may implement new strategies. Participants also indicated the program was beneficial (9.5 ± 1.1) and it should be conducted again (9.6 ± 1.2).

Conclusion

Beef 2020 effectively improved participant knowledge of the management factors that influence value differences in beef cattle, which resulted in improved marketing opportunities and carcass value for their operations.