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One of the greatest joys of my position is getting to see the growth of many youth beef cattle enthusiasts. Opportunities like the Nebraska Youth Beef Leadership Symposium (NYBLS), allow for that growth to occur. As a sponsor of the NYBLS, Kentucky was able to take 10 sophomores-seniors in high school to the symposium.

Attendees included Madison Frogue (Todd County), Ty Jones (Allen County), Kadence Mathers (Nelson County), Whitney Peck (Caldwell County), Maggie Sparks (Bourbon County), Mary Brooke Stith (Meade County), Emily Tabor (Breckinridge County), Macey Thompson (Breckinridge County), Mollie Webb (Barren County), and Jenna Wethington (Casey County).

Before the symposium began, we were able to make a few industry visits. These were designed to give our Kentucky youth an opportunity to make connections between Nebraska's and Kentucky's agricultural industries. Our first stop was at CLAAS of America, where they assemble their Lexion Combines. Mr. Mike Anderson led our tour, showcasing their facility. Mr. Anderson also talked about the dedication of our youth today being the driving force for the continuation of our agricultural industry.

Our next stop was at Nebraska Beef Packing Plant. Many of our youth had visited a local processing facility before, however they were truly amazed at the efficiency/scale of a bigger processor. Our tour guides were able to showcase information such as hanging times, quality grading, as well as safety equipment that the meat cutters wear during their shifts.

My favorite stop of the trip was at H-KO Land and Cattle. Mr. Jack Klosterman and Dr. Rick Stock gave us our tour of their 8,000 head feedyard. One of the greatest connections that was made during our visit at H-KO was how their operation is successful due to the cow calf operations that most of our attendees come from. I think it is easy for our youth to not see the "big picture" in how our thirty head cow calf operations make an impact, however both Mr. Klosterman and Dr. Stock put an emphasis on the importance of the operations we have in Kentucky, as they receive several cattle from Kentucky.

We also took time to visit the Nebraska Cattlemen's Association where they discussed how their state association is advocating on their producers behalf, including lobbying for legislation, educational resources, and youth development. Many of our youth made connections between how we have very similar resources in our state as well. We greatly appreciate the time Mark Goes and Lee Weide spent showcasing the similarities and differences of our Cattlemen Association's.

When the Symposium began, our Kentucky group was divided amongst 35 Nebraska youth who were given a task of creating a new innovative menu item with one of three assigned beef cuts: the flat iron steak, ground beef, and top round steak. Groups had to come up with the cost of input, marketing strategy, as well as how to present their idea. Participants worked with a chef who spent quality time with each group as they then prepared their newest beef menu creation. On the winning team, Ms. Jenna Wethington's team created a beef chili cinnamon roll, perfect for a tailgate. We would also like to recognize Ms. Mollie Webb for receiving a \$500 scholarship to University of Nebraska- Lincoln for her leadership abilities shown during the trip.

After spending a week with these youth, I can confidently say that the future of our Kentucky Beef Industry is so bright. We have innovative, passionate, and creative leaders who will do great things in the future. Thank you so much to this year's attendees, applicants, and to Mrs. Meagen Bishop for serving as a Chaperone. If you are interested in applying for next year's NYBLS, applications will be posted in September 2023. 🐮

