

Meat the Future

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“4-Her’s Celebrate National Beef Month”

May is a busy month for most – full of a number of celebrations! Graduations, Mother’s Day, school being out for the summer, Memorial Day and many more. Did you know that May is also National Beef Month? A month that we as agriculturalist celebrate this tasty, nutritious, food staple in many American households, and the people behind producing it!

The leading sector of the Kansas agriculture industry is none other than the cattle sector. With over 27,000 cattle ranches and farms across the state, Kansas is recognized nationally (and beyond) for raising high-quality, healthy and safe beef. Our state is also ranked third among the U.S. for beef production and has a large role in the beef packing industry as well. In 2017, Kansas produced nearly 11 percent of the nation’s total in pounds of red meat – approximately 5.69 billion pounds were processed in Kansas beef packing plants.

An industry of this caliber deserves our support and celebration! And, we wanted to take this opportunity to highlight a few of our Twin Creeks District 4-Her’s who contribute, along with their families, to the beef industry of Kansas.

We will start out with Decatur County 4-Her, Michaela Wasson, who says her family has been a party of the beef industry for 16 years. The Wasson family focuses on a purebred and commercial cattle operation, selling seedstock, a few heifers, finish cattle and a few private butcher beef. She enjoys working with baby calves and watching them grow to become bulls, stay in the herd as heifers or get sold as high quality beef and says that she wishes consumers knew where their beef really comes from, and that there is huge need to support local beef. “My favorite cut of beef would be ribs on the smoker,” says Wasson. Who could argue with that?!

Gracie Billips, a Graham County 4-Her, says that her family runs a cow/calf operation of about 1,000 head that started in the 1890s and has been passed down through the generations up to this point. Gracie and her siblings exhibit cattle raised by their family each year at the Graham County Fair and says that her favorite part of raising cattle is seeing how it provides for her family. “Cattle are the most important part of our daily lives and almost everything we do revolves around them,” says Billips. Her favorite cut of beef is either a ribeye or sirloin. When asked what she wished consumers knew about cattle producers and ranchers, she answered with, “I wish the public knew the time and effort that went into producing the best beef product possible. We work our hardest to provide for our animals and keep them in the best health that we possibly can.”

Next up we have a brother duo from Sheridan County, Carter and Max Beckman, whose family runs 150 cow/calf pairs. Their family operation began with their grandfather nearly 50 years ago, and has been within their immediate family’s hands for 18 years. Carter and Max would like for the general public or consumer to know that “The beef at the grocery store is not the same as beef straight off the farm. Farm raised beef is much better tasting.” They also highlighted the hard work it takes to get that meat on the plates of families across the world, and that raising the calves to a finished product is time consuming and a big responsibility. Their noted favorite cut of beef was a T-bone steak!

Finally, last but not least, we have Graham County 4-Her, Ella Hart. Hart says that her family cattle production has been in her family since 1933, and currently focuses on a cow/calf operation. “My favorite part of raising cattle is probably calving season as we watch all the calves being born and watching them all grow up. It’s fun to watch as we take some of them and add to our herd, and get to watch them raise calves of their own.”, says Hart. She wishes that consumers knew about the long hours and hard work that beef producers put in to raising these animals, and the priority that is placed on keeping them healthy and growing. Hart says, “But, in the end it is all very rewarding as you get to watch them all grow up!”

Youth involved in 4-H livestock projects learn about the commitment and hard work of raising a product that eventually will enter the food supply. Beyond that, many lessons are learned through involvement in 4-H such as communication, teamwork, financial responsibility, and many more. And, we couldn’t be more proud of our Twin Creeks District 4-Her’s and their ability to advocate for the agriculture industry!

Don’t let your celebration of the beef industry stop with the month of May. Keep that grill hot and loaded with juicy beef – and don’t forget to take the suggestions of our 4-Her’s on their favorite beef cuts!

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