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Japanese Ag Training Program Closing Ceremony

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JAPANESE AG TRAINING PROGRAM CLOSING CEREMONY
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS
MARCH 28, 2002
6:30 P.M.
JOHN C. OWENS
NU VICE PRESIDENT AND HARLAN VICE CHANCELLOR, IANR

What a pleasure it is to be here with you tonight for this year's closing ceremony for the Japanese Ag Training Program. We have been so delighted to have those of you enrolled in the program studying with us for the past three months. You join the nearly 1,400 Japanese Ag Training Program trainees who have received animal science production, management, and agribusiness training from our faculty since the program began here in 1966, and we are so pleased to have had this opportunity to know ^{to} and work with you.

I am happy, too, to have the opportunity to greet your host families and friends, as well as others involved in this fine program, including our esteemed guests from the Japan Agricultural Exchange Council and the Japanese Agricultural Training Program, and Lincoln's Mayor Don Wesley. We in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources are proud to have co-sponsored and established, with the Department of Conferences and Professional Development within the Division of Continuing Studies, the special livestock training and agribusiness-

program for the Japanese-Agricultural-Training-Program. Our Department of Animal Science in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources has been on-board since the program began here 35 years ago. It's interesting how this program began in 1966 with an emphasis on technology transfer, and evolved into a management-oriented program that includes both on-the-farm production techniques and college-level courses. Of course, it has evolved to meet the changes we see both in the world and in the way producers operate. Change is a constant in our lives, and some of the best knowledge we can ever gain is the knowledge that allows us to evaluate, deal with, and spot the opportunities in change.

In 1995 our Department of Agricultural Economics began to offer half the training for your time with us. I am so proud of our faculty, and I know you have received quality information here from people who are dedicated to sharing knowledge. We hope that when you return home you will take with you much knowledge and experience that is extremely helpful, whether you're returning to a family farm, starting a new operation, or planning to work in various fields of agriculture or business.

In the past we've had participants in the Japanese Agricultural Training Program come back to UNL to complete both undergraduate and graduate degrees; some have received their PhDs here. There is a real sense of family in our College

of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and by studying with us through the Japanese-Agricultural-Training-Program you've become "part" of our family.

Please know that you are "welcome-back" on this campus anytime you might choose to come, whether it is for a "one-day-visit" or several years of furthering your education. We'll be "delighted" if the opportunity presents itself to see you again.

Last fall *Meat and Poultry* magazine named us one of the top 10 schools in the nation in "the-quality" of our meat and poultry programs. Now, I'm always a little "ambivalent" about national rankings, because they can be so subjective, but such recognition does "feel good," and in this case it feels "especially-good" because I think it is truly deserved. I believe we have "faculty-and-facilities" in these areas within the Institute that it would be hard "to exceed" anywhere else in the nation, and I am really "proud" of our faculty for the success they've achieved.

I'm also proud of "the-fact" that, when I look at the "other" schools on the *Meat and Poultry* magazine's "top 10-list," I see that Nebraska is the state on the list with the smallest population, yet this state and its citizens have made such a "tremendous-commitment" to this great land-grant university they've built. When you study with us "you are part of that great land-grant ^{univ.} tradition," and we are pleased to have the opportunity "to share it" with you.

I understand that among "this year's" trainees there are "four" with an emphasis

on beef, four with an emphasis on dairy, and "one" with an emphasis on swine and an interest, too, in poultry. Here in "the home" of the "Omega-egg" and the "flat-iron" steak we are "pleased to share" with you what we know. I hope you had "the opportunity" to sample both Omega-eggs rich in Omega-3 fatty acids that can help reduce heart disease risk-factors, and the new flat iron steak, while you were with us, or will before you leave. The new flat iron steak comes out of our scientists' work to "identify" higher-value potential in muscles traditionally used for ground beef or roasts.

On the "beef-side" there's much work being done, including the multi-state research "led" by one of our animal scientists that is helping cattle feeders keep "severe" heat from causing "costly" cattle-deaths and performance losses. There's also the "work" our researchers are doing to detect, understand, and control *E. coli* 0157:H7, the "potentially-deadly" bacteria responsible for numerous food-borne illness-
outbreaks.

While "most people" think of beef when they think of cattle in Nebraska, those of you "most-interested" in dairy have no doubt found, as Jeff Keown, dairy specialist in the Institute has told me, that Nebraska's dairy industry showed a 5 percent "increase" in cow numbers the past few years, which has "stopped" a 30-year decline in Nebraska dairy numbers. Today there are over 80,000 dairy cows in Nebraska.

That growth is caused by two things: 1) there's an increase in people from other areas of the country moving their dairies to Nebraska – in fact, our faculty are working with four dairies interested in relocating right now; and 2) current-Nebraska dairy producers are expanding. Dr. Keown estimates 60 percent of Nebraska's dairy industry growth in the past three years is homegrown.

One of the places this increased interest in dairy is shown is in work our University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension is doing with Northeast Community College in Norfolk on a Dairy Certification Program to fill what we anticipate will be a need for 300-400 new dairy employees over the next five years. We initially capped that program at 12 students, but this year we exceeded our cap by enrolling 15.

I know field trips are part of the Japanese Agricultural Training Program and I think they are such a vital part, acquainting you with producers and seeing the knowledge learned in class applied in business operations by those you visit. What a terrific opportunity, to visit farms and ranches, manufacturing and meat processing facilities, our fantastic Nebraska Sandhills and other parts of this state and region. They're a magnificent complement to the lectures, and live animal, meat, and computer labs that are part of your training.

And of course, for swine, this is the home of the unique Nebraska Index Line,

developed during 20 years' of work to determine if selecting pigs based on reproductive traits could increase litter size. Our landmark research was the first to show litter size is boosted by persistent, careful selection for reproductive traits. A quick look at our yearly swine report shows ongoing research in nutrition, genetics, housing, industry issues, meats and youth education, as well.

When you come to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to study with us we hope to do several things: First, we want to provide you with an environment that fosters learning and helps you further your knowledge of the fundamental principles that are involved in efficient dairy, beef, poultry and swine production and management in the U.S. We also want to introduce you to the basics of agribusiness and agricultural economics.

Second, we work to provide you with the opportunity to gain increased technical knowledge of the livestock industry so you can develop practical farm production and management plans that will work in your individual home situations.

Third, we introduce you to a basic agribusiness course that provides information on management at an agricultural business. And fourth, we encourage a cultural exchange between you and the UNL campus community, as well as the larger community of Lincoln and Nebraska. We know that in three months you have a lot of information coming at you; we hope you've had a great deal of

enjoyment in the learning and the experiences you've had with us, as well.

“Congratulations, trainees, on completing this part of your two-year program.

We are so happy to have had you with us, and we wish you all good things in the future. Thank you.

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