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Nebraska Cattlemen/Nebraska Cattle Women Conference

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NEBRASKA CATTLEMEN/NEBRASKA CATTLE WOMEN CONFERENCE
NEBRASKA CATTLEMEN FOUNDATION
DECEMBER 6, 2001
JOHN C. OWENS
NU VICE PRESIDENT AND HARLAN VICE CHANCELLOR, IANR

I'm so pleased to be here with you today, and I look forward to visiting and working with members of this group now, and in the future. Since arriving in Nebraska nearly a year ago now on a snowy, blustery day, I've been delighted to take every opportunity that comes my way to get to know Nebraska and Nebraskans better. I want to know what you think are Nebraska's greatest needs, now and in the future. I want to know how you think the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources can help meet those needs. I seek ways all of us, working together, can find the most efficient and effective solutions for Nebraska's concerns.

In the Institute we say we are partners with Nebraska, and we believe it. We try hard to be good partners, working with you and others, to meet the needs of the state and the people who live here. That's why I am particularly pleased each chance I get to visit with our partners.

I was asked to talk with you today about my vision for the Institute, how our

land-grant university mission translates into service for the ag and beef industries, and how the Institute will continue to be relevant to producers. I also was asked to talk about the challenges to keeping the Institute's programs competitive, and how we'll go about accomplishing this.

That's a lot to cover and I'll do my best, but before I start, I would like to first say some "thank yous" to you and the people of Nebraska. First I thank you for the support you provide higher education in this state, and your obvious dedication to it. I applaud the six \$1,000 scholarships you award undergraduate students from Nebraska, and am particularly proud to see three of those announced in April went to University of Nebraska-Lincoln students. I'm so pleased to see Nelson Trambly from Campbell, one of our junior ag-business majors, is the recipient of this year's \$3,700 integrated scholarship, leadership conference and internship award you provide. And I thank you for endowing the Nebraska Cattle Industry Professor of Animal Science professorship held by Chris Calkins in the Department of Animal Science. I also thank you for the campaign you've successfully completed to raise \$100,000 to endow support for the members of our UNL Judging Teams, and for the \$1,000 endowed scholarship that supports our Feedlot Intern Program, as well as the many other activities you support throughout Nebraska for young people and for your own members. I think the long-term value programs such as yours add to

individual lives, ^{TO} the industry, ^{TO} and society are inestimable. My own experience is they provide such substantial and far-reaching effects that we absolutely must applaud your vision, your wisdom, and your willingness to help others prepare and gain the ~~skills and~~ knowledge necessary to continually move the industry and Nebraska forward. Your support helps Nebraskans understand and build on our place in the global community, and to leverage Nebraskan's ethics and skills to become tremendous professionals, leaders in their industry and communities, and informed global citizens.

"Thank you." Your generosity of spirit and your willingness to put financial support toward the issues you've identified as important are much appreciated, and I applaud them.

Those of us in the Institute were delighted in the last couple weeks when *Meat and Poultry* magazine named us one of the top 10 schools in the nation for the quality of our meat and poultry programs. I know you found that exciting, too. I tend to be a bit ambivalent about rankings, because they can be so subjective, but whenever you get recognition like this it does feel very good, especially when you know it is so well-deserved. I really think we have faculty and facilities in the ~~Department of~~ **ANIMAL SCIENCE** within the Institute that it would be hard to exceed anywhere else in the country.

One of the things I was very proud of, when I saw that list, and commented on to an *Omaha World-Herald* reporter, is the fact that population-wise, Nebraska is the smallest state on the list, yet Nebraskans have made such a tremendous commitment to this great land-grant university you've built and supported. That's outstanding! Our commitment to you, in return, is to continue our strong tradition of fulfilling our land-grant mission to take the resources of the university to the state. In the Institute we do that through research, teaching, and extension education. Anybody who knows me at all can tell you that I am a true believer in the land-grant university mission, and a staunch supporter and defender of it. I laugh when I hear anyone suggest the time for land-grant universities is past, because I'd argue the need for land-grant universities is as great as it ever was and perhaps greater, when you consider the complexity of the concerns that affect our constituents today.

It is our land-grant university mission that makes us in the Institute partners with Nebraska. It's vital that we work with you and our other partner, and you with us, in a mutually respectful "two-way street" approach to the issues affecting Nebraska. I think land-grant universities that exclude their clients from the process of helping set the direction of research and extension-education programs are in trouble, and I am totally convinced that land-grant universities that disenfranchise their local partners are on the road to a meaningless, irrelevant existence.

You ask me my vision for the Institute and I tell you this – my vision is to fulfill the land-grant university mission in the finest and most comprehensive sense for Nebraska, meeting the needs of our traditional constituents, and identifying and meeting the needs of new constituents as they develop.

Our written vision statement in the Institute is to be "the premier provider of educational, research, and outreach programs essential for shaping Nebraska's future as a leader in the 21st century in the areas of food, agriculture and agribusiness systems, natural resources, and human resources. We are dedicated to providing the highest quality programs that are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially responsible, and scientifically appropriate." In short, in our areas of expertise we are constantly working to be the best partners possible with Nebraska.

It's a pleasure in visiting with you today to review just a few of the ways our research and extension education efforts benefit the beef industry in Nebraska and the U.S. I hope you've all had the opportunity in the last month or so to see the stories appearing in the media about the flat iron steak, and know of the work our meat scientists teamed with University of Florida colleagues to do the largest, most comprehensive meat profiling study ever conducted. The study was in response to a 1997 cattle industry report that, over a five-year period, the value of the loin and rib increased 4 percent to 12 percent, but chuck and round values decreased more than

20 percent. Often chuck and round were ground for hamburger. The team compiled its findings, which provide details needed to develop new products that add value to these cuts, on a CD-Rom available to both industry and academia. Our researchers now are studying marination with the chuck and round and developing innovative beef fabrication strategies to provide access to specific desirable muscles identified by the profiling. And Chris Calkins is assessing the flavor of value-cuts and profiling muscles in older beef and dairy cows.

Then there's our research showing calves that gain weight slowly in winter never fully make up the difference in summer grazing. That work is part of our ongoing research on economical, sustainable beef-growing and finishing systems that maximize forage and minimize grain use.

Our scientists have devised a simple, effective, ^{and} economical way to test pens of cattle for *E. coli* 0157:H7 without handling individual animals by hanging pieces of rope around a pen, and depending on cattle's natural curiosity. The cattle chew or lick the rope, leaving traces of organisms they're carrying. This work is part of the Institute's ongoing on-farm food-safety research to control dangerous bacteria on farms, ranches, and feedlots to reduce the chances of it reaching consumers.

We all know that hot, still, humid days are potential killers in feedlots. During 1999's severe heat-wave cattle deaths and performance losses cost Nebraska -

producers more than \$20 million. One of our animal scientists heads a multi-state research project to develop management strategies feeders can use to keep severe heat from becoming deadly for cattle, such as feeding in the afternoon and evening. Research showed cattle that feed around 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. reach their metabolic peak 6 or 7 hours later, and shifting feeding-time prevents the double-whammy of cattle hitting their metabolic heat during the hottest part of the day.

Wet byproducts from Nebraska's expanding ethanol and grain-processing industry have become a major cattle feed during the past decade, thanks partly to IANR research. Pioneering studies by our animal scientists revealed the feasibility, and economic advantages of feeding byproducts wet instead of drying and shipping them to dried feed markets.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Ranch Practicum teaches an integrated systems-management approach that incorporates animal, forage, and economic components. Participating producers estimate the practicum's average value ^{AT} \$34 per head in their own herds, or about \$35,313 benefit for each participant. More than 80 percent of participants surveyed said they expect their profitability to increase thanks to this extension education program, and that it will improve their operation's sustainability

The Nebraska Beef Team, composed of UNL College of Agricultural

Sciences and Natural Resources students, is helping Lincoln consumers learn how to better use beef in their menus by providing information at the supermarket-meat counter. The team is a partnership between the state's beef industry and the Institute, and was the first of its-kind when it began in 1998. It's a national-model and team organizers have trained people to establish similar programs in several other states.

Beef Cow Basics, a Cooperative Extension home-study course, lets cattle producers learn the latest beef nutrition, health care, marketing, and food safety information at home on their own schedules. The program, first offered in 1993, has been so-successful that several other states have patterned their beef and sheep programs after it. More than 4,500 courses have been distributed to producers from more than 40 states and several foreign countries.

Phosphorous is essential to beef nutrition, but feeder-cattle get plenty in their diets. The excess doesn't hurt or help cattle, but is an unnecessary expense and an environmental-concern if it gets into surface water. Our animal scientists studied the effects of reducing dietary phosphorous on feedlot-cattle performance and on the-amount of phosphorous in manure. They fed about 60 percent less phosphorous than typically fed in the cattle industry and could-not-create a diet low enough to see any effect on cattle. Feeding less phosphorous did significantly-reduce the amount

that wound up in manure. Findings should help producers save money and reduce phosphorous overfeeding to help protect water quality.

Work by our beef-cattle specialists has defined how much economic impact changing the weaning date can have for ranchers. They've found that by delaying calving to June, the nutrient requirements of the cow better match nutrient availability in grasses in the Sandhills and elsewhere, leading to savings in cost of feeding harvested forage up to \$50 per calf weaned.

Be assured we will continue to do research relevant to the industry; it is our job as partners with Nebraska, and we have excellent faculty determined to make that happen. In fact, Don Beermann, head of animal science, tells me that in the last five years our researchers brought \$1,426,834 dollars to the university to research projects important to the industry. You certainly help support that research; \$511,309 came from the National Cattlemen's Beef Assn., \$465,525 from the Nebraska Beef Council, and \$450,000 from the USDA/National Research Initiative and the Department of Energy. Thank you for your vote of confidence in our research; we think we have a track record in addressing Nebraska's concerns of which we all can be proud.

Don also notes that our feedlot intern program is nationally known and draws students from outside Nebraska as it fills a need to provide trained employees for

STEEN

feedlots in Nebraska and the region. And, he reports Terry Klopfenstein recently was asked to serve as chair of a National Research Council committee to study odor from ammonia-volatilization of feedlots and other issues of concern to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding environmental-impact of beef feed yards.

I also was asked to talk with you today about the challenges to keeping the Institute's programs competitive, and of course one of those challenges faces the entire University and state government right now in the form of budget rescissions. Those of us at UNL have been asked to prepare budgets showing a 5 percent rescission, and that is very-serious-business for us in the Institute, as it is throughout UNL. There is no fat to cut; we are into meat-and-bone, and that is difficult. We realize, however, that the entire state is experiencing this economic downturn, and we think we must do our part to be part of the solution to this problem.

We in IANR know how critical and how interrelated teaching, research, and extension education are to our mission as a land-grant university, and that the Institute is the only comprehensive teaching, research, and extension-education institution in the state with programs in agriculture and agribusiness, natural resources, communities, families, and individuals. Program cuts could-have the potential to eliminate program-accessibility to students and constituents because the

program may not be available "elsewhere" in Nebraska. We hope that our uniqueness will be strongly considered when final rescission decisions are made. I can promise you that "whatever" the final rescission decisions, we in the Institute remain "dedicated" to doing all we can to meet the needs of the people and communities of Nebraska.

Another challenge we must meet in the Institute is that of recruitment; we simply must draw more students to the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources in the Institute. We must do this for several reasons, "one" being that we have "tremendous faculty" with great expertise to share, and we provide "a solid-base" from which young people can "build" many satisfying and rewarding careers. Another reason is that people look at "college enrollments", and from those enrollments they make judgments as to "the importance" of the subject taught in the college. We cannot have people "believing" that the importance of agriculture in Nebraska is declining, because "fewer" students are enrolling in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. You and I know agriculture is vital to this state; one in four jobs depends on it. Yet I encounter people "all the time" who do not seem to understand that importance; who seem to believe that agriculture's "time" in this state is past. We MUST turn that around.

I noted earlier that we are extremely pleased to be "ranked" in the top 10 by *Meat and Poultry* magazine for "the quality" of our meat and poultry programs. We

rank sixth on the list, with Texas A&M capturing the top slot, Iowa State second, Colorado State fourth, and Oklahoma State 10th.

Currently we have 174 undergraduates enrolled in our animal science department. Colorado State has 690; of those, 290 are strictly animal science, and 400 for 'equine-science', which they list as a separate major. Oklahoma State has 803 majors in its Department of Animal Science. Granted, both Oklahoma and Colorado have larger state populations than ours – Oklahoma at 3,450,654 in 2000, Colorado at 4,301,261, and Nebraska at 1,711,263. But we have such an accomplished and competitive faculty. We have such outstanding facilities. And we have the capacity for so many more students. We must attract them. We simply must. And because our traditional base from which we have for years recruited continues to shrink, that base being the sons and daughters of farm and ranch families, we must broaden the base from which we draw our students.

I personally think it would be difficult to find a land-grant university with any stronger ~~production~~ ^{PRODUCTION} agricultural program than ours. I think the Institute's teaching, research, and extension ~~production-agriculture-focus~~ "was built correctly, and I applaud the people who built it, as well as everyone in the Institute who continues to build on our strengths today. But to broaden our base we have to look at the changes constantly occurring in society, and seek new areas of study within our

“focus-areas that respond to those changes by building on our traditional strengths.

Examples in animal science would be an equine science program, and a program in “companion-animals” for developmentally disabled persons, as well as for senior citizens who could benefit from companion animal therapy. I welcome your suggestions for other areas in which we can grow our student base.

I think that if we can expand our offerings, and with those expansions, people's views of the wide variety of careers CASNR degrees encompass, we will build on and preserve the strengths of our traditional undergraduate programs. We cannot afford to let those strengths erode or languish because of misunderstanding as to their importance, so we must do all we can to preserve and build on our strong suits. Plus, we'll gain students who will leave our campus well-prepared for their chosen careers, and with a better understanding of the importance of agriculture and natural resources in the world – a plus for them, a plus for Nebraska, and a plus for us all.

Because congressional understanding of agriculture is so important, I'd ask you to consider supporting a student to intern in Washington, D.C. with a member of the Nebraska congressional delegation for a semester, someone who could carry information about Nebraska and our agricultural industry to Washington, and who might find a career in government. We need people in government with a deep

understanding of agriculture and natural resources. I applaud Greg Ruehle's efforts along this line here in Nebraska, and am very happy that CASNR agribusiness senior Brandon Katzberg of Juniata has had the opportunity ¹ this semester to work with Greg in convention planning and ¹ sponsorship-development. I understand that next semester third-year law student Julie Karavas of Lincoln will have the opportunity ¹ to work ¹ with Greg as a legislative intern. This is wonderful experience you're providing, and I applaud you for it.

It has been a pleasure ¹ to pinch hit for your cancelled noon speaker. Thank you for inviting me.

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CASNR ENROLLMENT

Undergrads	-	1,368
Gradates		431
		<hr/>
		1,799