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Panhandle Research and Extension Center feedlot expansion dedication

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Panhandle Research and Extension Center feedlot expansion dedication
March 8, 2004

Good morning. It's always a pleasure to visit western Nebraska with its wide open spaces, much of it filled with cattle. Cattle are tremendously important to Nebraska -- it being our state's largest single industry. Nebraska boasts many more cattle than people -- around 4 1/2 times more, counting all cattle and calves.

Beef is one of the things Nebraska does best, as generation after generation of ranchers and feeders give our nation a wholesome and plentiful supply of good quality beef. One of every five steaks purchased in the United States comes from right here in Nebraska. That's something to be proud of, no matter if you're directly involved with beef production, or one of the Main Street businesses that support the beef industry.

In the Panhandle, the livestock industry -- mainly cattle -- accounts for more than half of the gross agricultural sales. More than 65 percent of Panhandle land is available for grazing and to support more than one-quarter million beef cows. Panhandle feedlots finish approximately 700,000 head of cattle annually. And that, in part, is why we're here today to ~~dedicate~~ ^{begin} this expansion of the Panhandle Research and Extension Center feedlot.

This research feedlot expansion project is very important because the work conducted here will provide new information to enhance the profitability of the feedlot sector in this region. More importantly, the commitment demonstrated by the industry to fund the expansion project is truly phenomenal. You obviously believe in the university and the contributions ~~we~~ ^{our Faculty, Staff, + Students} can make to the industry. We genuinely appreciate the

commitment of the industry and expanded partnership we are developing to position this research unit to be a premier provider of research-based information.

Our research projects have delved into such weighty issues as E. coli, biosecurity, calf scours, and manure management. We study the best possible use of our feed resources in rations, **grazing management strategies**, new beef products, **Beef Quality Assurance**, computerized record keeping, and value-based marketing. We take this new knowledge gained through our research to students and producers in the classroom and through extension education.

[Optional] Our commitment to the industry also extends to young people, as we help them develop "leadership roles" through such programs as the Beef Team, a group of College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students who advise consumers on beef purchasing and preparation at participating urban grocery stores. Also, next month will be our first **Nebraska Youth Beef Leadership Symposium**, the goal of which is to help high school and community college students define their career paths.

Thank you for inviting me to be part of this dedication.