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Michigan Cattleman Attends Elite Beef Industry Conference

WASHINGTON (June 14, 2013) – Brian Plank, a cattleman from Crystal, Mich., was one of more than 50 young cattlemen and women selected to participate in the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) 34th Young Cattlemen’s Conference (YCC). Plank was sponsored in part by the Michigan Cattlemen’s Association (MCA) and the Michigan Beef Industry Commission (MBIC). The YCC program is a comprehensive, nationwide tour of beef industry sectors, created to enhance leadership skills in beef industry professionals.

“YCC is a prestigious and competitive program designed to foster the future leadership of our industry,” said Forrest Roberts, NCBA chief executive officer. “The participants selected to attend YCC were chosen because of their exceptional contributions to the beef industry and their potential to be a strong voice in our future development. I look forward to seeing Brian take an increased leadership role within NCBA and the beef industry.”

Plank is a graduate of Michigan State University (MSU) with a degree in Livestock Management. He grew up on a family farm in Crystal, Mich., with two brothers and a sister. Plank is currently in the process of taking over the family farm where he and fiancée Samantha are running 70 cow-calf pairs of registered Simmental and Sim/Angus. This fall will mark the operation’s 20th annual production sale.

Plank also works as a barn manager with his parents in the MCA/MSU bull evaluation program. He has three children, Hunter, 13, and twins Brooke and Cory, 10. All are involved with the farm and 4-H. Plank is also a past president of the Michigan Simmental Association.

The eight day tour began at NCBA headquarters in Denver, Colo., where participants were given an organizational overview of NCBA and the Beef Checkoff Program. While in Denver, the group also heard from representatives of Cattle Fax and the U.S. Meat Export Federation. They toured a Safeway retail store and learned about Rancher’s Reserve brand beef marketing efforts. The group spent a day in Greeley, Colo., visiting JBS Five Rivers feed yards and processing facilities.

“It is really important for participants to see each sector of the beef industry – from farm to fork,” said Plank. “Traveling from a cow/calf ranch to a feedlot and processing plant really drives home the point that our industry is composed of many sectors, sectors that are all striving to produce a healthy end product.”

In Chicago, the group met with the senior management of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange at the Chicago Board of Trade. They had the chance to watch the activity on the trading floor and witness futures trading firsthand. Participants also visited Otto & Sons Industries, a family owned company providing quality products and custom solutions for the food industry since 1909. This tour offered a view of how boxed beef is turned into custom order portions for both major restaurant chains and some of the nation’s top steakhouses.

The group then traveled to Washington, D.C., where participants received an issues briefing from NCBA’s government affairs staff about policy issues currently facing the cattle industry. The group then traveled to Aldie, Va., for a tour and barbeque at Whitestone Farms, one of the nation’s elite purebred Angus operations.

The next day, these future leaders were given the opportunity to visit one-on-one with members of their state’s congressional delegation, expressing their viewpoints regarding the beef industry and their cattle operations. During their congressional visits, participants focused on issues including the 2013 Farm Bill, federal lands ranching and overreaching regulations proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. They finished the day with a reception hosted by John Deere at the company’s Washington office.

For more information on the YCC program or to nominate someone for next year’s tour, contact the Michigan Cattlemen’s Association at (517) 347-8117.

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The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) has represented America's cattle producers since 1898, preserving the heritage and strength of the industry through education and public policy. As the largest association of cattle producers, NCBA works to create new markets and increase demand for beef. Efforts are made possible through membership contributions. To join, contact NCBA at 1-866-BEEF-USA or membership@beef.org.