



From Pasture to Plate

Impact Statement

The Problem/Issue:

About 40 percent of all beef cattle in the United States are raised in the South Central and Southeastern areas of the country. Alabama is 14th in number of beef cattle produced, contributing more than 350,000 to the food chain annually. However, there is a perception that Southern cattle, including Alabama cattle, are inferior to cattle from other regions.

What's Been Done:

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System developed the Alabama Beef Connection. ABC is a voluntary program for producers interested in post-weaning and carcass data on their beef calves through the use of electronic identification tags. In order to participate, producers must have had beef quality assurance training and have an industry-accepted herd health program.

In 2003, the first year of the program, more than 3,000 head of cattle from about 50 cattle operations were tagged with electronic tags. The tag is vital in tracking the animal through the feeding and harvesting process. It is estimated that individual carcass data will be available on 70 to 80 percent of all animals.

Extension is using the data to help Alabama producers show the quality of their products to interested buyers through a variety of methods including direct marketing, trade shows and media efforts.

Why We Care:

The Alabama Beef Connection provides an informational and marketing network among Alabama cow/calf producers, feedlots and packing facilities. Analysis of data is enabling producers and feeders to improve growth and carcass attributes of Alabama feeder cattle and to improve the quality and consistency of beef reaching America's dining tables. When Alabama producers can show the quality of their product, they are able to command better prices for their animals, boosting their operations' profitability.

