

Cattle Business in Mississippi – May 2015

“Beef Production Strategies” article

Introductions

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As you are picking up this issue of Cattle Business in Mississippi, I am starting my second month as a Beef Cattle Extension Associate for Mississippi State University. While I am still getting my feet wet, I have quickly seen a great infrastructure for beef cattle programming. I look forward to getting out on your farms and being involved in Mississippi's beef community. For my first article, I would like the opportunity to introduce myself.

A recurring theme across today's beef community revolves around sharing your beef story. The advantages to sharing the beef story from the farmer's and rancher's point of view enables the consumer to put a face on who is producing their food. While my multi-faceted beef story is still being written, the chapters logged thus far have set the stage for a long term career as a servant to the beef industry. As a beef producer, my beef story is dynamic and filled with emotion. As an Animal Scientist, my beef story is factual and science based. My beef story begins with my legacy, is driven by my education, and is evolving through my careers within the beef industry.

My beef story begins on my family's farm in Hatton, Alabama – a rural farming community in the Northwest corner of the state. Rutherford Angus Farm is a quintessential family farm that required efforts across three generations to be successful. From a young age, I took on a significant role in the operation as both of my parents worked off the farm. I began showing cattle at the age of nine and enjoyed a successful career showing steers and Angus heifers. My parents, teachers, and 4-H/FFA advisors encouraged me to pursue leadership roles in local and state organizations and become connected within Alabama's agriculture industry.

While working toward my M.S. in Animal Breeding, I was exposed to many new facets of the industry I thoroughly enjoyed. I had the opportunity to work closely with the Alabama Beef Connection (ABC) program, which worked to form relationships between Alabama cattle producers, feedlots and processors. Perhaps my favorite role as a grad student was my ability to teach and mentor the undergraduate students. My graduate education certainly prepared me for the career I have led to date.

Working for trade associations has been rewarding. Both the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association (KCA) and Alabama Cattlemen's Association (ACA) have given me a broad spectrum view of the agriculture industry and a deep appreciation for the farmers and ranchers who grow our food. At KCA, I served as the Marketing Coordinator of the Kentucky Beef Network. Much of my work there revolved around their co-mingled, graded feeder calf sales and the USDA-approved process verified program for source and age verification. As the Director of Industry Relations and Youth Programs for the ACA, I worked with state checkoff-funded projects. My primary responsibilities included: serving as the advisor for the Alabama Jr. Cattlemen's Association (AJCA), managing the Alabama Jr. Beef Expo in a superintendent role, coordinating the AJCA Round-up, serving as the staff lead for the Emerging Leaders program.

At both associations, I had the opportunity to work very closely with their associated land grant universities. I understand the importance of the strong relationship between MSU and MCA. I plan to get involved in the local cattlemen's association and volunteer at beef promotion and

checkoff events. It will be really nice to wear a 'member' hat for once and participate in events without planning them!

By returning to my land grant roots, at Mississippi State University, I can continue my career of service to the southeastern beef cattle community. I hope to be able to build upon existing extension programs and develop new concepts that will help increase the profitability and sustainability of Mississippi cattle farmers. I look forward to hearing your beef story and learning more about our Mississippi beef community.

Please make plans to attend the Mississippi State University Beef Unit Field Day on May 2nd. If you would like to contact me, my email address is cobie.rutherford@msstate.edu and phone is 662-325-4344.

For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.