

**Cattle Business in Mississippi – June/July 2014**  
**“Beef Production Strategies” article**

**Extension Service and the Mississippi Beef Cattle Industry**

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*Author’s note: This article is the last installment of the Beef Production Strategies column. I have learned much in my time serving as state extension beef cattle specialist here in Mississippi and thoroughly enjoyed my interactions with so many of you over the years. I look forward to serving you in a new way moving forward as I now undertake a research-focused role with the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Prairie Research Unit. Look for extension programming to come out of new research efforts for the Mississippi beef cattle industry in the years ahead. Thank you for reading; thank you for listening; and thank you for sharing your ideas with me along the way.*

*All the best,  
Jane*

**100 Years of Extension**

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Given this and the notable benefits of a strong Extension presence in Mississippi to support the beef cattle industry’s educational needs, it is worthwhile to cover some of the basics of what Extension does and what it can do for this key stakeholder group. A brief outline of Extension’s history, purpose, structure, and capabilities follows to provide a better understanding of this.

In 1914 the Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service, which is a nationwide education system that delivers information to the public. Still going through present day, this system operates through land-grant universities in partnerships with federal, state, and local governments. The Mississippi State University Extension Service functions as the outreach arm of Mississippi State University providing current research and educational information to people in all 82 counties of the state. It is a partner with Alcorn State University in providing extension programming in the state.

**Extension is Education**

The overall purpose of Extension is education. Extension addresses information needs in major base programs including agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer education, enterprise and community resource development, and 4-H youth development. Servicing the beef cattle industry with educational information has historically been a key focus area within agricultural extension efforts in Mississippi. The economic importance of the beef cattle industry throughout the state at not only the individual operation and family level but also at the community and statewide level is well documented. To support this, Extension works to assist individuals, groups, and the

industry as a whole to improve its economic status and contributions to the community. Sharing information about proven best management practices, approaches to enhance product quality and safety, and ways to increase profitability are what Extension does for the beef cattle industry and its stakeholders.

### **Extension is a Local Partner**

Extension is structured to be readily accessible throughout the state. Its county-level presence is one of the most important ways in which this is accomplished. County extension agents are essential in serving as local contacts to provide expertise to assist beef cattle producers and allied industry. Coordination of extension efforts across counties and on a statewide level are also covered within the extension structure. Area livestock agents and state specialists work to provide additional support to county agents meet clientele needs and help to deliver comprehensive programs across multiple counties or on a statewide basis. In addition, state specialists are often directly involved in university research and academic instruction, linking Extension with those other vital land-grant university functions.

Forming educational partnerships with industry organizations and other groups is another way in which Extension strives to effectively service educational needs in the state. The long-standing collaborative working relationship with the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association is one example of this. What you are reading now and other extension-authored articles finds a producer audience and gets information out to interested persons because the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association reserves space in its monthly magazine to publish it. Many other productive collaborations occur in Mississippi that benefit the cattle industry because of a willingness to work with Extension and draw on its information resources.

### **Extension is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Organization**

In Mississippi, Extension has done a very nice job of developing a strong and cutting edge information technology infrastructure. The Extension Center for Technology Outreach (<http://techoutreach.msucare.com>) leads this effort and is a major resource for extension programming efforts for the beef cattle industry. From communicating with producers through interactive video conferencing or webinars, live streaming cattle marketing events, developing mobile device applications, conversing through social media, or teaching technology to producers, the Mississippi State University Extension Service stays at the forefront of integrating technology into beef cattle extension programming.

### **Connect with Extension**

If you have not yet met or spent much time with your county extension agent, pick up the phone or stop in the county extension office sometime. They are there to assist with information needs on demand. Come with your questions and ideas. Leave with answers that are timely, unbiased, research-based, and relevant. You might just make a

new friend in the process, too. For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit [msucares.com/livestock/beef](http://msucares.com/livestock/beef).