

March 18, 2015

REE Advisory Board Office
Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 332A
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: In accordance with 7 U.S.C. 3124a, Federal-State Partnership and Coordination, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces an open meeting of the Agricultural Research Service--Animal Handling and Welfare Review Panel (ARS-AHWR) to discuss their report and recommendations on the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center.

On the part of our membership of more than 3,000 beef producer members, Nebraska Cattlemen respectfully submits these comments on the 2015 ARS-AHWR report on the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center.

Our organization wholeheartedly supports the conclusion of the review panel regarding MARC's professional and careful animal handling. Nebraska Cattlemen's experience with the research facility is consistent with the panel's observations and is not aware of instances of animal abuse, misuse or mistreatment. For these reasons and those articulated below, we encourage the panel to recommend lifting restrictions on research activity at MARC.

Nebraska Cattlemen is a grassroots, membership organization representing thousands of farmers and ranchers in Nebraska. Our members pride themselves in providing outstanding animal care and are committed to the stewardship of land and livestock. Growth and improvement of our industry depends upon that commitment and we believe the work done at MARC reflects our goal to continue to improve the quality and sustainability of beef production.

I. Current MARC research projects work toward increased production for a rising world protein demand.

Specific to beef research projects, MARC's focus has been, and continues to be, targeted at feed efficiencies, increased resistance of disease, improvements toward the reduction of morbidity and mortality. Advances in these phases of livestock production benefit all. Demands for lean and nutrient-rich protein continue to rise and MARC's work provides a meaningful positive impact to mankind.

II. Historic MARC projects have made clear and impactful improvements to beef and other meat industries to maintain economic viability in despite changes in climate, consumer need and trade regulations.

As the world emphasizes a more concentrated focus on sustainability, MARC is the premier model of creating scientific advances in improved practices of doing more with less. MARC research goes beyond the obvious mission with livestock efforts to encompass issues such as water efficiencies and nutrient management of our soil. These efforts work toward extending the quality and life of our natural resources, reduce man-made inputs into our land and enhance the richness of our environment.

III. Outstanding leadership at MARC focuses on animal care, strives to complete quality research and works to share important information with industry leaders impacted by their work.

Since MARC's inception, the caring for animals is a benchmark of high quality research from all involved. These methods are essential as poorly cared-for animals benefit no one and do nothing to advance MARC's values and goals. Collaborative efforts between MARC and stakeholders provide specific focus and results.

Our experience in the beef industry has shown MARC to be the envy of world livestock researchers and producers. Commitment to continue MARC efforts is essential for sustaining the quality of life for rural America - especially those whose livelihoods depend upon stewardship of the land and improved animal care practices.

IV. Summary

Nebraska Cattlemen respectfully requests the Agricultural Research Service-Animal Handling and Welfare Review Panel to recommend lifting restrictions on research activity at the Meat Animal Research Center (MARC). Our experience with MARC has been positive in all aspects- animal care, project management and quality research. Our industry, as well as all meat production industries have, and will continue to, benefit from the outstanding work done by Dr. John Pollak and his MARC team.

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