

**Comment by Charles Sylvester
General Manager of the National Western Stockshow
2004 R-CALF USA National Convention**

It is an honor to be here this morning. Thank you for inviting me. You are grassroots people that I like to identify with. Welcome to Denver!

Although I don't live here, I've worked here for over 28 years, 25 of those as General Manager of the National Western Stock Show, a show for people in the livestock industry. Over the last 25 years, the Stock Show has become an urban-attended show at 66%. We kept the identity of an Ag show to educate the urban population on agriculture, especially Livestock. Yes, the show ring is a big part. That is the glitter, not the real livestock industry that we know.

Some great pure bred livestock producers that we needed for our industry, the real cattle people like you - and thanks for including me - walk in the stock yards I was so proud to maintain during my tenure. We are the back bone of the industry and what the National Western is all about. Thanks to your help and many fine products, we educate the urban population that attends the show annually.

Thanks to my job I have been able to keep a cow/calf operation going in Central Wyoming. My operation, like many fighting to survive, could have survived the drought that plagued us 2001 and 2002. The high hay prices were tough. Many, including my ranch operation, had to sell cows in 2002 to pay the feed bills. Now we have grass and hay that we are raising on a new farm and you guessed it! We don't have the cows to feed it to and can't sell the extra hay. That's ranching!

As ranchers, it's time to get mad. We have continually improved our practices and products we produce. When they asked us to change the vaccination practices to vaccinating in the neck; we did. They have asked us not to use growth stimulating implants; we stopped. For the future, an identification process for our herds; we will do it at our expenses. All costs are passed back to the producers. We are price receivers, not price setters. Why should the identification process stop when cattle are processed? We tell the American consumer that our beef is safe and it is! How can we guarantee that statement when American Beef is intermingled with foreign meat? We don't know if it is safe, if it is ground beef, horse meat, or kangaroo!

We now have the ear of the American consumer. They want and deserve a safe product. We can give it to them, but only if it is labeled and they know what they are buying. The consumers are voters of our elected officials. Get the consumers on our bandwagon and demand labeling!

Beef has had a great slogan, but it needs to be changed to: U.S. BEEF! It's NOW what's for dinner!

Thank you and have a great convention.