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meatingplace

JBS: Life after the failed National Beef deal

Why Greater Omaha's single-minded business model works

CLEAR THE AIR: Strategies for in-plant air sanitation

A portrait of Jody Horner, a woman with shoulder-length reddish-brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a bright red jacket with large black buttons. The background is a blurred indoor setting with windows.

New face

Even as **Jody Horner** gets to know the meat business, she has plenty of ideas about where she wants to lead Cargill Meat Solutions.

Q + A

Meat in the middle

All the rules have changed.

The recession has turned the normal foodservice/retail split of beef cut sales on its ear, flooding retailers with more middle meats as restaurant demand for Choice steaks has waned. *Meatingplace* spoke to Randy Irion, director of channel marketing for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association — which contracts to manage retail programs for the Beef Checkoff — about the challenges and opportunities this economic situation presents.

How are middle meat prices doing?

We are now looking at [low] prices we have not seen since 2002 at the wholesale level. We've seen supermarket sales remain quite strong, but foodservice is down quite a bit. We are also seeing more of our animals grading Choice than before.

What is happening to that extra Choice middle meat now that consumers are staying home rather than ordering steaks in restaurants?

We are selling more Choice at retail, not just because the prices have gone

down, but also, we have a lot of retailers who formerly only sold Select now either adding a Choice program or selling only

Choice instead of Select. A lot of that goes back to the popularity of branding. More retailers are carrying branded programs, and those are often Choice.

What are you doing to educate consumers who are cooking some of these cuts for the first time?

Our easy fresh cooking label program has a photo of a finished dish, a recipe, as well as cooking directions on it.

What are you doing to educate retailers about middle meats?

To underscore the opportunity we think retailers have to feature middle meats in particular, we have now on our Web site (beefretail.org) the retail price matrix that really lays out what the opportunities are, based on wholesale prices, to feature retail middle meats and do it properly.

