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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **The Beef Checkoff Encourages Capitalizing on Middle Meat Mania During Summer 2009**

*Opportunity for Retailers to Maximize Profits and Gain Customer Loyalty*

Denver, Colo. (June 17, 2009) – The Retail Marketing Team of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to The Beef Checkoff Program, is encouraging retailers across the country to capitalize on Middle Meat Mania this Summer Grilling season. Beef middle meat cuts from the rib, loin and sirloin are currently at lower than average levels due to an increase in supply caused by economic conditions that led to a decrease in demand at foodservice. As consumers fire up their grills this summer, retailers have a great opportunity to aggressively feature these favorite grilling cuts, increase profits and build long-term customer loyalty.

Steaks are the ultimate choice for consumers during Summer Grilling season. Retailers are very well positioned to capitalize on current middle meat wholesale prices as part of their ongoing summer grilling promotions, and can merchandise steaks from the rib, loin and sirloin in multiple ways.

According to Cattle-Fax, wholesale prices for beef middle meat cuts have declined to 2005-2006 levels. Many retailers responded to this opportunity and capitalized on this trend. Over the 13-weeks ending on April 26, 2009, retailers featured more middle meats as the retail price of rib and loin cuts were down an average of nearly four percent. Consumer response has been very positive. Cuts from the rib experienced a pound sales increase of 12.1 percent, while loin cuts experienced a nice increase of 6.1 percent. The pound movement increases of both rib and loin cuts were above the 5.7 percent pound sales growth for total beef. (Source: FreshLook Marketing, 13-week ending 04/26/09). The current outlook suggests there will be continued opportunities for featuring beef middle meat cuts this Summer Grilling Season.

“Retailers have a great opportunity to help their customers create restaurant-quality meals at home by grilling steaks from the loin and rib this summer,” said Jim Henger, executive director of channel marketing for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, which contracts to manage retail programs for the beef checkoff. “Retailers can offer customers beef's most tender cuts at lower than average prices, while increasing profits and gaining greater customer loyalty. It's a win-win situation.”

The beef checkoff encourages retailers to utilize a variety of demand building programs when promoting middle meats to their customers this summer.

- The Retail Pricing Matrix – The Retail Pricing Matrix is a tool to aid retailers in determining price points for middle meats. As a resource to the industry, The Beef Checkoff Program funded the development of the Retail Pricing Matrix (RPM) to assist retailers in quickly determining retail prices while accurately predicting “going in gross” on selected middle meats. The gross margins reflected in the matrix are based on commonly used cutting techniques. Cutting test yield information is also included on each matrix as a reference.

(more)

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- Easy Fresh Cooking<sup>®</sup> – The Easy Fresh Cooking program is an on-pack labeling program applied to beef packages. The easily peeled label gives customers a recipe idea for the specific beef cut purchased along with a photo of the plated meal and cooking instructions. The program has experienced positive results as it provides fast and convenient meal solutions to time-starved customers. Retailers can easily find delicious recipes and fabulous photos for cuts from the loin, rib and sirloin in a special Middle Meats section, developed just for this summer grilling season.
- Beef Alternative Merchandising (BAM) – The BAM program brings together new merchandising methods for the Ribeye, Top Loin and Top Sirloin. The program addresses price sensitivities and provides consumers with appealing portion sizes as well as leaner-looking and more affordable cuts. BAM product information, cutting guide videos and point-of-sale materials are available for retailer use.
- Slice 'n Save – The Slice 'n Save program offers cost savings to consumers who buy beef in subprimal form and then cut and wrap it themselves. The program includes on-pack labels, signage, do-it-yourself videos and consumer brochures.
- Promotional Partnerships – Building on the success of the 2008 Summer Grilling Promotions, The Beef Checkoff Program has compiled an exciting promotional calendar for 2009. This year's promotional partnerships offer customer savings through a distribution of more than 60 million coupons.

Additional information on all the beef checkoff-funded programs associated with Middle Meat Mania is available on <http://www.beefretail.org/markMiddleMeatMania.aspx>.

*The Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. The checkoff assesses \$1 per head on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle, in addition to a comparable assessment on imported beef and beef products. States retain up to 50 cents on the dollar and forward the other 50 cents per head to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, which administers the national checkoff program, subject to USDA approval. The checkoff assessment became mandatory when the program was approved by 79 percent of producers in a 1988 national referendum vote. Checkoff revenues may be used for promotion, education and research programs to improve the marketing climate for beef.*

*Producer-directed and consumer-focused, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association is the trade association of America's cattle farmers and ranchers, and the marketing organization for the largest segment of the nation's food and fiber industry.*

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