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LIVESTOCK—UI Livestock Research Center for Magic Valley takes another step forward

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EFFORTS TO CREATE an innovative, first class research facility focused on livestock and the environment advanced another step in mid-January.

The Idaho State Board of Education authorized the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences to proceed with the planning and design phase of the \$35 million Idaho Center for Livestock and Environmental Studies in south central Idaho's Magic Valley.

"The new center will emphasize both the growing importance of Idaho's dairy and beef industries and ways we can design and manage confined animal feeding operations to protect the environment," said John Hammel, college dean.

The college's report to the board noted that the project has expanded at the direction of Gov. C. L. "Butch" Otter to increase collaborative efforts with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Idaho Department of Fish and Game by integrating an animal diagnostic laboratory with the center.

The university gained State Board approval to spend up to \$750,000 for project design and planning.

Idaho legislators in 2007 appropriated \$10 million for the center at the governor's request. Legislators put a two-year deadline on the university to obtain revisions to federal laws governing the use of endowment lands to allow sale or exchange of endowment lands to acquire the land and buildings needed for the project.

That step was achieved within months with the help of Idaho's Congressional delegation.

CALS began pursuing plans for the center in close coordination with the region's dairy industry. Idaho's dairy industry pledged \$5 million for the project.

The center will complement the college's Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center near Salmon focused on beef production.

Idaho's dairy and beef industry provided 57 percent of the \$5.6 billion in projected farmgate cash receipts collected by Idaho agriculture during 2007, according to college agricultural economists. Milk sales, largely from Magic Valley dairy operations, more than doubled from \$829 million in 1998 to \$2.04 billion in 2007.

Helping dairies increase cull-cow value

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IN THE PAST, dairy producers sent their "cull" cows to market when milk prices were low or replacement heifers were cheap. If the cows spent no time in the feed yard and their meat was subsequently a little tough, so what? They were just going to be processed into hamburger or bologna anyway.

Not anymore. Today, more than half of the beef from these "market" cattle is fabricated into nearly 20 different wholesale cuts, including marinated steaks, roasts, deli roast beef, fajitas, and other high-value products.

That's why Jason Ahola, University of Idaho Extension beef specialist, is helping

Idaho's dairy producers improve meat quality of cull livestock. With graduate student Jamie Allen, he compared carcasses from 27 animals from three Idaho dairies this past summer to see whether 90 days in a feedlot would improve meat palatability and selling price.

Results: Three months in the feedlot prior to harvest added about 239 pounds per carcass. Also, a taste test showed strip steaks were more tender, juicy, and flavorful than those from dairy cows harvested immediately after culling. Cull-animal sales comprise about 5 percent of a dairy's income. Ahola says their contributions could easily double.

University Extension helps assure a safe meat supply

LEARN MORE about ways University of Idaho Extension is helping Idaho's livestock industry at

<http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/>

MANY IDAHO RANCHERS are becoming beef quality assurance (BQA) certified through programs offered by University of Idaho Extension in partnership with other agencies. BQA helps cattle producers improve production practices that influence the safety and quality of their products.

UI Extension also helps Idaho ranchers learn about the national animal identification system (NAIS), implemented as a permanently voluntary program by USDA. NAIS will enable 48-hour trace-back of livestock in the event of a disease outbreak. Other benefits are individual animal identification and performance measurements.

The electronic identification device (EID) is a quarter-size chip attached to an animal's ear that holds a unique 15-digit number. EID numbers pop up on a computer when a reader wands the animals. The EID system is in use in youth livestock in 30 of Idaho's 44 counties and will be pilot tested or re-enrolled in 37 counties in 2007. The BQA certified database in Idaho now exceeds 1,100 producers, sale barn owners, order buyers, veterinarians, and feedlots.

DID YOU KNOW?

8%

PORTION OF U.S. BEEF PRODUCED BY DAIRY COWS.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture survey, 1996