



## Guest Editorial

By D'LESE TRAVIS

**A** FEW years ago, I had a son in what I considered an outstanding high school wrestling program. At the onset of the season I attended the traditional "parents night" where the coach reviewed the program with the parents regarding his expectations. The first year the coach instituted his new diet, which consisted of fish, chicken, pasta, fruit and vegetables. Despite the lack of beef on the menu, I went along with it to be supportive.

The second year at a parents night when the subject of diet came up, a parent asked why beef was not included. The coach responded, "Because beef is hard to digest and weighs the wrestlers down."

After the meeting, I approached the coach and said, "I cannot sit idly by and listen to you say the things you are saying about beef that are not true. Beef is not hard to digest."

He proceeded to tell me that certainly he had felt the effects of difficult digestion after eating a "big ol' steak."

I said, "You just revealed the problem when you said 'big ol' steak.' A proper serving of beef is 3 ounces, just the same as a chicken breast or serving of fish. It's the fat that is hard to digest, not the beef. Carbohydrates digest first, then protein and fat last. Overeating anything will make a person uncomfortable."

I also reminded him that he was talking negatively about a product that was the livelihood of many of his students' parents! I told him I would bring him some information, and I hoped he would be open to reviewing it.

I then made a trip to the Oklahoma Beef Council where, thanks to our beef checkoff dollars, I found all the printed information needed to prove my case.

I pulled information comparing 3 ounces of beef to a boneless, skinless

chicken breast, as well as other poultry and fish. I made information packets for the coach, the assistant coach and the home economics teacher, who had sons in the wrestling program. I also included nutritional information listing the zinc, iron and protein in beef, as well as the amount of B12 in a serving.

I submitted the information to the three instructors with a respectful letter offering any assistance they might need or questions answered.

A short time later I attended parents night, where I visited with the coach, who was also a history teacher. He said, "Tell me about this information you brought me. Why didn't you tell me about this sooner?"

I explained that I was trying not to meddle in his program but that I felt the information was important. He agreed and said, "I am an educator. I need to know these things."

He reviewed the nutrition list and said, "Look at the amount of B12 in 3 ounces of beef. My gosh! We are having to send the guys for B12 shots before the end of the season because they have no energy!"

I responded that beef is the most nutrient-dense protein available, and we reviewed the amount of zinc, iron and protein, as well as the benefits to blood supply for rebuilding muscle tissue.

The coach quickly became a believer, and at the next meeting he announced that beef was back in the wrestlers' diets.

The home economics teacher then explained to all the parents about the 29 lean cuts of beef from the information I had provided and how they should be included in the diet in 3-ounce servings.

Misinformation about beef is no longer going out to generations of wrestlers and their parents, and the young men in the program are now allowed a healthy, balanced diet with a delicious and nutrient-dense product to fuel their bodies. This is now a program that makes winners of us all.

*Travis is this year's Oklahoma Cattlewoman of the Year and is president-elect of that organization.*