



ASPEN  
MEDIA AND  
MARKET  
RESEARCH

## ***Memorandum***

July 12, 2008

To: Lynn Heinze  
From: Dan Hoffman  
Subject: Topline Findings from the July 2008 Beef Producer Attitude Survey

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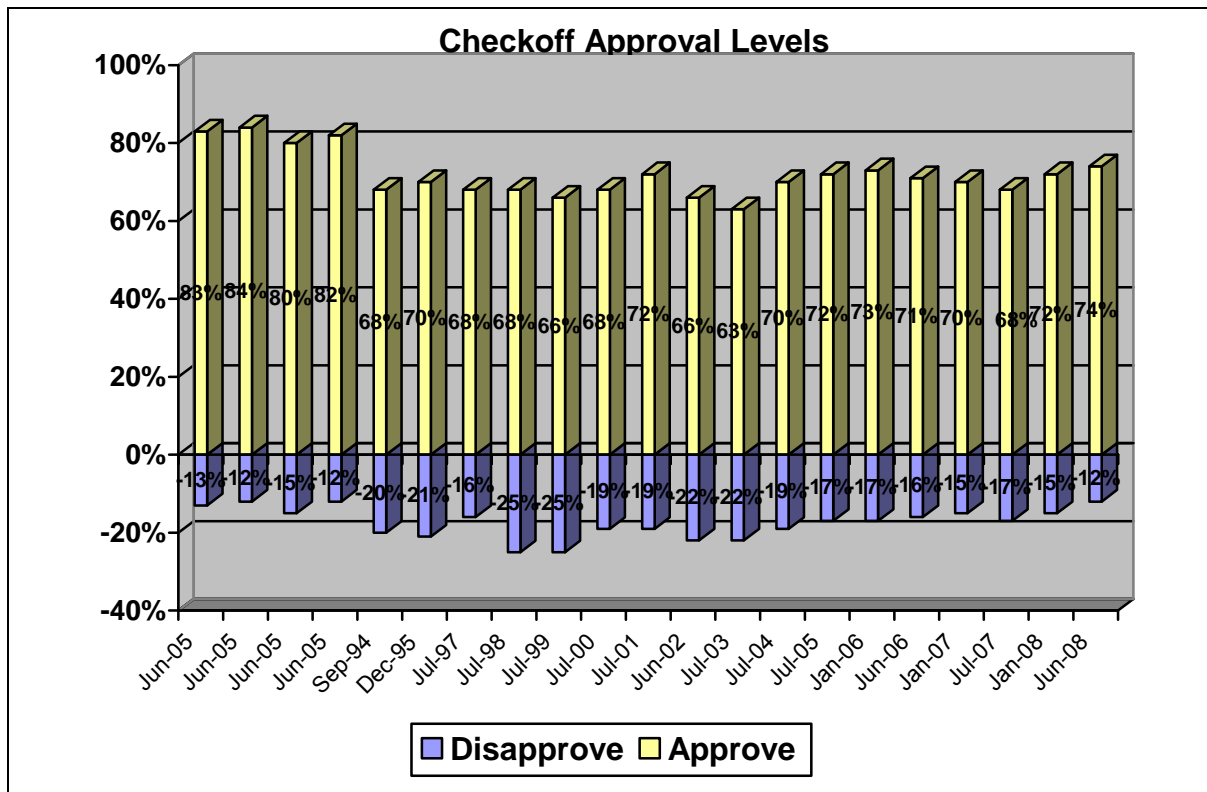
Aspen Media & Market Research was commissioned to conduct a study of beef producers nationwide in order to determine their awareness of, attitudes toward, and concerns about the Beef Checkoff Program. The following are the topline findings from this study. They are based upon 900 interviews of a random representative sample of beef and dairy producers nationwide. The interviewing was conducted between June 17 and June 30, 2008. For a sample of 900, the statistical margin of error is  $\pm 3.3$  percentage points around any one reported percentage.

### **Support for Checkoff**

Producers continue to have very favorable attitudes toward the beef checkoff program. Currently about three in four approve of the program, which is an increase over last summer's results. Moreover, the results have been fairly consistent over time. In the past five years, approval rates have ranged between 63% and 74%. Producers' support for the checkoff program has shown this consistency on a longer term basis as well—during the past decade, a majority always have approved of it, with positive ratings of 60% or more.

For the most part, checkoff support has remained steady in spite of changing economic conditions or extensive news coverage. Economic conditions have been cyclical—they have improved and declined. There have been two up market cycles and one down cycle in the past seven years. Economic conditions also have influenced producers' outlook toward their industry, although this has not had a large effect upon their approval levels regarding the checkoff. In the past 12 years, there have been three cycles where producers had a negative or mixed outlook toward their industry.

The research also shows that the proportion of producers who disapprove of the checkoff has declined in the past 12 months. Moreover, the disapproval rates have remained lower during the past few years. Since July 2003, there has been a steady decline in the disapproval rate. The proportion who disapprove has dropped 10 points, from 22% to 12% now. Currently, there are equal numbers of producers who say they “strongly” or “somewhat” disapprove of the checkoff. There has always been a core group of producers who dislike the program; it is at the low end of the historic range (12%-27%).



Knowledge about the checkoff continues to be a predictor of favorability toward it, a consistent finding. Producers who are “very” or “somewhat” well informed are more likely to approve of the checkoff, particularly among those who say they are very well informed. Among this group, 83% approve of the program (55% of them strongly), while only 11% disapprove. There is a similar ratio of approval and disapproval ratings among those who are somewhat well informed (76% and 12%, respectively), but fewer of them say they strongly approve (24%).

In contrast, the strength of checkoff support begins to slip among those who say they are not too well informed. Only about one in two approve of the checkoff (3% strongly approve), 30% are neutral/unsure, while 15% disapprove.

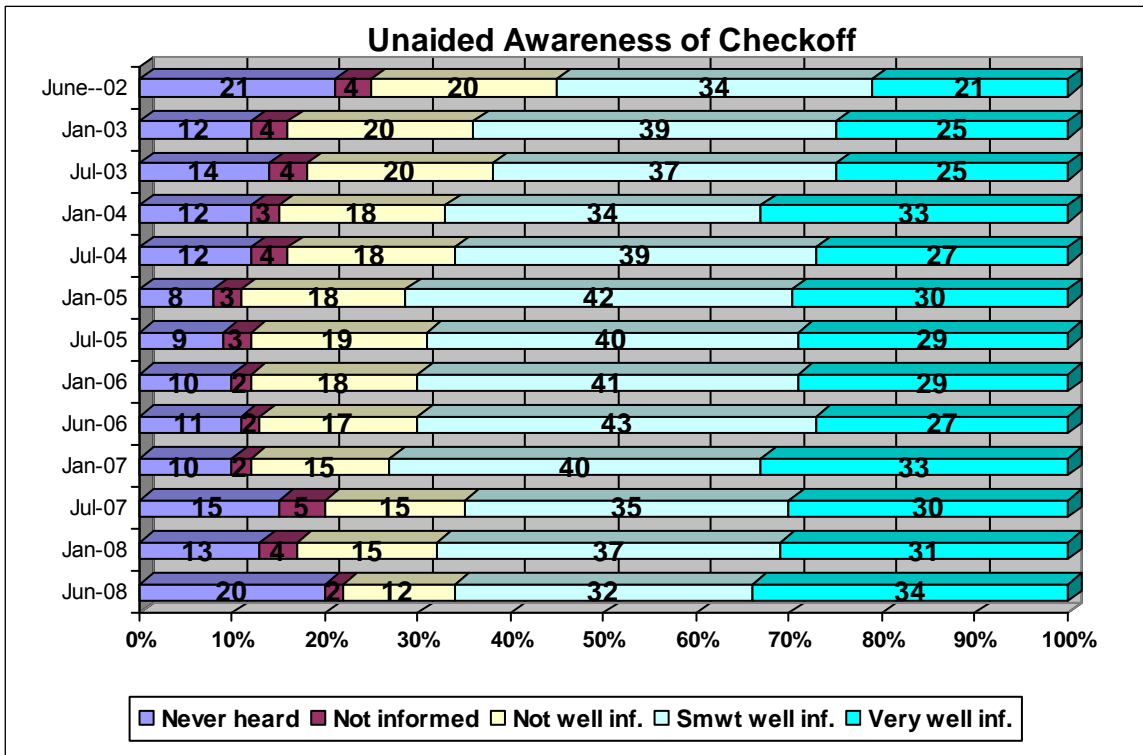
The weakest support occurs among those not informed at all—only 37% approve (15% strongly), 30% are ambivalent/unsure and 33% disapprove.

Approval Ratings	Very well informed	Somewhat well informed	Not too well informed	Not at all informed
Strongly approve	55%↑	24%	3%↓	15%
Somewhat approve	28	52↑	52	22
Neither	5	8	17	7
Somewhat disapprove	4	7	10	11
Strongly disapprove	7	5	5	22↑
Don't know	1	5	13	23↑
(n=)	(312)	(300)	(126)	(25)

### Awareness of and Knowledge about Beef Checkoff

Understanding producers' awareness of the checkoff program is a first step toward determining how familiar they are with it. Low awareness represents a lack of knowledge about the program. With little knowledge, it can be difficult for producers to understand the benefits of the program. To address these issues, producers were asked whether they had heard about the checkoff and, if so, how knowledgeable they were about it.

First, producers were asked, on an unaided basis, if they were aware of the checkoff—that is, without any description of it being read to them. On this basis, 80% said they had heard of the program, which is slightly lower compared to previous years. The reality, however, is that about one third of producers know little or nothing about it. Twelve percent said they were not too well informed, two percent were not informed at all, and 20 percent were not even familiar with the name.



The 20 percent of producers who did not recognize the checkoff on an unaided basis were read a subsequent description of it. Using this reinforcement helped raise their awareness another five percentage points. In total, then, the unaided and aided name awareness of the checkoff is very high (85%).

The proportion of producers who have at least some knowledge about the checkoff program has dipped slightly in the past several years. Currently, 68% of producers consider themselves “very” or “somewhat” well informed about the program, a seven-point decline since January ‘07. Some of this is seasonal—during the summer the scores tend to be unchanged from winter or down several points. However, the big picture shows the trends in producers’ knowledge about the checkoff on an unaided and aided basis continue to be mostly positive, a consistent finding over time. In the past two years, between 68% and 75% say they are informed. The proportion of producers who consider themselves uninformed is unchanged from a year ago and is in the high of its historic range. Thirty-two percent say they are uninformed.

Awareness (unaided, aided) of checkoff	Jan. 2004	July 2004	Jan. 2005	July 2005	Jan. 2006	June 2006	Jan. 2007	July 2007	Jan. 2008	June 2008
<b>Informed</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>68%</b>
Very well	33	27	30	29%	30%	27	33	31	32	35
Smwhat well	36	41	43	41	43	45	42	37	39	33
<b>Uninformed</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>
Not too well	20	21	19	21	19	19	16	18	17	14
Not informed	4	4	3	4	3	2	2	5	5	3
Never heard	7	7	4	5	5	7	7	9	7	15
(n=)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(1,225)	(900)

### Recall of Checkoff in Advertising or News

A program with the visibility of the checkoff is bound to be talked about or in the news from time to time. It is important to find out just how visible the program is and how producers perceive the coverage. The results indicate that many producers continue to pay attention to recent checkoff news; the visibility of the program remains high. Currently, about half of producers have seen, read, or heard something about the beef checkoff in the past six months. Of the producers who are aware of the checkoff being discussed, nearly three-fourths perceive the majority of news coverage to be positive. In contrast, less than one in ten think it is either negative (5%) or both negative and positive (3%).

