

# Quality Care Matters



A Column about Beef & Dairy Animal Care

## McCullough Brothers Promote Beef with Fall Corn Maze

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified producers John and David McCullough of Mercer, Pa. uniquely tell their farm story to thousands of western Pennsylvania consumers each fall at their Coolspring Corn Maze. In this issue of Quality Care Matters, we learn more about the McCullough Brothers growing agritourism venture and how they use innovative marketing tools to promote both their corn maze and beef.

John and David calve approximately 130 Angus cows each year, while managing their 400 acres of crops and pastures. Recently, the McCulloughs began finishing some cattle, selling quarters to customers. In addition to the cattle operation, the brothers also install livestock fencing and the Advantage brand of tarp style buildings.

The corn maze concept began seven years ago. "An area farmer had a corn maze for 3-4 years and when they closed, we decided it would be a good time to start our own adventure," John McCullough said. McCullough thinks their farm's maze helps fill an important void in the community. "I grew up in FFA, but now that we no longer have a chapter, I think our corn maze can continue to tell the story of agriculture," McCullough noted.

Unlike many corn mazes, McCullough is the proprietor and designer. "I design the maze each year and this past February, won the best maze award at the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) annual conference," he said. This year's theme commemorates the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, and is appropriately called, "American's Heroes." The maze opens to the public on Friday, Sept. 9, and is open each weekend through the end of October.

Maze visitors also can purchase McCullough's Angus burger and homemade apple cider donuts. Each year, the burger complements the maze theme. "My cousin manages our Facebook page and she used our page to gather name suggestions for



Hayride visitors see the McCullough's beef cattle.

this year's burger, The Firehouse Burger," McCullough explained. Almost 1,200 people "like" the page that keeps them updated with farm pictures and special events all year long. The McCulloughs also give away an assortment of their Angus beef to customers, via weekly drawings through the fall season. "The corn maze really helps build our beef business," he said.

The McCullough Brothers also promote their 10-acre maze with an annual T-shirt. Their 2011 T-shirt, introduced at the Great Stoneboro Fair last week, has a unique message, with an 11 x 17 inch QR (quick response) code. "If you stand up straight, and there are no wrinkles, you can snap a picture of the QR code on the shirt, and with a software application on your smart phone (that reads the QR code), you go right to our Facebook page," said McCullough. "Kids like to take shortcuts and I think they'd sooner take a picture than type in a website address. It's free, so why not try it?" They also incorporated QR codes on their maze brochure, front and

back, taking consumers directly to the maze Web site and also a YouTube video about the farm, produced by the Pennsylvania Beef Council last fall.

On Sept. 11, Coolspring Farm will host its annual Burger Cookoff Challenge. Restaurants and amateur cooks compete for \$500 in prize money in various categories including Best Burger (\$250); People's Choice (\$50); Best Display Booth (\$50); Originality (\$50); Best First Time Competitor (\$50); and Best Presentation of Burger (\$50). Eight - 15 teams typically compete in the Cookoff. "On Cookoff Day, we charge \$9.95 for admission and a burger," McCullough said. "\$5 of the \$10 goes to the Northwest Cattlemen's Association, our local beef producer group."

This year, contestants will use extra special beef to make their Cookoff burgers - grand champion beef from the Mercer County 4-H Round-Up. "We partnered with a few local businesses and bought the steer from 4-H member Marshall McKean," McCullough noted. Contestants prepare six burgers; five burgers for the panel of judges and one for presentation at their display. After the contest, each team prepares 50 quarter-pound burgers for the public. "We average about 1,000 people at the event," he said.

Visitors to Coolspring Farm also can enjoy a hayride and inadvertently, learn more about beef production. "When my brother or I do the hayride tour, we shut the tractor off when we get close to the cow pastures," McCullough said. "We call the cows and they come over the hill. And more often than not, people want to know when we are milking the cows. It gives us an opportunity to explain the difference between beef and dairy cows. Even though we live in a rural part of Pennsylvania, people just don't know agriculture," explained McCullough.

To learn more about the Coolspring Corn Maze, visit the farm's Web site at [www.coolspringmaze.com](http://www.coolspringmaze.com) or their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/Coolspring-CornMaze](http://www.facebook.com/Coolspring-CornMaze).

## Beef Council Enjoys Taste of Hamburg-er

BEDFORD, Pa. — Burger enthusiasts flocked to Hamburg, Berks County, on Sept. 3, for the eighth annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival. What began as a celebration of the hamburger's 100th anniversary has grown into an event attracting upwards of 20,000 people to the town each Labor Day weekend.

The Taste of Hamburg-er boasts a variety of entertainment including three stages with live music, petting zoos, beef themed contests and all the burgers you can eat at the infamous Burger Stand.

Arika Snyder, 2011 Pennsylvania Beef Ambassador, addressed the crowd and visited with consumers about the importance of including beef as part of a healthy diet. She also distributed easy, delicious recipes and educational materials focused on beef and its benefits.

The Berks County 4-H Beef Club also entertained crowds with Patty Melt, the Beef Council's burger mascot. Patty strolled the streets of Hamburg, waving to visitors and even posing for pictures.

Other highlights of the festival included the restaurant cook off, chili cook off, hamburger eating contest, mooing contest, and wooden cow decorating contest.



Patty Melt greets visitors at the 8th annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, Saturday, Sept. 3.

Prizes were even awarded to visitors who traveled the farthest.

This consumer promotion was funded, in part, by Pennsylvania's beef, dairy and veal producers through the \$1 per-head national Beef Checkoff. For more information on this program or the Beef Checkoff, contact the Pennsylvania Beef Council office at 1-888-4BEEFPA.



Visitors to the Great American Food Drive, Washington, pose with the Hereford cow at the Young Farmer's Area.

## Beef Council Partners With Washington County Food Bank to Stamp Out Hunger

BEDFORD, Pa. — The Greater Washington County Food Bank commemorated its 30th anniversary with a 24-hour food drive, Aug. 26 - 27, at the Meadows Racetrack and Casino, Washington. With partnership from the Pennsylvania Beef Council and other businesses and organizations, the Food Bank attempted to break the current world record donation of 559,885 pounds of nonperishable food.

During the 24-hour period, the Food Bank collected 431,011 pounds of food that included 42,300 pounds of beef products. That food donation will feed approximately 10,100 families in Washington County and across the state. Although the collection fell short of breaking the world record,

the celebration continued through the weekend.

The festival kicked-off with a concert by country music group Lonestar and continued through the day Saturday with appearances by several Pittsburgh Steelers players. Donnie Iris, Pittsburgh's rock legend, also visited the festival.

The Pennsylvania Beef Council, together with several agriculture groups including the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, staged themselves in the Young Farmer's Area to teach both young and old festival participants about Pennsylvania agriculture.

For more information about the Washington County Food Bank and ways to donate, visit their web site at [www.gwcfb.org](http://www.gwcfb.org).



The 2011 Corn Maze pays tribute to Sept. 11