



Cattle Ranches Wrangle Sustainability

Results of a national survey show cattle ranching viewed as the third most sustainable profession.

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Courtesy Dickinson Cattle Co.

Americans view cattle ranching as one of the most sustainable professions, according to a national survey conducted by the Beef Checkoff Program.

When your office is the farm and your commute is on horseback, preserving and protecting the Earth is part of the job description.

In a national survey of American beef eaters, cattle ranchers and farmers were selected as the third greenest profession from a diverse list of jobs, with park rangers topping the list. This survey was conducted by IPSOS Public Affairs for The Beef Checkoff Program.

The fact that cattle ranching is viewed as a sustainable profession is no surprise to Gary Teague, a Colorado cattle rancher and environmentalist.

“We work every day to teach our three children what it means to be truly passionate about the land and the animals. Preserving natural resources is how we make our living and how we secure our family business for our children and grandchildren,” he says

Two-thirds of United States’ 1 million cattle farms and ranches have been in the same family for two generations or more, according to data from Aspen Media and Market Research, 2008. American cattle farmers and ranchers have embraced the values of sustainability for generations, and Americans recognize that commitment. Eighty-six percent of Americans surveyed think cattle farmers and ranchers are committed to environmental preservation.

“It’s the right thing to do and our ability to keep feeding Americans depends on it,” says Teague. “As short-term stewards of this land, it’s our job to ensure it’s left in better shape for the next generation.”

In light of the survey, cattle ranchers celebrated different ways raising cattle can contribute to environmental sustainability. Cattle are raised in every state in the nation, in nearly every type of climate and geography. While cattle ranching practices may vary from state to state or region to region, the goal is the same: Leave the land in better shape for the next generation.

Among the sustainability practices are those that prevent erosion, maintain clean waterways, guard wildlife or recycle resources, while providing a flavorful source of protein. The survey found that Americans value these practices as important ways to protect the environment. Actions seen as very important by more than half of Americans surveyed include things common to cattlemen like planting crops and grasses to control erosion, rotating cattle pastures to manage grazing, and planting trees to provide windbreaks and shelter.

More Survey Stats

Park rangers were the clear leader when consumers were asked to choose green professions. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the second greenest profession, dietitians, and cattle ranchers and farmers.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (86 percent) believe farmers and ranchers are committed to protecting and preserving land and natural resources.

Most Americans’ impressions of farms and ranches are not from personal experience. Only 22 percent of people surveyed get their impressions about cattle ranches from first-hand experience with a rancher. Of almost equal proportion, 21 percent get their impressions from newspapers and magazine articles, and 30 percent from TV shows and movies about the American West.

Consumers aren’t the only ones who find the actions of farmers and ranchers critical to protecting our environment. For example, a group of sportsmen, conservationists and outdoor interests, including The Nature Conservancy, is collaborating



on a new "Thank a Rancher" campaign in Wyoming that recognizes the importance of agriculture and ranching in maintaining our open spaces and conserving wildlife habitat.