



Young Leaders Conference at the 2012 National Program for Genetic Improvement of Feed Efficiency in Beef Cattle and the Weight Trait Project attendees (pictured, l to r) are: Keela Retallick, Glen Haven, Wis. (Angus); Lauren Schiermiester, Buffalo, Wyo. (Hereford); Bridget Beran, Claflin, Kan. (Hereford); Sydney Bigger, Media, Ill. (Gelbvieh); Cashley Ahlberg, Longmont, Colo. (Angus); Tara Fountain, Centralia, Mo. (Charolais); Erika Downey, Boonville, Ind. (Charolais); Lindsey Grimes, Hillsboro, Ohio (Angus); and Kelli Retallick, Glen Haven, Wis. (Angus).

Youth Learn About Genomic Tools, Genetic Improvement

An educational conference for youth on genomic and genetic improvement tools was held June 23-26 in Nebraska. The Young Leaders Conference at the 2012 National Program for Genetic Improvement of Feed Efficiency in Beef Cattle and the Weight Trait Project Stakeholder Meeting was designed for young beef industry leaders. Two representatives from the Hereford breed — Lauren Schiermiester, Buffalo, Wyo., and Bridget Beran, Claflin, Kan. — were invited to attend.

The event was hosted by University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) Animal Science Department Professor and Extension Specialist Matt Spangler along with Kansas State University

Animal Science Professor and Extension Specialist Bob Weaber.

The conference's purpose was to "provide educational programming to young leaders from U.S. breeds on the improvement of feed efficiency and use of genomic tools for selection of beef cattle. Also to provide opportunities for the young leaders to interact with project collaborating producers, project and USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) scientists and allied industry personnel."

The three-day conference kicked off with tours of UNL animal science department and GeneSeek Inc.

Beran said the GeneSeek tour was exciting because it is the new American Hereford Association DNA lab. "We were given an in-depth tour and explanation

of the DNA collection and testing process. It's amazing all the knowledge we can now gather from one little hair follicle."

The rest of the conference was held at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (US-MARC) at Clay Center.

Schiermiester said, "I learned just how important genomics will be in the future of animal breeding and how far we have come regarding the molecular research and data. Genomics and DNA technologies will play a role in selection and breed improvement and also increase EPD accuracies."

The conference wrapped up with a tour of US-MARC, which Beran described as "a sprawling facility where they conduct research projects while still maintaining production." **HW**