

MSGGA addresses brucellosis, EAJA, and NCBA structural change at 2010 Cattle Industry Convention in San Antonio

[Ryan Goodman, MSGGA](#) / [February 1, 2010](#)



Last week, MSGGA officers, members and staff attended the 2010 Cattle Industry Convention in San Antonio. Altogether, more than 6,000 people attended the convention. The MSGGA delegation accomplished a lot at the meeting including further discussing the brucellosis issue with a top APHIS official, contributing to two major policies for NCBA, supporting the NCBA structural change recommendations, and seeing MSGGA Past-President Bill Donald become NCBA President-Elect. (Bill is in the left of the picture with Tucker Hughes, MSGGA 2nd VP, and Tom Hougen, MSGGA President, to his right. MSGGA 1st VP, Watty Taylor was also in attendance.)

MSGGA discussed some of our members' concerns about APHIS's concept paper for revamping the National Brucellosis Eradication Program with Dr. Brian McCluskey, APHIS Veterinary Services Western Regional Director, who was in attendance at NCBA's Cattle Health Committee meeting. Specifically, MSGGA asked McCluskey what would happen if Montana were to discover another case of brucellosis in cattle before the new rules, which are two years from completion, are formally adopted. McCluskey said that in such a case, APHIS will apply the newly developed concepts even though the official rules are not yet finalized. McCluskey said that APHIS is currently utilizing the new concepts with the latest brucellosis case in Idaho. McCluskey also addressed the difference between split-state status, regionalization, and the new Designated Surveillance Area model. He said that the differences between all of these are very clear: split-state status and regionalization are both clearly defined by APHIS and the World Animal Health Organization, and usually indicate a difference in class status from the surrounding areas with international trade implications. Designated Surveillance Areas (DSAs) are not based on declaring a separate class status and are designed to gradually shrink their boundaries based on scientific risk analyses. DSAs have flexibility and agility while split-state status and regionalization are fixed and rigid.

In the area of cattle health, MSGA worked with Wyoming and Idaho to modify NCBA's policy on brucellosis. The new policy implies that NCBA will pursue priorities and strategies regarding both the modification of the National Brucellosis Eradication Program and the eradication of brucellosis from the Greater Yellowstone Area. New policy also directs NCBA to work to maintain producers' ability to keep their cattle healthy through the use of approved antibiotics.

In the area of federal lands, property rights and land management, MSGA worked to get approval of the policy we submitted on reform of the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA). While EAJA was established by Congress to ensure that individuals, small businesses or public-interest groups with limited financial resources could seek judicial recourse from unreasonable government actions, a lack of federal oversight has allowed the Act to be abused, particularly by environmental-activist organizations which often target ranchers under the guise of "public interest." In a six-year period, non-profit environmental groups have filed more than 1,500 lawsuits, and in turn the federal government has paid out billions in taxpayer dollars in settlements and legal fees under EAJA and other fee-shifting statutes in cases against the U.S. government.

The NCBA Board of Directors approved a task force report by a 201-13 margin, putting in motion the creation of a new governance structure, which would feature a smaller NCBA Board of Directors and a new House of Delegates that would include the organization's state affiliates, state beef councils, industry/breed organizations, and product/allied industry councils. The Federation of State Beef Councils would be housed within the House of Delegates, and continue to conduct its federation duties as specified in the Beef Promotion and Research Act & Order. Also, the membership committee and board of directors accepted the dues increase first presented at the 2009 Summer Conference. This increase establishes the minimum dues level at \$100, increases all membership categories accordingly, and increases the feeder dues from 10 cents/head marketed to 12.5 cents/head. Prior to this change, Montana's minimum dues level for NCBA was \$90.

Melville rancher and MSGA Past-President, Bill Donald, was elected to serve as the new NCBA President-Elect. This puts him on track to become President of NCBA in 2011. MSGA commends Bill for all of his hard work and leadership. Montana will be well represented at NCBA in the next two years!