



NICHOLS

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026

ROSS' THOUGHTS



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Good Cattle, Good Beef, and a Big World to Feed

Every year about this time, someone will ask, "Ross, what are you folks selecting for at Nichols Farms now?" My usual answer is, "Everything!" If there was an EPD for fixing fence or finding the one cow that always slips through the gate, we'd probably be working on that, too.

The reality is that our breeding philosophy hasn't changed much over the years. We continue to focus on the traits that make our customers more profitable - feed efficiency, fertility, structural soundness, longevity, health, carcass quality, and cattle that are simply good to be around. Using genomic technology along with decades of performance records allows us to make better selection decisions and continue moving the breed in the right direction.

Those genetic improvements have never been more important because demand for high-quality U.S. beef has never been stronger. Here at home, consumers continue to choose beef because of its outstanding eating experience and nutritional value. Beyond our borders, the appetite for U.S. beef continues to grow. Through the outstanding work of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), American beef is reaching customers in more than 100 countries. Those export markets

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Nichols Farms at BIF

Genho Talks BRD

It was after returning from the annual Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) conference in 2015 that Dave Nichols decided to start selecting for BRD resistance.

There were skeptics. But the founding member of BIF knew what he was doing. A data set was implemented.

Today, Nichols Farms offers customers a Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) EPD predicting probability (in %) of a calf not being treated for respiratory disease post weaning. At this year's BIF conference, John Genho, geneticist at Index Genetics, presented on Nichols Farms' genetic analysis of BRD.



Using data from the 658 head 2025 calf crop, they analyzed treatment phenotypes, ran models with and without genomics, and predicted actual BRD treatments to establish EPDs. SenseHub temperature ear tags were utilized to identify sick animals rather than relying on observation and treatment data as previous industry studies have done.

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Tarochione Brings Home Award

Audrey Tarochione received the 2026 Baker/Cundiff Student Award recognizing outstanding student research and writing at the 2026 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) symposium in June.

Audrey joined the Nichols Farms team in June as Data Coordinator, after receiving her Masters Degree in animal breeding and genetics from Iowa State University.

Audrey was selected for her essay, "Considerations for the Development of a Bovine Respiratory Disease National Cattle Evaluation." Her essay examines the challenges and opportunities associated with developing a national cattle evaluation for bovine respiratory disease (BRD), one of the costliest health challenges facing the beef industry, by exploring the disease phenotyping, genetic parameters, data collection and industry collaboration needed to make genetic selection for BRD resilience a practical reality.

"Nichols Farms is one of the first to implement the 'cooperative interaction' needed," says Audrey. "We're utilizing data from the seedstock, cow/calf, feedlot and packer sectors to predict BRD resilience, with all sectors working together to benefit the industry." In her essay, she concludes that while significant hurdles remain, genetic improvement for BRD resilience could provide lasting gains in cattle health, productivity and profitability.

At Nichols Farms, Audrey will be responsible for managing data, statistical analysis and genetic evaluation. She also helps with most cattle working events. "I enjoy the chance to get my hands dirty," she says. "It's a nice balance to using my degree."

She is looking forward to the opportunities Nichols Farms presents for both.

Audrey hails from London Mills, Illinois.

Kenedy DeVoe of Kansas State University also received the award, often presented to PhD candidates. The award winners each received a \$2,500 scholarship with their winning essays published in the annual BIF Research Symposium and Annual Meeting Proceedings on the BIF website.



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create tremendous value for our industry by increasing demand for premium cuts as well as products that often have much greater value overseas than they do here at home. An example would be beef tongue. Two years ago I visited Japan and toured a processing facility that 5 days a week, 8 hours a day all they did was process U.S. beef tongue for consumption by Japanese consumers.

What does that mean to a Nichols Farms customer? It means every genetic improvement that produces a healthier calf, a more efficient animal, a higher-quality carcass, or a more productive cow helps strengthen the entire beef supply chain. When cattle perform better, consumers enjoy a better eating experience, demand remains strong, and everyone - from the ranch to the feedyard to the packing plant - benefits.

At Nichols Farms, we're proud to play a small part in that success. We believe that producing better cattle today helps ensure a brighter future for our customers tomorrow. And if we ever do find that gene for fixing fence, you'll be the first to know.

Genho BRD ...continued from page 1

Genho ran the data with and without 50K chip genomic information and showed the genotype increased accuracy of the EPD. Without the genomics, the EPD predicted a .6 percentage point decrease in probability of treatment per EPD unit. With genomic data, that increased to a 2.4 percentage point decrease in probability of treatment per EPD unit.

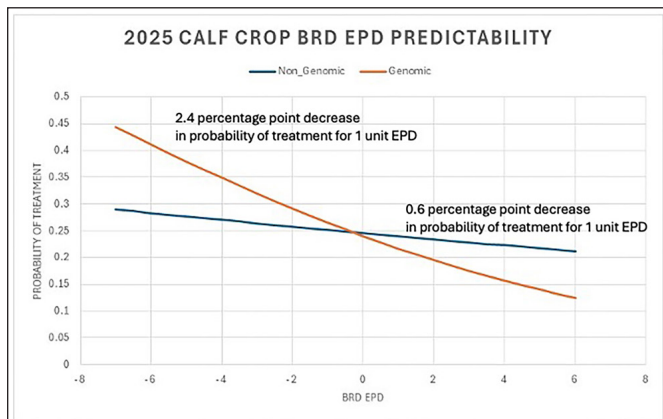
"Adding genomics is definitely an advantage in establishing the EPD," says Genho. "Using the temperature eartags has also made the EPDs more predictable." BRD is 13% heritable, not accounting for breed differences. Genho says the use of the SenseHub tags has increased that number.

Neogen Igenity has also released a BRD prediction tool, based on 20,000 records across multiple geographic locations. "It's a useful tool," says Genho, "though Nichols customers will find the specific data from the Nichols herd to be more predictive of Nichols genetics."

Genho also highlighted assessments of the impact of the incidence of BRD on feed efficiency and feeding behavior. Comparing animals with zero, one, or two treatments for BRD, those with more treatments fed from the bunk less frequently and ate less. However, they tended to continue to gain during sickness events. "Once they're on a gaining trajectory, they keep gaining even while eating less," Genho explains, adding that could change with a longer duration illness.

Generally, Residual Feed Intake (RFI) is adjusted to feed and weight. Nichols Farms adjusts its RFI calculation to include feed, weight and sickness, increasing the accuracy and predictability of the measurement. "RFI is a better selection tool because of the work Dave initiated with BRD," says Genho. He also emphasizes the value of using the index calculation, rather than selecting for individual traits.

"The BRD EPDs work," says Genho. "If you're buying Nichols stock, that is the best prediction for sickness and its potential effects on your bottom line."



2026 Nichols Calf Crop



Notes from Lillian

All of us at Nichols Farms thank you for your business this past year. It has been a joy to work with all of our customers, both long-timers and new ones. We are now into the heat of summer; but the calves look great and the grass seems to be holding up.

As I talk to parents, grandparents and kids when they come through the office, I can tell you there are some really motivated youngsters looking forward to their role in agriculture. My granddaughter Natalie set her goals in 6th grade - she wanted to be an eye doctor, and we celebrated her graduation this spring.

One granddad was telling me how his grandkids really helped him with making hay and how he enjoyed teaching them. He looked at his 11-year-old granddaughter standing beside him carefully observing all that was going around her and said, "You're going to help me make hay again this summer, right?" And her reply was, "Yes, but this year I'm going to drive the baler." Talk about setting goals and paying attention to those around you who can help you meet those goals!

The Adair County Fair was last week, and I thank 4-H and FFA for being leadership training organizations for young people. The future of agriculture looks bright!



Dr. Natalie Nichols
Working at Fairway Eye Center
Leawood, Kansas

It's Fair Time



Sophiee Jameson highlighted the beauty of the Iowa countryside in her Blue Ribbon photo at the Adair County Fair. Sophiee is the daughter of Garrett Jameson.



Nichols Farms herdsman Kassidy Bremer's family made a fun outing at the Dallas County Fair. Pictured, left to right, Kassidy, Riley Melancon, who judged the fair's Beef Show, brother Klayton Bremer and mom Jennifer Carrico. Kassidy and Riley are college friends. Riley's family in Mississippi run a 1,000 head cow/calf operation.



Young Booker sported the Grooviest Costume in the 1970s-themed Baby Contest at the Adair County Fair. Mom Cadee is the daughter of Mike Firch.



Ayden Goetz shows his blue ribbon FFA lamb at the Adair County Fair. Ayden, an employee at Nichols Farms, works on the hay crew and as a bull barn assistant.



Bart Mostaert, Brian Christensen, Tom Thompson and Steve Baudler hit the links for the Page County Cattlemen's Golf Tourney fundraiser at the Clarinda Country Club.

LETTERS from you

Des Moines, Iowa -

Ross, Thank you so much for hosting Secretary Naig a few weeks ago. He visited a dairy farm shortly thereafter that I had the opportunity to join him on, and there were some fun ties he was reflecting on in regards to EPDs that you had discussed with him. The impact you're making reaches far past Bridgewater – thank you for that and the leader you are for the state. As a younger adult, I feel incredibly blessed to have someone like you to look up to. Grateful for you Ross!

*Sincerely, Leah Mosher - Iowa
Department of Agriculture and Land
Stewardship Executive Assistant*



NCBA leadership visited Nichols Farms. Pictured, left to right, Ross Havens; Lillian Nichols; Abby Melnikoff, Membership and Affiliate Services; Ethan Lane, Senior VP of Government Affairs; Colin Woodall, CEO of NCBA; and Craig Moss, ICA President.



Above: Argentine Cattlemen and Nichols Farms exchanged ideas when Nico DiLorenzo, Professor of Beef Cattle Nutrition from the University of Florida at Marianna, Florida, brought 27 beef cattle producers from Argentina to Nichols Farms. Nico also handled translation duties.

Below: Iowa State University Collegiate Cattlemen visited Nichols Farms in April on the organization's Spring Day Trip. They also made stops at Wiese & Sons and Lauritsen Cattle Co.

Texas A&M Animal Science research assistants Ashtyn Knowles and Brooke Baker install overhead cameras in several of the Nichols bull barn SmartFeed pens to enhance data collection. The cameras will provide continuous visual observations to better monitor bunk conditions and verify that feed is consistently available to provide bulls with free-choice access to feed throughout the day. The video observations will also provide additional insights into the feeding behavior patterns of bulls, making it possible to cross check SmartFeed's RFID based visit logs with real time observations. By comparing the video observations with SmartFeed system records, frequency and duration of bunk visit events and overall feeding activity can be validated with greater confidence. This added visual monitoring strengthens the ability to track feed bunk status across pens, supports consistent free-choice access to feed and will enhance the reliability of the feed intake and feeding behavior data collected by the SmartFeed measurement system. Ashtyn is a summer intern at Nichols Farms.

