

**Livestock**

# Iron and zinc in beef benefit consumers

By **CURT ARENS**

**I**RON and zinc in beef provide dual benefits for consumers that can be overlooked. That's what Raluca Mateescu, a researcher at the University of Florida, told participants at the 46th Beef Improvement Federation research symposium and annual meeting in Lincoln recently.

**At a glance**

- Researcher says beef is a good source of iron and zinc.
- Health professionals are receptive to learning more about beef.
- Consumers should be educated about important nutrients in beef.

There is a strong, positive correlation between iron and zinc in beef. She contended that most of the nutrient profile of beef is very positive. Researchers don't completely understand the interactions of micronutrients in beef, but they are generally considered to be beneficial to consumers, even providing antioxidant properties, Mateescu said.

She noted that while it is possible to change the nutrient profile of beef, the only area that she concluded could be improved would be in iron concentration. With iron deficiency and related health problems prevalent around the world, improving iron concentration in beef has potential, she said.

For instance, iron has been identified as a nutrient that could help prevent sarcopenia, or loss of muscle quality through aging, she said. For producers, iron improves the color and stability of beef, making it more attractive to consumers. Higher iron also might mean higher yield grade.

She suggested developing genetics and management tools that could improve the iron profile of beef to levels that are even better than they are now, and educating trusted health professionals and consumers about how important iron and zinc are to their health. Beef could be promoted for these health benefits through more research on specific human needs of these nutrients, and the amounts that beef in the diet can provide.

"Health professionals are receptive to this kind of nutrient research," Mateescu said. People trust farmers and health professionals with generally favorable assessments. Because of the positive nutrient profile of beef that includes iron and zinc, for instance, Mateescu suggested that consumers might be receptive enough to learn more and consider beef as an especially strong source of these nutrients.

If you'd like to learn more about BIF, go online at [www.beefimprovement.org](http://www.beefimprovement.org).

**DAIRY BRIEFS**

**Leading dairy processors make sustainability commitments**

Seventeen U.S. dairy processors, accounting for 68% of U.S. milk production, have already committed to voluntary best practices for enhanced dairy traceability established by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. The new guidelines do not affect producers and on-farm practices, the organization says, but in a food safety crisis, enhanced traceability standards for processors can quickly isolate products to protect public health and prevent brand damage to the broader U.S. dairy industry.

**Dairy researchers plan to create app with disease data**

A Michigan State University animal scientist will lead a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional effort to adapt mobile technology to help farmers prevent dairy cattle illnesses, the university said this month. The project will take a nearly \$1 million USDA grant to study factors that contribute to cow health risks during the most vulnerable period of their lives — the three weeks before and the first several weeks after giving birth. Researchers will then take this information to develop an app for smartphones that will help farmers detect early warning signs of disease susceptibility.



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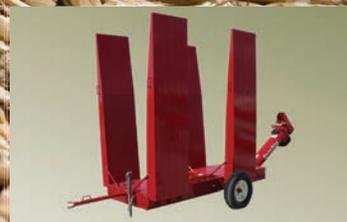
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