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Kansan Appointed to USDA Secretary's Advisory Committee

Mary Ann Kniebel, White City, Kan., was recently elected to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health.

Representing Kansas and the animal agriculture industry, especially the beef cattle sector, Kniebel joins seven other committee members with diverse backgrounds from across the nation as an expert in production livestock.

"Kansas is ranked third highest for the production of cattle and calves in the United States, with more than 6.1 million cattle on ranches and feedyards. Due to the high production of cattle, it is imperative that Kansas have representation on the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health," said Kansas Governor Sam Brownback. "Mary Ann's lifetime of experience coupled with her industry knowledge and involvement will allow her to help guide animal health decisions at USDA."

Kniebel plays an integral role in her family's cattle ranch, Kniebel Cattle Co., which is recognized as a leader within the Kansas beef cattle community for its quality of cattle. Under Kniebel's leadership, Kniebel Cattle Co. became a founding member of U.S. Premium Beef (USPB), an expanding marketing cooperative offering innovative, alternative marketing opportunities for cattlemen and women to earn premiums for the value they add to their cattle. USPB can be found in 36 states across the nation.

In addition to her work on the ranch, Kniebel works part time as a cattle nutrition consultant. She works with ranchers and feedyard nutritionists to develop balanced rations to maximize cattle performance and contribute to the overall health of the cattle. Her animal health work expands beyond this role as she currently serves as a member of the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health advisory committees for Johne's Disease and Trichomoniasis.

"We are proud to support Mary Ann as a representative of Kansas agriculture and the beef cattle industry on the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health," said Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman. "She has served as a valuable asset to the Kansas Animal Health Division's advisory committee and will provide valuable insight and firsthand knowledge about raising healthy animals in her new committee position."

In her spare time, Kniebel is active in her community and within the beef industry, serving on the board of directors for both the Kansas Livestock Association and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. She is a member of the Beef Improvement Federation and was the recipient of the 2008 Commercial Producer of the Year award.

The Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health advises the U.S Secretary of Agriculture on matters of animal health and broader issues of public concern. Committee members represent the greater agriculture community and make recommendations on collateral issues involving public health, conservation of natural resources, the stability of livestock economies and livestock disease management and traceability strategies. For more information about the committee please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/acah.