



# Discussion Topic

August 2008

A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

## QUESTIONS

- 1. How can your county Farm Bureau help the cattle industry implement the electronic ID program to the benefit to everyone, farmers and consumers alike?**
- 2. What other method could be used to identify cattle and trace them back to the farm of origin as efficiently?**
- 3. What is the value of safer, quicker, more efficient tag reading compared to reading metal tags now?**

## How well do you know your county Farm Bureau?

In today's partisan political climate, people from all walks of life are attempting to make the connection between state and national politics and their lives.

Often, laws that come from Washington or Lansing seem to have little relevance to farmers, the people on the ground who get the job done.

That's where county Farm Bureaus fill the void. In an age of disconnected relationships, county staff members and elected county Farm Bureau boards are the connection that helps bring state and national issues home.

For example, Michigan Farm Bureau policies always begin at the local level. And if you think they aren't effective, read the article in this issue of Michigan Farm News about the new water law (page 1). St. Joseph County had a major impact on state Farm Bureau policy, and that policy was enacted with only a few compromises, all because local folks got together and rooted in the grass to get a truly grassroots policy to the Annual Meeting and ultimately into law.

Not every policy ends up being the law of the land, obviously, but it's encouraging to think that, in an age of impersonal, electronic connections and lack of conversational skills, the folks on the ground at the local level make a difference. It's what makes Farm Bureau such a unique organization.

"I don't think we can overstate the importance county Farm Bureaus have in politics, be they local, state or national," said Mike Wenkel, manager of the MFB Membership and Field Services Department. "But there's more to it. The counties give local people access to all the services that come as a benefit to membership. The counties do the grassroots work of educating their neighbors through programs such as Project RED, and they keep the local press informed about agriculture. The local level is where the understanding of agriculture starts, and if the counties weren't doing a great job - or didn't exist - there would be a major void out there that nothing else could fill."

And don't forget the role of Michigan Farm Bureau's regional representatives, who work intimately with the counties to bring their concerns, ideas and policies to the state level.

As former U.S. Congressman Paul Henry used to say, it was his job to represent local folks to Washington, not to represent Washington to the local folks. And that, too, is the role of regional reps. They represent local folks to Michigan Farm Bureau, and the state staff listens.

So get to know your local county Farm Bureau, and thank them for the role they play. Without them, things wouldn't get done.