

Cattlemen's Young Leaders Mentorship Program

Established in 2010, the Cattlemen's Young Leaders (CYL) Mentorship Program is a national youth initiative of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, which annually pairs participants with a mentor in their specific area of interest in the beef industry and provides networking and travel opportunities tailored for personal and professional growth. Young beef enthusiasts between the ages of 18-35 can apply for the program which has seen over 120 graduates since it was established.

The CYL Program saw a number of changes to the way opportunities were offered throughout 2020 to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19. Program year highlights included the annual National Western Stock Show trip, an extended program year for 2019 CYL participants, as well as new ways to engage with participants and sponsors virtually through a webinar series.

On the annual CYL and Young Cattlemen's Council trip to Denver in January 2020, CYLs Robyn Unrau, Lacey Tillotson, Kimberly Lansdall and Haley Scott participated in tours of Colorado's agriculture industry while taking in the National Western Stock Show. The tours included stops at the Greeley JBS Packing plant, Five Rivers Feeders and the Anheuser-Busch brewery and barley research centre.

The effects of COVID-19 drastically impacted 2019 CYL participants' ability to take full advantage of travel, networking and mentorship opportunities provided through the program.

For example, the annual CYL Spring Forum, which traditionally includes industry tours and skill building training opportunities, was cancelled. As a result of limitations to peer and industry networking opportunities and travel, the 2019 CYL Program year was extended, where participants who were originally set to graduate in August at the Canadian Beef Industry Conference, will now be graduating in August 2021.



CYL's Kathleen Holweger with her Mentor, Duane Thompson, at the 2020 Saskatchewan Beef Industry Conference.



The purpose of this extension was to provide participants with more time to use their \$2,000 individual budgets, with a goal of allowing them to attend an in-person Spring Forum and the Canadian Beef Industry Conference in 2021 while creating additional opportunities to meet face-to-face with their mentors. This creates two groups of CYLs for the 2020-2021 program year.

On August 10, 2020, the annual CYL Selections event to hand pick the new group of 2020 CYL participants shifted to a virtual event, where semi-finalists participated in judged roundtable discussions about timely topics in the beef industry using Zoom breakout rooms.

We are very excited to see how each of these mentorships progress throughout the upcoming year.

The 2020 mentee and mentors are as follows;

- Andrea van Iterson (*Fawn Jackson*)
- Laura Code (*Lee Sinclair*)
- Aydon Almberg (*Dave Solverson*)
- Iva Harberg (*Kim Ominski*)
- Claye Harsany (*Mathieu Paré*)
- Dave Slingerland (*Dave Kasko*)
- Mackenzie Argent (*Nicole Zeni*)
- Katie-Jo Stehr (*Sheila Hillmer*)
- Kaylee Chizawsky (*John Lawton*)
- Scott Gerbrandt (*Brent Difley*)
- Matt Hildebrandt (*Steve Kenyon*)
- Sarah Jensen (*Bryan Thiessen and Stuart Thiessen*)
- Laura Plett (*Martin Unrau*)
- Charlene Yungblut (*Matt Bowman*)
- Grace Kuhl (*Crystal Mackay*)
- Greg Stavert (*Dean Manning*)





CYLs and YCC delegates touring Five Rivers Feeders on January 16, 2020 during the annual National Western Stock Show trip to Denver, Colorado.

2020 also marked the 10th anniversary of the CYL Program. A special celebration was held at the virtual Canadian Beef Industry Conference on August 11, 2020 with a video presentation reflecting on the success of the program over the past ten years by highlighting sponsors, mentors and graduates.

The Program has been hosting a webinar series with sponsors to deliver content to CYLs, while still offering sponsors a way to interact with participants throughout the year. Topics covered in 2020 included learning about precision agriculture technology applications in forage equipment with New Holland, creating an ideal herd health protocol with Zoetis, succession planning with Farm Credit Canada, government relations training with the Alberta Cattle Feeder's Association (ACFA) and business risk management tools with MNP. We look forward to continuing to work with our other program sponsors to host more webinars in 2021.

In 2020, the CYL Program was excited to welcome RBC Future Launch and Alltech as Gold level sponsors. In addition, Cargill renewed their Foundational Partner sponsorship and provided additional support to the CYL Program through Cargill's corporate grant matching program. McDonald's Canada has also renewed their Foundational Partner sponsorship. CYL participants also received free Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) online training thanks to the generosity of VBP+.

Funding for the CYL Program is made available through its Foundation Partners Cargill, MNP, McDonald's Canada and Zoetis. The Program also receives support from Gold Sponsors Farm Credit Canada, New Holland, Alltech and RBC Future Launch, along with program sponsorship from the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association. CCA and CYL Program participants are extremely grateful for the support received by these generous partners.

We look forward to expanding the program and creating more young leaders for the Canadian beef industry. With a focus on youth development and engagement, CYL is working collaboratively with multiple other members of industry to build a strong foundation of young beef producers and industry stakeholders.

