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VALLES CALDERA TRUST HOSTS INAUGURAL BEEF ACADEMY

STUDENTS LEARN THE BUSINESS OF BEEF

Have you ever heard of Forrest New Mexico? There is no forest near Forrest because it sits in the eastern part of the state about 35 miles south of Tucumcari in Quay County. Forrest is also a little more than 2100 miles from Harvard University where Richard Rush completed his freshman year studying history and economics last May. Harvard is a long way from New Mexico cattle country but history and economics are not.

“Cattle ranching has a long history in this country and is important to many rural economies,” said Rush. “I know how important it is to my family’s cattle business and I hope that what I learn here will improve our business.”

Rush was among 18 future cattle ranchers who spent an intense week of study this summer at the inaugural US Beef Academy on the Valles Caldera National Preserve <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/>. Most were alumni of the First New Mexico Ranch Management Camp <http://nmyrm.nmsu.edu/> held last year on the Preserve. The Academy takes what students learned in the Ranch Management Camp to the next level.

“The Ranch Camp spent half a day on beef quality and producing healthy cattle,” said Dr. Manny Encinias, NMSU Extension Beef specialist. “The Beef Academy devotes an *entire day* of hands on learning to each component of beef quality covered during that one morning in Ranch Camp.”



Richard Rush looks for answers during the US Beef Academy at the Valles Caldera National Preserve

It’s all part of Encinias’ vision. First, begin the program with a smattering of all things cattle ranching in Ranch Camp. Second, expand to an intense hands-on curriculum that provides information students can use on their home ranches or to pursue other career opportunities in the beef industry. The third and final leg will direct students to explore educational and business options within the industry through a series of visits to cattle producers, feed lots and marketing operation such as auction yards.



NMSU's Dr. John Wenzel instructs Shiprock's Matt Denetclaw

“It’s exposure to the entire business model that will hopefully attract more young people to an industry that is growing older and smaller because young people leave the ranch for other careers,” says Encinias. “We want to give them a business reason to stay at home.”

Rush plans to do just that in Forrest which was originally named Forr’s Rest. Legend has it that the U.S. Postmaster General’s Office misread the application and named the new post office “Forrest”. You can discover more about the US Beef Academy,

sponsored by the New Mexico Beef Council on the Valles Caldera National Preserve at

<http://www.usba.nmsu.edu/>.

