

MAEP Hall of Fame Award 2006

Nominee: Eldon Cole, Livestock Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Lawrence County

Since Eldon Cole's employment in 1964 as a Balanced Farming Agent in Saline County, Eldon has worked to bring about positive change in the livestock industry. In 1968 he became an Area Livestock Specialist based in Lawrence County and currently conducts programs in five counties. There is no doubt that Eldon Cole has influenced the quality of cattle that Missouri produces.

With Eldon's 42 years of service he shows no sign of slowing down. According to Tom Hansen, Agronomy Specialist from Greene County, "Eldon is well respected by beef producers and his peers in his local area and across the state. He is very dedicated to the job of Livestock Specialist and has served as a great trainer for other Specialists."

A colleague, Dona Funk, Livestock Specialist in Cedar County, states, "He has been a mentor, advisor and cheering section for me and the other Extension staff. If I could only impact half of the people he has helped during his Extension career, both clients and coworkers, I would have had a successful career."

Eldon's educational program focuses on developing the quality and performance of the entire cow herd on Missouri farms by developing bulls, replacement heifers and steers that come off the farm. Eldon has actively promoted the university's Tested Bull Sale that has created great improvements in beef cattle. Eldon developed the Steer Feedout Program which tracks the performance and carcass traits of cattle as they pass from the farm to the slaughter facility. Nearly 4,000 steers have gone through the program since its inception in 1981.

In 1997 he piloted one of the first Show-Me Select Replacement Heifer programs in Missouri. This program tracks performance traits of heifers and prepares qualified animals for value-added sales offered through Extension. Through the work of Eldon and his colleagues in Southwest Missouri they have processed 8,900 heifers with nearly 4,000 that have been sold through the program.

Eldon has produced a monthly beef newsletter for Southwest Missouri that spans 38 years without missing an issue. He developed the longstanding Ozark Empire Fair Hay Show in 1985. Over the years he has helped to develop the swine evaluation station at the Southwest Experiment Station and helped to organize associations for beef, sheep and pork producers in Southwest Missouri.

Another colleague, Ed Browning, Natural Resources Engineering Specialist from Jasper County, remarked, "Probably the thing about Eldon that impresses me the most are ideas he comes up with. It just seems that when some new issue arises, Eldon has an idea about a solution."

Over the years Eldon has been active in NACAA, attending numerous AM/PICs. He received the Distinguished Service Award from NACAA. The list of other awards that he has received over the years is impressive. They include the Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association Outstanding Livestock Specialist Award in both 1975 and 1995; the Carl Scheneman Excellence in Extension Teaching Award in 1983; the Missouri Cattlemen's Association Show-Me Industry Award in 1985, the University of Missouri Extension Association (UMEA) Professional Communicator Award in 1991; the Missouri Farm Bureau Agriculturalist of the Year Award in 1992; University Block and Bridle Club's Livestock Person of the Year Award in 2005.

Our Civic Communication Specialist for the Southwest Region, David Burton, remarks, "I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that Eldon Cole has been the most visible face and voice in southwest Missouri for Extension and livestock production in general, over the past 15 years that I have known him. I never met a serious journalist or agriculture reporter in this area that doesn't already know, and respect, Eldon for his depth of knowledge on livestock issues."

Eldon and his wife, Charlotte, have four grown children and four grandchildren. They are active members of the Mt. Vernon First Presbyterian Church. Eldon is an avid Mt Vernon High School basketball fan and attends many of the games. He is a member of the University of Missouri Extension Association, American Society of Animal Science, National Association of County Agricultural Agents and Epsilon Sigma Phi.