



**National Cattlemen's
Beef Association**

Young Producers' Council

How To Guide for **Beef** Bloggers



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National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Young Producers' Council

YPC Blogger's Guide

Created by the YPC Blog Subcommittee: Cari Rincker, Editor; , Erica Beck, Sharon Breiner, Chelsea Good, and Crystal Young. Publication design by Rachel Cutrer.

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National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Young Producers' Council

What is the Young Producer Council (YPC)?

By Holly Foster

The Young Producers' Council was established during the 2008 Cattle Industry Summer Conference in Denver and was initiated to help NCBA members ages 18 to 35 develop their leadership skills and become more involved in NCBA policy development. The group also helps provide networking opportunities, continuing education and professional development activities to its members.

YPC members elected their first slate of officers at the 2009 Cattle Industry Annual Convention in Phoenix, Ariz.

The executive committee and members of the YPC board members also serve as liaisons for YPC to the following NCBA committees:

- Agricultural Policy
- Cattle Health & Well Being
- Federal Lands
- Live Cattle Marketing
- Membership
- Property Rights & Environmental Management
- Tax & Credit Resolutions

The immediate past chairman serves the board in an advisory capacity. YPC members are also active in several task force committees to coordinate specific activities, such as public relations and the group's Cattle Call blog.

Membership in the council is free to current NCBA members. For more information, become a fan of the Young Producers' Council on Facebook or visit www.BeefUSA.org/ypc

“YPC was established to help younger producers gain more effective leadership skills and to give them an opportunity to become involved in NCBA. This is our chance as young members to learn about the grass roots workings of NCBA from the ground up and gain valuable experiences that will benefit our industry and the association in the future.”

-Ben Spitzer, 2010 YPC Chairman

2009 Executive Committee and Board of Directors

Chairman- Dustin Dean, Texas
 Vice Chairman- Steven Yardley, Utah
 Ag Policy- Evan Tate, Kentucky
 Live Cattle Marketing- John Schroeder
 Membership- Ben Spitzer, Georgia
 Property Rights & Environmental Management- Holly Foster, California
 Cattle Health- Brandon Carlson, California
 Federal Lands- Ty Kelly
 Tax & Credit- Ben Neale
 Resolutions- Cari Rincker, New York
 Public Relations Committee- Cari Rincker
 Membership Committee- Ben Spitzer
 Governance/Structure Committee- Ben Neale

2010 Executive Committee and Board of Directors

Chairman- Ben Spitzer, Georgia
 Vice Chairman- Ben Neale, Tennessee
 Secretary/Treasurer- Sharon Breiner, Kansas
 Ag Policy- Evan Tate, Kentucky
 Live Cattle Marketing- Travis Hoffman, Colo.
 Membership- RaeMarie Gordon, Colorado
 Property Rights & Environmental Management- Holly Foster, California
 Cattle Health- Brandon Carlson, California
 Federal Lands- Sarah Baker, Idaho
 Tax & Credit- Wyatt Prescott, Arizona
 Resolutions- Tonya Amen, Wisconsin
 Public Relations Task Force- Cari Rincker, N.Y.
 Membership Task Force- Anna Aja, Arizona
 Cattle Call Blog Task Force- Katy Groseta, Arizona

Why Should Young Cattle Producers Have a Blog?

By Cari Rincker

It's a new age. One where more people obtain their news from social media than traditional types of media such as newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. One where folks socialize with friends, family and professional contacts via blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Social media hasn't replaced the business lunches, happy hours, and golf outings – it has added another dimension to information proliferation, networking and self-expression. Though blogs are not “new,” they are the classic backbone of modern social media. It is important that cattle producers have a voice in the blogosphere.

There are six major reasons why young cattle producers should start a blog:

1. Share Information. More people obtain news on current events and policy on blogs than with traditional newspapers. These blogs oftentimes link to relevant articles on the internet to help direct readers to important information so that readers can more quickly ascertain news on a specific subject. Blogs allow the writer to share the news through his or her lens to add perspective.

2. Be Part of the Discussion. There are discussions happening online everyday about the issues that affect the cattle industry. Shouldn't cattle producers have a voice in that conversation? Great blogs provide an excellent forum to discuss the issues that are important to the beef business to help magnify important issues. Real change happens by trying to understand the concerns of others.

3. Market Your Business. Blogs are a powerful way to market your cattle operation or agribusiness. Blogs inherently add Search Engine Optimization (“SEO”). The majority of the population will use Google or Bing before heading to the Yellow Pages. Blogs are not just for fun — they can play a roll in generating business. Blogs also play a key role in branding and allow people to “get to know you” before they

decide to do business with you.

4. Network with Readers and Bloggers. Blogs, like other social media platforms, allow participants to cultivate relationships. Blogs naturally open up a line of communication between the writer and reader.

5. Showcase Your Passion. We all have God-instilled passions. Your passion may be photography, cooking with beef, ruminant nutrition, embryo transfer, western fashion, graphic design, computer technology, or fuzzy show steers. Blogs are an ideal way to showcase your passion--no matter what it is.

6. Be an Advocate for the Cattle Industry. Unlike any other type of social media, blogs allow producers to inform consumers and elected officials about the agriculture industry. Not only will a blog help correct misinformation about the livestock industry, but blogs also allow the general public to better understand the breadth of the cattle industry.

So what are you waiting for? Start a blog and give it a try. I think you will be glad you did.



Beginning Blogger How-To-Guide

By Chelsea Good

Blog stands for weblog, which is an internet-based journal. Blogs take many forms, ranging from private blogs sharing personal stories with a select group of friends to public business updates from company blogs. Many in the agriculture community use blogs as a way to connect with their friends, family, customers, and, perhaps most importantly, urban consumers. Starting a blog is free and easy. Here are some steps to get started.

1. Decide What You Want To Blog About. Decide what you want the feel of your blog to be. Do you want it to be mostly personal, mostly professional, or some combination of the two? What will your targeted readership be? How will you attract these readers? Writing down your vision and some concrete goals for your blog will help guide you through the blogging process.

2. Choose a blogging provider. The most popular providers are Blogger and WordPress. These sites come equipped with pre-made templates, so you can blog easily without much technical understanding.

Blogger's advantages are that it is easy to use and quick to set up. Because Google owns it, Blogger integrates well with Google applications.

While WordPress is also fairly easy to set up, its advantage is in its flexibility. WordPress is an open-source software that is constantly updated. The basic code is light, and the flexibility is in the add-ons that can help your WordPress blog do almost anything you want.

3. Choose a Template. When choosing a template, pick a color

scheme and layout for your blog. Most sites come with a set of layouts you can choose from. Select one and personalize it by adding your name, interests and one of your own pictures for the header.

4. Decide where your blog will be hosted. While hosting by WordPress and Blogger are free, you may prefer to host the blog on your own domain (i.e. www.smithfamilycattle.com instead of www.smithfamilycattle.blogspot.com). Typically it costs \$10-\$15 a year to host your own domain name. If you're interested in buying one, check www.godaddy.com to see if the domain name you want is available for purchase.

5. Start writing. Write a couple posts to get yourself started. Some major features of blog post are that they tend to be short in length with lots of short paragraphs. Blogs often contain pictures and links to other sites. Additionally, they tend to be conversational in tone.

6. Tell people about it. Start spreading the message about your blog. Send out an email blast to friends, family and customers letting them know about your new blog. Twitter and Facebook are also a great way to let people know you are blogging. You can also visit other blogs and leave comments, including the address of your blog so they can visit you too.

7. Track your progress. If you want to keep track how many people are coming to your blog, what they are reading and where they are coming from, add Google Analytics to keep track of these things.



WORDPRESS



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RSS Feeds

By Cari Rincker



Really Simple Syndication (“RSS”) is a web feed used to publish frequently updated web sites such as blogs, news, and podcasts. It is sometimes referred to as a “web feed” or “RSS feed.” Folks can “subscribe” to a RSS feed using “feed readers,” “news aggregators” or e-mail subscriptions. The RSS reader regularly checks the “feed” for updates so that subscribers do not miss a beat.

Most blogs have RSS feeds. Usually, you just have to click on the RSS symbol on the blog. However, sometimes you have to look more carefully for the RSS feed. For example, the RSS domain for Rincker Law, PLLC’s Agriculture Law and Policy Blog is <http://www.rinckerlaw.com/blog/feed>.

I highly recommend Google Reader for a news aggregator. Not only does Google Reader automatically find the RSS feed for most blogs, but one can easily save or share my favorite posts to others. Smartphone applications, such as NewsRack or Byline, and desktop applications such as Net NewsWire, pull in the feed through Google Reader. I also have the ability to pull in RSS subscriptions through iMail and Outlook. I encourage both bloggers and readers to subscribe to their favorite blogs via the RSS feed.

Private Blogs: Keeping it Locked Up

By Cari Rincker

When you are setting up your blog, you will have an option to keep your blog private. In such cases, only the invitees will be able to see the content of your blog. This is useful if the purpose of the blog is to have a private discussion over a select group of people. For example, you may want to have a candid conversation about issues that affect the cattle industry without fear that the information will be publicly available. Alternatively, you may choose to have a travel blog and only want your closest family and friends to read your entries.

A word of caution: in the land of the Internet, you cannot guarantee that material that is meant to stay private will stay private. You can control the privacy settings on the blog but you cannot control what others choose to copy and share with others.

Categories vs. Tags

By Cari Rincker

The distinction between categories and tags on blogs can be confusing. Categories are an organizational tool for the reader so that he/she can quickly find posts relating to a specific topic. Some blog platforms like Wordpress allow for categories and subcategories. To illustrate, if you have a farm/ranch blog, “cattle sales,” “embryo transfer,” “day in the life,” and “coffee shop chatter” might be useful categories for your readers. If you want to start an agriculture policy blog, you may want to have a subcategory for posts discussing your local legislation. On the other hand, tags communicate to search engines on the content of your blog. I recommend using only one or two relevant categories for each post and as many tags as you can that may describe the post.

Should I Be An Anonymous Blogger?

By Cari Rincker

When you set up your blog you will have to make a choice whether you want to use your real name (i.e., your full name) or whether you wish to be anonymous. There are advantages to be anonymous. For example, one of my favorite women’s fashion blogs is Corporette. Because the blogger is an attorney at a prestigious Wall Street firm, she chose to remain anonymous for several years. However, as the blog gained notoriety and national recognition, the blogger decided to come public on her true identity.

On the other hand, there are disadvantages to anonymity. Anonymous bloggers don’t reap the same rewards as bloggers who share their real name with the blogosphere. They are not able to build a professional reputation/network or use their blog as leverage for their agribusiness in the same way. Furthermore, if the purpose of your blog is to be an advocate for agriculture, your blog may have a greater sense of reliability to your readership if you take ownership over your posts.

At the end of the day, you need to decide what is the best for you. Using an anonymous handle such as “ColoradoHerefordGirl,” “IowaSteerJock,” or “TypicalRanchhand” does not mean that your posts will always remain anonymous. Anything that you put in writing – whether it be in an email, tweet, Facebook status, or blog – can always come back to you. Don’t put anything on the internet that you may regret later.

How to Choose a Blog Design

By Erica Beck

While the choice of a blog design is ultimately one of personal preference by the blogger, there are a few things to consider when hunting for the perfect background and layout for your new blog.

1. Download free themes or hire a professional?

*You must have your own domain or an upgraded subscription to WordPress or Blogger to upload a theme not already available on Blogger.com or WordPress.com. If you are currently using the free hosting option from either of these web sites, that's fine - some of these tips are still useful for you!

Next to choosing a domain name, this decision is one of the biggest for a blogger. There are a multitude of web sites that offer free WordPress and Blogger themes. Simply type "free WordPress/Blogger themes" into your search engine of choice and prepare to waste hours cruising through themes. Many available themes offer the user the option of customizing the code - everything from swapping in your own header to changing background colors and column numbers.

Hiring a professional will cost you more than "free", but there are advantages. You don't have to tackle the overwhelming world of free themes or try to customize a theme to match the vision you have in your head. Having a professional design your blog will also give you a unique style and layout that can't be accessed by others as a free download.

For most beginning bloggers, the wide array of free themes will be more than adequate. This gives you the opportunity to dabble your toes in blogging without the worry of an overhead cost.

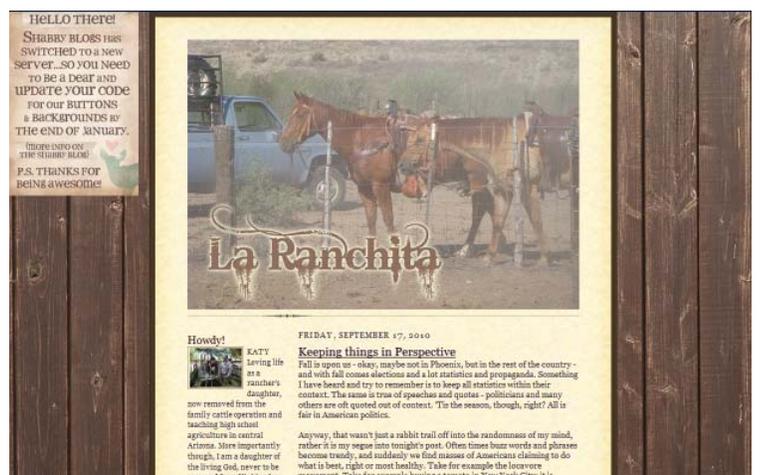
2. What is the purpose of your blog?

When trying to choose a blog design, keeping the blog's purpose in mind can help narrow down the selection. Are you writing personal updates for your family and friends? Or are you interested in utilizing your blog for professional purposes? Blog design is a large portion of the first impression your visitors have of you and your web site. Try to match the purpose of your blog with that first impression!

3. Yikes! What if I don't get it right the first time?

First off, breathe. And secondly, it's okay! While changing out blog designs with your weekly garbage run isn't the best blogging practice, the first blog design you choose doesn't have to be your one and only. In fact, it most likely won't be. As you start blogging and you become more comfortable with it, your ideas and visions of what you'd like to do with your web site will grow and change.

A lot of bloggers begin with a blog hosted free on Blogger/WordPress. They fall in love with blogging, reaching out to their audiences, and having a voice for the beef industry which leads them to purchasing their own domain as well as hosting space on a server (a place for your web site to "live" on the Internet). Taking that first step into starting a blog is the most important, and just have fun making it grow from there.



How to React to Negative Comments on Your Blog

By Erica Beck

There are different views on how to handle negative comments on your blog - everything from deleting them to responding in a like manner to ignoring them. I will argue that the most important thing in handling negative comments on your blog isn't the comments themselves but your content.

Write blog entries that you stand behind 100%. Research your statistics, make sure that you fully agree with articles or products you are reviewing or advocating. Believe in your content so when negative comments happen — and they will if you blog long enough — you can stand tall in your boots knowing you have stuck to your core values.

With that said, negative comments still need to be dealt with, and they can sure cause you to lose a stirrup or two if you haven't thought about how to approach them.

1. Delete negative comments. One of the best practices I have seen is to include a reminder at the bottom of each post for readers to be respectful and professional and those who can't follow that courtesy will have their comments removed. Some bloggers refer to their web site as their “home” and ask readers to treat it as such — a great way of expressing your point.

Comments that offer constructive criticism, while sometimes viewed as negative, can actually be an excellent avenue for opening conversations and discussing issues with people who have different views. Deleting comments that disagree or criticize closes opportunities for these types of interactions.

2. Responding to negative comments. If you don't moderate your comments before they appear on your blog, sometimes inflammatory comments can pop up. If you choose to respond to them, handle your responses with professionalism and courtesy — even if you haven't been shown the same regard. This will always get you farther than responding to these type of comments in a similar manner. Also refer to Tip 1: Deleting these types of comments

shows you won't tolerate disrespect at your online “home”. You can even post a comment to explain why a comment has been removed.

To respond to comments critical in nature, guess what? Approaching them with professionalism and courtesy is also the best practice. You don't have to agree with your readers, and they don't have to agree with you. However, keeping conversations respectful gives you the opportunity to expand upon the topic and deliver more of your ideas while listening to theirs.

3. Ignoring negative comments. It is tempting to shove your head into the sand and pretend like nothing negative has been posted on your blog. Even constructive criticism can be difficult to accept on a post you have put a great deal of hard work into. However, blogging is a conversation that allows you to reach well beyond your physical geographic reach. It is about community, and ignoring comments that disagree with your post makes it difficult for that community to grow. Again, Tip 1 is a good resource for trying to deal with disrespectful comments.

As with most things related to blogging, how you handle negative comments is largely a personal choice. It is likely you will use a combination of practices when it comes to negative comments, and there will always be exceptions to whatever rule you decide to follow. Many bloggers choose to hold their comments for moderation before they appear live on their web site. Closing comments can also be a consideration and may be warranted on specific posts.

The most important thing is to consider how you would like to handle negative comments before you have an issue. When a negative comment does get posted on your blog, you will have a much better idea of how you would like to approach the issue instead of simply reacting.



Is Anyone Reading This?

By Crystal Young

When talking with bloggers many wonder if anyone is reading what they are writing. First, remember that you should be writing for yourself not to please others. However, a little encouragement and feedback at times is nice. The fact is that there are thousands of lurkers on the Internet who are reading but may not be interacting. In fact, only about one percent of blog readers will actually comment on blogs.

So how do we get people to comment?

1. Ask a question for them to answer.
2. Be sure that you are commenting back on their comments and answering questions that have been left.
3. Don't make it hard for them to comment. Lots of people don't have Blogger or Wordpress accounts. Consider allowing anonymous comments. Lot of anonymous commentors will leave their name anyways
4. Make sure they can find your email easily. Some people would prefer to send you a private message.

Also, consider adding Google Analytics to your blog. Google Analytics is a free service that will let you know how many people are visiting your blog, from where and what they are reading. You may be shocked at how many people are reading what you have to say.

There are numerous tutorials to show you how to install Google Analytics into your blog. You may even use this data to determine what post are more popular with your readers or if posting on Facebook is driving additional traffic to your blog.

Bloggers Block

By Chelsea Good

Do you have bloggers block? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Why did you choose to get involved with Agriculture?
- What experiences did you have growing up that shaped who you are today?
- What's the best advice anyone ever gave you?
- If you could meet 1 person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?
- What's your average day look like?
- How does life on your farm or ranch vary by the season?
- Interview someone else in agriculture and feature them on your blog.
- What are you favorite sources of Ag information and why?
- What organizations do you belong to and why?
- What popular advice do you disagree with and why?
- What is the hardest part of being in agriculture?
- What is the most rewarding thing about your job?
- What is your favorite memory of growing up in agriculture?
- When and why did you decide to make a living in agriculture?
- Start a giveaway contest requiring readers to comment with an answer to a question. The prize can be something small.
- Share some of your favorite pictures.
- What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about agriculture?
- Write a part 2 to a popular post.
- Talk about a recent book/movie/TV show etc. that had agriculture implications.
- What do you think are the biggest issues facing agriculture today?
- What do you wish someone had told you when you first started ranching that you had to learn the hard way?
- Invite a guest blogger to do a post for you.
- What's going on in the news today and how does it effect you.
- Share your favorite quote and why it speaks to you.
- Pick a recent article from an agriculture publication to share and tell your audience why you shared it. You can also look at recent articles in agriculture publications to find inspiration to write on a similar topic.
- What's going on in politics today and how does it affect you?
- Share a story about how you connected with someone removed from agriculture and taught him or her about what you do for a living.

NCBA YPC Blog Roll

By Sharon Breiner & Crystal Young

Many YPC members have already answered the call:

- YPC Cattle Call, Official YPC Blog - <http://ypcblog.beefusa.org/>
- Erica Beck, PNW Rancher, <http://www.pnwrancher.com>
- Crystal Cattle, Crystal Young - <http://cdycattle.blogspot.com/>
- Food and Agriculture Law Blog, Cari Rincker - <http://rinckerlaw.com/blog/>
- Food For Thought, Kansas State University Students - <http://bloggingfoodforthought.blogspot.com/>
- Jeralyn Stephens - <http://jeralynstephens.weebly.com/my-blog.html>
- La Ranchita, Katy Groseta - <http://laranchita.blogspot.com/>
- The Angle, Andy Vance - <http://www.andyvance.com/>
- The Beef U Eat, Lance Zimmerman - <http://thebeefueat.blogspot.com/>
- The Sage Brush Chronicles, Jenna Feusner - <http://www.sagebrushchronicles.com/>
- The Optimistic Rancher, Sharon Breiner - <http://www.theoptimisticrancher.blogspot.com/>

Beyond YPC members, many more beef cattle producers have gotten into the act. Check out these blogs for more inspiration:

- A Day in the Life of a Farm Vet - <http://thefarmvet.blogspot.com/>
- Advocates for Agriculture, Troy and Stacy Hadrick - <http://www.advocatesforag.blogspot.com/>
- AgProud - <http://agricultureproud.com/>
- BEEF Daily Blog, Amanda Nolz - http://blog.beefmagazine.com/beef_daily/
- Beef Matters, Kim Brackett - <http://www.beefmatters.com/>
- Beef on a Budget, Amy Brown and Anna-Lisa Giannini - <http://beefonabudget.com/about/>
- Beltway Beef - <http://www.beltwaybeef.com/>
- Buzzard's Beat, Brandi Buzzard - <http://buzzardsbeat.blogspot.com/>
- Common Sense Agriculture, Jeff Fowle - <http://commonsenseagriculture.blogspot.com/>
- Confessions of a Farm Wife - <http://webfamilyfarm.blogspot.com/>
- Cow Art and More - <http://cowartandmore.blogspot.com/>
- Fueled by Beef - <http://fueledbybeef.com/>
- JJB Cattle Company - <http://www.jjbcattlecompany.com/>
- High Country Cattle Services - <http://highcountrycattle.blogspot.com/>
- Kid's Cattle Blog, Illinois Beef Kids - <http://www.kidscattle.blogspot.com/>
- Life on a Kansas Cattle Ranch, Debbie Lyons-Blythe - <http://kansascattleranch.blogspot.com/>
- Maggie Jasper Angus - <http://maggiej Angus.blogspot.com/>
- National Beef Ambassadors - <http://beefambassador.com/>
- R.A. Brown Ranch Blog - <http://rabrownranch.blogspot.com/>
- The Beefman Blogeth, Darren Williams - <http://darenwms.blogspot.com/>
- The Next Generation of Agriculture - <http://thenextgenerationofagriculture.blogspot.com/>
- Til the Cows Come Home - <http://tilthecowscome.blogspot.com/>
- Trio Angus - <http://trioangus.blogspot.com>
- Wag'n Tales - <http://wagfarms.wordpress.com/>

Agriculture Law & Policy Blogs

By Cari Rincker

As a food and agriculture attorney (and blogger), I enjoy following agriculture law and policy blogs via Google Reader to stay up on current news and trends. Here are some of the blogs that I subscribe to:

- Agriculture Law, <http://aglaw.blogspot.com/>
- Beltway Beef, <http://www.beltwaybeef.com/>
- Equine Law Blog, <http://equinelaw.alisonrowe.com/>
- Farm Policy, <http://www.farmpolicy.com/>
- FDA Law Blog, http://www.fdalawblog.net/fda_law_blog_hyman_phelps/,
- Food Law Blog (US), <http://foodlawblog.foodlaw.org/>
- Food Safety News, <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/>
- Greenversations, <http://blog.epa.gov/blog/>
- Ohio Agriculture Law, <http://ohioaglaw.wordpress.com/>
- Tax Girl, <http://www.taxgirl.com/>
- The FOIA Blog, http://thefoiablog.typepad.com/the_foia_blog/
- The LLM in Agriculture and Food Law, <http://aglawllm.blogspot.com/>
- The United States Agriculture and Food Law and Policy Blog, <http://www.agandfoodlaw.com/>
- The Wall Street Journal Law Blog, <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/>
- USDA Blog, <http://blogs.usda.gov/>

Video Blogging

By Cari Rincker & Crystal Young

Don't like to type but own a video camera? There is tremendous potential for video blogging within the cattle industry. Not only does it give the writer a break from the keyboard, but it too allows the readers to really get to know you. Voice, tone and expression are sometime difficult to convey in the written word.

Video blogging might be easier than the think. Most smartphones have video capabilities and video recorders are more affordable than ever before. Tap into your creative side and see what video blogging will do for you. Here are some suggested uses for video blogs:

- Post a video from your family's cattle branding;
- Post a clip giving your calves vaccinations;
- Post a short video highlighting calves for sale;
- Discuss a topic that you are passionate about;
- Post footage of you cooking your favorite beef recipe;
- Have a video introduction to your readers telling them who you are and what you do;
- Publish a clip of your children running around the farm/ranch enjoying life on the countryside; and
- Publish a clip of you giving a set of cattle reasons at the county fair.

The easiest way to post a video, whether it be one you shot or another video you have seen on the Internet is to post it through YouTube. When on YouTube look below the video for the embed button. Click on this and a box with code will appear. Copy this code into your blog post. This will allow the video to play right on your blog.

If the video seems to be cut off by your posting area, go back to YouTube and the embedded code. Change the width to a smaller number and it will readjust the size of the video. Then once again recopy the new code and paste in your YouTube post.

When you are stumped on what you should post grabbing someone else's videos are a great way to keep fresh content on your blog.

YPC Cattle Call

By Cari Rincker

YPC has had its own blog, "Cattle Call," since the Fall of 2009. You can visit the blog here: <http://ypcblog.beefusa.org/>. Perhaps you are not ready to start your own blog but would be interested in contributing to the YPC Cattle Call blog. The blog is continually looking for young cattle producers to serve as regular and guest bloggers. Blog posts can be on any topic relevant to young cattle producers.