



## ALONG THE TRAIL

### *ACA Executive Vice President Billy Powell*

The past two months have been trying times for a lot of Alabamians. Typically when we think of April and May we think of the many joys of spring. The birds fly northward or they settle down to have their families. The

bees and butterflies begin to gather nectar from the first flowers of the season.

It's planting time. Professional baseball begins in April. Spring cleaning starts and people start mowing their yards again.

May is one of the most beautiful months of the year with wildflowers blooming. The first garden begins to sprout in May. The wild flowers are blooming, and the trees and grasses have turned green. Many birds have built their nests, and mother birds are sitting on the eggs, which will soon hatch and the first crop of hay is usually harvested.

But this year May will be remembered as the first steps toward recovery from the horrendous tornados in April. As one who was hard hit at our farm in South Alabama from the Hurricanes in 2004 and 2005 I know the many hours of hard work it takes for clean up and recovery.

Folks are at their best when times are the toughest – that certainly has been the case across the State. You can be extremely proud of your fellow cattlemen for all of the work they provided helping their neighbors who suffered losses during the devastating tornados and providing meals for the first responders. Our thoughts and prayers remain with those who lost loved ones and property during this time.

Immediately after learning of the devastation, your Association began meeting with federal and state officials to determine what assistance might be available, communicating that information to our grassroots and fielding numerous calls from folks needing and offering help.

Although cattle deaths were not extensive, damage to barns, fences and trees was. The poultry and forest industries were hard hit. Many of our cattlemen are very diversified and own poultry and timber as well. Our work in facilitating communications and representing the interest of cattlemen to a wide variety of groups and agencies is what makes ACA a quintessential trade association. We are working for you while you are working at home.

#### **Legislature Works Day and Night**

Another one of our main functions and time consuming jobs is representing your interest in the legislative process. Most of you are well aware that the legislative session this year has seen a major paradigm shift not only in the makeup of the legislature but in the actions taken during this regular session.

Numerous bills have passed on subject matter that had only been talked about in previous legislative sessions. This includes bills addressing ethics reform, immigration, teacher tenure, job creation tax incentives, controlling wasteful spending, state options on health

care, moratorium on landfills just to name a few. In addition the Special Education Trust Fund and General Fund budgets were passed early on and redistricting for Congress and School Boards was approved. Clearly there is a new sheriff in town and several other major issues will pass before this session ends.

The House and Senate has often worked three days a week rather than the typical two with Committee meetings starting early and then going late into the night with the session to break filibusters and pass some of these significant pieces of legislation. Our Farm Animal Care and Wellbeing Coalition has also been successful in keeping several animal activists sponsored bills from passing.

#### **Coliseum Future May Hinge on HB486**

The political process works vastly differently from running your farm or business and is certainly not for everyone. Guess I have been working for you in the political arena for such a longtime that I have a good understanding for the process but it is never easy or simple.

Take the legislation that we have been working on to get the Montgomery City and County involved in the Garrett Coliseum. Sounds straight forward doesn't it? But, there are so many independent parts moving in this political arena that have to be navigated so everyone remains happy and on board and focused on the real mission. We have met with many different players to keep them all working toward the same piece of legislation at least 25 times over the past month and finally have an agreement. Now we must watch to make sure that the cogs stay in place until the bill gets put on the Special Order Calendar in the Senate and voting is done. By the time you read this, hopefully you will know that House Bill 486 as substituted has passed, been signed into law by the Governor and the Coliseum stays open.

#### **The MOOseum continues to teach students**

The MOOseum continues to attract lots of young folks as well as walk-in visitors. Even with the down economy, we continue to have thousands of school children schedule trips from all across the state to tour The MOOseum. This provides us an excellent opportunity to tell the story of cattle production and teach them about the nutritional value of beef.

We were proud that when the City of Montgomery recently put up signs showing directions to some of the City's most popular attractions The MOOseum is one of these featured. Now visitors can simply follow the signs to your Building. In the near future you will hear about plans to raise money to update The MOOseum and attract more schools to make the trek here.

#### **Volunteer Leadership Key for ACA's Future**

We are excited about the Young Cattlemen's Leadership Workshop to be held in our building June 3 and 4th. Thirty-five 20-40 year olds will be in town to develop leadership skills and learn how to become effective advocates for their beef cattle industry. Darren Williams, Executive Director of Communications, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, will be here to help develop these future county and state cattle industry leaders.