

TALL XVII Session II - Lubbock/Amarillo - October 19-23, 2020

Big John Leifester #14

What a wonderful week spent in the South and High Plains. There was a bit of a nip in the air which is much welcomed by this South Texas man. One of the neatest things I find this program brings to its participants is the ability to see much of Texas through our travels to and from each session. After session one, I was awed at the lessons learned and the people we met. Session Two did not disappoint. I learned so much from this session, but I aim to describe about the people we interacted with from the session. In business, I have always said, the people make the industry, and it is the same in the industries we visited.

I had no idea what to expect going into the South Plains. Coming from the Green Industry, I feel I have a good feel of the demographics that it represents. The South Plains brought out some heavy hitters in their respective industry. Dan and Linda Taylor were our first hosts, and boy did they throw us a heck of a welcome. They are very down to earth, the backbone of what I would consider the row crop industry. Dan and Linda welcomed us to their home with open arms and we left there with a full belly, many laughs had, and I left with a feeling like I had known the Taylor's my whole life. You see, this is what makes this industry so amazing. They are willing to sit and share some of their talent and treasures to further the message of what cotton farmers do on a daily basis. Salt of the Earth people with a passion to preach the good word of farming. They shared the highs and lows and everything in between. You can tell Dan loves what he does, and he passes that love on to the people he visits. Linda is right there with him, quietly listening and beaming with pride as Dan preaches the Cotton Gospel. A man with his own personal cotton industry museum of implements, tractors, and machinery, Dan spares no expense in telling his story. Dan was an Agriculture Teacher right out of college, but his true calling came 10 years down the road when he jumped full time into the cotton industry and farming. It was amazing to sit and listen to him talk about where he had come from many years prior. Dan introduced us to the Johnson's, whose son Brennan, is part of our current cohort. The Johnson's are a family of wonderful people who also farm the South Plains. Through them sharing their story, I was able to understand more of the issues these farmers face daily. Through all the hiccups or

bumps in the road, they love what they do, and it shows. I came to Lubbock with an open mind, to listen and understand why they do what they do. Long hours and many days, it still doesn't put a damper on the spirit of these wonderful people.

We fellowshiped with Jodey Arrington, the United States Representative for the area. Jodey spoke of the plights of the farmers and why he fights for their rights on Capitol Hill.

We met with Burt and Shelley Heinrich, who farm irrigated and non-irrigated cotton. Burt's passion for innovation is what stood out to me. Burt has tried to conserve the biggest natural resource we have, water, to help make more with less. Burt has turned to drip irrigation for his fields that have wells, and that has helped him do more with less in dry times. His resolve is unwavering to produce a good crop in the most trying times. The heart of these people who farm should be recognized for their efforts. It truly taught me that it's what people do when times are tough that build character and great people.

We traveled slightly northwest of Lubbock to learn about the dairy industry. We were fortunate to tour Continental Dairy Facilities Southwest Milk Plant. The people working here take pride in producing quality grade butter and milk powder from the local dairymen they receive milk from.

We traveled a little further northwest to Muleshoe where we met with a third-generation family owned seed company. The Bamert's have been producing high quality native seeds for many years and their passion for what they do shows. Now, the grandsons are taking their turn running the family business and they are staying ahead of the curve and modernizing their family business. The younger generation has sought to find more efficient ways to produce their product by modernizing equipment and staying on the cutting edge of the seed market with their blends of field-tested seed. Much like the South Plains, the love of their industry fuels this passion the Bamert's bring to work every single day. Much like what we saw in Lubbock, water is a valued resource here and local water conservation boards work tirelessly to ensure that the resource will be around for generations to come.

We loaded up and headed a little north to Earth, Texas to tour Caprock Dairy. Much like the businesses we visited before, the family run dairy is on its second generation at the

helm. Let me tell you, these people love what they do, and it shows in how their dairy is run. Mike Lawrence, his sister, and brother-in-law showed us all the steps necessary to make a large dairy run. The care shown to these animals was second to none. The cows live high on the hog so to speak and they milk about 10,200 cows producing about 93,750 gallons of milk per day. The dairy workers are fast and efficient in milking these cattle and the upmost care is taken to make sure these animals are comfortable and able to produce milk. The milk is immediately chilled to 34 degrees and ready for pickup by transport trucks to be processed. The milk is made into Fairlife milk products which is shelf stable for 2 years. Mike truly cares for his industry and I hope I am doing them justice in telling their story. They do an exceptional job and the passion they have for this industry shows with every step they take.

Leaving Caprock, we headed northwest over to Friona to tour Burch Family Vineyards. Farming is in their blood and it appears risk taking is too; the family set off on an adventure to produce high quality grapes to be made into wine. A husband and wife team, the Burch's walked us through the time and effort it took for them and their family, as is common in most of the cases we've seen, to take on the task of cultivating their farm to produce their crops. Long hours and many days have been a staple of life on the vineyard and it is paying off in dividends.

After loading up into our vehicles, we began the push north to Hereford where we stopped to visit with Caviness Beef Packers. It was a fun filled welcome and I really enjoyed our tour guide. She gave us a no-nonsense introduction to a beef packing facility. The care the animals are given during transport and staging, to the humane way they are processed, the Caviness team does it right. They are a great group of people who produce fresh beef products for all to enjoy.

After a group photo out front of their operation, we traveled further into Hereford to enjoy a wonderful dinner and to hear from Scott Seed company. Scott Seed Company is another multi-generational company who produces quality crop seed for the sorghum industry. These guys really love what they do, and it shows. They really know the sorghum industry and stay ahead of the curve when it comes to research and development. They have test plats to better determine what grows best in all areas of the world. Their attention to

detail in their scientific approach, means cultivating sorghum year-round with their farm in Amarillo and near the equator in Central America.

We made our way back to Hereford to take a tour of Mc6 Cattle feeders. This place was amazing to see. There are 58,000 head of cattle being cared for at a time to produce over 200,000 head annually to the supply chain for Wal-Mart stores across the Southeast United States. There is a lot that goes into sourcing and verifying good stock for the supply chain and they do a great job. A common theme I see is the need to evolve and upgrade for efficiency and Mc6 is in the process of doing just that. Their custom feed production unit currently under construction will allow Mc6 to be more efficient and productive in their feed operations. I still don't know why everyone says feed lots smell, it didn't smell much like anything and the people there are hardworking and knowledgeable about their industry.

We departed Mc6 and made our way to Canyon to tour Timber Creek Vet Clinic. Through this whole process, we get to ride with our fellow cohorts to each destination. This trip I had the privilege to ride with Chaz Rutledge and Andrew Polk. We get to see each other during the program, but we can take for granted what each of us has left behind for week to make this possible. These guys are good people. Hard working and each of us has a story to tell in the way we work hard for our industry.

We arrived at Timber Creek to be greeted by Dr. Gregg Veneklasen. Dr. Veneklasen is world renowned in his field. You may have guessed, like many in this narrative, he too is passionate about his work. He was the first to clone the most endangered horse in the world, a Przewalski. He is doing amazing work with the bucking stock of the PRCA, working to clone some of the greatest bucking horses and to help further the industry for years to come. My jaw dropped when he walked us to two horses. Standing in pens next to each other, Dr. Veneklasen said, "these two horses are the exact same horse!" He went on to explain that the two horses are genetically identical of one another. My mind was blown. Peoples passion can be harnessed and cultivated much like land, to produce such amazing scientific advancements and I was fortunate enough to experience that at Timber Creek Vet Clinic.

We traveled into Amarillo to tour Snack Pak 4 Kids. You talk about a heart wrenching predicament in our country. Kids not having food to eat when they are out of school. Dyron and his folks at SP4K have been able to not only identify the need but put into motion a plan to solve that need. Through their hard work, they have brought together a program to help reach these children not only in Amarillo but all over Texas. They have even helped train volunteers from all over the country to implement a similar program to SP4K in their own communities. The love this team has put into their concept will continue to make an impact on kids for years to come.

We loaded up and head south for our final stop on for this session. We were hosted by West Texas A&M University and their College of Agriculture Sciences. This is a wonderful program dedicated to reaching the backbone of future, the kids in West Texas. They have a program that works to increase the veterinarians for rural Texas. Their VERO program, as they call it, is a game changer for the ag industry, and they should be highly applauded for their hard work. We also met Dr. Ty Lawrence who is the Director and a Professor for the University Meat Laboratory at West Texas A&M. Dr. Lawrence and his team have worked hard to create a world class Meat Sciences program deep in the heart of the Cattle Capital of the World. This program teaches students a hands-on approach to meat sciences starting on the kill floor and working them all the way through the steps to the final stop, the retail market. These students will benefit from first hand knowledge of each step and process, and they make a tasty beef stick as well, which I benefitted from on the drive back to San Antonio.

Session Two, did not disappoint. It in fact, went above and beyond anything I could have imagined for this tour of the South Plains and High Plains. The people we met are not much different than the farmers, and producers, I have in my region. They are kind, hardworking, and above all, selfless. The world is a better place because of people like the ones we had the pleasure to stand with on their land. I drove away with so much more than I can ever repay to these people. They shared their time, talent, and treasures with our group and for that, I am truly blessed.

It was with pure excitement to welcome my current TALL Cohorts to the panhandle and south plains of Texas, my home ground, for the second session. We began with quite literally my backyard at Dan and Linda Taylor's for a social and dinner. We were fortunate to be joined by DeLinda Hicklen and her husband Thomas, as well as Congressman Jodey Arrington who spoke to us about what ag means to not only the United States today, but how important it has been forever as it has a place in our constitution. Mr. Taylor has always meant a lot to not only me, but my family as well. My dad and I have the privilege to farm some of Dan's land and he was an instrumental part of my dad's childhood and professional life. Dan shared a video we made three years ago when stripping the cotton at his home farm. It was a great start to a great week.

The next morning, we made our way south to a small community called Lakeview where New Home Co-op Gin calls home. David Weid was generous enough on an extremely foggy morning, to meet with us and give us an in-depth tour of the gin. Even while being extremely precautious and protective with his employees from COVID-19, we all masked up and saw how the cotton on the high plains was processed from module to bale. David, another man that has been apart of my life for a long time also gave me the opportunity to be an associate board member for a year to learn and see what its like to be on a great board at a Co-op gin. That experience alone was a large reason I found TALL so important and a reason I wanted to be a part of it.

Following down FM 211 and up north to west Lubbock, we made a spot in the middle of Bert and Shelley Heinrich's cotton farm. Bert spoke about the family farm and what it is like to grow cotton on the South Plains. The farm we were at was 107 acres of drip where he had around 3.5 gallons of water per acre. That is really good water for this area especially with the number of wells that he said he had. He was detailed in his explanation of drip tape and the application of water that he can make in a weeks' time. Interestingly enough, and something to continue to learn, is the age of the tape at this farm. Bert mentioned he installed this field in 1998 and it is still working extremely well with proper maintenance and carefully managing what he will or will

not put through it. Shelley, who works for The Cotton Board spoke about the “fiber of our lives” and some of the work she does and their kids and family. Eric Best, an Agronomist with Bayer Crop Science and Deltapine, met us on the turn row and spoke with us about his work with cotton. Eric explains his work to find what cotton works but more importantly what does NOT work. Best also went through some of the details with the Bayer, Monsanto, and BASF trades and buy outs. Eric spoke to some interesting facts about cotton. For instance, on irrigated cotton 70 percent of that cotton will only meet one-third of the crops need of water. It was a great visit and one that I thoroughly enjoyed.

To finish up the cotton heavy morning, we made our way to Farmers Cooperative Compress. CEO, Eric Wanjura and VP Mike Nettles, visited with us about the work they do for the cotton industry in the panhandle. FCC has 6 location with 235 warehouses and can store 3 million bales. Some interesting facts I found was about a 5-year bale life average before it starts to deteriorate.

We then made our way to the newly named FiberMax Center for Discovery, previously known as Bayer Agriculture Museum. With the buyout and such previously covered by Eric Best, the museum was one more thing that changed names with the larger industry changes. Texas Tech University College of Ag Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) Dean Dr. Brown met with us during lunch and went over all the exciting changes and growth of the ag school. TTU saw a record number of students in the ag school with 2,400 undergraduates and 400 grad students. He also then touched a bit about the MILE program (Matador Institute of Leadership Engagement). A perfect lead into Lindsey Kennedy’s talk. Lindsey is the MILE program director. This program is mirrored by the TALL program but for undergrads at TTU. MILE is a 3-semester program with trips across the state of Texas and to D.C. Lindsey also spoke a bit about the Peanut Board and that industry. Following her was Tim Lust, the CEO of the National Sorghum Producers. Being a local ag producer, I found Tim’s talk very interesting. There is a lot of hope both domestically with ethanol production and internationally with Chinese alcohol sorghum is showing some promise. The south plains desperately need a viable crop rotation on our acres, and everyone is rooting for a strong sorghum market. Angie Martin spoke about what corn is doing and working on and Mary Jane Buerkle talked to us about PCG. We then finished our day

at the museum with a tour and plans for more interactive areas for children in the future. Once we arrived back at the Cotton Court Hotel, we had a brief social hour before departing with our dinner hosts for that night, one thing that every single cohort looks forward to.

Being engulfed in agriculture on the south plains I found day two of session II just as interesting as day one. We began the day in Littlefield, TX at Continental Dairy Facilities. This plant owned by Select Milk Producers and the greater southwest agency, produces dry powdered milk and in June began producing butter for retail. John Van de Pol, a local dairy farmer that sends his milk to the plant helped facilitate the tour and answered questions about the farm side of the plant. We talked about the impact of COVID and the dumping of milk we all saw, and some of the results and accomplishments the industry has found since. Jeff Galbraith mentioned that the plant can take more than 80 loads per day and produce 14,000 lbs of powder an hour. Jeff also spoke about how innovative and how sustainable the plant is. They can capture and reuse the heat off the dryer and use the wastewater from the milk to water 2,500 acres of nearby crops.

One type of ag that I am not as familiar with is the native grass industry. Bamert Seeds did a great job of introducing me to the way they make sure our native pastures and CRP fields survive. From the way the plant, harvest and clean the seeds to the needs and sales that is out there for grass seed. Bamert grows cultivars, cleans seed, and creates blends for any and every growing scenario. One thing I found very interesting is when selecting different varieties for a blend, root depth is extremely important to drought tolerance due to less competition at the root zones.

We chased dirt roads for a couple miles to Caprock Dairy for a quick farm tour. The Lawrence family is truly a family farm that is very large. Between father and son (David and Michael) and the son-in-law, Cody, all have day to day on the dairy or growing the feed. Those same dirt roads led us after that to the Burch Family Vineyards for a quick wine tasting and crash course of what the challenges and advantages there are to growing wine grapes in the panhandle of Texas.

One of my most anticipated tours was a beef packing plant and that was up next on the agenda as we arrived at Caviness Beef Packers. Trevor Caviness was gracious enough to walk us

around a small part of the plant and some of the details that happen there. He then visited with us for 30 minutes in the classroom area about the COVID issues they faced and the industry issues past, present and possibly into the future. 50% of the beef cattle killed at the plant are dairy animals which pose a larger number of animals that they condemn due to health issues. Caviness produces 800,000 lbs of edible products per day.

Scott Seed was a great place to end the day with a bit of a happy hour that was very well received being on the road all day. While there Cassie Schulte with Sweet Brand got us kicked off with an overview of their products. Cassie went over the heart-warming story of the “Hi Macey” logo on the side of many of the trucks we see going up and down the highways in the panhandle. Rick Auckerman, county agent for Deaf Smith County, then briefly gave us some interesting stats about his county and the ag industry there. Lastly, our host talked to us about Scott Seed and their sorghum hybrids and wheat seeds. They are specifically excited about a waxy sorghum hybrid that is hoped to be used for Baijiu in China.

Mc 6 Cattle Feeders welcomed us on the final full day of session II. Warren White did a great job talking about Mc 6’s partnership with 44 Farms and Walmart’s partnership. Walmart approached them three and a half years ago and really wanted to focus in on genetics, so 44 Farms was the first to be chosen for this new endeavor. 44 Farms has around 2,000 bulls and is the number four angus seedstock breeder in the world. With this partnership formed it was named prime pursuit and is 100% hormone free angus bred cattle. This program makes the cattle ranchers around the country use RFID tags to track each and every individual from baby calves to slaughter. Up to \$50 premiums are offered on calves and upwards of \$100 a head on yearlings that fit the criteria of the program. As of today, 20% of harvested animals in this program are from 44 Farms genetics. Hank McWhorter walked my group around to a pen and showed us the construction of the new commodity area.

Following that visit with traveled to Canyon to Timber Creek Veterinarian Clinic. Dr. Gregg Veneklasen began by giving us an overview of his history and work in the area. He obviously has a passion for veterinarian science and the kids that want to be apart of it. Dr. Veneklasen talked some about his work with West Texas A&M meat science in the cloning of the beef cattle to make

superior grading carcasses. After that was when my mind was truly opened to the world of cloning and gene editing. Right off the bat, Dr. Gregg showed us a 2-month-old Przewalski horse native to Mongolia.

“Horses are an important part of Mongolian culture. However, Przewalski's horses have not been seen in the wild since 1968. Excessive hunting by people and the loss of grazing and watering sites to domestic animals like cattle and sheep lowered the horses' numbers dramatically. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several wild Przewalski's horses were caught and bred in captivity. Thirteen of those horses are the original ancestors of today's captive population. Today there are about 1,200 Przewalski's horses living in zoos, private preserves, and protected areas in Mongolia. Small groups are gradually being reintroduced into the wild to once again roam the grasslands of Mongolia.” - <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/przewalskis-horse/>.

The Przewalski horse we were able to see was the first ever cloned horse of his kind. The San Diego Zoo contacted Dr. Veneklasen to try this experiment to have him at the zoo. We then walked around the property and saw several powerful and famous bucking horses and cutting horses and learned much more about the possibilities of cloning. He also shared a great new experiment with feral hogs and how he can gene edit them to have orange noses to identify them but they would only produce males that would be sterile, unfortunately he shared the FDA did not and may never allow him to do it.

As we closed in on lunch, we made our way to downtown Amarillo to the Snack Pak 4 Kids warehouse and offices. Tim Peart President of Micro Technologies sponsored our lunch and gave an overview of the business while we ate. Micro is a tech company that has a distribution side. Mr. Peart referred to that a few times being that is what they hang their hat on, services. They do not start with price when talking with a customer but what that individual or company needs and goes from there. Dryon Howell founder and Director of SP4K then spoke about his passion and drive of making sure that hungry kids are taken care of. This program impacts 12,000 kids. An interesting fact is that one third of a kid's week, whom is food insecure, the next meal is not certain. Dyron and his wife in their home kitchen began this program of providing snacks to kids

to take home for the weekend when school meals are not available. Working closely with SP4K and helping to get it off the ground is Cactus Cares. Wayne Craig was invited to visit with us about that partnership and work. Cactus Cares was started two years ago under the Cactus Feeders business. They offer scholarships and education to employees and their kids, they work in the towns they live in to renew and improve them, and work with meat labs to relieve hunger. Once again, we returned to the hotel in Amarillo to have a happy hour and depart with our dinner hosts.

As the last morning arrived, we found our way headed south to WTAMU campus and new ag campus. Dr. Lance Kieth talked about the ag school and their growth with 990 students enrolled. WT is truly a small school with the largest of opportunities that other schools can offer. VERO, a new opportunity for undergrads is the most recent and impactful example to provide with 18 students currently enrolled. Joe Locke talked about Seaboard the number one pork producer in America, with 340,000 sows and 15,500 litters a week. They provide pork to Prairie Fresh Brand in a 50/50 partnership with Triumph Foods. Rodney Mosier shared some information about Texas Wheat followed by Ben Weinheimer with Texas Cattle Feeders Association who just celebrated their 50th anniversary. Their members have a 16-Billion-dollar economic impact with 15% of beef exported. Lastly, we ended the trip with a tour of the meat lab and saw the students slaughtering hogs and even had the ability to buy some beef from their store. Unfortunately, that was followed with trying 9 samples of “fake meat”. I can say with confidence that I am confident in my beef producers and their product. It was a unique experience to try the food created in a lab to see what a limited number of consumers are looking for.

In conclusion, it was again, a tremendous opportunity to be apart of the TALL program and the cohorts and alumni involved. I am hopeful for a full agenda with Austin and DC quickly approaching with COVID not seeming to have an end in sight, but I know with what ever the outcome this program with our current cohorts will make the best of any scenario.

TALL Cohort XVII - Session 2, Lubbock/Amarillo
“Production, Producers, Progress” October 2020
Blair Krebs, 13

The second session of the TALL Cohort XVII was held in October 2020 in the Lubbock and Amarillo areas, focusing on “Production, Producers, and Progress.” Thank you to all of the organizers, sponsors, presenters, and hosts who made the event an educational and memorable experience.

The 5-day session started with an evening social and dinner at Dan and Linda Taylor’s. Through presentations and the Taylor’s personal museum we learned about cotton production and gins, not only in the area, but worldwide. Mr. Taylor started from the beginning about Eli Whitney’s development of the cotton gin, which increased cotton production heavily. Mr. Taylor also shared his small-scale machine to demonstrate the cotton gin process. Special guest Congressman Jodey Arrington also joined the event and spoke about the importance of agriculture, highlighting the fact that agriculture is a part of the preamble of the Constitution.

The following morning, we visited the New Home Co-Op Cotton Gin. Here we saw the process and machinery involved in processing cotton. The manager of the gin, David Wied, lead the tour and noted this gin had been around since 1930 and has about 300 active members. With the help of local TALL alumni, I learned about the grades and standards involved with cotton that is checked by the USDA. I also had questions answered about the differences in cotton production across the state and different harvesting methods.

We then moved to Heinrich Farms to see cotton production with Bert and Shelley Heinrich. They spoke about cotton production, irrigation, and the struggle of growing crops in the environment near Lubbock. They noted that for cotton farmers, having “effective” methods of growing is ideal, instead of other methods closely associated buzz words. Eric Best from Monsanto spoke about cotton as well. He noted that water is the most valuable resource in the area and cotton is one of the most efficient crops for water usage.

We traveled to the Farmers Cooperative Compress to visit with several representatives. They noted that they can store 3 million bales of cotton at one time and 42

gins deliver to their facility. Most of the cotton gets exported and they discussed the different ports for each destination. In the end they noted, “all we have to give is service to the industry.”

The group departed for the FiberMax Center for Discovery to enjoy lunch, presentations, and a tour. The presentations started with a welcome from Dean of the Texas Tech University College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR). Tim Lust, CEO of the National Sorghum Producers and Legislative Issues, then gave a presentation on his organization. He focused on international trade issues and legislative affairs, which were especially relevant with current trade and government issues. He also presented on the incredible growth sorghum is seeing and the foreign markets that are utilizing the product. Lindsay Kennedy from the Texas Tech University MILE Program then addressed the cohort about the MILE Program which is similar to the TALL program for college students at Texas. She also gave a brief update about the Texas Peanut Producers, because their representatives were not able to join the event. The Texas Corn Producers were next up on the docket with Angie Martin presenting. The group represents the state check off program for corn, and she further explained the structure of the organizations in the state of Texas. I found this presentation especially interesting as it helps me relate it to my industry. She also spoke about the uses for corn and development of further products. The final presentation was from the Plains Cotton Growers group, given by Mary Jane Buerkle. She gave us great updates about what the group is doing and how much cotton production they represent. The event ended with a tour of the newly renamed FiberMax Center for Discovery. The center did a great job of educating and highlighting different aspects of agricultural and rural life. I even hope to work with the center to use a pecan harvest video, instead of a walnut feature, in one of their displays.

We finished the evening by enjoying dinner with our Lubbock dinner hosts. I enjoyed the company of Tim Lust and his wife Lea Ann, who is a TALL Alumnus. We were joined by several other hosts as well as their TALL participants.

The following day we started with a plant tour of the Continental Dairy Facilities. The impressive and modern facility built in 2019. They make milk powder and butter that mostly goes to export markets and produce product for several brand names.

The next tour stop was Bamert Seed, which was started in 1957 as a reaction to the opportunity the US Soil Bank Program afforded. They have 400 species or varieties of grasses and still harvest native seeds. Of their products, 90% is grown in Muleshoe, but they will contract other materials out if it cannot be grown there.

We traveled to Caprock Dairy, a family farm that started in East Texas, but later moved to the current location. They milk 10,000 cows a day but have around 20,000 animals. They spoke about the advancements in the industry and about the current situation and struggles with COVID, stating they had to dump milk. Overall, they said the dairy industry can be a struggle because of volatile inputs and output prices.

Burch Family Vineyards was up next. I was looking forward to this stop, not necessary because of the tasty wine, though that was an extra perk, but because it was a fellow specialty crop and product. Keith and Brenna started their vineyard with 7 acres instead of a smaller amount because they were told that you “had to have skin in the game” to not quit. The running of a vineyard takes a lot of labor with hand trimming and they struggle getting affordable labor since they are the only vineyard in their area.

Next, we visited Caviness Beef Packers, which was not going to be my favorite experience given the amount of blood, but it was an education in the process of how we get our beef. The representatives noted that they are congested right now because of everything going on, including COVID and the market. They usually process around 2,000 animals per day and can process the animal in 45 minutes. Caviness sells all over the world, 15% exported, and diversifies their products, including a number of custom products for different businesses.

Food safety is a high priority; they have a lot of costs associated with that. What was especially impressive is their ability to produce almost no waste and use every product efficiently.

The final stop of the day was at Scott Seed for dinner and programming. Scott Seed is starting the celebration of their 75th anniversary. They grow seed locally and in Costa Rica for a longer growing season. They also noted that sorghum is becoming more popular when there is not water available for corn. TALL Alumnus Cassie Schulte also gave a presentation about Sweet Bran, a feed for dairy cattle that shows it increased milk yield and reduces input costs. Deaf Smith County Extension agent Rick Auckerman also made a short presentation about agriculture and the history of the county.

The following day we started our day with the focus being on cattle. This visit was to Mc6 Cattle Feeders, a cattle feed yard that produces about 200,000 cattle a year for the Wal-Mart beef program. They have very specific parameters and work with specific genetic lines to get the traits Wal-Mart requests. They noted that the hardest part is planning for a 12-month supply of beef.

The second visit of the day was to the Timbercreek Vet Clinic. Dr. Gregg Veneklasen, who started the clinic in 1989, lead the tour and discussion. He spoke of the new veterinary program at West Texas A&M to get student hands on experience, particularly in the large animal clinic. However, most of the tour focused on the cloning work they do in horses. Our group was lucky in our timing, as we got to see the first cloned Przewalski's horse. The foal is still young and headed for the San Diego Zoo.

We moved to the Snack Pak 4 Kids facility for lunch, a tour, and further programming. Tim Peart with Mico Technologies started the program to tell us a little about their company. Their products mix nutrients into food for feed yards, dairies, stockers, and cow/calf operations. The technology looks to make the food more efficient. Dyron Howell with Snack Pak 4 Kids then presented information about their program, helping kids with hunger issues, and connecting agriculture to the process. He spoke about how the program has been duplicated and can be further replicated in our communities. The final presentation was from Wayne Craig with the Cactus Cares program. It was a process to formalize their company's non-profit efforts and feeding those in need. They use "non-profit goals with a for profit mindset."

The group was then separated with the dinner hosts. John, another TALL participant, and I were paired with Dr. Danny Nusser. He is the Regional Program Leader for Texas A&M AgriLife. We enjoyed a good Mexican food dinner with great conversations about each other programs, as well as agriculture and its future.

Friday morning, we joined at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas for the final program. We were welcomed by Dr. Lance Kieth, the Department Head of Ag Sciences. He described the growth of the department, seeing its highest enrollment this fall. The region is a big agriculture region with \$5.8 million in agriculture receipts, and because of that they recruit locally and have a hands-on approach to learning. Joe Locke from Seaboard Foods then gave a presentation on their operations within the pork industry and what they do to maintain the care of their animals. The Texas What Producers Association was up next with Rodney Mosier speaking about their organizations and how they are working to help the industry. Ben Weinheimer then presented for the Texas Cattle Feeders Association and how they work to maintain quality supplies of beef to the United States and abroad. His interactive session and materials allowed us insight into an industry that has recently had a lot of national spotlight attention on it due to COVID. The final presentation involved a tour of the West TAMU University Meat Laboratory and an exercise in tasting alternative protein products. Dr. Ty Lawrence, the Director of the program, lead all activities. Through the laboratory, students are learning and involved in every stage of meat processing, from the slaughter to their ultra- modern smokehouse system. The public is also invited to witness the process, to create a better understanding of the system to the general population.

After the completion of the West Texas A&M University presentations the cohort departed with lunch, many souvenirs, and a lot of information. One more session of education completed and on to the next in 2021.