



**CATTLE FEEDERS  
HALL OF FAME**

## News Release

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### **Two Industry Pioneers Inducted Into Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame**

*Kenneth "Kenny" Monfort and H.C. "Ladd" Hitch, Jr. leave legacies as cattlemen, visionaries and entrepreneurs*

Kansas City, Mo. (July 23, 2010) — Two accomplished leaders and visionaries in the cattle feeding business became the second class of inductees into the Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame. The late Kenneth "Kenny" Monfort and H.C. "Ladd" Hitch, Jr. were honored during a special Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame banquet held July 8 in Denver, Colo.

Monfort and Hitch each placed a unique and impressionable fingerprint on the cattle industry. Monfort, who passed away in 2001 at age 71, is credited with relocating harvesting facilities from city-based stockyards to cattle-feeding country, and inventing boxed beef to sell to foodservice and retail professionals. Hitch, who passed away in 1996 at age 78, embodied the spirit of an entrepreneur, adding several new divisions to the legendary Hitch family business, including the first large-scale commercial feedyard in the southwest.

"The ingenuity and forward-thinking of Monfort and Hitch left the cattle-feeding industry forever changed, and we are privileged to recognize their lifetime of achievements through the Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame" says Jim Miles, Senior Marketing Manager for Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health and Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame development team member. "Both men came from respectable and hard-working ranch families, which may have made it easy to simply toe the line; however they challenged the norm and trail blazed a path that has led our industry to where it is today. Some of the ideas Monfort and Hitch put into practice are still visible throughout the food chain, and we truly are beneficiaries of their extraordinary efforts."

Monfort and Hitch were selected by a nominating committee, along with three other distinguished cattle feeders, and were then voted on by members of the cattle-feeding industry.

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## Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame Inductees/Add One

### **Kenneth “Kenny” Monfort**

Kenny Monfort, born November 22, 1928 in Greeley, Colo., was the son of Warren Monfort, who, along with William D. Farr, pioneered the development of feedlots that made well-fed cattle available to packers year-round instead of only in the fall when traditionally the cattle were rounded up.

Like father like son, Monfort developed a passion and business-minded approach to the cattle-feeding business early in his life. At the age of 11, he made a tenfold profit when he showed the Grand Champion Hereford Steer at the 1941 National Western Stock Show. By 1951, Monfort had received a degree in agriculture from Colorado State University and was back full-time to the family business, which had grown to a capacity of 8,000 head. Under his leadership, Monfort then expanded the business to a 32,000 head capacity feedyard, making it one of the largest in the United States. By 1968, Monfort operated the largest feedyard in the world with 100,000 head of cattle.

Before it became a popular catchphrase, Monfort understood the meaning of “gate to plate,” and put it into practice when, in 1960, he purchased a finishing facility in Greeley, Colo., to be closer to ranchers and feedlots. Five years later, the Monforts added a fabrication process to the plant. The decision enabled Monfort Beef to cut carcasses at the plant and ship boxed beef to restaurants and grocery stores. Moving harvesting facilities to the source of cattle and cutting and boxing beef before it was shipped significantly cut meat production costs and was soon adopted as an industry standard. The invention of boxed beef also improved meat quality and increased food safety for consumers.

In 1969, Monfort Beef processed more than 645,000 lambs and 330,000 cattle. The company also acquired its first major distributor, Mapelli Brothers Food Distribution Co., and started a transportation operation, completing Monfort’s control of the entire meat production process.

In 1970, he was named the Chief Executive Officer of Monfort Beef, and the company sourced \$16 million in stock offerings, making it publicly owned for the first time. It was renamed Monfort of Colorado, Inc.

As CEO, Monfort built a second 100,000-head feedlot near Gilcrest, Colo., expanded the Greeley harvesting facility, and added a new line of consumer portion food products to the established boxed beef business. Under his guidance, Monfort of Colorado, Inc. became a Fortune 500 company and was sold in May 1987 to ConAgra Foods, Inc. After the sale, ConAgra formed ConAgra Red Meat Companies, which Kenny oversaw until he retired in 1989.

## Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame Inductees/Add Two

In addition to being a beef industry icon, Monfort also was a generous philanthropist and member of his community. He was named the Citizen of the West in 1991 by the National Western Stock Show for his efforts.

“[Kenny’s] heritage lives on in the industry he molded, the family foundation he helped endow, the four children he adored, the thousands who had a job as a result of his work, the scores who were inspired by being associated with him,” says his longtime friend and colleague Senator Hank Brown in a foreword from the book called “Kenny’s Shoes.”

### **H.C. “Ladd” Hitch, Jr**

In 1884, James Hitch drove a herd of longhorns from Kansas to the Panhandle region, where here, ranchers lived and played by their own rules. Little did he know that his grandson would live by his own rules as well and grow the Hitch family business into one of the largest and most successful cattle businesses in the high plains.

Ladd Hitch was born April 5, 1918 in Guymon, Okla. He quickly jumped into the cattle business, working alongside his family. He furthered his education by receiving a bachelor’s degree in agriculture in 1939 from Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University). After 10-months of service in the Navy during World War II, Hitch returned to the ranch, where he would lay the foundation for his family’s cattle business that lives on today.

In his first bold move, Hitch insisted in experimenting with new approaches to cut costs and make the business more efficient. He was the primary force behind the Hitch family’s decision to introduce center-pivot irrigation systems to the Oklahoma Panhandle, where they drilled a number of wells in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Hitch also opened one of the area’s first large-scale cattle-feeding operations in 1953 at the ranch headquarters near Guymon, which is still operating today with a 52,000-head capacity. He later opened two additional feedyards northeast of Guymon and southwest of Garden City, Kan. Combined, the three feedyards have a present-day capacity of almost 160,000-head of cattle and feed more than 350,000 cattle per year.

Hitch also pioneered the use of feeding cattle high-moisture corn, which allowed him to cut feed costs by purchasing corn from local farmers instead of a grain elevator. He stored the corn in large silo pits at the feedyard, which are still used by the operation today.

## Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame Inductees/Add Three

Hitch dedicated a lifetime of service to the cattle industry right to the very end when he passed away July 29, 1996, during the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association annual meeting in Oklahoma City. His entrepreneur spirit lives on in his grandsons, the fifth-generation of Hitch cattlemen, who continue to own and operate Hitch Enterprises, Inc.

"Under my grandfather's direction, Hitch Enterprises experienced planned and sustainable growth," says Chris Hitch, co-owner (with his brother Jason) of Hitch Enterprises, Inc. "Most importantly, he shaped our business — and the cattle-feeding industry as a whole — through his forward-thinking and courage to break traditional practices."

As the newest inductees into the Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame, Hitch and Monfort join a distinguished class of inductees that include the Paul F. Engler and the late William D. "W.D." Farr.

### **About the Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame**

The Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame was established to honor the exceptional, visionary men and women who have made lasting contributions to the cattle-feeding industry.

The nominating committee is comprised of five industry leaders: Betty Jo Gigot, editor and publisher of *CALF News*; Richard McDonald, former CEO of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association; Dr. Del Miles, veterinarian and industry consultant; Terry Stokes, former CEO of the National Cattleman's Beef Association; and Topper Thorpe, former CEO of Cattle-Fax.

For more information about the inductees or the Cattle Feeders Hall of Fame, visit [www.cattlefeeders.org](http://www.cattlefeeders.org).

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