

## WHAT I LOVE ABOUT AMERICA

*Gary Bates, Director  
UT Beef and Forage Center*

The other day I read about an American citizen who was killed as he was fighting for a group of Islamic radicals bent on the destruction of the United States. That started me wondering why someone who grew up in this nation would decide that they hated it enough to travel halfway around the world and fight for its destruction. Maybe it's because we have stopped teaching kids from their earliest days what is special about America, and what makes us different. Here are a few things that I love about my nation.

- A boy from S. Louisiana with very few resources can graduate from college, then go to graduate school, get the best job in the nation and spend a career doing what he loves. The opportunity to get an education is a blessing. Many countries do not provide this to the level the US has.
- I am surrounded by kind, caring people. Even though this is not what we hear about in the news, America consists mostly of people that smile and say kind words.
- I have the freedom to worship who I want, when I want, where I want. And I don't have to be scared and hide it, afraid I am going to be killed for saying the wrong thing. Obviously, that doesn't happen everywhere.
- The US values agriculture. The Land Grant System was developed specifically to fund agricultural research and extension education. If you ever wonder why we have such an advantage in agricultural production, this is one reason.
- Our country has an accepted set of morals based on Judeo-Christian principles. It gets under a lot of people's skin, but you can't argue that our country was founded on a belief in the Creator and it influenced our laws and actions.
- Our country works to help disadvantaged people. Look at how much money is given to charity. Look at how much money we spend to help get people out of poverty. Maybe you disagree with how it is used, but you can't argue that, as a nation, we try to help people. See the preceding point.
- Lots of things to see and do. Beaches, mountains, desert, caves, lakes, rivers. Anything you want to see, chances are we have it in the US. I can take my family camping, fishing, hunting, biking, etc. I can go to the city, or I can go to the country. Sometimes the problem is deciding what to see next.
- It is accepted to take your hat off indoors, open the door for a woman, say "Yes, ma'am" and "No, sir". These traditions are being slowly lost. Hopefully they will come back strong.
- I can go home at night and feel safe. I don't worry about what will happen if my kids go outside. No paranoia. And if someone or something threatens us – well, we can deal with that, too.
- I can honestly tell my kids that if they study, work hard, and stay disciplined, they can be successful. All we seem to hear about is how bad it is, but I am convinced this country will provide my kids the same opportunities I have had.

All of these are things that come with being an American. People have written about this topic a lot more eloquently than I just have. Living in this great country has allowed me to have fun,

enjoy opportunities, and make a positive impact on people. It is too bad that in some places, people's existence revolve around the opposite.

**Important Date:** Nov 7- TN Forage and Grassland Council conference – Nashville.  
[gbates@utk.edu](mailto:gbates@utk.edu) for more info