

2001 CAB FEEDLOT PARTNER OF THE YEAR, < 20,000 CAPACITY

They Walk the Walk

Heartland Feeders II gets
the job done in award-winning style.

by *Chris Lavergne*

You're looking for a feedlot program that can bring the whole package. You want consistent and quality feeding, an array of marketing options, and people who can ensure your cattle are harvested at the optimum time. You can find all this and more at Heartland Feeders II, Menlo, Kan.

The division of Heartland Cattle Co. has been named the 2001 Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Feedlot Partner of the Year for feedlots with a one-time capacity less than 20,000 head. Heartland also rounded out the third spot in the Top Volume Feeder Award category, with 993 carcasses from June 1, 2000, through May 31, 2001, accepted to carry the *Certified Angus*

Beef® (CAB®) brand.

Cal Siegfried, feedyard division manager, says Heartland Feeders II has a one-time capacity of 9,000 head. Pen sizes range from 80 to 220 head. Various grazing programs are available, including intensive, traditional and cornstalk, as well as backgrounding.

"A full-time nutritionist is employed to monitor the quality, consistency and economic viability of our feeding programs," Siegfried says. "Cattle health is another strong point at Heartland Feeders."

The next level

Winning the Partner of the Year Award speaks volumes for

the company's many strong points, but the volume award is a noteworthy part of the whole picture.

"Heartland is a 9,000-head feedyard earning the third top-volume award, with other yards two or three times that size in the Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP)," says John Stika, CAB feeder-packer relations director. "That really shows their commitment to filling their yard with cattle that can make the grade."

Siegfried says volume is expected to increase with Heartland's recent acquisition of a 15,000-head yard near Holdrege, Neb.

Greg Comfort, manager, and Jamie Fortin, assistant manager at the Menlo yard, oversee the workforce at Heartland Feeders II. The talented duo works to provide the most cost-effective and best care possible for customers' cattle. Comfort is relatively new to Heartland but has been in the feedlot business for most of his career.

"Greg's reputation of care and feeding of cattle is exceptional," Siegfried says. "He will help bring us to the next level of performance in the

feedyard. And coupled with Jamie's abilities on the sorting and the animal health side, we'll have an even bigger advantage."

"I just do the very best that I am capable of doing," Fortin adds modestly. "I've been around cattle all my life. I do all I can for each and every customer."

Prior to joining Heartland Feeders II, Fortin worked at a nearby feedlot for 12 years. Siegfried says Fortin has proven over the last two years that he has more than a knack for the job.

"Jamie walks the walk. He is respected, and our customers like him because he brings substance to the table," Siegfried says. "Anybody can talk the talk, but Jamie gets it done."

Full circle

Heartland works with CAB, packers and customers to develop an informational loop that results in mutually beneficial relationships, linking every part of the beef industry, Siegfried says. Heartland's heifer-development and research center in McCook, Neb., is the foundation of the dynamic enterprise.

"Long-term customers from the heifer-development and



► A combination of management, information sharing and customer education makes Heartland Feeders II, Menlo, Kan., stand out as the the 2001 CAB Feedlot Partner of the Year for feedlots with a one-time capacity less than 20,000 head.

► Above: Greg Comfort (right), manager, and Jamie Fortin, assistant manager at the Menlo yard, oversee the workforce at Heartland Feeders II.

► Left: Cal Siegfried, feedyard division manager, is especially happy with the CAB Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) since refinement of data-transfer systems. "This affords us some unique marketing options," he says.

research center have the opportunity to experience firsthand how the right genetics can make the difference," says Patsy Houghton, Heartland's general manager. "These customers' cattle are routinely qualifying for the CAB program at 15% to 25% higher rates than other Angus-based calves that do not have our genetic influence."

Janet Lynch, information manager, plays a key role in summarizing and transferring meaningful information to customers. Lynch works in the McCook corporate office and manages all of the carcass data for both feedlots.

"We want to approach this as a full circle, all the way from the ranch and heifer development to genetic selection and retail," Lynch says. "We have also worked hard on customer service and information transfer. We feel these are the keys to successful, long-term customer relationships."

Producers with e-mail access can receive their individual carcass data as soon as five days after cattle are harvested. Siegfried says that customers appreciate the fast turnaround on information.

"Everybody has been happy with the CAB program. This is especially true now that we, along with CAB personnel and the packers, have refined data-transfer systems," Siegfried says. "This affords us some unique marketing options."

Big dividends

Heartland Feeders, an active proponent of retained ownership, recognizes the need for commitment to quality from beginning to end.

"We emphasize retained ownership because [producers] should realize the benefits of their work and genetic planning on the front end," Siegfried says. "It takes commitment from the rancher and our folks at the heifer-development facility to get the right genetics into the cattle. It is not just one or two people that makes this fly."

Earlier this year, Heartland Feeders was named the first yard

to achieve "Thirty-Aught (30-0) Bronze" status for harvesting 500 head or more with 30% or more CAB acceptance and no "out" or discount carcasses. Fortin says their tremendous ability to sort "keeps the outlier cattle to a minimum." Siegfried adds that the strategy pays big dividends, especially in years when the Choice-Select spread is wide.

Siegfried and Fortin look to a pen of cattle owned by a customer who develops heifers at the McCook facility as an example of what visual sorting can do. Of the cattle already harvested, 70% graded Choice, with 70% Yield Grade (YG) 1s and 2s.

"This is a case where we have input on the genetics and management all the way through to the end," Siegfried says. "We provide a quality animal for the feedlot, as well as females that perform on the ranch and breed back with minimum input costs."

Balanced

Stika says several feedyards do an outstanding job at sourcing high-quality Angus cattle, sorting them into uniform outcome groups and completing the informational loop with the customer and the CAB office. "What sets Heartland apart is their ability to balance all of these elements," he explains. "The combination of their management, information-sharing and customer education, all at an elevated level, really made them stand out this year."

Siegfried concludes: "Bottom line, we work to help ranchers build a cow herd that is not only functional but economically viable. All our people are truly committed to improving not only the Angus breed but the entire beef industry."

Heartland Feeders II will receive the awards at "Catch the Spirit," the CAB Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 13-16.



Leave Nothing on the Table



Attentive sorting and detailed recordkeeping earn CAB awards for an Idaho feedlot.

by *Chris Lavergne*



► **Shane Berquist, manager of Boise Valley Feeders LLC, Parma, Idaho, says precision in management and marketing, coupled with their CAB partnership, lets the business procure high-quality cattle.**

When it comes to gathering high-quality cattle to feed, Boise Valley Feeders LLC keeps a good thing going. The Parma, Idaho, division of Agri Beef Co. clinched second-place honors in the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Annual Top Volume Feeder category.

Shane Berquist, manager, says precision in management and marketing, and their CAB partnership lets the business procure high-quality cattle regularly.

"We are able to use CAB® (Certified Angus Beef®) as a marketing tool in the field to attract a customer base that is looking to provide a consistent, desirable product for the consumer," Berquist says.

Report cards

Boise Valley Feeders has a one-time capacity of 25,000 head and has been a Partner in the CAB Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) since 1999. The 3-year-old facility has enrolled more than 44,000 cattle in that time. That includes both CAB "green-tag" cattle and non-Angus herdsmates with orange tags. In the award year,

from June 1 to May 31, a total of 2,698 head of the green-tag enrolled cattle fit CAB criteria at licensed packing plants.

Many of Boise Valley's pens are designed to hold only 80-100 head to ensure individual attention for smaller herds. A report card including individual weights and carcass data is available upon request. The service is a beneficial sorting tool for the customer and helps the feedlot market cattle.

"As we continue to get those cattle year after year, we can do a better job of marketing," Berquist says. "We know what kind of numbers they have on the inside."

Money in your pocket

Boise Valley doesn't keep that information on the inside. Providing it to ranchers gives them the advantage of knowing how their cattle will perform, says Tanya Hartung, quality assurance (QA) officer at Boise Valley Feeders.

"I like to see people make money," Hartung says. "And if the CAB program is going to put money in people's pockets, all the better."

She enrolls cattle in a spreadsheet program and sends detailed records for both the FLP and the individual cattle owners via the Internet. That way, everyone gets information they can use, and producers aiming for the CAB quality target can earn market premiums for qualifying cattle.

The feedlot sorts lots and sends CAB-eligible cattle to harvest in groups when they are ready. "We do two or three sorts as small as 15 to 25 head," Hartung says.

Boise Valley Feeders' philosophy is not to leave anything on the table; the Top Volume Feeder Award shows that approach pays.

