

CAB Roundup

A good way to move more beef is to sell the salesman on it.

Corrals Learning

Story & photos by **Miranda Reiman**

You can't know too much. Targeted education is critical today, when most companies that sell wholesale beef are "broad liners." They merchandise beef alongside hundreds of other products, ranging from paper towels to crackers. Whether based in a U.S. city or foreign business capital, their level of knowledge about the beef industry is often limited.

That's why Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) invites them to its annual Roundup seminar. More than 150 people from CAB-licensed distributors, retailers and restaurants gathered in Fort Collins, Colo., for this year's seminar, April 24-26.

Learning the basics

"It's important that we go back and cover some of the basics," said Margaret Cook, CAB assistant director for education. "We're sometimes the only source of information for them on the beef industry."

More than one-third of the conference-goers were from other countries.

"We invite them because the international distributors aren't nearly as exposed to the

U.S. beef production system unless they come here. They don't see beef the way we see beef," said Mark Spengler, CAB International Division director.

Santosh Sam had not even seen a cow "in person" or been to a packing plant. Indeed, he hadn't traveled to the United States until he attended the CAB Roundup. A salesman since last fall with CAB-licensed distributor Faisal Al Nusif Trading Co. LLC, United Arab Emirates, Sam called the Roundup experience "eye-opening." He sells mainly to chefs in five-star restaurants.

Sam and 50 others from nine countries, including Chile, Korea and Mexico, started with a tour of Gary and Gloria Parker's Shamrock Ranch near Laramie, Wyo. The Parkers talked about Angus seedstock cattle management and provided details such as the use of artificial insemination (AI) as a means of beef improvement.

They sprinkled technical education with lighter comments. "To me there's

no prettier sight in the world than a bunch of baby calves, running around with their tails up in the air," said Gary, painting a picture of ranch life. He fielded a number of questions, ranging from feed efficiency to the life cycle of a cow to why he chose the Angus breed.

"We're ahead of the race by a long ways in terms of feed conversion and certainly quality grade," he said. The Shamrock Ranch targets producer customers looking for high-quality genetics that thrive at high elevations.

On the snowy Monday morning, Parker told the audience about his family's deep ties to livestock production and about the Laramie Valley ranching community where they have lived since 1988.

"These folks soon understand what we mean by grassroots," he said later. "It's amazing to me the knowledge they already have of our industry."



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The other side of the story

Parker, the 2003 CAB Seedstock Commitment to Excellence honoree,

said those involved with foodservice, especially from other countries, need to see the "other side."

"It's so important to our whole industry that we support the whole chain of events with CAB," he said. "We want them to see how dedicated we are to raising a high-quality, safe, predictable product."

Sam appreciated the tour, because in his line of selling beef in Dubai "we are not familiar with production. This was a wonderful experience."

Spengler said, "We were excited to get some of the street salespeople, the people who can really effect change."



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Another Roundup participant, Yun-Seo Lee said, "It can give you a simple idea of how product becomes products." Lee, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Korean KOSCA Corp., enjoyed the chance to see the big picture. "It's very good to understand the whole meat industry."

The U.S. beef producer may benefit as the Roundup experience gives sales professionals an edge.

"They're able to explain the difference between our beef and that of our competitors," Spengler said. "They can make more compelling sales arguments now. One of the most important things a salesperson can have is enough information."



► Overall, the series showed participants how beef becomes meat, walking participants through many facets of the industry, from genetics and breeding to harvesting and fabrication.

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From beef cattle to meat

Throughout the three-day event, the group toured the Greeley, Colo., area Swift & Co. packing plant and Five Rivers Ranch Cattle Feeding LLC feedlot. The international, foodservice and retail tracks each considered different ways to merchandize and prepare *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand products.

They attended CAB sessions, visited the Colorado State University (CSU) Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center and went to Swift & Co.'s Summit Customer and Innovation Center.

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"We're able to focus on the whole process of bringing high-quality cattle to market and to the consumer," Spengler said.

At both the CSU and Swift research facilities, meat scientists demonstrated several ways to use specific cuts of meat.

"Some cuts are vastly underused and thus vastly undervalued in the American market," said Mark Gwin, value-added products research and development manager for CAB. Those include the short rib, sirloin tip and chuck.



► Attendees to the CAB Roundup gathered from nine countries, including Chile, Korea and Mexico.

The educated salesman

Cook said the most important element of Roundup, beyond how to use new cuts, is learning what differentiates the brand. "We focus on how CAB fits in the industry and how we're unique," she said. "We want them to learn more, to know more about the brand they're selling."

"Normally I'm just doing sales," Sam said. "Now I'll explain to customers the background on how they're processing meat."

Ed Hornyak of Performance Food Group in Little Rock, Ark., said Roundup armed him with more than any previous CAB training. "You forget so

much information, so the more you're given, the more you'll retain," he said. "This just gives me a couple more ins and outs."

"It's hard to get people to change," he continued. "You've got to get it in their mouths. You have to use all their senses. There are so many brands out there and people promoting them, but they can't compare to the CAB flavor and taste."

Lee said strengthening relationships was a key part of his experience.

"A very important part of the ag industry is people," he said. "As long as you trust people, business can go on."

In the end, all of the networking, seeing animal and meat production firsthand, and learning adds up to one thing: a more knowledgeable sales force in the field, selling the brand that most rewards Angus producers.



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