

Top NACC Winners Announced

A pen of heifers wins overall honors in 2004.

by Steve Suther

Forty purebred Angus heifers won grand champion honors in the 2004 National Angus Carcass Challenge (NACC). Stan and Brad Fansher had them fed by Sam Hands, Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co., all of Garden City, Kan. The Fanshers and the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB)-licensed feedlot have a 15-year record of doing business.

No one should be surprised that these heifers won. Their sisters won reserve champion honors in the 2003 NACC, and Fansher Angus Ranch supplies bulls to the Borells of Dighton, Kan., for whom Triangle H fed the highest value pen at any CAB feedlot in the 2002 Best of the Breed (BoB) contest.

Moreover, these 2004 heifers were selected from a group of 150 by ultrasound. The tool is available to anyone, but in this case it was in the hands of its developer, John Brethour of the Kansas State University Ag Research Center in Hays, whose technological signature was all over BoB. Harvested in November at National Beef Packing, Dodge City, Kan., the only surprise is that the February-born heifers spent only 65 days in the finishing yard.

NACC is an annual beef value contest, sponsored in 2004 by CAB, *Drovers* magazine, Merial SureHealth™ Farnam Co., John Deere FoodOrigins and the American Angus Association. Groups of at least 40 steers or heifers sired by registered Angus bulls have to be fed in CAB-licensed feedlots,

according to NACC coordinator Rod Schoenbine. Winners of the 2004 contest were to be announced Jan. 15 at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo., where Stan was to accept the top prize of \$5,000 and a new John Deere 4x4 Gator®.

Impressive quality

"I am impressed with the quality of cattle we attracted to the 2004 contest," Schoenbine says, "with 20 of the top-placing entries grading more than 85% USDA Choice, less than 3% Yield Grade (YG) 4s and greater than 25% Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) acceptance." There were 140 pens and 5,998 cattle entered, with 4,909 harvested as eligible during the calendar year, and several pens carried over to the ongoing 2005 NACC, he explains.

The top-value pen graded 40% Prime and the rest Choice with four YG 4 discounts; 53% of the heifers met all criteria for the brand, which include Modest or higher marbling. "They had nearly twice as many Primes as the next closest group," Schoenbine says, "the second-highest CAB-acceptance rate overall and the second-heaviest heifer carcasses."

All but three of the heifers were sired by four Fansher herd sires, sons of Traveler 6807, Precision 1680, Lucy's Boy and Emulation 5522. "The other three were sired by three different ABS bulls," Stan says. The family's 400-cow registered herd was originally built up from Gardiner, Sitz and Jorgensen influence, he adds.

His son Brad, a veterinarian, says fall-born heifers are favored for replacements, and the quality grid market looked like a good option for the spring group when they began pushing 1,000 pounds (lb.). "We wanted to see how they would perform and grade, so we had Sam enter them in the contest. We decided not to implant," he says.

The Fanshers set their sights on winning Prime premiums more than any contest, but they hoped to do well in both areas. Hands turned to ultrasound to develop a plan on marketing the long yearlings and avoid overfinishing. It happened that Brethour was in the area and personally scanned the winning pen.

Lest anyone think the Fanshers won only because of ultrasound, Hands reports all 150 heifers finished at 96% Choice or

better, and 59% were CAB or Prime.

"They had maturity on their side, along with genetics and technology," Hands says. A veteran of several carcass contests throughout the years, he likes the educational aspects. One thing Hands says he learned early on — while many cattle feeders think they deserve full credit for quality grades, they can rightly only take credit for not messing up genetic potential.

The heifers' \$107.74-per-hundredweight (cwt.) value on the contest grid was more than a dollar greater than last year's champion on the same grid, \$2.09 per cwt. greater than the 2004 top steers and \$3.25 per cwt. greater than the heifer division champion pen. Four of them went beyond the YG 4 line, without which the whole pen would have tallied another dollar higher.

Top steers

Steers from Woodstone Angus Ranch, New Ulm, Texas, claimed the champion steer division honors. Fed at Cattleman's Choice Feedyard Inc., Gage, Okla., by managers Dale and Mary Moore, the 43 steers were out of registered Angus cows and bulls of an old Irish line. Descriptions of the cow families at Woodstone's Web site (<http://irishherd.com>) read like jackets of Celtic romance novels — Lady Elizabeth of the Manor to Violet of Boghead. They were discovered amid five- and six-cow herds in Ireland — all tracing back to the original Old Grannie 1 and Greybreasted Jock 2.

Bill and Yvonne Woods live in Texas with their 5-year-old son, Will, where they keep half the 500 registered cows; the other half are on family land near Hackett, Ark., looked after by John and Angela Wiggins, who backgrounded the NACC steers last spring. The Woods family was to accept the \$3,000 NACC champion steer division award at Denver.

Woods developed the Irish connection beginning in 1980 with the help of Al Maurer, an "Aberdeen-Angus specialist" then of Magnolia, Texas, who in turn knew Kevin Culhane in Limerick, Ireland. "We wanted all of our cows to trace back to the original registered Angus, and we found we could do that with these Irish cow families," Woods says.

The 43 NACC steers were unique in that they brought no discount of any kind on the contest grid, only premiums from their 7% Prime, 51% CAB showing. Only 30% of the 785-lb. carcasses were YG 1-2, but Woods



► Yvonne and Bill Woods, with son Will, New Ulm, Texas, aimed for old-fashioned Angus quality with their champion steer pen.



► Brad Fansher (left) and his father, Stan, owned the grand champion pen, fed by Sam Hands of Triangle H, all of Garden City, Kan.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TRIANGLE H AND WOODSTONE

says he is “not trying to raise Limousin or Charolais. If we get too many YG 2s, we lose marbling, so we aim for YG 3 and easy-fleshing mommas.”

As vindication, he notes the steers were sired by 14 different home-bred bulls. “This cow herd is uniform and where it ought to be,” Woods says. The line-bred herd generates its own bulls and typically another 25 bulls for local customers, he says. “We don’t just feed the bottom end in these contests.”

Moore, who built up from a 650-head backgrounding yard to a 7,000-head finishing yard since 2000, has fed Woodstone cattle for four years and referred others to their genetics. “Whether calf-fed or yearlings, they always wind up better than 90% Choice,” he says. “This NACC pen came in at 870 pounds, converted in the 5s and gained in the 3s, not implanted. With 150 days on feed, their cost of gain was only a couple of cents more than our average implanted steers.” They were harvested at National Beef Packing, Liberal, Kan.

“If I could have all my retained ownership customers keep the records Bill keeps and use carcass data the way he does, we would have nothing but outstanding cattle here,” Moore says. “That’s where we’re heading.” He and Woods already have plans for the 2005 NACC. “We’re going to win both the steer and heifer divisions next time,” he says.

In the top of both divisions

The ranch that came closest to doing just that this time was Darnall Ranch, with its large commercial Angus herd and CAB-licensed feedlot near Harrisburg, Neb. Forty Darnall heifers won champion in the heifer division with 20% Prime and 45% CAB,

while 40 Darnall steers came in third in the steer division with 10% Prime and 40% CAB. Both groups were 98% Choice or better, harvested at the Swift & Co. plant in Greeley, Colo.

“They were all home-raised from Darnall Ranch Inc.,” says owner-manager Gary Darnall. “Similar genetics across the board, all trace back to the Performance Breeders on both the cow and bull side.” Dave and Yvonne Hinman, Malta, Mont., are partners with Bill and Jennifer Davis of Rollin’ Rock, Sidney, Mont., in Performance Breeders.

Ultrasound sorting 80 days preharvest is routine at Darnall’s 20,000-head feedlot, so, of course, the scans were taken into account as cattle were grouped for the NACC. But a wide cross-section of cattle was entered for educational purposes — 16 groups in all. And nothing special was done to enhance grade. “We aggressively implant everything,” Darnall says, with the final one being a trenbolone acetate (TBA) compound.

Calves were weaned in mid-September, relatively early for western Nebraska, but the February-March calves weighed close to 600 lb. by then. They took 45 to 60 days to work up to full feed, which they consumed until harvest at about 14 months. “We had no real health problems, and they did well, but we were surprised they came out that high in the contest,” Darnall says. He was to accept the \$3,000 NACC champion heifer and \$1,500 NACC third-place steer awards in Denver.

The reserve champion winners of the steer division and third-place winners in heifers were the owners of last year’s top heifer pen and 2003 CAB annual award honorees.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 142



► Gary Darnall, Harrisburg, Neb., knew his cattle were good, but he was a bit surprised they won champion heifer pen.

PHOTO BY STEVE SUTHER

NACC Contest Grid

Fixed values, not for actual marketing

Base price (Choice/YG 3) \$100.00

Quality Grade premiums/discounts

Prime	+ \$12.00
Certified Angus Beef®	+ \$5.00
Choice	Par
Select	- \$8.00
Standard/ungraded/no roll	- \$20.00
Hardbones	- \$20.00
Dark cutters	- \$20.00

Yield Grade premiums/discounts

YG 1 & 2 Choice or Better	+ \$4.00
YG 1 & 2 Select	+ \$1.00
YG 3	Par
YG 4	- \$20.00
YG 5	- \$25.00

Carcass weight premiums/discounts

≤549 lb.	- \$20.00
550-649 lb.	- \$5.00
650-749 lb.	Par
750-849 lb.	+ \$3.00
850-949 lb.	Par
950-1,000 lb.	- \$10.00
≥1,001 lb.	- \$30.00

2004 National Angus Carcass Challenge official winners

Grand Champion Entry

Placing	Value on NACC grid	Prime/CAB	YG 1s&2s	HCW	Participant/Owner	CAB-licensed feedyard	CAB-licensed packer
Gr. Champion	\$107.74	93%	25%	788 lb.	Fansher Angus Ranch	Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co.	National, Dodge City, Kan.

Steer Division

Placing	Value on NACC grid	Prime/CAB	YG 1s&2s	HCW	Participant/Owner	CAB-licensed feedyard	CAB-licensed packer
Champion	\$105.65	58%	30%	785 lb.	Woodstone Angus Ranch	Cattleman’s Choice Feedyard Inc.	National, Liberal, Kan.
Reserve	\$105.42	56%	37%	805 lb.	Jimmy and Kenny Thomas	Boise Valley Feeders	Tyson, Boise, Idaho
3	\$105.27	50%	13%	806 lb.	Darnall Ranch	Darnall Feedlot	Swift, Greeley, Colo.
4	\$104.85	51%	16%	772 lb.	Mason Fleenor	GG Genetics	Excel, Schuyler, Neb.
5	\$104.76	37%	52%	745 lb.	Lazy U Ranch	Flint Rock Feeders Ltd.	Swift, Dumas, Texas

Heifer Division

Placing	Value on NACC grid	Prime/CAB	YG 1s&2s	HCW	Participant/Owner	CAB-licensed feedyard	CAB-licensed packer
Champion	\$104.49	65%	28%	735 lb.	Darnall Ranch	Darnall Feedlot	Swift, Greeley, Colo.
Reserve	\$104.26	34%	23%	768 lb.	Beller / Pluhar	Beller Feedlots	Swift, Grand Island, Neb.
3	\$104.00	43%	43%	728 lb.	Jimmy and Kenny Thomas	Boise Valley Feeders	Tyson, Boise, Idaho
4	\$103.54	33%	53%	746 lb.	Mark Feller	Gregory Feedlot	Tyson, Denison, Iowa
5	\$103.21	42%	24%	757 lb.	Lazy U Ranch	Flint Rock Feeders Ltd.	Swift, Dumas, Texas

Jimmy and Kenny Thomas, Homedale, Idaho, proved they still have what it takes with the showing, again fed at Boise Valley Feeders, Parma, Idaho.

The 41 steers were 56% CAB and Prime, with just one YG 4, and 73% of the 805-lb. average carcasses hit the NACC carcass weight bull's-eye range of 750 to 849 lb. The heifers managed 43% combined CAB and Prime, as well as 43% YG 1-2. Both pens were harvested at the Tyson plant in Boise, Idaho. Jimmy was to accept the \$2,000 steer and \$1,500 heifer awards at the Denver presentation.

Other top finishers

The reserve champion of the heifer division involved another partnership with a long CAB association. The 47 heifers were a "middle cut" from Chuck Pluhar's 600-cow commercial Angus ranch near Cohagen, Mont., co-owned and fed by Beller Feedlots, Lindsay, Neb. Pluhar was a CAB annual award winner in 1993, Beller in 2003.

Pluhar keeps a close eye on cow performance traits to ensure they are never compromised. "We look for cattle that work here, and then try to fit the carcass traits in," he says. After a four-year association with Beller, Pluhar feels confident the feeding

expertise can accurately gauge his genetics.

As a team, they achieved 98% Choice or better and 34% CAB and Prime, with 77% of the 768-lb. average carcasses hitting the premium NACC carcass-weight bull's-eye. The cattle were harvested at the Swift plant in Grand Island, Neb. Terry Beller was to accept the \$2,000 check in Denver.

The fourth-place steer division winner of \$1,000 was last year's overall champion, Mason Fleenor of GG Genetics, a CAB feedlot partner near Ida Grove, Iowa. They came from the same Pattiglen Ranch, Saint Ignatius, Mont., longtime customers of Fleenor's Angus seedstock operation. The 43 steers had the second-highest percentage of Prime carcasses, at 23%, along with 28% CAB and nothing below Choice, and were harvested at the Excel plant in Schuyler, Neb.

Fourth place in the heifer division came from Mark Feller's Redfield, Iowa, 225-cow herd, fed at Gregory Feedlots, Tabor, Iowa. Feller is new to NACC, but Gregory won four steer division awards last year and enrolled the most pens for 2004 as part of an overall commitment to education and value discovery. Feller has been improving the family herd for 15 years, feeding for seven, but only the last year at Gregory. "I use

carcass data to select bulls," Feller says, "but it is about fifth on my list." The 40 heifers — 93% Choice or better, 5% Prime and 28% CAB — were harvested at Tyson's Denison, Iowa, plant. Gregory manager David Trowbridge was to accept the \$1,000 award.

Fifth place (\$500) in both the steer and heifer categories came from James Fuqua's Lazy U Ranch, Quanah, Texas, fed at Flint Rock Feeders, Gruver, Texas. The Lazy U made headlines a couple of years ago, coming in a regional second place in BoB. The 2004 NACC steers were 7% Prime, 30% CAB and 52% YG 1-2 with just one YG 4 discount, while the heifers went 42% CAB with no YG 4 discounts. Both pens were harvested at the Swift plant in Dumas, Texas. Fuqua operates a 500-cow Angus seedstock operation and the U Lazy 2 Cattle Co. network of allied customers.

The 2005 NACC features easier entry rules and a new sponsor, Alltech, a multinational biotechnology company providing natural solutions to the feed and food industries. For more information on entering the NACC, visit <http://cabfeedlots.com>, contact Schoenbine at (330) 345-2333 or e-mail rschoenbine@certifiedangusbeef.com.

