

From Potential to Profit

Partnering with genetics suppliers, winners produce premiums throughout the beef value chain.

by Nicole Lane Erceg, Certified Angus Beef LLC

If anyone else had made the phone call to Jamie Hoffman, he'd have thought it was a mistake or a joke. The manager of Hoffman Angus Farm, Otwell, Ind., was on the line with his bull supplier, a beaming James Coffey, who told his customer of four years he'd just won the inaugural Angus Value Discovery Contest.

"We've known for a long time we have good ones that grade, but as many people as there are feeding cattle out there, it was incredibly humbling and surprising news," Hoffman said.

Coffey, who nominated him and manages Branch View Angus of Hustonville, Ky., wasn't shocked.

"From my first conversation with Jamie, I knew he and his wife were dedicated to raising and feeding high-quality Angus cattle," Coffey said. "This group that won didn't happen by chance. They've concentrated on raising the right kind for years."

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) organized the contest last spring as a way Angus seedstock suppliers can reward commercial customers who invest in top genetics and finish the progeny.

Pens of 30 head or more were evaluated on feedyard performance, quality grade and yield grade (YG), as well as grid premiums and discounts. Closeouts for each pen were assessed based on the grid average at harvest time in CAB-licensed packinghouses through July 31.

Hoffman's grand champion pen



Hoffman Angus Farm, Otwell, Ind., was recognized for having the grand champion pen in the 2017 Angus Value Discovery Contest.

of 40 graded 100% Choice or better, with 75% qualifying for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, including 32.5% Prime.

These are great cattle, but not the highest-grading pen.

What set Hoffman's cattle apart was a lack of discounts, with no death loss or even sickness on feed, said Justin Sexten, CAB director of supply development and contest judge.

"They demonstrated quality and leanness with a high percentage earning YG 1s and 2s that produced a significant percentage of CAB and Prime," he said. "But there were no YG 4s or 5s and no heavyweights."

So how did he do it? Hoffman said it's a disciplined focus on the details of animal care he learned from his father. He also credited his emphasis on quality carcass genetics selected for moderate frame and personally feeding them a corn silage ration at home.

"Most Angus cattle can grade well," he said, "but I wait until my cattle are ready before selling them to the

plant. Oftentimes I have to tell my buyer no, I need to feed them another 30 to 45 days to ensure I get the expressed value from my genetics and on-farm investment."

Earning reserve honors

The reserve prize went to a partnership that spans the beef industry. Mark Gardiner of Gardiner Angus Ranch, Ashland, Kan., nominated long-time customer Randy Bayne of nearby Protection, Kan., along with his feeding partner and veterinarian, Randall Spare of Ashland.

Bayne and Spare's pen of 67 head all made Choice or better, with 89.2% earning the CAB brand, including 54.3% Prime.

"The reserve winner excelled in quality grade, which earns exceptional premiums," Sexten said. "However, each carcass only retains the full value of premiums if it simultaneously avoids discounts. The pen had a large percentage of YG 4s and some 5s, causing discounts that left them in second."

A Gardiner customer for more than 20 years, Bayne said he leans on his suppliers' expertise when selecting carcass genetics, and Spare for creating the optimal health program. Gardiner and Spare credit the commercial cattleman's management and business sense as keys in producing high-performing, profitable cattle.

"Randy is very disciplined in selecting cattle that provide end-

product merit,” Gardiner said. “He’s worked toward selecting cattle that are in the upper percentiles without compromising reproduction and maternal function.”

Spare manages health programs for both Gardiner and Bayne, the kind of work that makes each day enjoyable.

“The thing I appreciate about Randy is his understanding of genetics and how to maximize them to their environment,” the veterinarian said. “We come alongside him and make suggestions to help facilitate that optimal expression and eliminate the infectious process so every day can be a good day in the life of these calves.”

Bayne said management is critical, but starting with a good foundation of genetics is key: “You’ve got to be sure and buy good bulls. If you aren’t buying good bulls, then you aren’t going to get a good end product.”

The first year of the Angus Value Discovery Contest drew 27 nominations by nine suppliers on 1,914 finished cattle from across the country. A couple of the suppliers submitted eight nominees, making



Randy Bayne was recognized for having the reserve grand champion pen in the 2017 Angus Value Discovery Contest.

them eligible to award divisional champion prizes for their customers.

“We all like to compete, whether it’s in ball or cattle,” Gardiner said. “The benefit for everyone isn’t about who wins, it’s about what we can learn from looking at the data. When we compare and compete, we find out who is doing it well and how we can apply what they’ve learned to do better on our own operations.”

Contest winners earned trips to the National Angus Convention in Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 3-6, 2017, where they were presented the awards. Hoffman’s grand champion pen merited a \$2,000 credit toward

his next bull purchase with Branch View Angus, while Bayne was awarded \$1,000 credit to spend with Gardiner Angus Ranch.

“Both of these winning commercial producers are great examples of what can be accomplished by partnering with a seedstock supplier not only to buy a bull, but to create the foundation for a profitable program that leads to higher-quality beef and increased profitability,” said Sexten.

Nominations open for 2018

The 2018 Angus Value Discovery Contest has been open for nominations since Aug. 1, 2017, running through the end of July next summer. A simplified entry process requires only completing an online form at www.cabpartners.com/contest.php and submitting harvest reports on 30 head or more by scanning those documents. **AJ**

Editor’s Note: Nicole Lane Erceg is a producer communications specialist with Certified Angus Beef LLC.



Hoffman Angus Farm, Otwell, Ind., was recognized for having the grand champion pen in the 2017 Angus Value Discovery Contest. Pictured at the awards ceremony during the 2017 Angus Convention are (from left) Justin Sexten, Certified Angus Beef LLC director of supply development; Jamie and Kim Hoffman, owners of the champion pen; Keegan Cassidy, 2017 Miss American Angus; and nominator James Coffey, Branch View Angus, Hustonville, Ky.



Randy Bayne of Protection, Kan., and veterinarian Randall Spare, Ashland, Kan., were recognized for having the reserve grand champion pen in the 2017 Angus Value Discovery Contest. Pictured at the awards ceremony during the 2017 Angus Convention are (from left) Sexten; Spare; Bayne; Cassidy; and nominator Mark Gardiner, Gardiner Angus Ranch, Ashland, Kan.