

# Certified Angus Beef



## Meet Your CAB Staff

### Involving Cattle Producers in CAB — a Case of Supply and Demand

Supply and demand. These two words conjure pictures of Economics 101 or trading in the Chicago Mercantile Exchange pit. Supply and demand, however, are the economic basis for any business, whether you sell peanut brittle or feeder cattle.

Certified Angus Beef also works with supply and demand. There is a demand for CAB from restaurants and retail stores who want to offer their customers a consistent, high quality beef product. The supply comes from the Angus-type cattle that meet CAB specifications.

John Stowell, CAB director of supply development, concentrates on the supply aspect. His work includes a variety of projects to help increase the number of cattle qualifying for CAB. This covers a wide spectrum of activities, from performance testing and carcass data collection to helping buyers find feeders or finished cattle that would be eligible for CAB evaluation.

Stowell works with purebred and commercial producers, helping determine how their cattle perform in relation to what buyers seek.

"The first step is to know how the cattle perform. You need to know more about your cattle than the buyer does," says Stowell.

Stowell says an opportunity for cow-calf producers to find out how their cattle perform on the rail is through the CAB carcass data program.

Through this program, Stowell helps the producer obtain accurate information on ribeye area, marbling score, fat thickness and carcass weight.

"If the producer notifies me of where the cattle are being fed, I can contact the feeder and discover when and where the cattle are to be slaughtered," says Stowell.

He then arranges for data collection on the selected cattle and provides the information to the registered or commercial cattle producer.

"This program is one of the most beneficial because it helps producers discover how many and which of their cattle qualify as Certified Angus Beef," says Stowell.

To provide consumer assurance of consistent, high quality beef, there are strict guidelines which cattle and carcasses must meet to wear the CAB label. The



John Stowell, CAB director of supply development, works with feedlots and producers.

live cattle specifications for CAB state that eligible cattle must: 1) be predominantly black, 2) have typical, beef-type conformation (no visible dairy influence), and 3) have no hump or long, floppy ears (no visible Brahman influence). All CAB carcasses must have a Modest (middle Choice) or higher marbling degree, be from the "A" maturity range (the youngest maturity classification for beef), be USDA yield grade 3 or leaner, and have a medium to fine marbling texture.

The program also helps to determine what sires are useful in a producer's herd, says Stowell.

The cost for obtaining the carcass data is \$1.50 per head. Stowell says the information the producer obtains is well worth the investment because it's vital to learning how the breeding program is working.

The carcass data Stowell provides could also help a producer market a future group of cattle. "There was a producer in Kansas that showed a previous year's data to a buyer and was able to get 50 cents per hundredweight higher for his cattle," says Stowell. This was a 300 percent return on his investment in the carcass data program.

Another producer in Nebraska has narrowed his cow herd to only Angus-type because of the performance advantage he was getting from black cattle. Packers aggressively buy this producer's cattle because of the proven performance, says Stowell.

Another useful program that is available to seedstock and commercial produc-

ers is the carcass evaluation portion of the American Angus Association's Sire Evaluation Program, which Stowell coordinates in conjunction with John Crouch, director of performance programs for the American Angus Association.

The program begins with a seedstock producer wanting to test a young bull for carcass traits. The producer supplies semen from the bull for the test. Semen from a reference bull is also used to create a control group. A commercial producer, who volunteers the cows and heifers for the test, is contacted to participate in the program.

The cows and heifers are randomly bred to each bull to ensure an unbiased selection. These calves are tracked through sale to the feedlot and eventually to the slaughter plant, where data is collected.

The reference sire's offspring data is used to determine the amount of maternal and environmental influence on the carcass traits. This data then allows the evaluators to determine the test sire's carcass performance capability in terms of expected progeny differences (EPDs).

The Sire Evaluation report is printed by the American Angus Association and appears in each issue of the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. Certified Angus Beef's involvement in the program began two years ago. Stowell believes that the data produced next spring and fall will provide the most accurate carcass EPDs available to date.

"We have been having trouble getting commercial breeders to participate because many don't artificially inseminate.

And many of the untested bulls, because of their young age, have no progeny in production; therefore, the only measure of their performance is derived from their pedigrees," says Stowell

However, he believes it's a win-win situation for seedstock and commercial producers. The seedstock producer gets a bull tested; the commercial producer receives free semen on registered Angus bulls.

"The commercial producers can also retain all the heifers because the test involves only steers. It's an inexpensive way to breed replacement heifers," says Stowell.

Another facet of Stowell's work is helping buyers find Angus-type cattle that have the potential to qualify for CAB. The Angus Feeder Cattle Directory is pub-

lished twice a year and contains listings and availability dates of predominantly black feeder cattle.

This is a valuable tool for feedlot buyers and provides an opportunity for cow-calf producers to advertise their cattle. The cost is \$10 a year to have cattle listed in both Spring and Fall issues of the book.

*Supply Update* is a newsletter that is sent to interested Angus seedstock and commercial producers, cattle feeders, all packer buyers for licensed CAB packing plants, and other people and organizations associated with the beef industry.

This newsletter contains not only CAB news, but also listings of predominantly black feeder and finished cattle available, says Stowell.

He emphasizes that because the newsletter goes to buyers from CAB packing plants, it's a great opportunity for feedlot operators to market cattle.

"You need to market your cattle, rather than merely sell your cattle, to get more value," says Stowell.

The CAB program's supply development division is designed to provide valuable information to producers to help them market their high performing cattle.

Consumer demand for CAB is strong and growing daily. To meet this demand, producers can breed for cattle whose carcasses will qualify for CAB. It's simply a case of economic supply and demand.

— **Cindy Folck**

## Let the Contest Begin!

Nearly 1,000 head of cattle from 20 different states are entered in the Certified Angus Beef Feedlot Gain and Carcass Contest.

The entries represent both purebred and commercial producers who are competing for the grand prize of \$5,000, awarded to the highest scoring pen of cattle.

Although the cattle arrived at Decatur County Feed Yard, Oberlin, Kan., in early December, the official starting date is Jan. 15 when each steer will be weighed and photographed.

The cattle will be judged on feedlot performance, carcass merit and qualification for Certified Angus Beef.

The winner will be announced in June after the cattle are slaughtered and all data has been collected.

The primary purpose of the carcass contest is to increase industry awareness of CAB specifications. Producers will be able to see how their cattle compare to other cattle in carcass performance.

Each entrant will receive a detailed report on the carcasses, including ribeye area, marbling score and fat thickness data.

The carcass contest will provide an educational tool for identifying how genetics affect carcass traits. "All cattle will be treated and fed the same; therefore, this contest will allow genetic differences to surface," says John Stowell, CAB director of supply development.

Producers will benefit from gaining knowledge of bloodlines which have potential for increasing carcass quality and feed efficiency.

Additionally, producers have the opportunity to gain knowledge of commercial cattle feeding practices as well as learn the total performance capabilities of their cattle. Feeders and packers will be able to compare cattle performance in order to more effectively procure and market cattle and carcasses.

Those interested in seeing the cattle will be able to attend a field day in April at Decatur County Feed Yard. People can even place their guesses on which pen will win!

During the field day, a *calcutta* will be held. This is an auction where individuals can place bids on the pen of cattle they think will win. The money raised will be pooled and given to the winning bidders proportionally, based on the final results of the carcass contest.



*Cal Siegfried (left) of Decatur County Feed Yard and John Stowell, CAB Feedlot Gain & Carcass Contest Coordinator, look over a pen of Angus steers entered in the contest.*



*An Angus steer is ear-tagged with CAB Contest ID number after delivery to the feedyard.*