



## Reflecting on the Past, Progressing Toward the Future

The new year presents an opportunity for many to reflect on the past and make plans for the future. As the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program concludes its 15th year with record achievements, a look into the past is helping to fuel plans for an aggressive future.

Success was not always a term easily associated with the CAB Program. Henry Gardiner, an American Angus Association Board member during the CAB Program's infancy, recalls a time when there was serious doubt about its potential. Gardiner says he can remember sharing with his wife, Nan, several times prior to Board meetings, that he feared "this may be the meeting where they vote the CAB Program out."

Another Angus leader, Ed Horton, says, "We had to wonder if this was a 'pie in the sky' idea." Horton shares that, at the time the CAB Program was started, the Board had several projects to which monies needed to be directed. The CAB Program's troublesome start caused Board members to question its financial priority.

Although he never doubted the potential of CAB Program's concept, Ohio breeder Fred Johnson remembers the persuasion required to keep it alive. It was Johnson who charged into a tough situation when the CAB Program was once shut down by USDA-FSIS. His impact on this challenge was later evidenced by a personal letter received from Carol Tucker Forman, expressing her viewpoint.

**Beyond the tenacity** of the founding Board members, the other important factor associated with CAB Program's survival was the person selected to take charge — Mick Colvin.

"Mick was the spark plug that kept the CAB Program going," says Horton.

"Obvious flops didn't deter him; he kept charging on," adds Gardiner.

"I never dreamed it would be so difficult to get started, but I was optimistic from day one that the CAB Program would some day have a positive impact on the Angus business," says Colvin.

Many recall vividly its turning point. Colvin secured a food service consultant named Leonard Berkowitz. Gardiner looks back at the Board meeting where Colvin introduced Berkowitz and shares, "He was from a much different culture

than us." Berkowitz, described as a fiery, blunt gentleman, had the contacts and knowledge to open many doors in the food service industry.

Berkowitz was Colvin's last playing card, and after tense debate, Board member Joe Reznicek finally made the critical motion to give Berkowitz a chance to allow the CAB Program to continue for three more months.

Fifteen years later, it is now the world's largest specification branded beef program, marketing more than 125 million pounds of product during fiscal 1993. The Certified Angus Program is recognized both domestically and internationally for its association with a high quality, consistent beef product.

### **Why has the Program succeeded?**

Colvin points out three factors: "First, the product is a true, science-based, value-added product. In addition, there is a sincere and in-depth focus on maintaining integrity via the most comprehensive monitoring program in the industry."

The third factor Colvin attributes the success to is a young, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff.

With 15 years of powerful momentum built, where does the CAB Program go from here? Fred Johnson warns that complacency is the only thing that can stop

the momentum. "Consumer acceptance is not an issue, it's proven," says Johnson. "Considering the Program's success, it behooves the breed to identify as quickly as possible the genetics to supply product."

"Future growth will be production-based," says Colvin. "Until now, when CAB Program needed product we simply added another packing plant. We are rapidly approaching the time when we will not have that option. Increased supply must come from either increasing the number of Angus-type cattle in the fed cattle mix or increasing the number of these cattle which meet the Program's carcass specifications."

Supply was a concern from the start, Horton says. "We knew that one day finding enough cattle to meet the specifications would be our biggest problem," he says. However, Horton would rather see CAB Program sell fewer pounds of product than ever jeopardize its future by changing the stringent specifications.

Thanks to an evolution of long-range planning and prioritizing by the Association Board, Johnson feels there is now much more genetic knowledge to address the supply challenge CAB Program faces.

"There are a lot of breeders who want to be involved, but not a lot are actually doing anything yet," Johnson says. "It's time we realized that producing a high

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quality end product is the sustaining factor in this business. You can't take a blue ribbon to the bank for a deposit."

**The survival incentive** will be the driving force behind producers' involvement, says Johnson. His point was recently supported by Gary Smith of Colorado State University during a pre-sale address to Summitcrest commercial customers.

"You don't have to work with carcass EPDs, you will just have to worry about competing with those who do," said Smith.

Gardiner believes the genetics to tackle the supply situation exist. "The challenge is achieving economic feasibility by looking at all characteristics, not single trait selection," he says.

An eternal optimist, Mick Colvin has faith. "I personally feel Angus breeders will respond to the opportunities that the Program offers to even further strengthen their positions as the quality leaders in the beef industry," says Colvin.

"We have received criticism for the lack of 'premiums' for black cattle in the past," he says. "However, the size of our current packer base, coupled with the need for increased supply, will provide unlimited opportunity for serious Angus breeders who have done their homework through sire evaluation and carcass data collection. These are the breeders who know where their breeding program is in terms of end product value."

Information will become an increasingly important marketing tool for Angus breeders wanting to benefit from CAB Program's success. Only 18 percent of the cattle identified through its live animal evaluation actually meet the carcass specifications. Producers who can prove their cattle's carcass merit will be the ones who realize the most benefit.

Fifteen years of success is something to be proud of for the 25,000 Angus breeders who own the Certified Angus Beef™ trademark. Fifteen more prosperous years are going to require aggressive breeder involvement.

**If you are interested** in becoming involved in the CAB Program's supply development activities, contact Kelly Frank at (303) 362-4315, or Larry Dorsey at (406) 763-4366.

- *Jenny Stickley*

## Three New CAB Program Staff Positions Filled

Three new people have been added to the Certified Angus Beef Program to facilitate program growth. **Terra Thorpe**, Castle Bock, Colo., is the new assistant in the supply development division. Terra will assist with collecting, organizing and processing feedlot and carcass data, and planning the Value Discovery Project.

She will also help with follow-up communications to cattle producers involved in the American Angus Association's sire evaluation program and feedlots utilizing the Angus Feeder Cattle Directory.

Terra graduated from Colorado State University in December with a bachelor's degree in agricultural business. Last summer she helped coordinate carcass data services for National Cattlemen's Association. Terra also gained beef industry experience by collecting carcass data and serving as a research assistant at Colorado State. She will work in CAB Program's Denver office.



Terra Thorpe

**Lori Franklin**, La Salle, Colo., recently joined the CAB Program marketing division as its food service marketing manager. She will facilitate development of new food service promotional materials, supervise the cooperative promotional program, and process material requests from licensed distributors and restaurateurs.

Lori will also work within the food service division to plan seminars and special promotions with food service industry.

A December graduate of Colorado State University Lori received a bachelor's degree in animal science. She recently served as chairperson and a director of the National Junior Angus Association. While interning at the Western States Meat Association and Washington Cattlemen's Association, Lori gained communications and marketing experience.



Lori Franklin

**Stacy Sanders**, Crane, Texas, has been hired as assistant director in retail division. He will supplement the duties of Curt Terry, the division's assistant director based in Houston.

Stacy's responsibilities will include licensing and compliance of retailers, and licensee and industry education. He will also work with the retail marketing manager to coordinate industry and retailer promotions, and assist with promotional material development.

He is completing his master's degree in meat science from Colorado State University where his thesis was on the effects of Vitamin E supplementation on ground beef shelf-life and beef destined for Japanese markets. While at Colorado State, he was a graduate research assistant for the animal science department.

He also holds a bachelor's degree in animal science, with a production option, from Texas A&M University.



Stacy Sanders