

LEAD IN

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NCA Grading Report on Hold While Angus Genetic Evaluation Forges Ahead

By now you've probably read the report from the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) Carcass Quality Task Force presented to the 1993 NCA Convention in Phoenix.

The Task Force report was a culmination of meetings by an appointed group of cattle producers, retailers, packers and consultants who met this past fall to hammer out an industry proposal to address the "War On Fat."

The Task Force began its work at a well attended one-and-a-half-day Beef Grading Conference sponsored by NCA in Denver last summer. It was attended by Board and staff members from the American Angus Association.

When all was said and done, the NCA grading committee endorsed the report, with some changes. But the NCA resolutions committee tabled the report for further study.

For some of us, this prolonged unnecessarily an acceptable report for the beef industry. At best, any change through USDA channels takes a long time and this delay did not appear necessary, considering the importance of therecommendations.

The Task Force report would have requested the USDA to adjust current beef yield grades to combine YG4 and 5, to split YG2 into 2A and 2B, and YG3 into 3A and 3B, with the A's representing the leaner of the two grades. The proposal would have reduced the number of B maturity cattle that would qualify for Select and Choice grade.

Finally, the resolution proposed development of a method or instrument to measure tenderness under modern packing plant conditions and inclusion of tenderness as a part of the quality grade, once a system is developed.

Most important, the report left marbling alone as a trait that helps assure acceptability of our end product. Your national Board has held firm on their con-

viction that the evidence shows marbling to be an important part of beef quality and thus an important part of our grading system. Furthermore, the "War On Fat" campaign should be directed to waste fat, not taste fat as an indicator of acceptance.

From a breed association standpoint, it was also encouraging to read that the Task Force recommends more efforts need to be focused on identification of the variability of genetics, both between and within breeds.

For at least two decades, your Association has taken the position that genetics play a vital role in the production of a high quality and consistent end product. The continued efforts of your Board through long-range planning objectives has set genetic evaluation for carcass traits as our Association's highest priority. The support of this objective on an industry basis is well received.

The NCA grading committee report, at least for now, is on hold or under study until the NCA mid-year meeting in July. In the meantime, I encourage all of you as Angus breeders and state and National Cattlemen's Association members to participate in the process. Your input and involvement is important to the decisions made for our industry and through state and national actions.

Just like the proposal on grading issues, your Board and staff has remained involved in the process. While we support the recommendation of the NCA grading committee, it appears we'll be waiting at least a while before any specific recommendation takes place. Most important, all of us have an opportunity to be a part of the process. Don't be reluctant to get involved.

