

# Up Close and Personal

*CAB purchases 109 acres of Chippewa Valley Angus Farm to bring partners closer to beef.*

*by Abbie Lankitus, Certified Angus Beef*

About a thousand people walk through the doors of the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio, each year. Customized experiences cover everything from meat science and culinary masterpieces to learning more about beef production.

Many visitors have never seen live cattle, much less been to a working ranch. For the past five years, the brand has provided that experience by visiting Atterholt Farms and other Angus operations.

“We have a great partnership with the Atterholt family and several other farms,” says Deanna Walenciak,

vice president of brand marketing, domestic. “But a lot of groups tell us an hour and a half isn’t enough time on the farm. They want to be out there longer and do more.”

To grant that greater experience, CAB purchased 109 acres of Chippewa Valley Angus Farm, a working ranch about seven miles northeast of the brand office.

“It helps us tell a better story because it allows our customers

to see that we are completely transparent in what’s happening at the farm,” Walenciak says. “When they can get to a farm or ranch, it’s a game changer in their minds. They’re so impressed.”

This purchase is only part of Rod and Laurie Ferguson’s Chippewa Valley operation. Along with the facilities on the 109 acres, CAB has leased back the land to Chippewa Valley to continue business as usual.

“The farm’s going to stay a farm,” Walenciak says. “It will remain the working operation that they are, because that’s the authenticity that our guests want to experience.”

Currently, CAB takes guests to Atterholt Farms year-round. In northeast Ohio, outside events aren’t comfortable six months out of the year.

“The biggest change we’ll make at Chippewa Valley is incorporating ‘creature comforts’ like a temperature-controlled room, restrooms, and a place to serve meals with a kitchen.”

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Rod and Laurie Ferguson operate Chippewa Valley Angus Farm in Smithville, Ohio.

In the short term, Walenciak says the brand will work with the Fergusons to determine their needs, do some pasture development and pour concrete.

By having these facilities, Walenciak says the brand can create more of what their guests want to do like help feed cattle or witness calves being born.

“Eighty to ninety percent of our guests at the Culinary Center today have never been to a working farm,” she says. “Some of the biggest things they want is a chance to meet the people and see cattle up close. We can’t provide that experience unless we’re standing in a barn. So, let’s throw out a bale of hay, let the cattle come close.”

Walenciak says this experience is even more eye-opening for international guests.

“We host groups from places like Japan, Korea, the Middle East, and it completes their picture, their trust, of our American beef industry when they can get out to a farm,” she says. “When they come to Wooster, we can roll out the red carpet in everything: culinary, meat cutting and farm. There’s no other brand that they can have that much confidence in. It really completes a whole package.”

CAB hopes to use these facilities not just for partners but also the next generation of agriculturalists.


“There’s an opportunity to host FFA groups or judging teams when they come through this area to tell our story to an even broader audience,” Walenciak says.

For those who can’t make it to Wooster, ranch days featuring Angus farm and ranch families across the country will continue.

A day on the farm or ranch

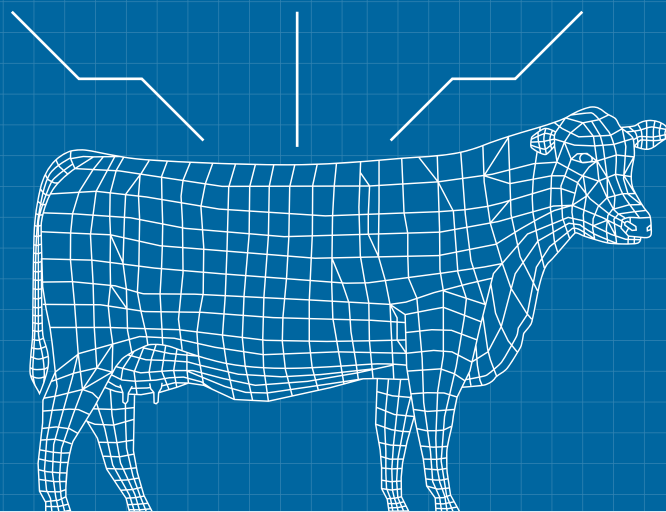
becomes a story students, chefs, meat managers and foodservice sales people tell with excitement when talking about the CAB brand long after their visit.

“This new facility is going to open up countless opportunities,” she says. “I hope people start to identify

Wooster and visiting Certified Angus Beef as a destination because they can get to the farm, the culinary center and the meat lab. That becomes a really cool experience.” 

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