

Geographical Challenges Don't Stop Georgia Breeders

Seventy head of Georgia cattle made the trip to northwest Kansas as entries in the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program's 1994 Value Discovery Project. Representing seven different Georgia breeders, this was the largest, single state contingent.

The Value Discovery Project is sponsored annually by the CAB Program to enable producers of Angus-sired steers to retain ownership of a small number of cattle in an efficient, commercial feedlot environment. Participating producers receive valuable feedlot and carcass data on their cattle, including itemized cost accounts for individual steers, monthly feed consumption and average cost updates.

Project requirements state that a producer may enter as many lots of five or six steers as desired. Steers are shipped to Decatur County Feed Yard, Oberlin, Kan., during December and fed to the optimum degree of finish (target = .50 inch backfat).

Once the cattle are processed, carcass data is collected, results are compiled and awards are presented for highest carcass merit, carcasses meeting CAB Program specifications, highest feedlot performance and highest retail yield.

A total of 544 steers were entered in the 1994 Project. Sixty-seven producers entered cattle, with 34 being first time participants and 33 previous entrants.

Ralph Bridges, a Georgia Angus breeder and American Angus Association Board member, took the lead to generate

the enthusiastic Georgia involvement. "We want to know more about the carcass quality of the cattle we are producing so bulls we sell our commercial customers will sire calves to meet the needs of the consumer," says Bridges.

After successfully feeding cattle in the Midwest for a number of years, Bridges knows the extra profit to be realized through retained ownership with the right type of cattle.

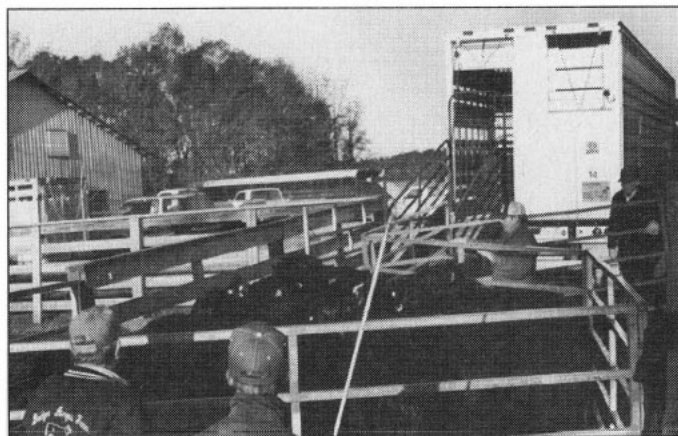
Another Georgia Angus breeder, Walt Helmreich, was also instrumental in encouraging entries. He invited Larry Dorsey, CAB Program director of cattle production programs, to accompany University of Georgia animal scientists on the program of a Georgia Angus Association field day. Larry explained the Project guidelines and encouraged involvement.

CAB Value Discovery Project news releases were printed in the Georgia Angus Association newsletter, and American Angus Association regional manager, David Gazda, personally encouraged participation and provided follow-up to breeders expressing interest.

"Georgia Angus breeders see the direction the industry is moving and realize to remain competitive in this market they must know as much about their cattle as possible," Gazda says.

The success rate of previous Georgia entrants was also an incentive. The 1992 overall Project grand champion was Little River Farms, Madison, Ga., and the 1993 reserve champion was Paul Ritchie, Comer, Ga.

Beyond generating interest, however, the shipping coordi-



Eighty-two steers from Georgia and South Carolina are loaded onto a semi to be taken to the Certified Angus Beef Program's Value Discovery Project at the Decatur County Feedyards, Oberlin, Kan. The steers were loaded at Bridges' Angus Farm, Lexington, Ga.

nation was a key. Trucking costs associated with sending just five or six head of cattle to Kansas made involvement in the Value Discovery Project prohibitive for some in the past. With Ralph Bridge's leadership, coordinated trucking arrangements were made and the Georgia entries were loaded into one truck at Bridge's farm.

What are the benefits of this effort? Gazda identifies several. "Their participation shows the rest of the country that cattle from Georgia and the Southeast will perform in the feedlot and be profitable cattle for both feeder and packer."

Bridges adds, "Our involvement lets our customers know we want to help them produce the best possible product. Then we can sell more Angus bulls."

Carcass data is another important benefit. "Although carcass data is only collected on five or six steers, the Project allows cattlemen to get some idea of where their program is from a carcass standpoint," says Gazda.

Both Bridges and Gazda recognize Georgia's Project involvement as a strong marketing tool. "Producing quality beef is our goal, and Angus cattle are in great demand," says Bridges. "We have to do all we can to stay No. 1."

Learning more about cattle's end product value is especially important as breeders target the commercial sector. "For those breeders who market a large number of commercial bulls annually, it is extremely important as these commercial cattlemen search out purebred breeders who have collected meaningful carcass data on their cattle," says Gazda.

The significance is demonstrated by Bridge's commitment to the Value Discovery Project. "I have offered to partner with my bull customers to send steers to the Project," he says. Bridges hopes to assist in gathering a full load from South Carolina for next year's Project.

Backed by vision and determination, Georgia Angus breeders have conquered the chal-

STORY BY JENNY STICKLEY, CAB PROGRAM

lenges others might have used as excuses and taken the lead as the largest state group to head west to discover value.

**1994 Georgia Value
Discovery Project Entries**

Ralph Bridges, Lexington

Royce Brogdon, R&R Angus
Farm, Atlanta

Donnie Courson, K&D Farms,
Douglas

Walt Helmreich, 6-H Angus
Farm, Crawford

Dewey Johnson, Johnson
Farm, Jefferson

Charlie and Lil McIntosh,
Lexington

Ben McLeod, McLeod Farms,
Cordele

*For more information about the
Value Discovery Project, con-
tact Kelly Frank, Project coordi-
nator, at (303) 362-4232.*

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