

Angus Stakes

by Shauna Rose Hermel, editor

Welcome to the July feeding options issue

We've taken a giant step as a breed publication. We've done away with the traditional June/July Herd Reference Edition, replacing it with separate June and July issues. And we've moved our feeding options theme to July, making the information more timely and more useful in decision making for this year's calf crop.

We've also added a few readers. This issue will mail to approximately 80,000 cattlemen, including subscribers to the *Angus Journal* and to the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. It's a testament to this breed's belief in cooperating with industry partners to allow our product to reach its full potential and thereby secure a place in the food industry for members of the American Angus Association and their partners.

It's an outcome of a quality mindset.

My advertising professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia would have had a fit if we had included the word "quality" in an advertisement, let alone used it as the theme to an advertising campaign. "What is quality?" he'd ask. "Instead of *quality*, use the words that define it."

He must have thrown a hissy when W. Edwards Demming's total quality management (TQM) concept gained attention in the United States in the 1980s.

The article beginning on page 44 describes the TQM approach in greater detail than I am going to here. In a nutshell, the TQM philosophy encourages every person affecting the production of a product to do whatever possible to maximize that product's quality. The philosophy also encourages forming long-term relationships with suppliers and buyers who place the same emphasis on quality.

Let's define *quality*

Still, my advertising professor did have a point. How can you work toward a quality goal if you don't know — or don't agree — what defines *quality*?

In 1979, when the American Angus Association launched the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program, it defined *quality* in the specifications outlined for certifying a carcass under the *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®)

brand (see www.certifiedangusbeef.com/cabprogram/html/fastfacts.html).

National beef quality audits (NBQAs) conducted by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) also help define our *quality* target (see May 2001, page 126; also available through a back-issue search on www.angusjournal.com).

If we define quality as meeting the specifications for the CAB brand and meeting the goals outlined in the 2000 NBQA, we have a place from which to start.

Before our product reaches its ultimate consumer, it is handled by many stakeholders — the commercial cattleman who uses genetics from a seedstock supplier, the cowboys who process the calves, the herd veterinarian, the trucker who hauls the calves to the backgrounding facility, the processing crew and the veterinarian there, the trucker who hauls the calves to the feedyard, the feedlot processing crew and veterinarian, the pen riders, the bunk managers, another hauling crew, and everyone who handles the animal and the carcass through the packing facility.

Each handler has the opportunity to amplify the quality of the product — or to destroy it.

Your contribution

Part of managing for quality is understanding your contribution to the mix. Cow-calf producers may feel far removed from the steak on a consumer's plate, but quality audits have shown that what you do to that animal on the ranch has a huge impact on the quality of that steak.

Vaccinations given incorrectly at or near birth can create abscesses that stay with the animal through harvest. Excitable cattle can lead to dark cutters and tough beef (see page 236). Proper vaccinations at the ranch can minimize health problems at the feedyard, and that can mean a difference in marbling scores and in profit or loss.

Everything you do to a calf affects its "quality." In building a quality mindset, we have to learn how each management technique affects the end product and do what we can to enhance that quality while

the animal is in our care. That includes choosing the next handler in the process.

Partners in quality

Sounds a little backward, doesn't it? A commodity mentality doesn't put any of the decision making in the hands of the seller. You put them up for sale, and whoever pays the highest price takes them home.

If you're a quality-minded seedstock producer and you want your bulls to realize their full potential, you should be looking for commercial producers with a quality mindset — producers who will have genetically good cow herds, the means to identify their calves and management techniques to start them out right. Otherwise, you've gone to a great deal of expense, and for what?

If you're a quality-minded commercial producer, you want to find a feedlot operator with a quality mindset — one who will maximize the value of the animal, not the yardage expense; one who will solve health problems before they are mortality figures; one who will tell you how your cattle perform.

The Association and CAB are actively developing programs to enable those with the same quality mindset to work together. CAB made the first step in bridging industry sectors when it began licensing packers and encouraging the differentiation in value of CAB brand product over commodity Choice product.

The Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) includes 70 feedlot partners who have dedicated themselves to feeding cattle to meet CAB standards. We are learning so much from these lots, including the fact that if you feed Angus cattle like they're Angus instead of like a commodity, they can be top performers in the feedlot and on the rail.

The Commercial Relations Department has put together a list of feedlots that have indicated they want to feed Angus cattle. It begins on page 186.

Commercial producers enrolled in the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS, see page 94) are taking the initiative a step further.

Witnessing the excitement for the product of those who have the opportunity to set it before the final consumer reveals the true value in a quality mindset (see pages 146, 152 and 157). The Association has pledged to help you do your part.



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Coming in August: our animal health focus, June Board meeting highlights and coverage of the Atlantic National