

Certified Angus Beef Program Expanded to Missouri

The first sale at 11 a.m. April 18 in Columbia marked initial expansion to Missouri of the Certified Angus Beef program that has been test-marketed in Ohio since last October.

"This is the first time in history that a breed association has attempted to merchandise cattle directly to the consuming public," says Louis "Mick" Colvin, American Angus Assn. director of the national Angus beef merchandising plan.

Launched at the Eastgate IGA Foodliner in Columbia, the program's initial success in the Show Me State was marked by a 30% increase in beef sales during the first week.

The first CAB customer at the store was Liz Menzel of 2500 Meadowlark Lane in Columbia. She was presented a gift certificate of Certified Angus Beef by store owner and manager Dale Cornelison and by CAB Director Mick Colvin. In the store parking lot were a pair of Angus steers to give customers a look at the origin of CAB.

Expansion Plans

The Certified Angus Beef in Missouri is supplied by Diggs Packing, Inc., of Columbia. The Diggs people are interested in expanding the program into other parts of the state. Plant manager Dale Diggs points out that "Missouri is the largest producer of Angus cattle of any state in the nation, and straight-bred Angus cattle are plentiful. Finished cattle are a little hard to come by these days, but a large percentage of those available are Angus."

"The new program will not increase the price of beef at the retail meat counter," according to Cornelison. "We are selling Certified Angus Beef at the same price we would regular USDA choice beef. All carcass beef sold in the market will be Certified Angus Beef," Cornelison adds.

Strict quality standards are set for the CAB program. "Approximately one-half of the beef that qualifies for USDA choice grade equals CAB standards," Colvin says.

Quality Standards

In addition, each Angus carcass must meet seven quality standards as determined by the USDA beef grader in the packing plant:

1. It must have at least modest (average choice) marbling.
2. It must fall within the "A" maturity range.

3. It must make yield grade 3 or better for prime and no higher than the mid-point of 3 grade for choice.
4. Lean must have "fine" texture.
5. Marbling must be "fine" to "medium" texture.
6. Meat must be moderately firm, with no indication of softness.
7. Color of lean must be slightly dark red or lighter.


Identity Maintained

Angus cattle used for CAB are identified and certified at the packing plant, with Angus identity maintained from live animal to the individual retail cut on the supermarket shelf. The carcasses are quality graded and rolled either choice or prime; then those carcasses that meet or exceed the seven Certified Angus Beef specifications are stamped by the federal grader with USDA's "Accepted as Specified" stamp. The "accepted" carcasses are eligible to be rolled by the packer with the trademark "Certified Angus Beef."

The CAB program was initiated to combat consumer complaints of inconsistent quality in beef purchased at the supermarket. The USDA choice grade today, which many retailers feature, contains beef that several years ago would have graded USDA good. CAB comes only from the upper portion of the USDA choice and prime grade—and only from younger animals that grade "A" maturity.

Association Role

The American Angus Assn. administers the program but does not take ownership of the cattle or beef. The Angus are obtained by the packer, who supplies beef directly to the retailer. Both packers and retailers sign an agreement with the American Angus Assn. explaining the program. To insure that all provisions of the agreement are being followed, the packer and retailer are subject to unannounced inspections by a CAB representative.

The program is available to all interested retailers, and plans are being made for expansion in the near future. The large supply of Angus cattle available in Missouri, coupled with the ability of Diggs Packing to supply larger quantities of Certified Angus Beef, could possibly expand the program into St. Louis and Jefferson City as well as to other parts of the state, states Colvin. 



The first Certified Angus Beef customer in Missouri, Liz Menzel of Columbia, is awarded a package of Certified Angus steaks by Eastgate IGA Foodliner store owner and manager Dale Cornelison.

A program to merchandise Certified Angus Beef (CAB) to Missouri Consumers proved highly successful, as beef sales increased 30% within the first week.