

# Becoming Leaders From Pasture to Plate

*Beef Leaders Institute provides front-row seat to the beef value chain.*

*by Peyton Schmitt, American Angus Association*

Most careers are built on an individual's ability to specialize in a particular area — accounting, law, medicine — but few require proficiency in as many areas as are required of a cattleman.

While a cattleman does not necessarily need to be a veterinarian, he or she still must understand animal health. They do not need to be a USDA certified grader, but they must understand what makes a Prime carcass. A cow-calf producer does not have to be able to run a feedyard, but they must understand the traits that allow cattle to excel in one.

To be successfully involved in even one step of something as multifaceted as the beef industry, one must understand the entire picture. The annual Beef Leaders Institute (BLI) provides American Angus Association members with a front row seat to the beef value chain from start to finish.

Open to members ages 25-45, the event allows the breed's outstanding young leaders to experience the industry beyond their operations. BLI is hosted by the American Angus Association and funded by the Angus Foundation and Certified Angus Beef (CAB).

The 2022 Beef Leaders Institute was hosted June 13-17, and kicked off by welcoming 26 young beef enthusiasts to the Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo.

“Educational opportunities like Beef Leaders Institute are incredibly valuable for our members,”

says Jaclyn Upperman, Angus Foundation executive director. “We are proud to support programs that build strong leaders for the Angus breed.”

Excitement hung in the air nearly as thick as the midwestern humidity as the BLI class of 2022 entered the doors of 3201 Frederick Ave. Mark McCully, Association CEO, provided the group with a welcome and an Association overview to kick off the morning. He led participants through introductions, each sharing their background and one thing they were eager to learn more about throughout the week. Despite first-day jitters, attendees cracked jokes that dissipated the feelings of nervousness and anticipation blanketing the room.

Like studying the inner workings of a clock, the BLI class spent the day in Saint Joseph learning from the employees who make the gears of the American Angus Association turn. Attendees put faces to the voices on the other end of the phone as they met the customer service representatives who assist them with registration questions and updating herd records. They heard from Kelli



Jerry Cassady, director of member services, gives Beef Leaders Institute attendees a tour of the American Angus Association office.

Retallick-Riley, Angus Genetics Inc. president, and Brett Spader, Angus Media president, on the ways their entities are working to best serve the Association's membership. Attendees marveled at the historic Angus artwork lining the walls of the office. The day concluded with the first of many steak dinners as attendees visited about where they call home, their operations and what the rest of the week had in store.

## Connecting the dots

The next morning the group loaded up on the charter bus and headed to Herington, Kan., to study a different link in the beef value chain. Located on an old army air corps base, Tiffany Cattle Company is co-owned by brothers Shane and Shawn Tiffany, and feeds roughly 80,000 head per year. Ninety-eight percent of these cattle are custom fed, and



Twenty-six young beef enthusiasts from across the country attended the 2022 BLI June 13-17. The experience is open to members ages 25-45 and provides insight to all segments of the beef industry.

98% of them are black-hided. When explaining the intricacies of their business, Shane Tiffany shared that they “don’t do anything without thinking about it.”

“These cattle are on as high a plane of nutrition as about any human — besides maybe an Olympic athlete,” he said.

Tiffany helped connect the dots of the industry, expressing the importance of understanding each phase of cattle production.

“As a cow-calf producer, you don’t always know how your cattle feed, but the guy who bought them last year sure does,” Tiffany said.

It was clear attendees valued Tiffany’s perspective, posing probing questions up until the bus had to depart for the airport. The stop, while contrasting starkly with the previous day’s time spent under the roof of the Association office, continued to help paint the bigger picture of the beef industry.

Tensions were a bit high on the trip to the airport after a canceled flight forced the previous year’s BLI class to travel the 14 hours to Ohio by charter bus. Fortunately, this group landed

at the Baltimore Airport for their connecting flight with no problems. With an hour layover, attendees had just enough time to grab a burger from The Flying Dog Tap House, a restaurant whose beef is supplied by Roseda Black Angus Farm. Roseda Black Angus Farm happens to be managed by 2022 BLI attendee Curtis Bryant’s parents, Dean and Marcia Bryant, in Maryland.

“As soon as my dad heard we’d be coming through the airport, he wanted to do something for the group,” Curtis said. “We like to host people, and we like to feed people — that’s just how we are.”

His eagerness was replicated by both of his parents.

“We probably enjoyed it even more than they [the attendees] did,” laughs Dean Bryant.

The first stop on the Ohio leg of the trip was Select Sires, Inc., in Plain City. Currently the largest global artificial insemination (AI) cooperative, they focus on providing customers with the world’s best genetics to meet their specific needs. The BLI class explored the Angus sires offered throughout the company’s

history and the ways these bulls influenced the breed. They also visited one of their barns to learn more about the collection process and see some of the sires at the facility.

## A quality product

After exploring the influence of access to high-quality genetics, the next stop touched the opposite end of the spectrum as attendees toured Hudson Meat Company in Columbus, Ohio.

The company specializes in custom *sous vide* cooking for the retail and foodservice industry and offers a variety of CAB products. Owner Dan Emmenegger explained the benefits of offering a *sous vide* product, and attendees were eager to learn about the role value-added products play in marketing CAB.

“Certified Angus Beef truly offers the quality product we want to supply to our customers,” Emmenegger says. “With the *sous vide* cooking method, we produce consistent results every time.”

Anticipation grew as the bus approached the town of Wooster,

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Ohio. The next stop was the Culinary Center, located at the CAB headquarters. From world-renowned chefs and walls that fold open to reveal mouthwatering meals, to an on-site meat lab, it's easy to understand why folks speak highly of a trip to the Culinary Center.

Throughout the two days spent in Wooster, attendees were immersed in all things connected to “the brand.” They kicked off with a welcome from John Stika, CAB president, and enjoyed some healthy competition with meat scientist Daniel Clark and Director of Supply Management and Analysis Paul Dykstra, as they led them through a session on the true value of a carcass. The BLI class broke into teams and had to correctly identify how value is distributed throughout the carcass.

The next day — and another delicious CAB steak dinner later — attendees suited up in the meat lab for a beef fabrication demonstration. Clark led the group through the ways the brand helps merchandise the entire beef carcass through value-added cuts. Soon the class had the opportunity to take a turn at the butcher block themselves, cutting their own steaks. Jokes and laughter circulated the meat lab as attendees acquired skills they planned to take back to their own kitchens.

“It was a one-of-a-kind experience learning at CAB,” said Curtis Bryant on his time in Wooster. “And the people you learn with and the relationships you create in this short week are hard to replicate.”

As the trip came to a close, it was evident on the smiling faces of all attendees that they wouldn't soon forget this experience.

“I chose to attend BLI because I wanted to broaden my horizons,”



BLI attendees spent time in the meat lab to better understand the value of the carcass while at the Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio. The group watched a beef fabrication demonstration, and then had the chance to cut their own steaks.



said Margo Lehn, Neb. “I wanted to learn and have more experience in different parts of the beef industry. I knew it would help make me a better resource.”

After a week fully immersing themselves in the industry, the BLI class realized how the cattle they raise influence the industry well beyond their pasture.

“We look forward to this event each year,” said Kara Lee, director of producer engagement for CAB. “BLI provides a unique opportunity to explore all facets of the beef industry, while also learning from and forging connections with fellow attendees.”

Often BLI class members go on to be friends and resources to each

other well beyond their week spent in the Midwest. The group of emerging leaders ended the week equipped with a greater understanding of each step on the path that takes their beef to the plates of consumers.

From the comradery amongst the group and industry connections made to the ideas sparked and delicious meals devoured, it was clear there was much more than knowledge gained throughout the week. **AJ**