



Award-Winning Feeders Turn Up the Volume

Certified Angus Beef LLC recognizes three feedlot partners for meeting brand specifications with the largest volume of cattle.

BY CHRISTY JOHNSON



PHOTOS BY STEVE SUTHER

Every Angus-influenced steer or heifer at El Oro, regardless of ownership, is enrolled in the FLP upon arrival or at reimplant time, says Jim Sauter, manager of El Oro Cattle Feeders.

“World of Opportunity” couldn’t have been a more fitting theme for this year’s *Certified Angus Beef™* Annual Conference in Whistler, British Columbia, Aug. 24-26. An area that has experienced substantial growth and has opportunity for even greater growth is feeder-packer relations, specifically through the Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB).

This year marked the first time licensed feedlots were honored during the CAB Annual Awards Banquet. Three Top Volume Feeder awards recognized licensed feedlots that focused on quality and produced the largest volume of CAB® carcasses from June 1, 1999, to May 31, 2000.

“Congratulations to El Oro Cattle Feeders, McPherson County Feeders and Darnall

Feedlot for their commitment to producing a high-quality product for consumers,” says CAB President Jim Riemann.

El Oro Cattle Feeders Moses Lake, Wash.

The Top Volume Feeder is El Oro Cattle Feeders, a division of Agri Beef Co., Moses Lake, Wash. Agri Beef’s largest Northwest feedlot has a one-time capacity of 38,000 head. Within a 10-mile radius, El Oro’s two satellite feedyards — Coulee Cattle Feeders and Par 4 — have a combined capacity of 22,000 head.

El Oro has been committed to the FLP since becoming licensed in March 1999. To date, they have led the way in cattle numbers, enrolling nearly 10,000 head. Of the enrolled cattle, approximately 4,000 have been harvested, with the

balance of the cattle currently on feed.

Every Angus and Angus-cross steer or heifer at El Oro, regardless of ownership, is enrolled in the FLP upon arrival or at reimplant time, says Jim Sauter, manager of El Oro Cattle Feeders. “It’s just part of our program.”

Eric DeTrollo, CAB quality assurance officer at El Oro, keeps track of all enrolled cattle at the feedyard. In July approximately 40 pens were enrolled, 35% of those being retained-ownership cattle.

Sauter says El Oro is trying to take some of the risk out of retained ownership by allowing producers to retain as little as 10% interest in their cattle in order to receive carcass and performance information. This option is available at all Agri Beef yards, but it has been applied in earnest at El Oro. Some of the yard’s highest CAB acceptance rates, some higher than 40%, are from retained-ownership cattle.

Due to its unique location, some nontraditional

management practices go into the daily activities at El Oro, one being fugitive-dust-control practices enforced by state environmental agencies. Because of an average annual rainfall of less than 8 inches (in.), each afternoon trucks must spray water into the pens to minimize dust.

During the summer, electric fence also helps minimize dust by reducing pen size from the 225 square feet (sq. ft.)/head allowed in the winter months to 60 sq. ft./head. Sauter says it probably has a positive effect on cattle health, reducing dust-related respiratory problems.

El Oro takes advantage of alternative feedstuffs to help keep its cost of gain competitive with Midwest feedyards. Taking advantage of its location near several potato plants, the yard uses potato byproducts in addition to corn and barley. Cattle are fed three times daily.

McPherson County Feeders

Marquette, Kan.

Located in central Kansas,



Allan Sents has been pleasantly surprised at the performance of high-percentage Angus at McPherson County Feeders.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MCPHERSON COUNTY FEEDERS



Gary Darnall, owner of Darnall Feedlot, Harrisburg, Neb., has been a longtime proponent of returning information to the cow-calf producer. That management emphasis led to the feedlot's participation in the FLP.

McPherson County Feeders, Marquette, earned second place in the Top Volume Feeder category. Owner Allan Sents has been pleasantly surprised by the performance of the high-percentage Angus cattle.

McPherson County Feeders markets approximately 20,000 head annually with a one-time

capacity of 9,000 head. The yard's customers are mainly stocker-feeders, and that group has been receptive to the FLP.

Sents says he has been pleased with the cattle handling, marketing and sorting McPherson County has been able to accomplish so far, but he recently decided to

increase the commitment to quality by adding new processing facilities that improved sorting capabilities.

"We're trying to get positioned to make the next step," Sents says. "I think there's going to be a shift in our customer base as we transition to focus on tying back to the cow-calf producers."

Darnall Feedlot

Harrisburg, Neb.

Darnall Feedlot, located near Harrisburg, Neb., was one of the first feedlots to partner with CAB, becoming licensed in February 1999. Since that time, Darnall Feedlot has enrolled more than 5,000 head in the program, of which some 1,000 head had been harvested by this summer.

Darnall Feedlot's commitment earned the third spot in the Top Volume Feeder award category. Family-owned and -operated, Darnall Feedlot

has a one-time capacity of 14,000 head. Ultrasound is used extensively in cattle management at Darnall. Specifically, cattle are sorted into different outcome groups based on ultrasound data to maximize returns.

Gary Darnall, owner, has been a longtime proponent of returning information to the cow-calf producer, and that led to the feedlot's participation in the FLP.

"I truly believe that if we are going to progress in the beef industry and have a more-consistent-quality product," he says, "the key is going to be the rancher's having the knowledge to make those adjustments in genetics and management."



Editor's note: *Christy Johnson is Supply Development marketing manager for Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Angus Association.*