Off the Hoof, on the Rail

Junior members learn carcass value at the NJAS.

Story and photos by **Corinne Blender**

► Above: After being weighed and tagged, carcass steers are loaded on the truck to be shipped for harvesting and data collection.

► After tattoo numbers and weights are taken, carcass data collection tags are placed in the steers' ears for identification at the packing plant.

► Right: Mary Dawn Kendrick, Southlake, Texas, watches as her steer is tagged for identification at the packing plant. Juniors had the opportunity to enter steers in state groups of three for the first time at this year's competition.

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members are paying close attention to carcass data when they are considering genetics for their own herds. This is evident by the number of juniors competing in the carcass steer contest at the 2001 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Denver, Colo.

"The carcass steer competition provides the opportunity for youth involved in seedstock production to bring the learning process full circle from purebred cow-calf sector to the final marketing of finished steers," Clint Walenciak, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) assistant director of packing, says.

Mary Dawn Kendrick, Southlake, Texas, has been entering steers from her herd for the last five years. She says she has been using the carcass competition as an evaluation tool.

"We base our selection on information from the past contests. It has been very important to me because the data it provides helps me to improve my herd," Kendrick says.

She adds that it is a good way to receive relatively low-cost carcass data for her herd.

Closer to the consumer

Improving a herd based on carcass evaluation has played a key role for producers who want to add value to their end product.

Participating in the NJAS carcass competition "brings those involved one step closer to the ultimate customer in the beef industry, the consumer," Walenciak says. "It allows them to understand why things in the seedstock sector, like carcass EPDs (expected progeny differences), are important to the final product and where some of that information is gathered."

Many NJAA members have learned just how important their customers are to their final product.

"Paying close attention to carcass data helps [me] understand why most cattlemen and -women are in the business to produce a quality end product," Brandon New, Leavenworth, Kan., says. "Most breeders

RANK	ENTRY	EXHIBITOR	WT. (lb.)	HCW (lb.)	DRESS (%)	FT (in.)	REA (sq. in.)	KPH (%)	QG	YG	CAB®	INDEX
1	31	Brandon New	1,133	675	59.58	0.20	13.1	2.0	PR-	1.77	Prime	103.40
2	8	Natalie Thomas	1,074	640	59.59	0.30	12.0	1.5	CH0	2.14	Y	102.48
3	27	Tammy Ettredge	1,096	622	56.75	0.30	12.0	1.5	CH0	2.07	Y	102.48
4	14	Patrick Taliaferro	1,173	738	62.92	0.40	13.1	2.0	CH+	2.51	Y	102.22
5	25	Robby Shofner	1,096	660	60.22	0.25	13.4	1.5	CH-	1.65		100.25
6	11	Andrew Bagley	1,180	733	62.12	0.50	14.3	2.0	CH0	2.36	Y	97.52
7	13	Garrett Lampe	1,100	664	60.36	0.40	12.9	2.0	CH-	2.30		96.67
8	28	Flinton McCabe	1,000	649	64.90	0.45	11.4	2.0	PR-	2.84	Prime	95.41
9	32	Hannah McCabe	1,090	679	62.29	0.50	13.1	2.0	CH0	2.54	Y	94.28
10	35	Brandon New	1,167	705	60.41	0.20	12.3	1.5	CH0	2.04	Y	94.20
	1	Rachael Vaassen	1,098	674	61.38	0.50	12.6	2.0	CH-	2.68		
	2	Julie Thelen	1,125	667	59.29	0.20	11.5	2.0	CH-	2.25		
	3	Renee Thelen	1,152	705	61.20	0.50	13.2	2.0	CH0	2.61	Y	
	4	Patrick Taliaferro	1,185	731	61.69	0.30	10.8	2.0	CH-	2.97		
	5	Ray Ramberg	1,167	709	60.75	0.55	12.4	2.0	CH-	3.00		
	7	Mary Kendrick	1,435	892	62.16	0.70	13.8	2.0	CH+	3.62	Y	
	10	Kera Robinson	1,131	701	61.98	0.40	13.4	2.0	SE+	2.28		
	12	Jared Thomas	1,111	669	60.22	0.20	11.5	2.0	CH-	2.26		
	15	Ben Woycik	1,325	858	64.75	0.40	13.4	2.0	CH+	2.87	Y	
	16	Robbie Smith	1,237	793	64.11	0.80	12.8	2.0	CH0	3.82	Y	
	18	Ashley Kuehn	1,226	755	61.58	0.50	12.7	2.0	PR-	2.96	Prime	
	19	Natalie Thomas	1,048	618	58.97	0.20	11.1	1.5	SE+	2.10		
	21	Coye Crenshaw-Kleve	1,234	746	60.45	0.40	12.0	2.0	CH0	2.89	Y	
	22	Robbie Smith	1,290	804	62.33	0.50	13.1	2.0	CH0	3.01	Y	
	23	Flinton McCabe	996	602	60.44	0.20	9.9	1.5	CH+	2.42	Y	
	24	Ethan McCabe	1,040	621	59.71	0.30	10.2	1.5	CH-	2.65		
	26	Ethan McCabe	1,042	654	62.76	0.20	12.5	2.0	SE-	1.89		
	30	Jared Thomas	972	558	57.41	0.25	9.8	1.5	SE-	2.41		
	33	Mary Kendrick	1,389	869	62.56	0.85	13.2	2.0	CH0	4.10		
	34	Gretchen Ettredge	1,298	740	57.01	0.30	13.5	1.5	SE+	2.04		

won't make money raising, showing and selling show animals. So everyone strives to produce and make money other ways, such as selling seedstock that produce progeny with carcass characteristics that will hang carcasses on the rail that grade 85% CAB® (*Certified Angus Beef* ®)."

For New, carcass evaluation has been the key to his success, both at the NJAS and when selling calves from his own herd. New's family manages New Haven Angus, a family-owned operation of about 140 cows.

"The steers that I take for the carcass competition are the bottom end of the bulls that we feel won't make satisfiable production animals for our commercial bull buyers," New says. "We ultrasound all of our yearling bulls, steers and heifers, and we use that data for our selection."

Winning streak

New is a familiar name in the top-10 placings at the NJAS carcass competition. He knows the performance history of his calves, and he knows his selection criteria. He won the 2001 NJAS carcass competition with a steer that graded Prime and was a Yield Grade (YG) 1.77. His second steer rounded out the top 10.

"I was fortunate enough to win this year and have placed in the top 10 every year I have done this competition," New says.

For the first time in contest history, junior members were allowed to enter state groups in the carcass steer contest. New and Coye Crenshaw-Kleve, Manhattan, represented Kansas, claiming first place in the new division.

► The showring is not the only place junior members exhibit their cattle. The carcass steer competition has become a popular event at the NJAS for junior members who do not have an animal to exhibit in the showring.

Table 2: Group Winners	
State group	Group score
Kansas #2	86.79
Kansas #4	81.51
Michigan	80.65
Kansas #3	46.79
Kansas #5	34.78
Texas	34.35
Kansas #1	15.25

The carcass steer contest has meant more to New than just winning.

"I enter steers in the competition because, at New Haven Angus, we pay particular attention to those traits and to add value to the livestock we sell. And this is another way to get data on our herd," New adds. "It has shown that, by stacking pedigrees for carcass characteristics, a more consistent product is developed."

Competition

To compete, steers born between Jan. 1 and July 1, 2000, had to meet the minimum live weight requirement of 950 lb. After being weighed and tagged at the fairgrounds, carcass steers were loaded on the truck and shipped to ConAgra Beef Co.'s Greeley, Colo., plant for harvesting and data collection. To place, carcasses had to grade Choice or Prime with YG 3.99 or better.

Premiums were $1,000 for first, $750 for second, $500 for third, $400 for fourth, $350 for fifth, $300 for sixth, $250 for seventh, $200 for eighth, $150 for ninth, $100 for tenth, and $50 for all other qualifying carcasses. Carcasses earned an additional 25% premium for meeting CAB specifications and an additional 25% premium if the steer and it's dam were enrolled in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program. ⒶⒿ