

2021

NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS SHOW

Carcass Merit Champions

The carcass steer contest helps Angus juniors see a bigger picture of the beef industry.

by Amber Wahlgren, American Angus Association

Young Angus members are ultimately in the business of producing beef. The carcass steer contest hosted at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) gives National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members a chance to see how their animals rank for carcass merit and just what it takes to produce high-quality beef.

The carcass steer contest is unique to the NJAS since exhibitors don't exactly "show" these steers. They

send them off for harvest, evaluation and grading following check-in. Within a matter of days, the carcass merit of these steers was reported. The top steers were announced at the NJAS awards ceremony July 16 in Grand Island, Neb.

"The NJAS has an incredible learning opportunity for junior members that participate in the carcass contest," says Jaclyn Upperman, American Angus Association director of events and education. "Junior members feed and manage the steers to attempt to grade the highest quality carcass they can. Eighty percent graded *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®)

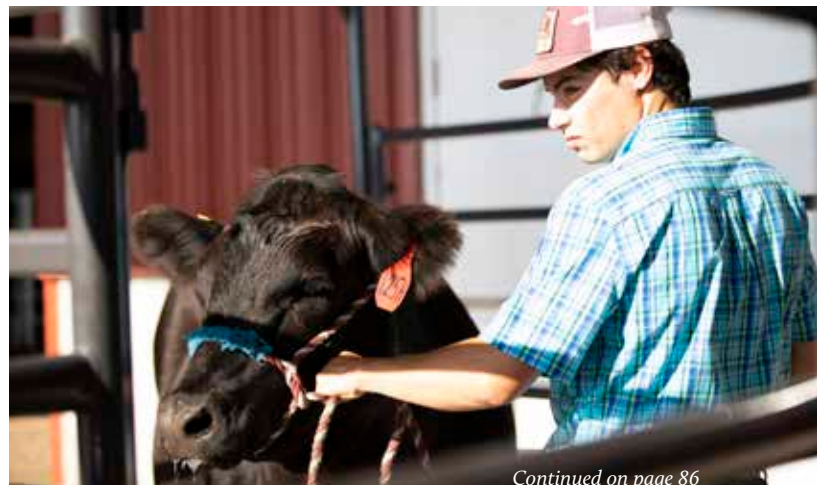
and 20% graded Prime."

Twenty-six entries from nine states competed in the carcass class, confirming the Angus legacy will continue for generations to come. This contest shows the versatility of the Angus breed and how these cattle can be beneficial to any producer.

The top steers' exhibitors were awarded contest premiums in addition to carcass premiums. Along with prize money, contestants received carcass data back to influence future selection decisions.

Carcass contest champions

The grand champion carcass steer was exhibited by Aubree McCurry, Burrton, Kan. Her steer graded Prime with a yield grade of 2.8. The steer had a 12.4 square inch (sq. in.) ribeye



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area and had a hot-carcass weight of 803 pounds (lb.), which allowed the steer to qualify for the CAB brand. McCurry received a \$30 per hundredweight (cwt.) grid premium.

Ethan Vanderwert, Columbia, Mo., was awarded reserve grand champion carcass steer. His steer graded Prime with a yield grade of 2.9. The steer had a ribeye area of 13.8 sq. in. and a hot-carcass weight of 774 lb. His steer also qualified for CAB, and Vanderwert was awarded a \$28 cwt. grid premium.

Kelsey Vandenberghe, Cleveland, N.D., was awarded grand champion bred-and-owned (B&O) carcass steer. Her steer graded Prime with a yield grade of 2.6. He had a ribeye area of 12.3 sq. in. and a hot-carcass weight of 750 lb. Her steer qualified for CAB, and Vandenberghe was awarded a \$28 cwt. grid premium.

Alexis Vandenberghe, Cleveland, N.D., was awarded reserve grand champion B&O carcass steer. Her steer graded Choice with a yield grade of 3.2. He had a ribeye area of 12.5 sq. in. and a hot-carcass weight of 753 lb. Her steer qualified for CAB, and Vandenberghe was awarded a \$16 cwt. grid premium.

State group was another aspect of the contest. Three steers were grouped together by no fewer than two exhibitors. Kansas won the first-

place state group. The Kansas team was composed of Aubree McCurry and Avery Mullen, Ulysses.

Winning second place in the state group carcass contest was North Dakota Group 1. This team consisted of Alexis and Kelsey Vandenberghe.

Third place in the state group carcass contest went to North Dakota Group 2. This team consisted of Trace and Kadence Spickler, Glenfield, and Colton Green, Maddock.

2021 NJAS Carcass Contest state group results

Rank	Team	Name	Prem. (\$/hd.)	State Avg.
1	KS	Aubree McCurry	\$240.90	
1	KS	Avery Mullen	\$150.48	
1	KS	Aubree McCurry	\$150.29	\$180.56
2	ND 1	Kelsey Vandenberghe	\$210.00	
2	ND 1	Kelsey Vandenberghe	\$146.68	
2	ND 1	Alexis Vandenberghe	\$120.48	\$159.05
3	ND 2	Trace Spickler	\$172.14	
3	ND 2	Colton Green	\$92.10	
3	ND 2	Kadence Spickler	\$17.26	\$93.83

2021 NJAS Carcass Contest Results

Rank	Name	State Group	Live wt. (lb.)	Dressing %	HCW (lb.)	Fat (in.)
1	Aubree McCurry	KS	1,335	60.1%	803	0.32
2	Ethan Vanderwert		1,240	62.4%	774	0.56
3	Kelsey Vandenberghe	ND 1	1,280	58.6%	750	0.28
4	Trace Spickler	ND 2	1,455	62.3%	906	0.44
5	Mckinley Stoller		1,340	60.2%	807	0.36
6	Jorja Green		1,285	61.7%	793	0.56
7	Avery Mullen	KS	1,365	61.2%	836	0.44
8	Aubree McCurry	KS	1,295	61.1%	791	0.36
9	Kelsey Vandenberghe	ND 1	1,240	62.3%	772	0.44
10	Bennett Gordon		1,230	62.0%	763	0.36





Kelsey Vandenberghe, Cleveland, N.D., (left) won grand champion bred-and-owned carcass steer. Also pictured is Curtis Long, Briarwood Angus Farms, presenting.



Aubree McCurry, Burrton, Kan., (left) won grand champion carcass steer. Also pictured is Long, presenting.



North Dakota juniors won reserve champion state carcass group. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey and Alexis Vandenberghe, Cleveland.



Placing in the carcass contest top 10 (from left) are Trace Spickler, Glenfield, N.D., fourth place; Mckinley Stoller, Palisade, Neb., fifth place; and Avery Mullen, Ulysses, Kan., seventh place.

REA (sq. in.)	QG	YG	CAB®	Grid prem. (\$/cwt.)	Carcass prem. (\$/hd.)
12.4	PR	2.8	Yes	\$30.00	\$240.90
13.8	PR	2.9	Yes	\$28.00	\$216.72
12.3	PR	2.6	Yes	\$28.00	\$210.00
15.0	CH	2.7	Yes	\$19.00	\$172.14
13.2	CH	2.7	Yes	\$21.00	\$169.47
13.9	CH	2.9	Yes	\$19.00	\$150.67
12.0	CH	3.4	Yes	\$18.00	\$150.48
12.4	CH	2.9	Yes	\$19.00	\$150.29
13.7	CH	2.6	Yes	\$19.00	\$146.68
12.5	CH	2.7	Yes	\$19.00	\$144.97



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Getting Paid By The Carcass

NJAS entrants learn where value comes from.

by Miranda Reiman, senior associate editor

When feeding a load of home-raised cattle, the paycheck is the ultimate report card on all the ranch-level decisions.

Members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) who participated in the carcass steer contest had that same experience at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in July.

“To those of you who entered a steer in the contest, you are the cattle feeder, and you have sold your animal to the packer,” said Paul Dykstra, assistant director of supply management and analysis for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, during the educational session.

He has coordinated the carcass data portion of the contest for a number of years and worked on behalf of the young breeders who sold to the JBS plant in Grand Island, Neb., this year.

There are two main ways to purchase cattle, Dykstra explained: live and on a carcass basis.

“There are packer buyers driving around to the same suppliers on a weekly basis, bidding on the cattle live or on a carcass weight basis — as they stand in the pen,” he said. “This is the bid system that exists today.”

Approximately 20% to 25% of cattle are sold in this manner.

“The price is the same for every animal in the pen, which is entirely unlike what you’re participating in with the contest,” Dykstra said. “In the grid system, you will each be paid based on carcass merit.”

How is price derived in a grid system? The equation accounts for three main points: dressing percentage, quality grade and yield grade (see sidebar).

“Not every animal is the same, and there’s more variation within breed than among breeds,” Dykstra said.

A Choice yield grade (YG) 3 is par, or the industry average. Genetics and management both matter, as feeders try to get the right balance of finish without too many “out” or YG4 and 5s, he said.

To start earning premiums on a pen of cattle, typically the percentage of animals grading Choice and Prime must exceed the plant average for that week. They have to be better than the average of what a packer can go buy live, Dykstra explained.

“Most of the grids you can sell on are advantageous, especially for cattle of our kind,” Dykstra said.

In 2020, the nationwide CAB acceptance was 36% of all predominately Angus type, black-hided cattle; but he encouraged the students to aim higher.

“I’d hope as individual Angus breeders, you’d shoot for more than average,” Dykstra said.

Cow-calf producers have multiple traits that require focus, and a recent survey of U.S. producers shows marbling ranks about seventh in a list of selection traits.

Dykstra said that makes sense when considering reproduction and mothering ability.

Dressing percentage.

This measure is affected by everything from gut fill (less is better) and external fat (more is advantageous) to muscling, age, sex and breed.

Quality grade. The amount of intramuscular fat, or marbling, determines whether carcasses will be USDA Prime (the best), Choice, Select or Standard. It’s also a main factor in making CAB.

Yield grade (YG). This accounts for the amount of closely trimmed retail cuts from a carcass. Ribeye area and backfat are measured between the 12th and 13th rib and combined with kidney pelvic heart fat (KPH) for the final calculation.

“But let’s keep some pressure on [marbling],” he added, “because it’s really important when animals go to the packers and we’re talking about deriving value.” **AJ**

Editor’s note: To brush up on CAB’s 10 specifications, grading trends or carcass quality information, visit www.CABcattle.com.