

FEEDING FOR YOUR GOALS

NJAA members learn how nutrition can support their goals in the show ring.

by Taylor Edwards, Angus Beef Bulletin intern

Every great superhero works alongside a loyal sidekick. Four-legged allies rely on young cattlemen in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) to remain healthy, strong and ready for the ring. NJAA members showed up in their red, white and blue attire July 4 for a hands-on learning opportunity with BioZyme.

This educational clinic hosted during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Grand Island, Neb., gave juniors a deeper understanding of nutrition programs.

“There are all kinds of things going on, but the fact that you took a few minutes to come listen to us talk and learn a little bit of something tells me you’re all trying to get better, and I think that’s a good thing,” said Chris Cassady, BioZyme senior manager of beef technical sales.

As an Angus breeder and past



junior board member, Cassady said he was excited by the turnout.

The session started with a simple question, “Who’s involved in feeding your animals at home?”

Nearly every hand was in the air — an indication that these young producers are taking responsibility for their animals.

Key nutrients

As he set the stage, Cassady stressed the base of a well-rounded diet is water.

“There’s a rule of thumb. For every 100 pounds your cow weighs, you need a gallon of water, at least,” he said.

Next, Cassady analyzed the nutrients that should be prioritized, with the first being protein.

Protein supports muscle growth and development in younger cattle, which is why Cassady said knowing the production stage of an animal is so important.

An often-overlooked nutrient is fiber, he added. Cattle usually receive this from hay or other forages, but fiber is important to remember when creating a program because this is where energy comes from. Energy gives animals the ability to work and maintain basic body functions.

Another important factor

to calculate into a program is carbohydrates. These are another source of energy in the cattle’s diet, giving them the ability to work and maintain basic body functions.

“When I think of carbohydrates, I think of corn, soybeans, wheat,” Cassady said, “all those different things that bring energy to the diet.”

Often lumped together, vitamins and minerals are small but mighty parts of any diet, helping keep up immune function or supporting the nervous system.

“Think about zinc, copper, manganese, iodine, biotin and all the different antioxidants that can help your calf do the best on show day,” Cassady said. “Vitamins and minerals come in a nutritional program in parts per million, so a little bit goes a long way.”

There’s one last nutrient Cassady encouraged juniors to focus on: fat.

“Fats are still a really important part, because we use fats to increase the energy level of the nutrition we provide for the animals,” he said.

Not only do these increase energy levels, but they condition the diet and encourage animals to eat.

Additives

Competitors can also use additives to gain a competitive edge in the

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show ring. Cassidy said while these are commonly used, it's important to remember first and foremost that balance is key.

"Most of the time when you purchase a complete feed, in a bag, it's already balanced. So sometimes the more you add, you throw that product out of balance," Cassidy said.

Cassidy said a popular option is a prebiotic, which is used to help build gut function, so cattle can utilize feed more efficiently.

To optimize digestion, absorption and feed utilization, Cassidy recommends cattle get 2.5 grams per day.

These young cattlemen can take these tips back home to become the superheros of feeding their calves. **AJ**

THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE — AND SNACK

Armed with a delicious treat, juniors are prepared to apply their knowledge.

After covering the basics of nutrition, Chris Cassidy put the juniors to the test. They divided into teams and had 10 minutes to create a nutrition program that they presented to the group.

"Part of this is that you're going to be potentially working with somebody you've never met, so take that as an opportunity to meet some people," he said.

The focus of these nutrition programs, he said, was show cattle, since the NJAS is what brought these juniors together.

To create their nutrition program — and a tasty snack — juniors used pretzels, cheerios, peanuts, M&M's®, sprinkles and Lucky Charms™. Each item represented one of the vital nutrients Cassidy discussed.

Providing this clinic allowed NJAA members to learn that "nutrition is all about intent, working toward a goal or a vision," Cassidy said.

While there's no perfect ratio, juniors can leave NJAS with the knowledge Cassidy shared about continuing to work toward their goals in the ring.

