

LEAD IN

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Angus cattle for generations have been the undisputed leader in the production of high quality, well-marbled beef that has a minimum of fat cover. And although that hasn't changed, we can't afford to generally take this important trait for granted.

Even within the Angus breed there are variations in the ability to produce marbling at an early age without first producing outside fat. Although some carcass work has been done on Angus cattle in the past, most breeders have ignored the marbling trait assuming that it was there. Besides, we went through a long period when it appeared that few if any cattle feeders worried much about marbling, certainly not enough to pay for it.

All that is beginning to change, thanks in great measure to the success of the Certified Angus Beef program. The program proved there is indeed a market for a quality branded beef product, and that retailers, food service people and consumers are willing to pay extra to get it. Now one of the nation's major beef packers is producing and branding beef with house grade quality standards similar to those of CAB and others could well follow the CAB lead.

It all adds up to a major change in thinking about how to best merchandise beef. Everyone recognizes the need for leanness and close trim, and now more people every day have come to accept the Angus position that quality is an equally important consideration to many consumers. As a result, many cattle producers, feeders and packers want to know if the bulls, the feeder cattle, or the finished cattle they buy will grade Choice or better at an early age with a high yield of lean meat.

Enter the Certified Angus Feeder program. This new Association program is based upon the principal that even within

the Angus breed there are variations in the ability of cattle to produce marbling without first getting fat. Although the worst of the Angus breed may still be better than the average or even the best for some other breeds, this is not the point. The Certified Angus Feeder (CAF) program is being designed to evaluate Angus sires for all carcass traits, and then to provide this information to Angus breeders and commercial cattle producers who use Angus bulls. Some breeders in our business have been collecting carcass data for years, but the CAF program will direct additional attention to this much needed information.

The program, headed by our newest employee, Terry Goehring, is designed to collect the necessary carcass data to provide Expected Progeny Difference (EPD) figures on Angus seed stock for carcass traits. Bulls that are evaluated will be bred, along with selected reference sires, in either commercial or registered herds. Test progeny will then be finished in a feedlot, and complete carcass data will be collected and processed through sire evaluation procedures.

One day, we will be able to provide accurate information on bulls that can be expected to sire a high percentage of cattle to qualify for the Certified Angus Beef program or for any other high quality beef program.

Success of the CAF program will require the cooperation of a great many Association members. Right now, Terry Goehring is looking for both test herds (commercial and registered) and for people who are interested in evaluating their bulls in this manner. If you want to get in on the ground floor of this vital, long-range program that is sure to have a major impact upon the cattle industry, I urge you to contact Terry at your first opportunity. **AJ**

