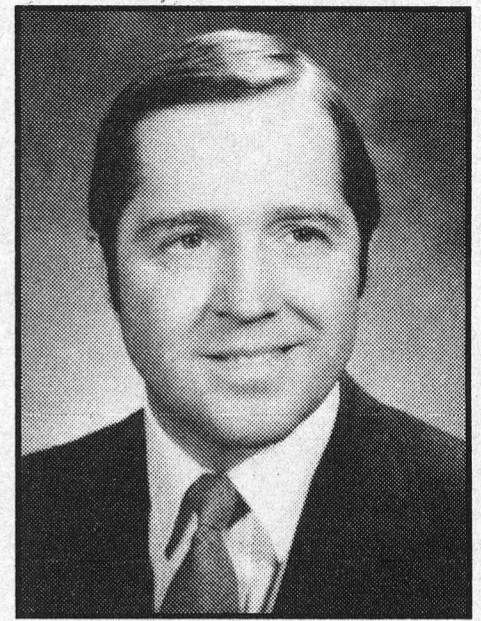


LEAD IN

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“Consumers want beef that tastes good, and they don’t mind the marbling that lends that good taste. They simply want beef trimmed of all outside fat.”

These are the words of Dr. Jeff Savell, Texas A&M University, commenting on the latest National Beef Marketbasket Survey conducted by Texas A&M and reported in the May issue of *National Cattlemen*. The revealing study was funded by the Meat Board with funds provided by the checkoff, and by the National Cattlemen’s Assn., the National Live Stock and Meat Board, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Jeff Savell’s words, which summarize the finding of the study, are music to the ears of Angus breeders. After years of fighting a lone battle to retain quality in beef, research has proved the Angus breeders were right all along—that taste and quality sell beef. The general public will benefit as more high quality, well-marbled, lean beef is put on the market. Angus breeders will benefit as individual commercial cattle producers turn more and more to Angus bulls to help them produce this more desirable product.

As a result, we need to renew our efforts to remind commercial cattle producers that Angus is indeed the carcass quality breed. There has been a lot of talk over the years that changes made in Angus breeding programs robbed the breed of its ability to marble and grade. That would be the case in some isolated instances, but it is not the case for the breed as a whole. This fact is documented by research done by the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, Clay Center, Neb., in cooperation with the University of Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station.

In a recent preliminary summary of carcass results from cattle sired by Angus bulls in the late 1960s and the mid 1980s, the Meat Animal Research Center reported that 78 percent of Angus-sired steers graded USDA Choice in the mid-1980s compared with 77 percent in the late 1960s, a slight improvement. What’s more, the slaughter weight of the finished cattle increased an average of 40 pounds from 1,056 pounds in the Sixties to 1,096 pounds in the Eighties.

So, despite some dramatic genetic changes made in the Angus breed during the past 20 years or so, the Angus advantage for marbling is still intact. It remains a strong base for our breed to build upon in the years ahead.

Despite the Angus marbling advantage, Angus breeders and the American Angus Assn. need to do everything we can to document the ability of our cattle to produce lean, well-marbled, high quality carcasses with a minimum of outside fat. Through the Certified Angus Feeder program, the American Angus Assn. is working to provide EPD information for carcass traits. Recent technical advances may soon allow us to evaluate some important carcass traits on live animals. One thing is sure; one day we will have EPD for carcass traits on a larger number of bulls in our breed just as we do today for growth and maternal traits. This will provide commercial producers the help they need to better serve the consumer and to fill the growing demands of the Certified Angus Beef program.

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