

The Supreme Commitment

Southwest Kansas cattle feeder named CAB Feedlot Partner of the Year for yards with 20,000 head or more.

Story and photos by **Heather Hopper**

Perhaps it is kismet that Supreme Cattle Feeders, Kismet, Kan., was named the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) 2002 Feedlot Partner of the Year for yards of more than 20,000 head capacity. Besides being a High Plains town name, kismet is Arabic for “fate.”

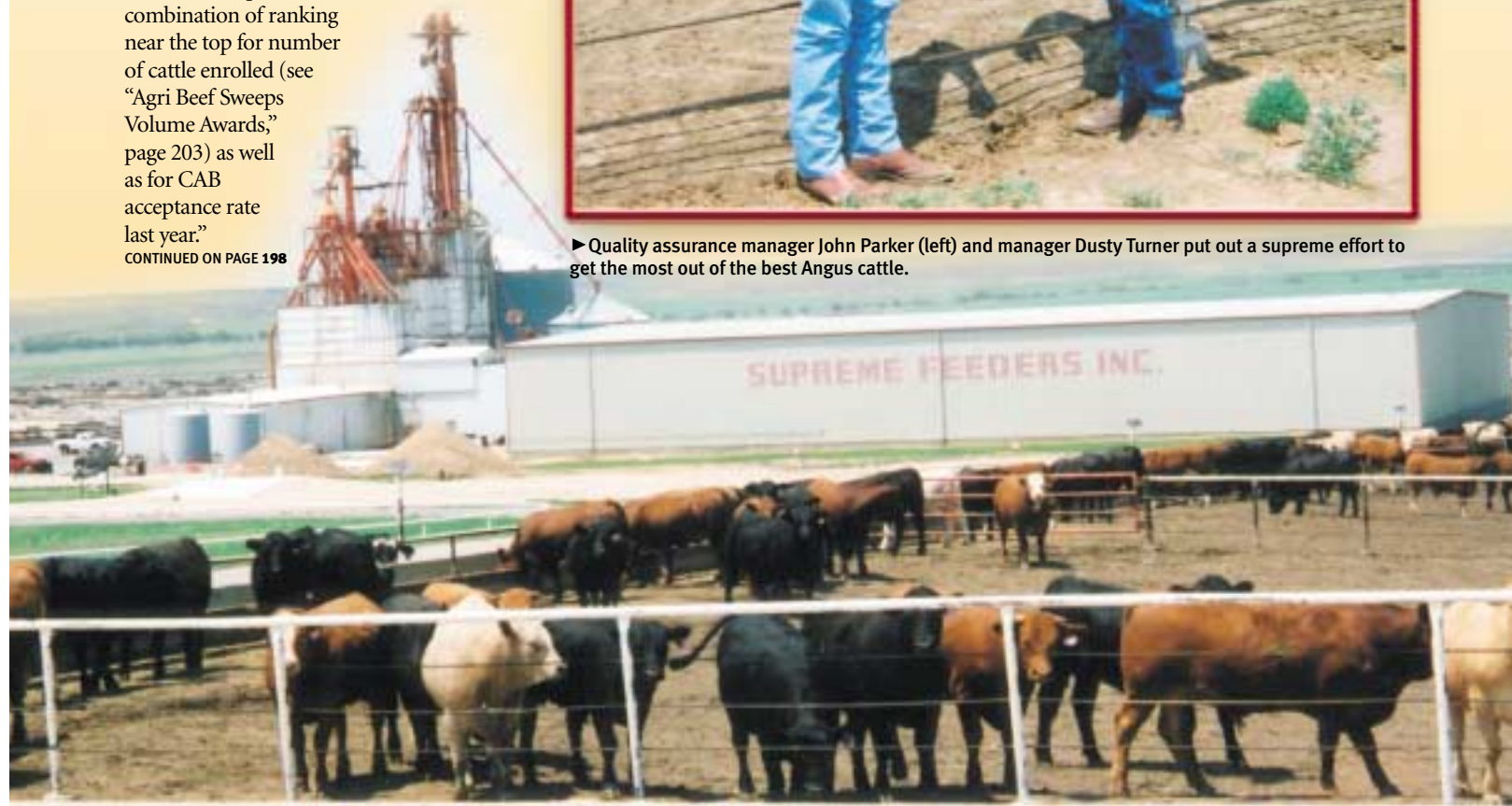
Supreme, a division of Agri Beef Co., has a long history of producing high-quality Angus beef, so when it signed on with CAB in 2000, it was probably inevitable. But it's only because of the commitment to excellence that runs through the staff, from customer service to end-product focus. The award was presented at the CAB Annual Conference in Asheville, N.C., Aug. 23.

“Supreme was selected because of the staff's strong commitment to our Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) and to managing cattle for the high-quality *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) end point,” says Paul Dykstra, CAB feedlot specialist. “That shows in the combination of ranking near the top for number of cattle enrolled (see “Agri Beef Sweeps Volume Awards,” page 203) as well as for CAB acceptance rate last year.”

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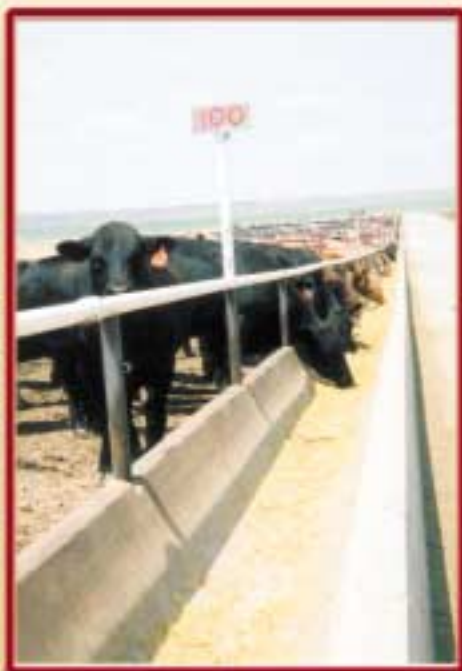


► Quality assurance manager John Parker (left) and manager Dusty Turner put out a supreme effort to get the most out of the best Angus cattle.





► Pens are sorted on horseback every two weeks, providing opportunity to evaluate each calf.



► Knowing that most cow-calf producers consider individual carcass data the most important part of retained ownership, Parker says protocols always act to maintain identity.

The 70,000-head-capacity feedlot shines because of the collective brightness of its 54 employees. “This place has a reputation,” says fourth-year manager Dusty Turner. “It comes down to the people this place was built on.”

High-quality crew

It comes down to overall attitude and discipline. You can see it in the front office,

where data flows to and from customers and the CAB office. You can see it in the sorting and feeding crews. “We try to focus on being proactive instead of reactive,” Turner says.

Dykstra adds, “Supreme does an excellent job of getting everybody tuned in to the goals of the operation. Everyone knows what the target is, and each team member knows what factors contribute to each of those goals.”

“The heart and soul of this place is our sorting crew,” Turner says. This summer, the crew picked out the fourth-place carcass heifer at Beef Empire Days, looking through all the Supreme pens without the aid of ultrasound. Last year their eyes found the heifer that won both live and carcass categories at the show. “These guys know what they are doing,” Turner states.

Evidence that Turner knows what he’s doing can be found in his hiring of quality assurance (QA) officer John Parker last October. Parker’s responsibilities include procuring high-quality cattle and determining which ones are eligible for enrollment in CAB and the company’s own Supreme Beef Alliance. Pens are sorted on horseback every two weeks, and each calf is evaluated.

“John and the crew have done a great job of combing through the calves. We don’t just enroll cattle if they are black-hided,”

Turner says. “We enroll those we have genetic information on, and if there is a question, we leave them out.”

Parker maintains open communications with CAB and with customers.

“We have quite a few retained-ownership cattle that are derived from the Alliance,” he says. Agri Beef Co. offers each producer an opportunity to retain as little as 10% of each calf.

Once a producer decides to retain ownership, Parker’s job begins. Before the cattle arrive at the yard, each customer talks with him about prior nutrition and health programs, and the goals each customer has for his cattle. Armed with that information, Parker works to set up “protocols,” or consistent management plans, for each group. Knowing that most cow-calf producers consider individual carcass data the most important part of retained ownership, Parker says protocols always act to maintain identity. “We do what it takes to be successful.”

Reach for the premium

The Supreme crews embrace new ideas — from processing to bunk reading and ultrasound sorting — to achieve those successes. So far this calendar year, the yard has been running a \$19-per-head premium on sorts vs. the commodity market. “Every employee treats this place like their own business, and that attitude is growing,” Parker says.

Agri Beef Co.’s goal of “building an industry for tomorrow” really plays well in Supreme’s relationship with CAB. “It feels like we are a part of something that is helping build the demand for beef,” Turner says. “CAB has tighter specifications than other Angus beef products.”

Coupled with the Supreme Beef Alliance, the increasing demand for Angus-type cattle has led to more customers, industry contacts and higher-quality cattle. Turner and Parker agree that the bottom line in this business is to produce a top-quality product that consumers enjoy, CAB being a leader in that area. “The fact that we are a part of the CAB brand is a way for our customers to add value,” Parker says.



The partnership with CAB is also linked to a co-sponsorship with Agri Beef Co. and several other industry leaders in the Best of the Breed (BoB) contest. Some 15,000 Angus-type entries from across the country have been or will be processed at Farmland National Beef in Liberal, Kan., where the top-value pen stands to win at least \$100,000 (visit www.bestofthebreed.com).

"It has been a great tool for current customers, and for our employees at Supreme," Turner says. "It has everyone paying attention to what the customer is

raising, which way the industry is going and what the consumer is demanding."

To build Supreme enthusiasm, Turner and Parker set up an in-house contest, with a cooperating producer putting up the money and cattle. Employees formed teams following the same rules as the BoB contest. So far, Supreme's version of BoB has been a fun learning experience. "It has really opened these guys' eyes," Turner says. "For years they have sorted cattle and never knew what they were sorting for — now they have an idea."

Kismet or not, Supreme has proven that teamwork can produce high-quality Angus beef. "It is no longer about sorting to the pound, it is about the dollar value," Turner says, referring to much more than the contest. "It is a team effort, if one of us goes down, we all go down."



Days of Reckoning at



Contest organizers discuss future of contest as the enrollment deadline for the 2002 contest passes.

by **Steve Suther**

The Best of the Breed (BoB) national Angus carcass challenge entries closed Sept. 22 as the contest moved into its final reckoning. A halt to entries was necessary to satisfy the requirement that cattle must be enrolled at least 100 days prior to harvest at the co-sponsoring Farmland National Beef (FNB) plant in Liberal, Kan.

The BoB leaderboard, available with weekly updates at www.bestofthebreed.com or www.cabfeedlots.com, shows first, second and third positions for all regions. By mid-August only three entries had been received in each of Regions 1 and 2. At least 10,000 head have been harvested, but nearly one-third were yet to come at that time, with a total of 13,463 head enrolled. Region 7, comprised of four states from Kansas through the Dakotas, was by far the highest-volume entry with 6,117 head.

Much could change on the leaderboard between now and the announcement of winners at the 2003 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show in late January in Nashville, Tenn. BoB was first announced at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) meeting, held in conjunction with the cattle industry convention, in Denver, Colo., in summer

2001. Other corporate sponsors are Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), Agri Beef Co., Allflex®USA, Drovers and Merial SureHealth™.

Total carcass value divided by pounds on the FNB BoB contest grid will determine winners. The top three lots in the nation will win \$100,000, \$50,000 and \$25,000, and the top three lots from each region will win \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,000. Merial will double the top national award if all calves in the winning pen are SureHealth-certified; 32% of enrollments were eligible for that bonus.

Most of the 150 entered pens were fed in CAB-licensed yards, which had the advantage of being the only yards with automatic contest approval and eligibility for an extra \$10,000 in prizes.

To learn more, visit the Web site or call toll-free 1-866-BoB-1160 for information.

Angus challenge will ride again

Details will come later, but two facts were clear by mid-August. First, the original BoB sponsors voted not to continue the contest beyond its first-year demonstration. Second, however, CAB planned to continue the national Angus carcass challenge. Entry

fees will be scaled back, but so will potential cash winnings.

What remains will be a national contest in 2003 that ranks the carcass value of Angus-based pens of steers fed exclusively in licensed CAB feedlots, of which there are currently 77 in 17 states. These cattle will need to have proof of their being at least half Angus to be eligible.

In an effort to open the contest to wider participation, there will be a new category for smaller-scale producers with between 40 and 79 steers to feed. In addition, the cattle may be harvested in any licensed CAB packing plant in 2003. National, regional and category winners will again be determined by a fixed contest grid.

All state Angus associations will be invited to participate through steer futurity pens, with any prizes awarded to the associations. True to its original purpose, the contest will aim to combine fun, education and profit. CAB Supply Development staff will coordinate the return of carcass data and the contest grid values to all enrollees.

