

Top Volume Feeder Earns Triple Crown

Agri Beef feedyards win top three awards for top volume feeders.

by Margaret Cook

Agri Beef Co.-owned feedyards made a clean sweep of the top three spots for the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) 2002 Top Volume Feeder awards for the CAB Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP).

"The key to our success in the CAB program can be attributed to commitment," says Jeff Johnson, Agri Beef vice president of feedyard operations. The people at Agri Beef genuinely believe the CAB program is a means to return value to their customers, he adds. That's evident at the feedyard level, where employees invest a lot of time and energy every day in detailed marketing programs, information retrieval and dissemination through producer contacts.

"When you think of the feeding companies in the United States known for top volume, 'quality' is not usually in the same sentence," says Turk Stovall, CAB assistant director, feeder-packer relations. "The Agri Beef people have put themselves in a different league by making an effort to procure quality Angus cattle and through their emphasis on providing information to customers."

For the third year in a row, El Oro Cattle Feeders, Moses Lake, Wash., the largest of Agri Beef's Northwestern feedyards, won the Top Volume Feeder Award. The yard, managed by Jim Sauter, has a one-time capacity of 45,000 head. El Oro led the program in enrollments and in the number of head meeting all eight CAB specifications.

In contest year 2002, more than 5,300 head were accepted into the CAB program. "Our continued success in the Certified Angus Beef program is related to our producers' desire to be a part of this branded program," Sauter says. "There is a real sense of pride when enrolling cattle in CAB."

"Producers get excited when they reach high numbers in CAB because they know the standards that go into the program," he notes. "Producers know they must have exceptional genetics and management practices, as well as commitment from the feedyard to achieve CAB standards."

First runner-up in the Top Volume Feeder category is Boise Valley Feeders, Parma,

Idaho, a 25,000-head-capacity feedlot. They rely on their management expertise and CAB partnership to procure high-quality cattle, says general manager Shane Berquist. Boise Valley clinched the award for the second year in a row, a fact Berquist attributes to sharing information with ranchers and sorting cattle to reach their optimal end point.

"The major issues that play a role in our success are our customers, who provide genetically superior cattle; our marketing; and our ability to sort finished cattle," he states.

Boise Valley's high acceptance rates are reflected by the feedlot's being the first licensed CAB feedlot to reach "silver status" in the Thirty-Aught (30-0) program. More than 1,000 head of cattle from various enrollment groups met the stringent specifications of at least 30% of the cattle in a group being *Certified Angus Beef*[®] or Prime and Yield Grade (YG) 3 or leaner, with no discount carcasses.

Completing Agri Beef's sweep is second-runner-up Supreme Cattle Feeders, Kismet, Kan. The largest of the CAB-licensed feedlots with a 70,000-head one-time capacity, Supreme is making its presence known, also being named CAB Feedlot Partner of the Year among yards with a 20,000 or more head capacity.

Supreme also led in the number of cattle enrolled in the "Best of *the Breed*" (BoB) national Angus carcass challenge this year. Besides that, experienced staff routinely sort cattle into groups that maximize performance and minimize discounts.

"At Supreme we are putting even more focus and effort on the CAB program," emphasizes John Parker, customer service representative. "We see mutual benefit in procuring high-quality Angus cattle that work well in the Supreme Beef Alliance and CAB."

Representatives of the three feedlots accepted the awards at the CAB Annual Conference in Asheville, N.C., Aug. 23. 