

NCBA Recognizes Award Nominees

compiled by **Stephanie Veldman**

During the Cattle Industry Annual Convention each winter, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) announces two prestigious awards. The Environmental Stewardship Award recognizes farms or ranches for exceptional care of the land. The No Boundaries Beef Industry Vision Award honors individuals who have taken innovative steps to make their operations profitable.

Each award has seven nominees, one from each NCBA region, who are announced at the summer meeting. The overall winners will be announced at the annual meeting Jan. 29-Feb. 1 in Nashville, Tenn.

Vision Award nominees

Seven innovators from around the country have been nominated for the 2003 No Boundaries Beef Industry Vision Award, which is

sponsored by Ford Motor Co. and the

National Cattlemen's Foundation.

"The award has been established to recognize innovative individuals of the beef industry who have excelled in implementing visionary business management practices," said Don Butler, National Cattlemen's Foundation chairman.



Nominees were evaluated primarily on the basis of effective use of available production technology; impact on the cost of production; ingenuity in implementation; successful and innovative marketing; benefit and impact on the beef industry; and optimum resource management.

► **Eugene Gagliardi**, Atglen, Pa., is a veteran of the processing industry and also develops value-added beef products. He recently worked with the NCBA as part of the New Product Development team.

Gagliardi's creative revolution began with Steak-umm. Making use of a new way to slice meat instead of grinding it, the sandwiches hold the steak texture and require less cooking time.

Gagliardi founded Designer Foods Inc., which grew to \$28 million in 1993. After leaving Designer Foods, he founded Visionary Design, a food product development company. He has played a decided role in designing many of the new beef ideas that are now available.

► Sparks Farming Inc., owned by **Willard Sparks**, Memphis Tenn., includes large-scale cow-calf, backgrounding and feeding operations. Sparks is being recognized for the system and efficiency created by a ranch-to-rail program he implemented for his customers in 1997.

It began with a calf buy-back option, which allowed customers to sell to one of Sparks's feeding outfits or retain ownership with the option of hedging. This program has since evolved into an educational opportunity for Southeastern cattle producers.

Since the program began, death loss has dropped 2%, feed efficiency has increased and carcasses have improved in value. The producers have also seen value in receiving feeding and carcass data on the cattle sold.

► **Marvin Walter**, Ames, Iowa, is involved in several facets of the beef business, including a meat-processing business that primarily focuses on niche markets and finds additional value in animal

byproducts. Another facet involves collecting animal tissues for medical use and supplying heart valves to medical markets.

The business Walter is probably most known for in the Angus world, though, is interpreting ultrasound scans for 16 breed associations at the National Centralized Ultrasound Processing Laboratory and Technology Center (CUP Lab) in Ames. The information derived there is used in developing expected progeny differences (EPDs).

► **Minnie Lou and Mary Lou Bradley**, Memphis, Texas, formed B3R Country Meats as an alternative way to market their cattle. The mother-daughter duo began by selling beef off the back porch of their home.

As the demand for their product grew, the Bradleys put the farm on the line and began expanding into processing facilities. They decided that everyone should have a choice, so they created options for producers, retailers and consumers.

They began an alliance that encouraged retained ownership and individual identification (ID) to help eliminate wide ranges in beef quality and smooth out gaps between breeding seasons and year-round demand.

The result is the ability to track each animal from pasture to the processor and cooperation and understanding among industry segments. This equates to lower costs, better product and more profit for all involved.

► **Roy Moore**, Denver, Colo., developed the Maverick Ranch Association and raises Salers cattle.

After hearing about some of Moore's successes in his breeding program, an Alfalfa's Market meat department manager discovered the cattle being produced by Maverick Ranch were worth \$183 more at retail than the average. Seeing opportunity, Moore organized producers and began Maverick Ranch NaturaLite and a grid-based marketing system in 1986.

In 1987, Maverick Ranch

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began donating beef to U.S. Olympic Training Centers and became the first family-owned company with Olympic rings on its product. The products are now featured in 10% of the supermarkets in the United States.

► **David Wood**, Selma, Calif., is the chairman of the beef division at Harris Ranch. Under Wood's direction, Harris Ranch has released a new line of branded beef products.

Beginning a value-based program called "Partnership for Quality," producers were offered incentives to improve genetics, carcass merit and management. They were also provided the option of retained ownership to maximize the value of their product. This allowed Harris's program a higher degree of control and product differentiation.

Under Wood's leadership, a program was developed to meet Japanese consumer demand. Harris Ranch is the 8th-largest beef exporter in the country.

► **Bill Buckner**, Wichita, Kan., joined Cargill Inc. in 1987 and has made a career in beef innovations. By 1994 he was president of Worldwide Beef Operations for Cargill, and in 1998 he was president of Excel Corp. He was promoted to corporate vice president of Cargill and leader of the Meat Solutions Platform in 2000.

Buckner's leadership guided Excel to develop several alliances and branded beef products, including Sterling Silver, AngusPride, Rancher's Renaissance and Cattleman's Collection. Under Buckner, Excel developed Vision Grading, a mechanical grading system to more accurately sort carcasses.

Excel co-developed steam pasteurization, which reduces bacterial contamination on carcasses. Buckner also led the development of case-ready plants, with five plants in use and four more in planning stages.

Environmental Stewardship Award nominees

► **Armstrong Farms**, Saxonburg, Pa., is a centennial farm established in 1816. John and Kathy Allen, owners, say the farm's primary enterprise is a cow-calf operation consisting of purebred Angus and Shorthorn cattle. Nearly 400 cows are rotationally grazed on grass and legumes.

Currently, the Allens own 1,000 acres and lease 300 more. The properties are divided into paddocks so cattle can be moved easily in an intensive rotational grazing system.

An active interest has been taken to preserve all natural resources as efficiently as possible. The farm is participating in a research study to determine the feasibility of using windmills to collect and generate electricity.

► **Asa and Julie Phillips**, owners of **Wakefield Farm**, Hartwell, Ga., worked to reduce the loss of soil on land that had been heavily row-cropped. The Phillipses created Wakefield Farm by piecing together tracks of land that had once been used in row-crop production. Today, the farm consists of 1,400 acres. Its primary use is as a commercial cow-calf operation.

Asa said that at one point, the land was losing 22 tons of soil per acre per year. "Using conventional and no-till crop sequencing for forage production we have reduced the soil loss on most of the farm to less than one ton per acre."

Wakefield Farm began fencing out streams and ponds in 1993. Nine wells were drilled to supply water for 30 concrete watering troughs. The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provided guidelines to design heavy-use crossings, where cattle can cross streams.

► **Brad Z Ranch**, Guthrie Center, Iowa, is home to Jim and Mary Bradford. The ranch consists of 1,000 contiguous acres, which are primarily in pastureland. Roughly 80 acres is used for corn production for use in the family feedlot. An additional 600 acres of pasture and cornstalks is leased for winter grazing.

The Bradfords run 400 head of purebred Angus and 100 purebred Gelbvieh. The land is divided into paddocks for rotational grazing. In most cases, ponds and streams are fenced off from livestock traffic, with water systems developed to keep cattle away from fragile areas.

"We have a responsibility to teach how grass saves the soil and how ruminant animals are vital to the ecosystem. Our continuing goal is to be more efficient utilizing roughage in producing high-quality protein," Jim says.

► **Goodson Ranch**, Blackwell, Okla., was established in 1893 during the first Oklahoma land run. Larry and Tom Goodson Cannon are the current owners.

Ranch pastures encompass 3,700 acres, with an additional 2,600 acres of farmland. The ranch relies on income from the cow-calf and stocker operation, hay and grain production, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) payments on riparian areas.

To help reach their conservation goals, the Cannons reduced their 400-head cow herd to 60 brood cows to convert to a rotational stocker program.

Twenty-eight ponds have been constructed to minimize erosion and maximize surface water for cattle. All croplands are farmed with no-till, and crops are regularly rotated.

► The Hibbard family, owners of **Seiben Live Stock Co.**, north central Montana, are the fourth generation to operate the ranch. Henry Hibbard established the

farm in 1907, and today three of his great-grandsons run it.

The Hibbards manage a cow herd of approximately 1,900 head, 300-400 head of stocker cattle, and 1,000 commercial ewes with a registered flock of 200 Targhees.

Rest-rotation grazing has proven extremely beneficial for the Hibbards, allowing for improved plant vigor and encouraging native grass species to grow and prevent soil erosion and improve the watersheds.

► **Y Bar D Ranch**, central Arizona, is owned by George and Sharon Yard. The ranch was started in 1991 when the Yards purchased a 15,000-acre Horseshoe Allotment in the Prescott National Forest. Most of the operation is sustained on federally owned land. The permitted number of livestock for the ranch is 225 head.

In 1994, the Yards voluntarily removed the livestock from the riparian pastures and proceeded to develop other management strategies for upland range sites. To bring the ranch back to a productive state, they have constructed crossfences for rotational grazing, cleaned out sediment-filled water tanks to increase water facilities and added a water well and pipeline.

► **Kelly Ranch**, located in the Sandhills of Nebraska, is a family-owned and managed integrated cow-calf and stocker operation. Michael and Cynthia Kelly are the third generation to own the ranch, which was established in 1885.

Including both owned and leased land, the ranch contains about 20,000 acres of native Sandhills grass, 500 acres of native meadow hay, 350 acres of irrigated alfalfa and 130 acres of irrigated corn.

All livestock are on a rotational grazing system, allowing the range some rest during the growing season. Ranch enhancements include seven miles of crossfencing, 11 livestock water wells, nearly 8,000 feet (ft.) of livestock water pipeline, 12 new windmills and 19 new livestock water tanks.

