



Value Discovery Project Opens Door to Change

Change is inevitable. It can be uncomfortable and threatening. It can also be exciting and prosperous. For beef producers who hope to survive in an increasingly competitive marketplace, change is a necessity.

The 1993 Value Discovery Project symposium, held in August during the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) Mid-Year meeting, offered a forum for industry leaders who are interested in making the changes necessary to provide consumers a consistent, high quality beef product.

The message was clear. Non-conformities in the beef industry are costing too much money and jeopardizing consumer confidence. Changes must be made now.

One of the most significant points made during the symposium was offered by Bill Mies, Texas A&M University: "You cannot change what you cannot measure."

Mies told symposium attendees that quality means delivering a product that meets your customers' expectations every time. Two of their most significant expectations are uniformity and predictability. "Predictability will bring value," says Mies.

Improving predictability and uniformity requires information and implementation. "Information about your cattle will be your best selling point in 10 years," says Mies.

He warned, however, that getting carcass data for the sake of getting data is of no use. Producers must incorporate analysis of the data into their production decisions to make change happen.

Value Discovery Project — Easy Information Avenue

While the Certified Angus Beef™ Program supports several opportunities to gather information, such as the sire evaluation and carcass data collection programs, one of the easiest is the Value Discovery Project.

Barbara Downey, owner of the 1993 Value Discovery Project grand champion consignment, says the project was the perfect opportunity to determine her operation's strengths and weaknesses.

"We were looking for some type of ranch to rail program to discover what we were producing," says Downey.

Downey Ranch, located near Wamego, Kan., is owned by Barbara's parents, Joe and Sherry Downey. "My father is an ex-

tremely forward thinking man," says Downey. "When we got into the business, he asked, 'what are we trying to produce?' The answer was beef, so we began to focus on the end product."

This philosophy is taken seriously in Downey's decision making. They don't consider using bulls without carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs). Her Value Discovery Project entries were sired by several bulls, including RR Traveler 5204, Shamrock Hi Guy RS 297, Hoff Valedictorian SC 925 and GDAR Rim 596 LT.

After reading about the Value Discovery Project in the *Angus Journal*, Downey



Barbara Downey is building a sound beef operation with the help of the CAB Value Discovery Project. Here she's shown with one of her Hoff Valedictorian SC925 bull calves.

felt it was an excellent way to receive the production information they needed. "We are not large enough to send our calves through the feedlot, so this project gave us a chance to feed a nonuniform group of steers to a uniform end point," says Downey.

The project not only provided the information the Downeys wanted, but one of their five consignments also earned grand champion and highest combined feedlot and carcass merit score honors. In addition, another consignment was awarded the highest feedlot performance award. Cash prizes, industry publicity and, most importantly, valuable feedlot and carcass data were all the positive results Barbara obtained from what she describes as "an easy opportunity."

Involved in the Angus business for 30 years, Paul Ritchie, Comer, Ga., used

the Value Discovery Project as his first attempt to collect feedlot performance and carcass data.

Ritchie was encouraged to enter by Georgia Angus breeder and Value Discovery Project participant Ralph Bridges.

"This is one of the only projects I know about that gives the producer complete information on his cattle," says Ritchie. "I've never been involved in the show ring, so this was the first time I have seen where my herd stands compared to others."

Project results indicated Ritchie has been doing something right. One of his two consignments earned reserve grand

champion honors as well as second highest retail yield and the third highest combined feedlot performance and carcass merit per day on test score.

Each of the steers in Ritchie's reserve grand champion consignment were sired by Turnpike Scotch Cap 840. Ritchie would like to test some additional sires in the 1994 project, but due to the extreme effects of this past summer's drought in the Southeast, he says he will have to wait until the 1995 Value Discovery Project.

Both Downey and Ritchie found the Value Discovery Project to be an important key to open the door to change. The CAB Program congratulates both for their commitment to learning more about the product they are producing and making the necessary changes to improve the quality of beef.

—*Jenny Stickley*

Entries Due Nov. 1 for '94 Value Discovery Project

Plans are already underway for Certified Angus Beef™ Program's 1994 Value Discovery Project. Here's an overview of the Project and information about how you can be involved.

Project Objectives

- Enable producers of Angus-sired steers to retain ownership of a small number of cattle in a large, efficient, commercial feedlot environment;
- Provide producers an opportunity to gain information about feeding and finished cattle marketing procedures;
- Increase beef industry awareness of the CAB Program.

Information Provided to Entrants

- Accurate, detailed information about how their steers perform in the feedlot;
- Itemized cost accounts for individual steers;
- Monthly updates on feed consumption and average costs for steers entered;
- Carcass data on individual steers.

Entry Requirements

- Producers may enter consignments of five or six steers;
- Steers must be sired by registered Angus bulls;
- Steers must be born between Dec. 1, 1992 and April 30, 1993;
- Steers must meet CAB Program live cattle specifications, including: predominantly black hair coat, typical beef-type conformation and no hump or long, floppy ear;
- Steers must arrive at Decatur County Feed Yard in Oberlin, Kan., between Nov. 29 and Dec. 1, 1993, weighing between 550 and 850 pounds.



Value Discovery Project Awards

Grand Champion — one winner, \$2,000 awarded to the consignment with the highest carcass merit per day on test score.

Reserve Champion — one winner, \$1,000 awarded to the consignment with the second highest carcass merit per day on test score.

Achievement of Excellence — multiple winners, \$4,000 divided among winners. The \$4,000 will be divided among each consignment having two or more carcasses qualify for the CAB Program. Prize money will be divided on a per head basis, so those with more than two CAB carcasses per consignment will receive progressively higher premiums.

Highest Feedlot Performance — one winner, \$500 awarded for best overall average daily gain for one consignment.

Highest Retail Yield — one winner, \$500 awarded for the highest retail yield of steers that meet CAB carcass specifications within a consignment.

Highest Combined Score — one winner, \$500 awarded to the consignment with the highest combined feedlot performance and carcass merit per day on test score.

CAB Contest Premium — Twenty-five percent of the entry fee will be divided equally for each carcass that meets CAB carcass specifications. This will be in addition to any premium paid by the packing plant.

Entry Information

To obtain a 1994 Value Discovery Project entry book, contact Kelly Frank, project coordinator, at (303) 362-4315.

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