



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## To what degree are you consumer-focused?

*In one of the committee meetings at the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) meeting this spring, J.R. Tait of Iowa State University (ISU) presented some interesting research. It showed how highly heritable the fatty acid profiles in beef are and suggested we could genetically improve the healthfulness of our beef product by selecting for cattle with a biologically higher ratio of omega-3 fatty acids as opposed to omega-6 fatty acids.*

### First reaction

Our initial reaction tends to be defensive. After all, we know beef is a healthy protein choice that provides essential nutrients necessary to human health. Why would we want to talk about research that would hint that beef wasn't the perfect food?

Well, look at it this way: Why do you look for bulls with a better profile of expected progeny differences (EPDs) than what you already have? Except for God's grace, there is nothing in this world that cannot be improved upon.

With the government's focus on obesity and the medical community's focus on reducing the saturated fat content in what seems nearly every patient's diet, it is logical to think that lowering dietary saturated fat will be a long-term consumer preference. To

not embrace the ISU research and others like it would be foolhardy.

Use the nutrient database described in "Consumer Focus" (see page 254) to compare the nutrient profiles of different types of beef — zero trim vs. ¼-inch trim, Select vs Choice, etc. I think you'll find it interesting.

Beef is a nutritious product, but there's no reason we couldn't make it more nutritious.

### What about natural, grass-fed?

The grouping of stories in this issue focused on grass-fed and natural beef is sure to create some discussion. While I would never condone bad-mouthing traditional grain-fed beef, I have a growing appreciation for those who have learned how to carve out a niche market and deliver to the consumer

a product for which they are willing to pay more.

For some producers, it is a way to add profitability to the operation. And that keeps beef producers in production. It is also expanding our consumer base and selling more total pounds of beef by attracting consumers who wouldn't otherwise buy a beef product.

### Then again

While improving the fatty acid profiles and adopting a grass-fed beef strategy are not mainstream approaches, the quality beef effort is. You've seen the graph showing demand for beef paralleled with the emphasis on premium-Choice product. *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) rightly deserves credit for stubbornly sticking up for the consumer and bringing beef back to the dinner plate.

Congratulations to the winners announced at Certified Angus Beef LLC's (CAB's) annual conference and recognized in this issue. These cattlemen — along with the distributors, retailers and restaurants in the food supply chain — are taking a leadership role in providing consumers the consistent, high-quality beef-eating experience that will bring them back for more.

Are you part of the network? Are you consumer-focused? If so, to what degree?

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