

Live-animal session explains advantages of testing to know more earlier.

by *Laura Conaway, Certified Angus Beef LLC*

Kee it simple.

If producers took anything away from the Innovation Workshops at the 2016 Angus Convention Nov. 5-7 in Indianapolis, Ind., it would be to find the ideas that matter and apply them. Don't focus as much on the numbers from genomic tests as how to use them profitably.

"The reality is, this thing has to be about economics," Mark McCully said. "You have to be able to find and produce calves that make you more money."

The *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand's vice president of production said that means responding to market demand for both functional cattle and high-quality beef, rather than choosing one or the other.

"Do we have to pick?" McCully asked the audience. "Is it the cow and the carcass, or is it the cow or the carcass?"

The answers are no and the former.

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The market says to use that ability, bringing to consumers what they want most.

Citing Virginia Tech animal scientist Scott Greiner's research in the area, McCully said selection for marbling comes with no detrimental effect on other cow traits.

"Single-trait selection is pretty dangerous in and of itself," he noted, "so this is reassuring that we actually can select for that trait that makes our product so desirable while at the same time we are able to maintain and keep maternal function in our cow herd."

Genetic progress in \$W and marbling has increased steadily within the Angus breed.

Applying those principles to the commercial ranch, Kent Andersen, director of genetic technical services for Zoetis, explained the ins and outs of the GeneMax®

Advantage™ and reconfigured Focus™ genomic tests.

The latter offers a sire match feature while predicting postweaning gain and carcass quality grade. Advantage is a more extensive test that serves as a tool for female selection, combining maternal and terminal traits. Both can add value and influence price discovery.

Assisted by Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) President Dan Moser and Genetic Service Director Kelli Retallick, Andersen invited the crowd to visually select and rank their top three keepers and three culls out of the pen.

Attendees used text-polling to interact with the presenters as Andersen showed GMX data to determine if the overall perception of keep/cull females would change the outcome.

"We can make some educated guesses on what we should keep, but wouldn't it be nice if we had a fuller, complete range of the story?" he asked.

Bigger isn't necessarily always best, he added, as resources must be adjusted to match cow herd needs. Further, it's no good to disregard visual analysis in its entirety.

"It's good to get up close to an animal," Andersen said. "Mix in cowboy practical sense when working on paper to make our final decision."

On average, the text polls showed producers would have selected similarly, either way.

"If we keep these top three, across the entire spectrum of CAB production, through the sixth calf, they're going to generate you 782 more dollars based on the genetic differences in the product," Andersen said. "Why wouldn't you want to have this information front-loaded and available at the time you make these decisions? It's going to help drive net return throughout each segment of the beef production phase."

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— *Mark McCully*



► **Above:** Attendees used text-polling to interact with the presenters as Zoetis's Kent Andersen showed GMX data to determine if the overall perception of keep/cull females would change the outcome.

► **Right:** "It's good to get up close to an animal," Andersen said. "Mix in cowboy practical sense when working on paper to make our final decision."

The session was the second of two live-animal Innovation Workshops sponsored by Zoetis in the Priefert Cattle Demonstration Arena.

For additional coverage of the Angus Convention — including summaries, speaker presentations, photos, videos and more — visit the convention newsroom at www.angus.media/news/Angus-Convention.



Editor's Note: *Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*



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