

Boot Camp Basics

Angus provides opportunities for commercial and seedstock producers to brush up on their beef knowledge.

by Brooke Byrd

Seedstock and commercial producers alike have a new opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the beef industry. The Angus Foundation-sponsored Cattlemen's Boot Camp will be conducted Oct. 20-21 in Fort Collins, Colo., by the American Angus Association in close cooperation with Colorado State University (CSU).

"We're at a very critical state in the beef industry," says Association Executive Vice President John Crouch. "Right now, education is crucial." The Cattlemen's Boot Camp is intended to fill that need.

It's also a recognition of the need to help universities and Extension programs fulfill their missions. "The fact that they have to operate on very limited funds makes it necessary for those of us in the breed association business to sponsor as many educational programs as we can," Crouch says. "There's a tremendous need for us to step in and partner with those universities and offer programs like Extension and academia used to offer."

Basic training

Offering opportunities to seedstock and commercial producers, the Boot Camp will focus on a broad spectrum of topics, says Sara Moyer, Association director of industry and member communications. "There's something for everybody."

For those new to the business or those who may not have an ag background, she says, "This is a great way to get a basic understanding of the big picture, and it gives the opportunity to learn about basic skills to use in your production system."

A workshop on understanding genetics and Association tools and programs is available for newer Angus members and commercial producers in the form of a sale book case study. Understanding the information presented and putting it to use within a herd will take center stage.

Seedstock producers, Moyer notes, will also gain a better perspective of the industry as a whole and their role in it, as well as an opportunity to learn about end product and

consumer satisfaction. "They'll gain a better understanding of how what they do affects the rest of the industry," she explains. The Boot Camp will also include a trip to a meat retail counter for producers to see other proteins competing against beef, as well as the amount of value-added beef product and branded product.

For commercial producers, there are topics such as emerging industry trends, creating a supply chain and communicating value, looking at quality grade and yield grade, examining the reasons for outs and nonconforming cattle, interpreting a feedlot closeout sheet and packing plant harvest data, and animal identification (ID) systems.

Another plus, she adds, is that the Boot Camp will have many interactive aspects. "It includes interactive sessions with peers, academic professionals they might not get to hear otherwise, and Association members and staff," she explains. "There's an amazing cross section of speakers.

"It's not just an Angus event, either," Moyer emphasizes. All who are a part of the beef industry are invited to attend.

Planning ahead

"In light of the really dramatic changes that occur in this business . . . , the Foundation and the Association wanted to play a leadership role in helping cattlemen adapt," says Tom Field, CSU professor of animal sciences. Field sees two significant changes and challenges facing the beef business, and notes that the Cattlemen's Boot Camp can help producers prepare.

"Managing the volume of information that's available as people start collecting more data on their cattle will become even more important," he says. "We'd like to help people better understand what that data means to them both genetically and from a profit standpoint."

The second challenge, Field explains, is helping producers understand how to better utilize the genetics available to them and put

together the right genetic package for their circumstances. "We're going to put information in front of people that ties the cow-calf producer to the supply chain and help them understand our whole business from the ranch all the way to retail."

One of the most valuable topics, Field notes, is about developing a marketing plan. "Everything else can be just right, but if your marketing plan's wrong, you're beat," he says. "That's a critical step in our overall business planning — think about what's coming, not necessarily what is today."

Ultimately, he says the Boot Camp will help producers, whether seedstock or commercial, understand more about where they fit in a changing market and a changing industry. "It's an opportunity for people to think through their role in this huge supply chain," Field says. "This is designed to help people understand the bar is getting raised and understand ways to be in a position to clear the bar on every jump."

Angus support

The Angus Foundation's sponsorship of the Boot Camp is a result of its continuing commitment to the goals of education, youth and research, says Milford Jenkins, Foundation director of development. "Because of support from special fundraising events, the Angus Foundation annual fund drive and other donations, the Angus Foundation has the ability to implement new programs," he says.

With this Boot Camp, the Foundation is trying to broaden its overall scope into educational efforts, Jenkins explains. "We'd like to continue to place a greater emphasis on education." The Association and Foundation plan to continue educating those involved in producing beef by providing educational resources for the industry. "Our goal is to provide important, timely and valuable information to both purebred and commercial breeders," he notes.

"With this opportunity to partner with higher education and academia's animal science beef experts, the stage is set for an outstanding educational seminar," Jenkins says.

Crouch says, "We want people to leave with a basic understanding of the beef cattle business — how to take part in the Angus advance, make our breed stronger and make the beef cattle industry stronger."

For a schedule and registration form, see page 212 of the August *Angus Journal*. You can also register online at www.angus.org. Oct. 7 is the last day to sign up for the Cattlemen's Boot Camp, but act soon — only the first 150 people will be accepted.

