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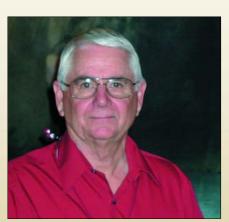BRAND

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2004
San Antonio, Texas

New Technology, Old-fashioned Service

Darnall named CAB 2004 Runner-up Feedlot Partner of the Year.

by Jessica Halsey

►"We try to keep abreast of new technology," says Darnall Feedlot manager Gary Darnall. "It is important to us to be quicker, better and more accurate for our customers."

Feeding cattle is a tough, competitive business. That's why even the most solid feedlots keep looking for an edge. Darnall Feedlot, Harrisburg, Neb., and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) have made a good match since the feedlot became licensed in early 1999.

The relationship reached a new level this summer, when Darnall Feedlot was named CAB 2004 Runner-up Feedlot Partner of the Year among yards with more than 15,000-head capacities. Manager Gary Darnall accepted the award Sept. 11 at the CAB annual conference in San Antonio, Texas.

"Darnall Feedlot has as good a reputation as anyone in the feeding business for managing lightweight calves from weaning through the finishing period," says Larry Corah, CAB vice president.

The Darnall family has had a long history of feeding cattle in northwest Nebraska. Darnall Ranch was homesteaded in 1897, and the feedlot was built in the late 1970s. "We started just feeding our own cattle," Darnall says. "Then our neighbors wanted us to feed their cattle, and it just expanded from there."

The 20,000-head capacity feedlot has found its edge with CAB. During the last 12 months, Darnall Feedlot has posted one of the highest acceptance rates among all CAB partner feedlots, at 23.4% on 3,888 carcasses that were 99% CAB eligible.

"It is impressive that the feedlot has been

able to post this kind of carcass performance on this volume of cattle," says Paul Dykstra, CAB feedlot specialist.

"It is an honor to be a part of CAB," Darnall says. "This allows us to feed for top-notch cow-calf producers and increase their rewards by helping them utilize the data CAB sends back."

Customer service

All of Darnall Feedlot's retained ownership customers use the carcass data in some way. "Some use it more than others," Darnall says. "But all of them utilize it and appreciate it."

One customer who uses the data to make changes in his herd is Mike Gebhart, a commercial cow-calf producer from Meadow, S.D., who was a 2000 CAB award winner. "I make use of the carcass data in breeding decisions," Gebhart says. "It really helps me to decide which cows to keep and which ones to cull."

"We like to provide the services that our customers want," Darnall says. "We try to keep abreast of new technology — it is important to us to be quicker, better and more accurate for our customers."

Keeping up with new technology helps Darnall Feedlot add value to customers' cattle. For example, ultrasound is used to manage quality and yield grade.

"Their use of ultrasound technology to sort and market fed cattle clearly indicates a focus on driving carcass quality and managing to avoid occurrences of 'out' cattle," Dykstra says.

From science to philosophy, the award-winning feedlot staff studies every pen of cattle.

"Darnall Feedlot knows that feeding programs aren't 'one size fits all,'" Gebhart says. "They really like to have the breeder's input on their cattle."

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>
> *— Mike Gebhart*

the customer and explain the details behind the data they have collected.

"We like to work one-on-one with our customers," Darnall notes. "We show them the ultrasounds and also let them know that the carcass data will be sent to them. Then, we discuss different ways they can use this information in their herds."

"We are fortunate to have customers with good genetics," Darnall says. "We are just a small part of the CAB-acceptance rate."

Using new technology and carcass data are important. But, what keeps people coming back to Darnall Feedlot is the way they are treated.

"Honesty is the biggest requirement when feeding cattle," Gebhart says. "Darnall Feedlot just makes it go hand in hand with everything else."

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