

Angus Producers Explore Industry

Participants learn, bond and become advocates for the beef industry.

Story & photos by **Shelia Stannard**

Twenty young American Angus Association members participated in the 2009 Beef Leaders Institute (BLI) May 31-June 3. BLI is designed to cultivate leaders in the beef industry while enhancing understanding of the total beef production system. This is the second year for BLI, which is sponsored by the Angus Foundation.

“I enjoyed making new friends — some will be lifelong friends — and meeting new contacts during BLI,” Byron Tuckwiller, Lewisburg, W.Va., says of the participants he bonded with from 15 other states. “I also gained valuable feedback from Dr. Tom Field, Cargill and Sysco that I can use to produce more marketable cattle.”

Tuckwiller says he will encourage future participation in BLI and remain a spokesman for the beef industry by sharing the information with the West Virginia Angus Association, West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association and youth.

“It is important to provide the facts about our industry to the consumer, whether it is one-on-one or in a group or at a program,” he adds.

After an evening and morning of learning more about the American Angus Association and its entities — Angus Productions Inc. (API), Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), the Angus Foundation and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) — the group loaded a bus and headed north, where it spent two days on tours. Tour locations included Tyson’s beef processing



► Twenty Association members participated in the 2009 Beef Leaders Institute.

plant, Dakota City, Neb.; Whole Foods Market, Omaha, Neb.; Gregory Feedlots Inc., Tabor, Iowa; Cargill’s Further Processing Facility, Nebraska City, Neb.; Sysco Lincoln, Lincoln, Neb.; the Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC), Clay Center, Neb.; and Gottsch Cattle Co., Red Cloud, Neb.

Industry insight

“The chance to learn more about feeders, processing plants and food marketing was second-to-none,” Kyle Conley, Perkins, Okla., says. “There is no other place we could go and learn as much as we have about all facets of the industry other than BLI.”

Engaging case studies were led by industry experts in the areas of consumerism and cattle feeding. Tom Field, executive director of producer education for the National



► Larry Corah, CAB vice president of supply development, presents an update on the CAB program. Staff of the Association, CAB, API, AGI and the Angus Foundation provided overviews of programs and services.



Industry at Beef Leaders Institute



► Jim Gregory (left) and David Trowbridge provided an overview of Gregory Feedlots.



► Shooting for the Certified Angus Beef® brand target, Gregory Feedlots, Tabor, IA, earned Feedlot Partner of the Year honors in 2002.

Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), challenged the beef producers to become more aware of what the average consumer faces at the meat counter by assigning them a beef purchasing project prior to BLI. Each producer had to purchase a cut of beef, evaluate the meat counter and beef packaging and prepare the beef.

Tom Brink, senior vice president and chief risk officer for JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, discussed breaking even and capturing the most profit while feeding cattle and walked the group through several marketing grids.

In addition, Mark Allan, associate director, global technical services with Pfizer Animal Genetics, presented information on the future of genomic-enabled selection in the beef industry.

"What really sunk in, and what I took home from BLI is this. We need to do something. We need to get involved and start being leaders," says Bo Bevis, Winnett, Mont. "Dr. Tom Field had a quote in his presentation by Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead that made me laugh and woke me up.

"It said, 'Somebody's got to do something, and it's just incredibly pathetic that it has to be us.' We do need to do something, and the time to start doing it is now. At the same time we also need to stay positive and have a good attitude and outlook on what the future holds and what

we can do to protect our industry and our way of life."

"It really hit home that myself and others in attendance at BLI truly are the next generation of leaders," says Keith Shifflett, Scottsville, Va. "That simple realization gives me more confidence and encourages me to be a better steward for the Angus breed."

Myron Kennedy, Brookeville, Md., agrees. "BLI broadens your scope on the industry on a variety of topics; therefore, I see it as my duty to pass along what I have picked up to Association members and producers back

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68

► The BLI tour included a stop at Tyson's beef processing plant in Dakota City, Neb.



► Participants broke into groups to set goals for their experience at BLI.

Beef Leaders CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

home. With this approach in mind, it will hopefully unify and strengthen us.”

Members selected to represent the Association this year include: Bo Bevis, Winnett, Mont.; Chad Campbell, Micanopy, Fla.; Kyle Conley, Perkins, Okla.; Lake Elliott, Adams, Tenn.; Robert Groom, Lyons, N.Y.; Ron Hinrichsen, Westmoreland, Kan.; Davis Holder II, Gamaliel, Ky.; Myron Kennedy, Brookeville, Md.; Kevin Kleinman, Wentworth, Mo.; Landi McFarland, Ellston, Iowa; Andrew McPeake, Arnoldsville, Ga.; Steve McPherson, Snow Camp, N.C.; Cody Sankey, East Lansing, Mich.; Keith Shifflett, Scottsville, Va.; Steve Stratford, Pratt, Kan.; Jennifer Svoboda, Sargent, Neb.; Ryan Sweeney, Fairmont, Okla.; Jerry Theis, Leavenworth, Kan.; Byron Tuckwiller, Lewisburg, W.Va.; and James Young, Forest, Va.

BLI is an annual event designed for American Angus Association members 25-45 years of age. It is limited to 20 participants to allow for tours and discussion, and is based on application. For more information about BLI, the Association or the Angus Foundation, visit www.angus.org.



PHOTO BY ANNE TRENHOLM

► BLI attendees toured the Association and API offices in Saint Joseph, Mo.



► Bus time served as time to return phone calls and visit.