



A Whirlwind Beef Tour

BLI participants travel the Midwest in five short days to see the beef industry from pasture to plate.

Story & photos by **Nicole Lane**, editorial intern

Where does beef go once it leaves the ranch? Once it leaves, how does it get where it's going? For 16 Angus breeders from across the United States, the Beef Leaders Institute (BLI) answered those questions and more.

As ranchers, most see the beef industry from the perspective of their personal farm. However, even ranchers differ in size and type of operation and how their beef impacts the entire industry. The 2015 BLI class was diverse and ranged from large seedstock producers to young commercial cattlemen located from California to North Carolina.

"I'm so thankful to have the opportunity to network with fellow breeders and learn about segments of the beef industry I wouldn't normally be exposed to," said Joe Fischer, from Auburn, Calif.

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► Beginning in Saint Joseph, Mo., at the American Angus Association headquarters, participants in the 2015 Beef Leaders Institute toured the Midwest with stops at Boehringer Ingelheim in Saint Joseph; Gregory Feedlot in Tabor, Iowa; TransOva in Sioux City, Iowa; GeneSeek in Lincoln, Neb.; the Tyson beef processing facility in Dakota City, Neb.; Sysco Cleveland; the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) headquarters in Wooster, Ohio; and a retail tour at Buelher's Milltown in Wooster, Ohio.

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"I applied to attend BLI because we register lots of Angus cattle and I wanted to know more about the Association and the beef industry as a whole," said David Orr from North Platte, Neb. "It was very impressive to see things like the packing plant, Certified Angus Beef and learn more about genetic opportunities for Angus cattle."

This was the first year the event included a visit to the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand's headquarters in Wooster, Ohio, and participants were able to learn about the CAB brand and see the Education & Culinary Center (ECC). At the ECC, participants interacted with chefs and meat scientists, learning the "science behind the sizzle" and gaining insight into how the CAB program operates.

"One of the biggest highlights for me was the Certified Angus Beef headquarters and understanding how the brand ties in with our breed, with consumer demand and how the trickle-down effect of all the work that CAB does has a huge impact on our industry



► Matt Dolezal (left), Rushville, Neb., and Joe Fischer, Auburn, Calif., discuss consumer perceptions of the beef business in a workshop presented by Debbie Lyons-Blythe at Association headquarters.

— registered and commercial producers — and consumers," said Jed Connealy of Whitman, Neb.

BLI is an annual event sponsored by the Angus Foundation to provide producers between the ages of 25 and 45 the opportunity to network with their peers in the breed, while learning more about the American Angus Association and the beef industry from pasture to plate. Applications to be selected to participate in the program are due each year in March.

"BLI overall has been an excellent

experience, and I encourage other producers to attend this," Connealy says. "It's a unique opportunity to see very many different sectors of the industry and most of the things we've seen on BLI are things you don't just walk in and see by yourself. It's a really neat opportunity that cattlemen on all levels should take advantage of."



► BLI participants toured the American Angus Association and were given a "behind the scenes" instruction on member services and tips on how to best use Angus resources.



► The tour at TransOva included labs where *in vitro* fertilization, embryo transfer, and cloning for beef and dairy cattle are all conducted. David Faber, president of TransOva, shares insights with BLI participants about this sector of the business.



► **Above and below:** BLI participant Kyle Musfeldt of Coon Rapids, Iowa, examines one of the “chips” used to do genetic tests like the GeneSeek Angus GGP-HD profile at the GeneSeek labs in Lincoln, Neb. These Illumina chips are specifically designed for use in sequencing Angus cattle genetics, and this GeneSeek lab processes more than 1.3 million total samples per year.



► “Our sales people feel that CAB is our brand because we know exactly what’s in the box,” says Danny Flynn, protein brand manager for Sysco Cleveland. The *Certified Angus Beef* brand waits on the shelves of Sysco Cleveland’s warehouse, ready to be delivered to a restaurant.



► During their tour of Sysco Cleveland, participants learned beef is not the only food that Sysco holds to strict quality standards. Here, they learn the specifications by which heads of lettuce must be cut and stored to maintain freshness and quality for customers.

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► The smell of quality beef wafts through the Education & Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio. Professional chefs prepared delicious meals for BLI participants during their stay in Wooster, and Chef Peter Rosenberg taught ranchers how to grill the perfect steak.



► The lively Phil Bass, CAB meat scientist, explains the 10 quality specifications required for an animal to qualify for CAB and shows what each marking on the carcass means.



► **Left and above:** “You own it, you breathe it, you deliver it,” says Peter Rosenberg, CAB executive chef, to the ranchers as he shows them how to test for steak doneness. “Chefs, we do that, too.”

After placing a McDonald’s meal next to a plated CAB steak, Rosenberg explains, “We represent you in this house, it’s our job to sell what you do to chefs and give them the knowledge of what is going to satisfy their customers.”



► **Left:** BLI participant Sarah McKenzie from McCamey, Texas, tastes the difference between grass-fed, Select and CAB steak at the CAB Education & Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio.

► **Right:** “It smells like banana bread,” says Matt Dolezal as he sniffs a piece of dry-aged meat. Phil Bass, CAB meat scientist, explained the process of aging meat and how it affects flavor. CAB steaks are aged for a minimum of 21 days.

