

Boot Camp Basics

Producers gain knowledge at Cattlemen's Boot Camp hosted at U of I.



Story & photos by **Shelia Stannard**

Cattle producers from 12 states increased their knowledge of the beef industry during the Cattlemen's Boot Camp Aug. 29-30 at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana (U of I). The American Angus Association and Angus Foundation partnered with the university to sponsor the Boot Camp, the third of its kind.

The two-day session is designed to educate producers about all segments of an ever-changing industry. Nearly 80 participants heard from leading animal and meat scientists from the U of I and others.

"We were fortunate to partner with the University of Illinois because of their excellent beef teaching and research staff, as well as their facilities," says Jim Shirley, vice president of industry relations for the Association. "Although Boot Camp is an intense learning experience with lots of information given to the participants in a short time, the interaction between the participants and the speakers remained high."

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► **Above:** Tom Carr, meat science professor, explains quality and yield grades at the U of I meats lab during Day 1 of Boot Camp.



► **Left:** Doug Parrett, professor of animal science, explains the university's state-of-the-art feeding and handling facility during the Skills Lab. Skills Lab is an opportunity for members to learn or enhance industry-related skills in a practical setting.

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► **Above:** Parrett welcomed the group of nearly 80 producers to the Boot Camp in Champaign-Urbana. This Boot Camp was hosted by the U of I and sponsored by the Angus Foundation and American Angus Association.

Day 1

The event kicked off with various U of I professors discussing their areas of expertise. Doug Parrett reminded producers they need to operate their cow herds with a business mentality. Reproduction and estrus synchronization were discussed by Darrel Kesler. Dan Faulkner talked about herd nutrition and described the advantages of early weaning.

Mid-afternoon the group visited campus, where they had the opportunity to learn more about quality and yield grades in a meat lab presented by Tom Carr and Floyd McKeith. The participants also heard from Jon Beever about DNA technologies.



► **Above:** Skills Lab attendees referred to the notebooks they were given as a resource for information on various topics, from nutrition and body condition scoring to reproduction.



► **Above:** Tom Nash explains proper chuteside handling procedures for reducing stress on cattle while working them. Skills Lab also included information about AI, feeding and BCS.

► **Right:** Jon Beever, assistant professor of animal science, discussed DNA technologies available for marker-assisted selection. He defined basic terms for the group before talking about various traits and how to make genetic improvements in the herd.



The session went into the evening while Bill Bowman, Association vice president of information and data programs, discussed genetic selection tools. Parrett and Association Regional Manager Jerry Cassidy then used the information Bowman presented to walk the group through a selection scenario. Small groups were formed and assigned the task of selecting bulls for various scenarios based off of a selection of bulls available.

Day 2

The second day of Boot Camp, speakers provided more information on nutrition, herd management, marketing, the end product and the consumer. N.T. Cosby, Purina Mills, LLC, discussed nutritional programs, while Faulkner and Larry Berger addressed ways of producing high-quality beef through nutrition and management programs.

Ty Groshans, Association assistant director of commercial programs, talked about AngusSource,® a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Process Verified Program (PVP) for genetic, source and

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► Above: Hands-on activities are key during the Skills Lab. Here, Association members learn about various feedstuffs.



► Left: Dan Faulkner, animal science professor and beef Extension specialist, describes the various feed byproducts to Skills Lab participants. He also spoke on the economics of cow herd nutrition during the Boot Camp.



► Above: Carr demonstrates how to calculate ribeye area during the Boot Camp.



► Left: Bill Bowman, Association vice president of information and data programs, discusses the various procedures to follow and forms to use when registering and transferring cattle and submitting performance information. Participants get to see the actual forms while viewing what is available on AAA Login.

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age verification. All cattle enrolled in AngusSource must be sired by a registered Angus bull.

Mark McCully, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) director of supply development, talked about branded beef programs. And Maralee Johnson, executive director of the Illinois Beef Association, addressed how beef production has evolved to meet consumer acceptance.

The Boot Camps are planned by the American Angus Association in cooperation with the animal science departments of universities. The Angus Foundation sponsors the educational events. Boot Camps are designed for both commercial and seedstock producers.

Watch the Association web site, www.angus.org, for information about future Boot Camps.



► **Above:** Participants get to experience the classroom during Boot Camp, where they are provided an abundance of information on a variety of topics.



► **Left:** Association Regional Manager Jerry Casady offers advice to participants during their one assignment — a bull-buying case study.

► **Right:** Illinois Beef Association Executive Vice President Maralee Johnson gave cattle producers an inside look at what the average consumer is looking for, and praised the convenience of heat-and-serve products.



► **Left:** Producers were grouped during a case study where they were assigned the task of selecting the bulls from a mock catalog that would be suitable for their operation. A silent auction was conducted, and most groups agreed on the best bulls for a given scenario.



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