

Ashland Feeders

by Dorothy Spencer

Ashland Feeders tries to do everything to live up to its motto: “Partners in Customer Success.”

To that end, the southwest Kansas feedlot became Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB)-licensed in 2001. Located near the town of Ashland, not far from the Oklahoma border, the yard can hold up to 15,000 cattle at a time.

“We are a full-service feedyard and can do anything our customer needs,” manager Mick Sharp says. Options include feed financing, AngusSource® program participation, sorting to optimize profitability and precision cattle marketing.

As one of four yards in Pratt Feeders LLC (www.prattfeeders.com), Ashland can “provide the service of a small feedyard, with the buying power of a large one,” Sharp says.

Customers get one-on-one attention from the manager and individual data on their cattle, including health reports and carcass data.

Roger Giles, whose 1,200-cow ranch borders the feedlot, has fed with Ashland since its beginning in 1989. “They’re just really good neighbors,” he says. But location is not the only reason his calf crop moves next



door for finishing.

“They have always been good cattle marketers, and they help you find benefits for your cattle,” Giles says. Sharp calls him the day his cattle are sold to share the closeout, price and performance information. “I especially appreciate that,” he says.

“They are very efficient feeders,” Giles says. For example, the flaked corn rations are fed three times a day to ensure ideal individual animal intakes. Professional advice comes from Kent Smith of Nutrition Service Associates.

That’s in tandem with a focus on quality. Ashland Feeders improved its overall CAB acceptance rate from 10% in 2006 to 20% in 2007. According to Gary Fike, beef cattle specialist for CAB, Ashland is the smallest of the Pratt yards, but consistently has the highest *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand acceptance rate.

Bob Huck has fed calves from his 500-cow operation near Coldwater, Kan., at the Ashland yard for 10 years.

“We are getting our cattle right where we want them,” he says, explaining how he uses the data he gets back to improve the herd. Last year he fed 296 cattle that reached 84.5% Prime and Choice — 40.2% of the group were CAB — and that’s with only 2% crossing the yield grade (YG) 4 discount line.

Huck notes Ashland’s pens are always in “good shape” and dry. The feedyard’s location provides moderate weather

conditions and good drainage in the winter and is also close to feed sources and packers: “Everything a thriving feedlot needs,” he says.

Sharp had producers like Giles and Huck in mind when he decided to partner with CAB. “It’s a benefit to our customers with good Angus cattle,” he says.

Fike works closely with Ashland and says several calf suppliers are focused on buying quality, registered bulls and producing cattle that grade well.

“Ashland Feeders is located in close proximity to several progressive Angus breeders in Kansas and Oklahoma,” he says. “Their ranch customers have realized the value of Angus-sired calves in retained ownership programs.”

Area producers include many “forward thinkers,” Fike says. “They have seen the advantage of linking carcass data and feedlot

performance to sire lines in the Angus breed to maximize returns on their investment in great genetics.”

The example from Huck Ranch illustrates the positive outcome when Sharp’s management, communication and marketing skills meet improved Angus genetics,

Fike adds. “As tight as the feeding industry is right now, every dollar counts. Keeping those YG 4s to a minimum has to be huge.”

Sharp credits his customers with bringing in top-quality Angus cattle. “That’s good for them, the feedyard and the industry — for everyone involved,” he says. “I enjoy feeding good cattle. It’s a pleasure.”

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