

Instructions Cattlemen Can Use

Manual outlines straightforward, applicable tips for quality production.

by Laura Nelson

It's no wonder they're often the first things to be tossed when opening a new gadget.

Instruction manuals these days are written in a dozen languages and folded like origami — they can make pressing the “on” button into a five-step process, but leave out some other basics.

With that said, Oakdale, Calif., rancher Dale Jackson was pleasantly surprised when he picked up a copy of the *Best Practices Manual* (BPM), a guide to targeting the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand for cow-calf producers.

“It's easy to read, it's easy to understand, and it has things in there that cattlemen can relate to,” Jackson says. Bull customers of his J3 Ranch received a BPM this year and a follow-up from Jackson to help them implement production strategies.

“One of the things we're trying to do is to get our commercial cattlemen to appreciate

the value of the premiums that are associated with cattle that will grade higher than normal,” he says. “Our challenge has always been finding a way to communicate the value of high-grading carcass traits to commercial bull buyers who do not participate in grid premiums, and the *Best Practices Manual* is the single most effective tool we now employ to get the CAB message to our customers.”

Jackson helped them focus on the marketing section. As a result, he now has bull customers who are marketing calves through grid programs, age and source verification and qualifying to sell their calves as a natural product.

The producers are finally realizing profit

they've been missing out on, he says: “It's been rewarding for those guys who have embraced it.”

Kevin Cantrelle is one of those guys. The Raymond, Calif., rancher started enrolling his cattle in the AngusSource® program after reading the manual.

“Source-verifying our cattle opened up the markets for some exporting,” Cantrelle says. “It also allows our calves' potential buyers to see the genetic makeup of our bull battery.” Both, he notes, added more dollars to his calves' worth at sale.

In Jackson, Mo., Kelvin Birk had some of the same ideas as Jackson and Cantrelle.

The Birk Genetics owner made BPMs

available at his last two annual bull sales for customers looking to capitalize on the quality he strives for in his Angus genetics. Birk made a point to take some advice from the manual himself, also focusing on the marketing section.

“I was really interested in its suggestions for buying back calves,” Birk says. He utilized the CAB feeder-calf value-discovery pricing system in the BPM. “There

was the suggested formula in there for pricing calves. I used it, and then I came up with my own based on that reference.”

That adaptability is what Jackson says made the BPM most useful for him and his customers. He points out that as long as commercial cattlemen are using quality-focused Angus bulls, the BPM can be adjusted to help any herd looking to improve.

“If you're using a bull that meets those quality requirements, and you have a herd that's either English-based or Continental crossbreds, the manual provides some marbling, ribeye and backfat carcass index numbers. You can relate those to the bulls you are looking to buy,” Jackson says.

That helps his commercial customers, no matter what their cow herd background, focus on the value of an Angus quality influence. “The first time those guys send in a load of calves and they actually score high on the grid, then that's it for them — they're completely sold,” he says.

King City, Mo., rancher Tracy Whorton was also inspired to explore new marketing options after reading the BPM. She realized the importance of collecting carcass data to add value to her operation. Starting with three heifers in 2000, she now has a registered herd of 25 head. With a growing herd, Whorton realized she needed to pay attention to some



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of the management points in the BPM.

“It’s getting to the point that I need to get out of my comfort zone a little bit to see what I can do to improve my herd,” she says. “That’s why it’s so important for me to get my carcass data back.” After reading the BPM, Wharton’s interest in retaining ownership in a feedlot was piqued, and now she’s searching for a feedyard that will meet her needs.

One change Wharton realized she could implement immediately came from the nutritional management section of the manual. She says reading the BPM reinforced her current vaccination program but made her take a second look at the mineral supplements she used. She consulted with her veterinarian daughter and tried several new supplements until finding one that complemented her herd’s health.

Success stories like that, Jackson says, do more than just tout the usefulness of the CAB manual. When more Angus producers realize ways to improve their cattle’s quality and value, it’s a boon to the whole industry.

“Ranchers who are progressive like this, their neighbors are looking over the fence,” Jackson says. “They see his calves and how they’re performing, and they see when he



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ships his cattle out. Then they talk later, they’ll see how well they performed from a carcass standpoint, and that helps generate some interest.

“The ultimate judgment here is always reserved for the calves. That’s when we’re able

to prove that this manual works, and then it’s a huge benefit.”



Editor’s Note: For a copy of the Best Practices Manual (BPM), visit <http://cabpartners.com/bestpractices/index.php>.