

Blending Feed, Service, Beef Quality

Performance Blenders joins CAB feedlot network.

by Lyndee Patterson

What goes around, comes around. Performance Blenders LLC owner Gerry Shinn hopes that will prove true. The company, based in Jackson, Mo., recently became a partner in the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Feedlot-Licensing Program.

For more than 30 years, Shinn has been fulfilling local stockmen's needs through his feed business. Over time he watched many of the small hog producers go out of business, taking that part of his business with them.

To help small cattle producers avoid the same fate, in 2000 he and his son, Geoff, began a marketing service. They aggregate loads of finished, mostly Angus-based cattle for shipment to U.S. Premium Beef's National Packing plants at Dodge City or Liberal, Kan.

"These guys were breeding and feeding their calves better, but not getting any benefit from it," Shinn says. "We're trying to capture value through carcass quality and brand recognition, while also improving their access to markets and feedback on carcass data."

Shinn and the local cattlemen work together to pick out the finished calves in each of their lots, and then they are transported to the Performance Blenders processing barn.

There the cattle are weighed, tagged and assembled for shipment to the packer. With individual identification maintained, bills are split based on carcass weight percentages and carcass data can be tracked all the way back to the cow. More than half of the calves are age- and source-verified, reaping additional rewards (currently \$35 per head).

"We're not a traditional feedlot, but we're accomplishing the same goal — just in a different way," Shinn says.

Those who lack facilities to feed at home send weaned calves to neighbors who can feed, retaining ownership there.

"It's not a perfect science," Shinn says. "But it allows the genetics to make a little more money for the producer."

The information is valuable beyond marketing, because customers can use



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► In 2000, Performance Blenders LLC owner Gerry Shinn and his son Geoff (pictured) began a marketing service. They aggregate loads of finished, mostly Angus-based cattle for shipment to U.S. Premium Beef's National Packing plants at Dodge City or Liberal, Kan.

it to improve their herd genetics and management.

One customer stands out as a good example. "When he first started out, he was selling Yield Grade (YG) 4, Select calves," Shinn recalls. However, after making genetic changes using the carcass data, his most recent set of cattle reached 40% Prime.

"It makes it worth getting out of bed each morning to see someone succeed like that," he says. Because calves from several different producers are sent on one truckload to the packing plant, the information Shinn sends them includes prices of the others' calves as well.

"Even though they don't get to see any names, they're very competitive, and it's made them raise the bar a little bit," he says.

That's evident in the rising quality trend among all Performance Blenders customers. "We started out only qualifying 17% for the

Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand, but this year we made 44%," Shinn says.

Becoming a licensed CAB partner will promote the emphasis the full-service feeder places on quality, genetics and continued improvement. It will also allow Shinn and his customers to use the data from other CAB producers as a benchmark.

"I want them to see they are doing the right thing and moving in the right direction," he says.

Shinn figures doing the right thing by his customers helps ensure their continued loyalty and ability for the network of feed company and feeding customers to thrive.

"If you bred and fed them as a producer, I want you to capture the reward," he says. And I will help fill in a piece of the puzzle that allows you to do that."



Editor's Note: Lyndee Patterson is industry information intern for Certified Angus Beef LLC.