

# Ranchers as Ambassadors

by *Miranda Reiman*

Connecting to the consumer is a hot topic any time of the year, as more and more people want to learn about the food they eat.

That's especially important in the perception-rich world of branded beef. A 33-year-old company owned by 30,000 rancher-members of the American Angus Association is empowering its stakeholders with the facts.

Those cattlemen are learning how to explain the *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand and what makes it different. Last fall the company released the Brand Ambassador Training program, an online course that takes less than 15 minutes to complete and provides a user-friendly overview of CAB specifications, business model, sales objectives and success stories.

"To their neighbors and friends, producers are experts on what all these Angus brands mean," says Christy Johnson, special projects manager for CAB. "Now they have an easy place to get information that helps them prepare for those conversations."

Jerry Gustin, an Angus breeder from Gloucester, Va., completed the program after he heard about it on an industry e-wire.

"I learned a lot more about the specifications that guide the criteria for CAB quality than I ever knew before," he says. "I didn't realize how it always arrived at such a consistently excellent quality beef. The specifications are much more stringent than I had imagined."

More than 80 people have completed the course and taken a short quiz at the end. Many respondents say they knew of the premium-Choice marbling specification, but discovered lesser-known criteria like the 10- to 16-square-inch ribeye and moderate or thicker muscling requirements, for example.

The program was unveiled on the National Angus Tour, which is where Virginia Koepke, from Edgar, Wis., heard about it.

"I knew that Certified Angus Beef wanted to offer a product superior to others, but this program brought that to light in more detail," she says. "I also never realized how many Angus brands are out there. To the general consumer this has got to be confusing."

Indeed, more than 75 USDA-certified brands include the Angus name, and many more non-certified Angus brands exist.

The course shares how CAB works, from the seedstock producer to their customers, feedlots, packers and the restaurants and retailers that ultimately market the product.

Teresa Perry, of Cottage Grove, Tenn., says, "We are proud of what we produce and are grateful to the businesses that support our efforts to provide the best quality."

After their quiz, cattlemen were invited to share a message with the brand's nearly 14,000 partners in the United States and 46 other countries.

"My ultimate goal is to provide an eating experience that will make them want to come back for CAB every time," says Mark Savage, of Mount Juliet, Tenn. "I care about the welfare of my animals, the environment and the consumer. We have the tools available to continue to ensure that we provide the best beef."

Koepke shares that goal: "It's so important to offer the best palate experience out there and keep customers satisfied, so we can keep producing those quality animals."

To view the Brand Ambassador Training, visit [www.CABpartners.com](http://www.CABpartners.com) and follow the link at the bottom of the home page.

