

# Evening Out

Customer-friends honored by Oklahoma feeder.

Story & photos by Rachael Van Horn

On any rare, sunny but still day around Gage, Okla., Dale Moore might look around himself and say to his crew, “It’s a good day to be a cowboy.”

The owner-manager of Cattleman’s Choice Feedyard Inc. (CCFI), along with wife Mary, recently made it a good evening to be a cattleman for nearly 150 customers and friends.

On Jan. 22, down the road in Woodward, Okla., the Moores found a way to thank those customers, some of whom have been feeding with them since they opened their award-winning yard 10 years ago. CCFI was named Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Feedlot Partner of the Year in 2008.

The couple, with the help of some vendor sponsors and CAB, hosted a steak dinner and evening out for the producers, owners, vendors and employees who have been a part of their decade in business.

“This was about saying thanks to those people,” Mary said. “It wasn’t about us. We just realized this winter that it’s been 10 years, and the next thing we realized was that we owe thanks to so many people.

“And it wasn’t just the big help,” she said, “but little kindnesses and assistance, like that snowmobile ride to the feedlot during the

blizzard of 2009, and we’ll never forget the early opportunity to move into their home provided by Doug and Jack Haines when we first came here — and countless others who helped along the way.”

“So, realizing we didn’t do this by ourselves,” Dale said, “this was all about people helping people.” Appropriately, were it



► Dale and Mary Moore, Cattleman’s Choice Feedyard Inc. (CCFI) hosted a steak dinner for the producers, owners, vendors and employees who have been a part of their decade in business.

not for the guests at the dinner, there would be no occasion to celebrate, he added. Maybe that bond explains the big turnout. “I think we served 134 steaks.”

One of those was enjoyed by Jarred Shepherd, former CCFI assistant manager, whom Dale credits with setting up the successful health program. Shepherd recently moved into full-time nutrition and ration consulting.

At another table, the Moores’ mentor, Lee Pfenninger, of Scott City, Kan., was on hand for a kind of roast by Dale that included stories about his first years in the feeding business as “a fresh young kid out of ag school who thought he knew it all.”

But, Mary explained, “It was Lee, a salty old cowboy — the last of his kind — who taught him that he didn’t know it all and then started really teaching him.”

Dale presented Pfenninger with an inscribed painting to honor the man who gave him much of the background he still uses to care for his own customers’ cattle.

Dinner events are nothing new, but those who gathered in Woodward that January night said this was more than just an evening out; it defined the character of the business and the loyalty surrounding it.

“I have been with Dale since he opened the feedyard, and he has faced and overcome a lot of challenges,” said Teresa Martin of Cattletrail LLC, Johnson, Kan. Her company provides the carcass data analysis that CCFI uses to help customers breed cattle that grade increasingly better.

“The willingness of customers to continue feeding with him instead of larger yards, even through a difficult economic climate, is a tribute, I think, to what Dale is doing for them,” she said.

Clearly, there was mutual appreciation in the air, and the event also provided an enjoyable opportunity to just touch base and talk with others in the business who don’t often slow down enough for a visit.

“You know, I’ve never been to anything like a feedlot party,” customer Monte Tucker of Elk City, Okla., said. “There was a man there whom I’ve partnered with on some cattle before and, you know this business is 24-7 ... I had never met him before that night Dale got us all together. It was great.”



► Dale Moore (right) presents Lee Pfenninger with an inscribed painting to honor the man who gave him much of the background he still uses to care for his own customers’ cattle.