

Good as Gold



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CAB partner McPherson County Feeders reaches Gold quality milestone.

by **Laura Conaway**, *Certified Angus Beef LLC*

Cattle feeders are a driven bunch. Striving toward goals and playing the odds are part of their daily routine. For Allan Sents and his team, quality has been in the cards for many years.

When the owner-manager of McPherson County Feeders, near Marquette, Kan., signed on with the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand nearly 15 years ago, he began to see how everybody can win with grid premiums for better cattle. He didn't stop at becoming a CAB partner. That wasn't just a goal on a list to check as completed. Sents was just getting started.

Accumulated closeout data spanning those years verifies the McPherson crew has been hard at work. A 30.06 Program

honor roll has been noting all harvest groups achieving at least 30% CAB or USDA Prime, with no more than 6% outliers for being too fat, heavy or light.

The 10,000-head-capacity lot recently attained 30.06 Gold Level, only the third CAB partner yard across the United States to do so. It took seven years to achieve the 500-head Bronze Level; then in four more years came the 1,000-head Silver in 2010. Doubling that

level of on-target feeding in just three years, the records show McPherson County Feeders had enrolled and harvested more than 2,000 of the 30.06 cattle by early 2013.

Of the 1,950 CAB-eligible cattle in those groups, 45.9% qualified for CAB and USDA Prime, with 83.8% reaching USDA Choice or better.

"It's been an inspiration to watch the transformation," says Gary Fike, beef cattle specialist for CAB. He has worked closely with the feedyard for a decade and notes that 10 years ago, the first 19,716 cattle enrolled made almost 19% CAB and Prime. Fast-forward to the past five years: Sents and cattle manager Landon Shaw worked with Angus customers to feed 18,048 enrolled cattle, qualifying more than 34% CAB and Prime. With virtually the same 760-pound (lb.) carcass weight then and now, there has only been a slight increase in Yield Grade 4s, and Fike says that is understandable because grid allowances moved up. All numbers point to the quality increase in cattle coming out of the yard.

► **Above:** Longtime partners of the brand in many ways, Allan Sents and his wife, Deanna, have been feeding cattle since 1981.

► **Right:** CAB presented the McPherson County Feeders team — represented by (from left) Allan and Deanna Sents and yard manager Landon Shaw — a Henry Golden Boy trophy rifle in custom walnut display case in honor of their reaching the 30.06 Gold Level.



Longtime partners of the brand in many ways, Sents and his wife, Deanna, have been feeding cattle since 1981. Their commitment to quality grew over time as ranching customers responded to feedback and market signals.

Positioning those cattle to realize their genetic potential and achieve top premiums requires sorting for quality and uniformity as they approach their final weight.

“We try to optimize the end point on marketing the cattle to get them sold when they have the best opportunity to grade Choice and hopefully make *Certified Angus Beef*,[®] but not have too many over-fats in them,” the feeder says.

While feeding 20,000 head per year, the couple manages by working with eight full-time employees and a few part-timers. Together, they are constantly looking for ways to gain an edge in the marketplace and take pride in offering their customers reasonable feed prices.

“We value our location here being far enough west that we have a more temperate climate, desirable for feeding cattle, and yet far enough east that we have enough rainfall to grow some good dryland crops,” Sents says. “So we have access to fairly abundant, reasonably priced forages to use in the ration.”

Not one to claim credit, Sents points out that feeding is a partnership with producers and stockers who were working toward their goals long before he handled the cattle. Regardless of who owns them on feed, he is willing to share data with the idea of increasing the quality of cattle overall.

“We just value working with the smaller producers,” he says. “When they have an interest in following the cattle, we try to respond and share information.”

Fike presented the McPherson team with a Henry Golden Boy trophy rifle in custom walnut display case at an October customer event, echoing those ideas: strong partnerships create success.

He commented, “Persistence, developing a solid customer base of producers who are committed to producing cattle that meet our brand specifications, and attention to detail ... are what earned Allan and his team this unique reward.”

Twice recognized as the CAB Small Feedlot Partner of the Year (2005 and 2010), the recent honor is one for the books. As the 30.06 Program transitions to a new Targeting the Brand Honor Roll this fall, McPherson County Feeders will be the last recipient of the prestigious award.

Still, their record foretells Sents and his team will not rest on their laurels. Achievements in quality are not the end of the road, but simply a way of life here.



Editor's Note: *Laura Conaway is public relations and industry information specialist for CAB.*



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