



More Than a Flash

Western Oklahoma ranchers use Angus for “best steak possible.”

by Rachel Stuart

Some things just go together, like Angus calves from Jimmy Taylor’s herd and management at Dale Moore’s Gage, Okla., Cattleman’s Choice Feedyard.

Taylor supplies the high-quality, easy-feeding Angus genetics and Moore makes the most of them — all the way to finished product. Their feeding relationship started in March 2008 and has already produced award-winning results.

In fact, their first pen won fourth place nationally in the 2008 AngusSource® Carcass Challenge. The 66 steers certainly drew attention when 67.7% of them qualified for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand and USDA Prime. But the story gets even better. That was the first time Taylor had fully retained ownership of his cattle at a feedlot since he started using Angus genetics.

The Elk City, Okla., rancher called the

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) office when he began looking for a licensed feedlot. Cattleman’s Choice, among the recommendations and fairly local, seemed like a perfect fit.

“Dale’s goals were the same as mine: enhance the value of each calf and get as many as possible to qualify for CAB,” Taylor says. Moore toured Taylor’s ranch to get a better idea of what he could do for the first-time feeder.

“I knew he had nice cattle, so I told him we just needed to try them out and see what they could do,” Moore says.

That’s what they did. A few months later, the facts were obvious.

“They were a phenomenal set,” Moore says. “They were the show-cattle type that you want up close to the fence for new customers to look at.” But the beauty was more than skin-deep. “The cattle were a feedyard’s dream, the kind that convert feed well and make everybody look good.”

It all starts with a planned herd of individual animals. Taylor and his wife, Tracy, own and operate the family ranch Jimmy was raised on. They have 600 Angus and Angus-cross cows now, mostly the result of weanling purchases from other ranches. They use only registered Angus bulls, and the replacement heifers are just beginning to make a good herd better.

Counting on Angus

When Taylor came back to the family operation in 1980, he partnered with his father before buying full interest in 1993. The mid-1990s were as challenging as today’s economy, but Taylor faced it with generic commercial crossbreds. The wholesale switch to Angus in 2005 came about because, “I was looking into how to get the most out of each calf,” Taylor says. “CAB was the best way to achieve those goals.”

He bought his first Angus bulls in 2005 and added to that battery the next year.



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Prior to feeding with Cattleman's Choice, Taylor sold his calves right off the cow at weaning. He calves twice a year. In the spring, heifers calve in late January, and the main herd follows from February to the first of May. The second rotation of cows calve from the end of August through the first part of November.

The program lets Taylor efficiently utilize his labor and bulls, but it all goes to serve one other noble purpose.

"Everything we do — from the selection of bulls, to the management of the cow herd — is geared toward making the best steak possible," he says. It takes balance to make it all work; cattle must excel both phenotypically and on paper. "From conception to harvest, everything must be in place."

Taylor attributes success with carcass quality to placing much emphasis on bulls with good carcass numbers. Keeping in mind the overriding need for balance, he admits carcass traits are a top priority. It's nice when the pieces fit: Progeny from Taylor's top calving-ease bull graded 22% Prime. With extensive use on first-calf heifers, the bull has already produced 140 calves.

Shared data, shared progress

The feeding partnership is anchored in shared genetic and performance data. Moore and operations manager Jarred Shepherd keep an eye on data from both sides of an animal's pedigree and relay that back to the producer. "It's a great selection tool," Taylor says. "It helps us determine the direction we need to be moving."

Taylor's next goal? With carcass quality and feedlot performance confirmed from the bull side, he plans to start placing more emphasis on the female side of carcass traits.

"The information that Dale and Jarred send me will be extremely valuable in determining which females are doing their job carcass-wise, and which ones don't fit in the program," he says.

Feeding does not start and end with one "super group." Taylor has sent several more sets since last spring. "He recently sent me a group of open 16- to 18-month-old heifers that we fed for less than 120 days," Moore says. "They gained over 4 pounds (lb.) a day and converted at less than 5. Overall, 85% graded Choice."

Results like these show a solid foundation for the program. "What Jimmy is doing takes away the one-hit-wonder scenario," Moore says. The Taylors may be newcomers to the CAB brand, but their cattle say they're here to stay.

