



2012 CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF

2012 Feedlot Partner of the Year, >15,000 head

Aiming Higher and Higher



Pratt Feeders maintains a high profile, but it isn't self promotion. The 38,000-head Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) partner in south-central Kansas makes news because of actions. Manager Jerry Bohn and his staff keep finding ways to increase beef quality while making money for customers and better steaks for consumers.

Everybody respects a good effort, but as the saying goes, nothing succeeds like success. Gary Fike, beef cattle specialist at CAB, says the numbers help explain why the CAB licensee was named 2012 Feedlot Partner of the Year, >15,000 head. Assistant manager Dave Latta and his wife, DeGaye, were planning to accept the award at the brand's annual conference Sept. 19-21 in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

"From last June through May, Pratt Feeders enrolled more cattle with complete data than any other partner in the Feedlot Licensing Program, at 23,015 head. That shows a huge commitment," Fike notes, "a 36% jump from their historical average volume, which was already at a high level."

Not incidentally, the feedyard also won the Partner award in 2004 and 2010, while earning a national Quality Focus Award last year.

Quantity and quality

"It's not easy to increase quality at the same time as quantity, but that's what they did, moving up 4 percentage points to nearly 36% CAB or Prime," Fike says. "That amounts to more than 2 million pounds of branded boxed beef products that originated at this one yard."

Bohn attributes the continuing upward trend to both inbound genetics and more intensive individual animal management.

PHOTOS BY LYNDEE STABEL

A Kansas feedyard stands out as a leader across several aspects of the CAB program.

by *Steve Suther & Lyndee Stabel, Certified Angus Beef LLC*

► **Above:** "If you are going to tie your star to somebody, it might as well be the most successful branded beef company in the country," Pratt Feeders Manager Jerry Bohn says of CAB. "We're proud to be a part of it, and we are going to continue to work at generating more cattle for the program."

► **Right:** Assistant Manager Dave Latta hosts an educational tour group of foodservice professionals at the yard.



"In particular, we are identifying the outlier, heavier cattle to market earlier," he says. "That allows us to feed the rest to a more optimum end point."

Higher quality and higher percentage Angus genetics coming in also make a difference.

"I don't think we have seen a marked advantage in feedyard performance from crossbreds versus our better-quality Angus cattle anyway," Bohn says. "And when the Choice-Select spread is as wide as it has been recently, that gives the Angus a leg up on the mixed-color and crossbred cattle, too."

Watching the drought develop in the Southern Plains last year, he expressed concern for subsequent quality grade levels.

"I don't know that we have seen that problem yet," he says, "but now that many of those herds are in their second year of stress, the concern hasn't gone away."

Extreme heat brought a dip in feed consumption and a bit more death loss, but Bohn did not just watch that happen. Instead, he set up shades in several pens and began to gather data on cost-effectiveness and benefit to cattle.

"It looks like those cattle held their consumption better than in the rest of the feedyard," he reports. "We also put out some extra water tanks in other pens and other things like that to try to mitigate the heat as best we could."

Speaking for high quality

Bohn speaks out as a proponent of higher-quality beef at seminars and symposiums across North America.

"The industry's goal is to produce consistently higher-quality beef for consumers, and to do that, I think the message has to get out that we need to ramp up the quality in our cattle population," he says. "We're seeing that happen very slowly, but we still have a lot of genetic variation and too many poor cattle."

"I think it's important for all of us to speak out and encourage and help get better returns to the people who are producing the kind of beef we're looking for," Bohn says, adding a window of opportunity may present itself for improving more herds. "We need to get this drought headed in a different direction, and then we can begin to grow the cow herd again. I hope people will see the advantage in building back with higher-quality heifers."

Every month or two in the past year, Bohn was either speaking out in some beef industry venue or hosting chefs and other



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end-product folks at the Pratt feedlot.

"We have to be transparent and tell consumers exactly what we do," he says. "Hosting these groups is our attempt to do what we can to educate the chefs, restaurant operators, retailers, school kids. All of those groups need to learn more about our industry, and we really enjoy doing it. We have had some very interesting groups come through here; we've gotten to meet some really cool people."

As fall approached, Bohn was hosting an international delegation of CAB partners and overseeing a GeneMax™ sorting demonstration on several hundred Angus cattle, from a customer known for top quality, to correlate GMX scores with feedlot and carcass results. That was to fit into the October National Angus Tour, on which

Pratt Feeders is scheduled to be a key stop.

"We try to manage cattle individually, and DNA testing certainly goes quite a way down that road," Bohn says. "It's probably the wave of the future."

Pratt Feeders and CAB are on the same path as far as Bohn can see.

"If you are going to tie your star to somebody, it might as well be the most successful branded beef company in the country," Bohn says of CAB. "We're proud to be a part of it, and we are going to continue to work at generating more cattle for the program."



Editor's Note: Steve Suther is director of industry information at Certified Angus Beef LLC. Lyndee Stabel is a freelance writer for Certified Angus Beef LLC.



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