



# Brand News

► News and highlights from Certified Angus Beef LLC,\* compiled by Laura Conaway, Certified Angus Beef LLC

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## An MBA reflection

The *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand is set to recognize the 10th class to complete its Masters of Brand Advantages (MBA) program. Since its fall 2010 debut, 205 students have experienced the specialized training and walked away with diplomas.

“The driving force behind the development of our MBA was looking at how we could grow our foodservice sales,” says Deanna Walenciak, CAB director of marketing. A lack of meat knowledge among those charged to sell the product had been identified as a major barrier to sales.

“As our industry has changed, there are not as many people working their way up through the cut shop to the sales role,” she says.

Targeting foodservice distributor partners, both domestically and internationally, the “crash course in meat” brings together the likes of CAB specialists, buyers and sales managers looking to add an extensive bank of knowledge to their protein repertoire.

“We want to deliver 10 years of experience through a three-week program,” Walenciak says.

Spread out over six months, the curriculum includes a week on the road visiting Angus seedstock and commercial ranches, followed by feedlot and packing plant tours. Weeks two and three, meat science and sales workshop weeks, respectively, involve the science behind the specification-based brand, getting hands-on with a carcass breakdown and sales strategies — all to culminate in a half-day final exam.

“Each participant has to give a professional sales presentation that’s critiqued and graded,” Walenciak says. “Obviously, our goal is for everyone to succeed, but we want them to feel confident when they walk across that stage, and take that with them home to their businesses.”

Ample time and resources are dedicated to the success of the classes, not to mention those on the production side of the business who open their gates to the traveling group. In a five-year span, eight seedstock operations, 21 commercial ranches, seven feedyards and nine packing plants have contributed to the unique educational opportunity.

Sure, sales have increased and there’s a list of people waiting to take part in the next class, but the program’s success is difficult to measure when it comes to numbers. To put it into perspective for cattlemen, John Stika likes to equate it to something that hits close to home.

“Calving. It’s not necessarily rocket science, but it isn’t easy either,” says the CAB president. “Sure, you can be familiar with cows, but until you’ve actually pulled a calf, gone through the entire experience from start to finish, it can be difficult to speak about it. Having experienced it firsthand versus having someone tell you how it’s supposed to be done brings about a vastly different level of confidence.

“That’s the takeaway. That’s what’s driven it from Class 1 to Class 10.”



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\*Certified Angus Beef LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Angus Association.

### Retail beef ads work

As beef prices trended lower last fall, many retailers responded with advertising to stimulate demand.

Steve Ringle, CAB director of business development for the brand, tracks the ad features of many regional and national retailers. Most of the brand's volume sells because of what's on the front page of that week's newspaper circulars.

"We can be in a 200-store retail chain each and every week, but we don't see any real movement until we're in the ad. That's what drives volume," he says. "That's what takes a trickle and makes it a flood."

Ringle credits weekly promotions with helping the brand reach 36.8 million pounds (lb.) of retail sales last October, a 29.5% increase compared to October 2014.

Using a snapshot from that October example, ad features increased from 73 in 2014 to 109 last year. Those are not paid placements, but rather business decisions made by retail chains, Ringle says.

During this expansion phase, the industry has work to do to take back the front page.

"We lost a tremendous lot of ground when cattle prices shot way up," he says.

Yet things are already looking brighter. Thanks especially to Christmas season rib features, CAB brand sales were up nearly 15 million lb. in the first quarter of the fiscal year, compared to October through December of 2014.

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### Meanwhile at the ECC

Since its establishment in February 2012, the CAB Education & Culinary Center (ECC) has served as a unique gathering place. Partners in and outside of the beef industry are gaining insight into the brand and the quality beef that defines it.

From cattlemen to media guests and scientists to chefs, more than 225 groups have visited the Wooster, Ohio, venue from all parts of the world. This ECC column within Brand News will help keep producers current on recent events there.

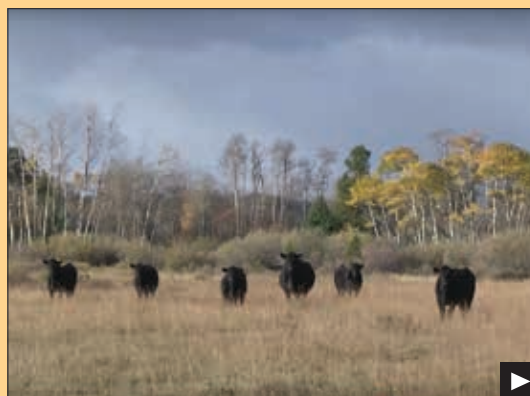
- ▶ Youth Leaders Orientation, Jan. 4-5
- ▶ Giant Eagle, Jan. 8
- ▶ Driftwood Restaurant Group, Jan. 11
- ▶ Jeremy Umansky, Jan. 13
- ▶ Advance Foods, Jan. 14
- ▶ United Source One, Jan. 14
- ▶ George Motz & Billy Durney, Jan. 14
- ▶ MBA 10.2, Jan. 18-23
- ▶ Sysco Cincinnati, Jan. 23-26
- ▶ ATI Beef Class, Jan. 28

### Digital extras

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and the American Angus Association provide these video segments. Readers of our digital edition can click on the photo to launch the respective YouTube video. The url (www ...) for each video is also provided for our print edition readers.



Lance Zimmerman, CattleFax analyst, says that this expansion phase in the beef industry is very different from those of recent decades. Producing quality beef helps win demand and dollars. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yp7T9BkQhEc>.



Ken Schmidt, former Harley Davidson communications director, spoke at the National Angus Convention last fall. This segment recaps his advice regarding public image. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qa8w0YulOgo>.



Richard Tokach of Tokach Angus Ranch, Saint Anthony, N.D., talks about market signals that pull him toward higher quality. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXlpOGAElls>.



Cattlemen Jerry Connealy and Steve Peterson credit the success of their businesses to communicating and building relationships around quality goals. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UciH2v2SQ6Y>.

January 2016 was off to a great start, as well, with the first week recording 25 front-page features, compared to 21 last year at less-attractive prices.

### Story behind the numbers: 7 hours

That's how long it takes the 17,500 *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand partners around the world to sell 1 million lb. of product.

To break it down, start at the beginning.

CAB sold 896 million lb. in fiscal year 2015 (FY15). Divide that by the 260 workdays brand partners commit to each year to get 3.45 million lb. per day. With consideration

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Based on fiscal year 2015 (FY15) sales of 896 million lb., 25 semi-trailer loads of fresh product carrying the CAB label hit the road every 7 hours.



► Young Angus leaders (from left) Katelyn Corsentino, Tim Mardesen, Macy Perry, Braden Henricks, Alex Rogen, Gabrielle Lemenager and Jera Pipkin (below) learned about how foodservice and brand marketing affect their operations.



### Youth Leaders Orientation

Along with snow and freezing temperatures, the first week of January brought the Angus breed's young leaders to Wooster, Ohio, for the annual Youth Leaders Orientation.

Valued as an opportunity to engage and educate the next generation of influential cattlemen, CAB staffers dedicated two days to ensuring the young people left with a better understanding of the brand that supports the cattle they raise.

"We know that a lot of what we do at CAB is out of sight, out of mind for these young Angus breeders," says Kara Lee, supply marketing coordinator for the brand.

It's a world that brings value to what they do at home, she says, but it's quite different from what they live in each day.

Most groups come into CAB's Education & Culinary Center (ECC) knowing much about the food industry, but little of the production story. The inverse is true for this group, Lee says. "That's their business, so cattle aren't the main focus for these two days."

Instead, the spotlight shines on foodservice and brand marketing to reveal how a high-quality steak may leave their ranch as a steer and end up on a consumer's plate.

Alex Rogen, Brandon, S.D., is a junior at South Dakota State University and has Angus production in his genes. Time in the showing with steers and in the pasture with bulls led to this year as a pre-vet junior with plans to serve animals. He's also the

National Junior Angus Association's chairman of the board.

"The biggest takeaway was the affirmation that a quality product needs to be our key focus," Rogen says, "because without it, we don't have a job that's going to make us money. It was a good reminder, for me and others, that it's not just the cattle industry, but the beef industry."

Consumers have to want it and be willing to pay for it, Rogen says. Otherwise, beef may not be the protein of choice.

"To be able to go learn and share with people that there are specifications in place that can guarantee a consistent and reliable eating experience is honestly a privilege," Rogen says.

For those coming from a stock-show background, he added, "It's important to keep that terminal outlook on things. At the end of the day, the cows are pretty, but they have to work and do good things for the consumer."

Young Angus members interested in attending the 2017 Youth Leaders Conference Jan. 3-4 should look for applications this summer.

to partners in 53 countries and different time zones, it would be remiss to not divide by a 24-hour workday and get 143,589 lb. per hour. Divide that into 1 million lb. and you get just 7 hours.

Look at it as 420 minutes — the length of a typical school day or a long trip.

From the live side, 3.48 million head earned the CAB stamp in FY15. Dividing

by 260 workdays equals nearly 13,400 head certified each day. Divide again by 24 hours in a day and multiply it by 7 hours to get a rough figure of 3,900 head of cattle that provide the 1 million lb. of branded product.

Estimating 40 head of finished cattle per load, that's close to 95 loads heading down the highway or 25 semi-trailer loads of fresh product carrying the CAB label every 7 hours.

That's a lot of CAB in a little amount of time, and it's all because of you.

Check back next month for another story behind the numbers.



**Editor's Note:** *Laura Conaway is a producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*

## A 'gastronaut' in town

Jeremy Umansky may have coined the term himself, but he fits it to a tee. A lover of mold and its biological properties, he's educated as a chef but prefers to spend his days foraging for edible vegetation and exploring all things food.

In the calm between opening his own deli and bringing his passion to CAB Brand Ambassador Jonathon Sawyer's Trentina restaurant, the "gastronaut" stopped by the ECC in Wooster to talk science.

"We all nerded out," CAB meat scientist Phil Bass says. "We shared our focuses and what we know and understand in our respective disciplines. It was just a really interesting day of brainstorming."

Umansky does a lot of that, always with the consumer in mind.

"For years, home cooks and professional chefs alike have used specific cuts of beef that limit the uses and dining enjoyment of the product," Umansky says. "By applying biological and anatomical sciences to these cuts, we can widen beef's appeal and create new market and consumption opportunities."



There's no doubt the healthy bacteria Umansky loves affect flavor and affordability, but there's more.

"His big focus is in edible molds and

fungus of all kinds," Bass says, "but he's fascinated with old-world preservation techniques and gastronomy."

By observing practices used by those who came before, Umansky says there's a chance beef can be made available in places it was once hard to keep.

The chef-turned-scientist says he looks forward to working with CAB to strengthen beef's overall appeal.

"There's more to eating beef than simply eating a great steak," Bass adds. "There are cuts that may really benefit from looking at these ideas. To align ourselves with people like him is a win for us."

Bryan Schaaf, media and communications manager for the brand, says Umansky is and will continue to be a voice for the culinary community — someone who will push the edge and carry conversations.

"Chefs seek him out simply to pick his brain," Schaaf says. "We throw out the word 'influencer' a lot and Jeremy truly is. For him to have a solid understanding of the brand and the cattlemen behind it, I don't know that you can put a price on that."

