



# Brand News

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

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## Brand at Cattlemen's Convention



A record turnout of more than 8,100 cattlemen joined with those in allied industries to share, learn and chart their courses at the Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show in San Antonio, Texas, Feb. 4-7.

That included learning about and enjoying the *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand, which was featured as part of several educational sessions and savored in eight food venues.

“Our goal was to not only engage but to be present with cattlemen and show them what we’re doing as a brand,” says Danielle Foster, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) meeting planner. “It’s absolutely critical that we get the logo, the brand out there,



► **Above:** Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), Angus Foundation, Angus Media and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) are all featured in a new booth design, says CAB’s Danielle Foster. A gathering spot for trade show attendees, the booth displays “beautiful imagery of all of us who make up Team Angus.”

and show them what we’re doing on their behalf.”

As more cattlemen breed quality into their herds, more take a critical interest in their beef-eating experiences.

“We wanted to make sure every bite was a quality bite,” Foster says.

Their eight opportunities included a breakfast of country-fried steak on a biscuit, summer sausage for a snack, short ribs for lunch and smoked brisket for dinner — and that was just one day. Other events featured CAB products as part of Southwest-style entrées such as fajitas and tacos.

Besides satisfying appetites, CAB was the focus for an export panel with CAB’s Larry Corah, another on the science of barbecue with longtime partner Weber grill master Kevin Kolman, and a presentation on a new white paper about premium quality vs. commodity grinds as market targets. The brand’s Dr. Phil Bass provided a cutting demonstration in the Trade Show’s Learning Lounge.

Meetings are another part of the week as everyone shares stories and ideas.

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

“Whether or not you’re an Angus breeder,” says Mark McCully, CAB vice president of production, “seeing the brand presence and leadership role across the industry is reflected in our presence there.”

Next year’s convention is set for Jan. 27-30 in San Diego, Calif.

### Independent Meat Group

With CAB, there’s a bite for everyone. Large or small, vast or more specialized, the only requirement for being a part of it is quality — and Angus, obviously.

Just as the world of cattle production has a wide range of variety and scale, CAB works with distributors across that spectrum. Many of the independent meat distribution companies have been with the brand for 30 years or more; they’re family-owned and -operated, and often are generations deep in heritage and legacy.

Their focus is center-of-the-plate protein. They’re known for selling the best — for instance, dry-aged CAB Prime — and perhaps hand-delivering it at that. Twice a year they gather as the “Independent Meat Group” to learn, grow and network, once at the brand’s Education & Culinary Center and once at the CAB Annual Conference.

“These people care deeply about their companies and customers, and are passionate about beef,” says Brent Eichar, CAB senior vice president. For the past three years, he notes, those sessions provide “a chance to reconnect and engage each other, to share successes and challenges.”

Mark McCully says, “Some of these guys have the size and scale to their businesses, but they’re not corporately owned and publicly traded. There’s that entrepreneurial spirit, a lot of tradition, a lot of heritage.”

They and their cohorts comprised most of the foodservice division until broadliners began to buy many of them. Now the broadliners comprise most foodservice partners, but Eichar says there’s room for both in the business model.

“These groups continue to be an important part of what we do as they call on a different customer base,” he says. “We see them as a necessary part.”

Just as they cohesively contribute to the brand alongside larger publicly traded companies, they complement and build each other up, too.

“They don’t view themselves as competitors as much as comrades, brothers in a cause,” Eichar says.

Maintaining relationships with them for years, he sees a mirror view of many of today’s ranching families: “Both businesses, whether you’re a fifth-generation cattle rancher or on the meat side of things, some of those same

CONTINUED ON PAGE 158

### 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.



Dan Moser, president of Angus Genetics Inc., talks about ways genomics are improving the beef business, now and in the future. Here’s the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lwd9Xnlzi4>.



As beef cattle numbers have declined, quality grade has increased all across North America. Mark McCully, vice president of production for the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand, talks about the shift: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5dN2qywORM>.



Arizona rancher Chuck Backus talks about improving genetics — increasing Angus in a herd, while remaining well-adapted in hot, dry climates. Backus started the major genetic makeover seven years ago when he was 70. Here’s the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzK4yNjCgG4>.



Kelly Murray, assistant director of foodservice marketing for the CAB brand, talks about an innovative new program that empowers beef sales people with knowledge. Here’s the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GChDXFd3BjY>.

legacies and family values are passed down. The cultures are very similar.”

### Marbling in Missouri

Marbling is a “lifetime event.” That core message was one shared at the Jan. 29 Mid-Missouri Grazing Conference in Jefferson City, Mo.

Along those lines, CAB production brand manager Kara Lee addressed what a cow-calf producer can do to raise the kind of cattle that will be more appealing to feedlots. She talked about how to aim for high quality throughout the lifetime of an animal.

“From an economic perspective,” she said, “we talked about what drives profits for feedyards and packers.” The opportunity lies not in producing more low-Choice cattle, because “higher-quality cattle are more profitable.”

Ranchers often feel little responsibility for marbling when they don’t share in ownership, seeing that as the feeder’s responsibility, but Lee said everyone stands to increase their common profitability by setting quality as a goal for the entire production process.

Prenatal nutrition, creep feeding, early weaning, genomic testing — all are likely to increase quality down the line and thus add to profitability, she said, crediting Missouri Extension specialists for helping spread that message to great effect in the state.

### Tailgating with Texans

The Lone Star state is known to enjoy football. Combine that with the need to do

### 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.

- ▶ Independent Meat Specialty Group, Feb. 3
- ▶ Broken Rocks, Feb. 18
- ▶ *Fine Cooking* magazine, Feb. 19
- ▶ Southern Foods/Pate Dawson, Feb. 23-24
- ▶ Bill Watson/CRO, Feb. 25

### Behind the Beef

One of the fortunate parts of a company that’s in all segments, from product creation to consumption, is the opportunity to know so many unique people, all with specific roles in the quality-beef industry. Behind the scenes, these are the folks who help bring the best beef to consumers. Fulfilling more than a job description, they’re on fire about the work they do.

### Meet Meg and Matt Groves

Meg Groves often starts work at 3:45 a.m. That’s when she assembles her crew and points the car toward the packing plant.

As the carcass data manager for Iowa’s Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF) — probably the most well-known and largest feedout discovery program in the nation — she takes her job very seriously. More than five minutes late to one of those early morning meet ups? You get left. Being a man short is better than the alternative.

“If you miss the kill order ... well, that’s everything. You can’t just go back the next day,” she says. Neither snooze button nor snowstorm will keep them from gathering the marbling, backfat and KPH (kidney, pelvic and heart fat) information. If there’s winter weather on the way, they stay in a hotel the night before.

During a high-volume season, Meg is in the packing plant almost every day. One day she and a coworker take down the “tag transfer” data, matching the ear tag number with the plant ID. The following day, four or five of the crew head into the cooler, taking carcass notes right next to the USDA grader. The line runs fast, so they must be focused and efficient.

It’s no wonder Meg is so committed. The producers who feed with the futurity depend on that data for breeding and management decisions, but it’s part of a greater body of work, too.

TCSCF analysis helped uncover truths like this: It doesn’t matter where the cattle come from, but rather how they’re handled; the calmer the cattle, the better they’ll grade; and keeping cattle healthy pays dividends. The list could go on, as these studies and abstracts are constantly cited in presentations and scientific literature, as proof of their impact.

Getting up early and working in a packing plant — sound like your dream job? How about working alongside your brother?

Matt Groves, two years Meg’s junior, says it’s a perk. His sister had already worked at the TCSCF for a handful of years when Matt started as the feedlot data coordinator in 2010. In that position he also intensively manages data — they weigh cattle five times while they’re on feed, for example. He’s often found right beside Meg in the plant, but also places cattle in the yards, processes, and tags and sorts for finish.

Ushering thousands of cattle through feeding and processing each year, these siblings make it possible for cattlemen from across the country to learn more about how their animals do postweaning, and perhaps even more importantly, they allow TCSCF manager Darrell Busby to continue making discoveries that improve the entire beef industry.

Simply put, they’re enablers of the very best variety.

To read more about the Groves siblings and others dedicated to the beef industry, check out <http://cab.info/1tm>.



▶ By gathering and recording data, siblings Meg (right) and Matt (above) Groves make it possible for cattlemen from across the country to learn more about how their animals do postweaning. Perhaps even more importantly, they allow Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF) manager Darrell Busby to continue making discoveries that improve the entire beef industry.

everything bigger, and tailgating becomes serious business. Add in devoted NFL Texan fans David Mitchell and Jim Brubaker, along with self-proclaimed foodie and Sysco CAB specialist Duke Dirksmeyer, and you have a recipe for the ultimate tailgating experience.

Brubaker and Mitchell grew up together, and when the Houston Texans opened the way for tailgating, they teamed up again. It started with a pickup and the basics, but grew from there. Mitchell had a vision, his friend says.

“From a Weber® grill behind the truck with just a few friends, Mitchell wanted to create something special,” says Brubaker. “He had the idea, and with a little bit of my help, we made the idea a reality.”

Dirksmeyer says, “It is one of the largest trailers and most popular tailgates. Everything is bigger and better down here, and we don’t aim to disappoint.”

For each Texans home game, Mitchell and crew host 60 to 75 with quite an elaborate menu, but the beef is always CAB.

“Most of us are employees of Sysco, so it’s a great opportunity to feature the brand,” Dirksmeyer says. “We entertain customers and restaurateurs, so it goes a step above your typical tailgate.”

For many, “typical” has evolved beyond hotdogs and burgers, but Dirksmeyer says it’s mainly just taking the best and making it better.

That means having fun, says Brubaker: “It’s a chance to come together, enjoy friends, watch some football and eat great food.”

In the course of a season, days range from a sweltering 100° F to cold rain and windy, he says. Relying on the known quality of CAB adds stability he can count on.

“It’s a better product, more consistent and has brand reputation,” Dirksmeyer says. “CAB cooks better on the grill in all different weather, all the time, always.”

The high-profile tailgate often draws crowds and a waiting list of guests. Featuring product in that adverse environment has convinced some customers to change their food orders, the CAB specialist says. “We always have chefs and customers say ‘Let’s try that in our restaurant next week.’”

For the last game, Dirksmeyer pushed the limits. The menu featured a 22-ounce CAB cowboy steak, lobster tail and champagne.

“We wear CAB hats and jackets; everyone knows what we’re cooking, and they all want it,” he says.

Some may think CAB is only for fine dining, but he’d rather show through this

setting that any time is the right time for high-quality beef.



**Editor’s Note:** *Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for CAB.*



### Texas tailgating with CAB®

