

# Fruition

**Pratt Feeders' CAB award is testament to a plan well-executed.**

*Story & photos by Steve Suther*

**A** 38,000-head feedlot near Pratt, Kan., shows what can be done with a systematic approach to higher-quality beef.

Pratt Feeders committed to quality in 2003 by licensing with Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and won a national CAB award the next year because of manager Jerry Bohn's plans.

With universal staff support, the feedyard would gather data as never before, sharing with CAB and customers to upgrade cattle and profitability. It would become as well-known for quality as for feedlot performance and marketing.

Back then, its 11% *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand acceptance rate on 17,000 cattle was not mentioned. That was a benchmark to leave in the dust.

In the same June-May period ending this spring, a similar number of enrolled and harvested cattle made nearly 32% CAB and Prime.

That was 7 percentage points above the



► Manager Jerry Bohn committed Pratt Feeders to quality in 2003, becoming a licensed feedlot. The yard has since moved from an 11% CAB® acceptance rate to 32%, earning it the 2011 Quality Focus Award for feedlot partners with capacities of more than 15,000 head.

2010 Pratt Feeders mark, too. It's why, at the CAB annual conference in Sunriver, Ore., Sept. 22-24, assistant manager Dave Latta accepted the 2011 Quality Focus Award for partners with more than 15,000-head capacity.

more of the right kind of cattle," he says. "But our retained-ownership customers have made great progress, as well."

Latta heads up both areas of procurement. "Our cattle from Florida and

Louisiana customers fit in with those from Kansas, Oklahoma, Kentucky and South Dakota, pretty much all Angus," he says. Per-head premiums earned in June ranged from the mid-\$40s to twice that above the cash market.

Bohn says a key to earning premiums with those cattle is learning how to feed high-quality cattle as a category, and specific to repeat customers as they improve those cattle. Again, results speak volumes.

Each month, CAB publishes a 30.06 Program On-Target list of feedlot pens that made at least 30% CAB with no more than 6% outliers. In a recent report, Pratt Feeders was in the "honorable mentions" with 131 Angus steers that made 82% CAB or Prime. It is the only large yard to have any pens listed in the main 30.06 section last year, accounting for 10% of all such on-target cattle nationally.

Bohn set the course for success years ago with a strategy to learn as much as possible about the cattle he feeds while inviting higher-quality placements. The feedyard has enrolled more than 150,000 cattle in the CAB database since licensing. It opened doors to

**CAB Quality Focus Award**  
**>15,000 head**



## Sourcing the right kind

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Angus producers for networking and a series of options to return data, even when the feedlot buys up to full interest.

From tours and open-house events to industry leadership, more and more Angus producers began to see Pratt Feeders as a potential feeding partner. The relationships grew with the common goal of improving cattle and beef, and one result was higher quality grades.

“Angus customers have made a pretty intensive selection for quality as we learned to feed them a bit more and returned the data,” Bohn says. In 2003, he knew something about the genetic potential in 15% of the cattle fed. Today that stands at 35%-40%. “I hope that can go higher, but the low-hanging fruit has been picked,” he says, referring to ranchers most likely to adopt a partnering stance.

Other factors have affected quality, too.

“The weather may have helped grade in the last few years, although drought can take some of that away in the next,” he says. “Instrument grading has been a little piece of the shift in grades—I don’t know that we have any more Choice cattle, but we certainly have a more consistent Choice.”

## Further training

Over the last couple of years, Pratt Feeders has been increasingly involved with CAB in training foodservice and beef sales teams, too.

“Our industry has to become a little more transparent,” Bohn says. “We don’t do anything here that we have to worry about or



► “We made a conscious effort to procure more of the right kind of cattle,” says Dave Latta, assistant manager of the yard. “But our retained-ownership customers have made great progress, as well.”

hide, but the beef consumer is quite removed from the rural roots of years ago. We have to become advocates for our industry.”

That’s why the feedlot is involved with the CAB Masters of Brand Advantages (MBA) program, and why it keeps looking for more ways to bridge the cultural and information gap between segments in the food chain.

“The beef industry gets beat up because we are feeding to animals the grain that they say ought to be going to people,” Bohn notes. “But they haven’t put together the whole system where we have acres and acres of

grass that can’t feed people without the beef animal and a finishing period on grain, so we have to get that story out, and I think we are starting to do that.”

From rancher to feeder, packer to purveyor and consumer, “everybody in the system is more willing to share information than they used to be,” he says. “That’s more important now than ever. All the volatility and higher prices in the system put more pressure on the need to share if we are all going to move ahead.”

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