

**BUSINESS STRATEGIES**

## Capturing Value Of Genetics, Management

Two cow-calf producers shared their perspectives on “capturing value” for calves during a Cattlemen’s College session at the 2017 Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville. Making remarks were Richard Meadows of Alabama-based Meadows Creek Farm and Sam Hands of Kansas-based Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co.

**Panelists Richard Meadows and Sam Hands share experiences in adding value to their calf crops.**

Meadows shared how his family operation has grown into a seedstock and commercial entity over the past three decades by working with others and looking for opportunities to add value. What began as a small herd from 4-H show animals has now evolved into working with cooperator herds and marketing 150-170 2-year-old Angus and Charolais bulls via three annual sales.



► “It used to be said we were in the cow business. Then we called it the beef business. Then it was protein, then the grass business ... but mostly we’re in the people business,” said Richard Meadows.

Meadows credited their growth to “finding the right people” with whom to work. This has included establishing the Southeast Alabama Feeder Calf Sale, which he and a majority of his customers sell calves through as a means to offer uniform lots in greater quantities. During the years they’ve added protocols for vaccinations, preconditioning and, most recently, even offering promotion

for genetic data on calves. What began with 600 head has grown to as many as 3,500-4,000 calves being marketed through the sale on the first Thursday in August.

Of this successful marketing venue, he shared, “Especially in our part of the world we have a lot of small producers and a lot of row crops, so cattle — and marketing — have to fit in with their other enterprises.”

He also noted that the ability to bring health, feedlot and carcass information back on the calves sold helps the process come full circle for producers to improve their management and selection strategies to capture more value in the future.

Within the past few years, Meadows has begun working with Reputation Feeder Cattle for enhanced marketing opportunities. He advised other producers, “You must always be looking on the horizon to see what’s new and needed in the industry.”

Notably, Meadows underscored forging long-term relationships and commitments.

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Meadows mentioned his three young sons at home and concluded, “What we are trying to do is create a better future for them.”

Kansas producer Sam Hands, whose family operation encompasses 10,000 acres of grain farming and cow-calf, stocker and finishing programs, opened his remarks noting the lack of vertical integration that exists within the beef industry. In comparison, he pointed out that the pork and poultry industries are highly integrated and as a result have extreme predictability.

That said, Hands acknowledged, “We’ll never be as efficient as them (pork and poultry) because it takes longer to produce beef, but we still need to keep it in mind.”

He added, “There’s not the same romance in pork and poultry as there is with ranching and being a cattleman.”

Turning to the topic of capturing value, Hands stated, “As a rancher, our challenge becomes how are we going to turn this [calf] into a beef product. We’ve got to convert pounds per cow per acre and do that in the shortest time and cost possible.”

To become a market maker rather than a market taker, Hands underscored that networking and setting cattle apart through management and quality genetics becomes key.

“Pounds pay the bills in today’s rail market, but quality makes the difference,” he

said. “The bar of excellence for quality beef keeps rising.”

Hands has worked with Top Dollar Angus to aid in marketing his calves and procure premiums for their genetic superiority.



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In his closing comments he encouraged other cow-calf producers to think beyond the ranch gate.

“Who is your consumer? Who is your market?” Hands asked. “At the dinner table consumers make choices, we need to ensure when they sit down to a meal of beef, it is the best experience. We’ll never be as efficient as pork and poultry, but we need [to utilize] predictability to produce the best.”

For more about the marketing services with which each of these producers works, visit <http://reputationfeederattle.com/> or <http://www.topdollarangus.com/>.

— Story & photos by Kindra Gordon

## Satisfying Hunger for Food Verification

Leann Saunders shared her perspectives on “capturing value” within the industry during a Cattlemen’s College® session in Nashville, Tenn. Saunders is president of Where Food Comes From Inc., which is a leading provider of certification and verification services to the food industry.

Saunders and her husband, John, have been working in the area of livestock identification, traceability and food industry verification for 21 years. Where Food Comes From brings together their two former companies, IMI Global and Sterling Solutions, as well as the entities of International Certification Services Inc. and Validus Validation Services LLC.