

# CAB Carcass Weights Edge Higher

Brand adjusts spec to reflect today's market needs.

Story & photo by **Steve Suther**, Certified Angus Beef LLC

**A**s finished cattle grow heavier each year, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) has chosen to adjust the *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) brand weight limit to 1,050 pounds (lb.), effective Nov. 24.

Prior to 2006, the 1978-established subsidiary of the American Angus Association had no weight limit, but relied on a yield-grade requirement. Eight years ago that was replaced with a ribeye size bracket of 10-16 square inches, an external fat limit of 1 inch and a carcass weight cap at less than 1,000 lb. as part of the brand's 10 specifications.

Since then, the North American cattle herd has continued to decline, and feedlots added more weight to each animal to compensate. U.S. average weekly steer carcass weights recently eclipsed the 900-lb. mark.

"As the beef industry continues to evolve, this brand is actively engaged in discussing ways to maintain increasing relevance to our farmer and rancher owners and licensed partners," says CAB President John Stika.

Noting the decades-long upward trend in carcass weights (see Fig. 1), he says, "Our team has been walking the meat coolers the past two years evaluating our brand within the marketplace."

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**— Doug Schroeder**

CAB Board Chairman for the 2014 fiscal year, Doug Schroeder of Clarence, Iowa, said science has always guided the brand. Data analysis combined with feedback from customers determined the move and the timing.

"This is a step we could take to ensure the brand remains strong and relevant moving forward," he says.

Product quality and consistency are always the first consideration, Stika says. While the change could mean another 3%-5% more product from the additional 2,500-3,000 cattle at 30 licensed



plants each week, the data show the impact on individual cuts will be negligible.

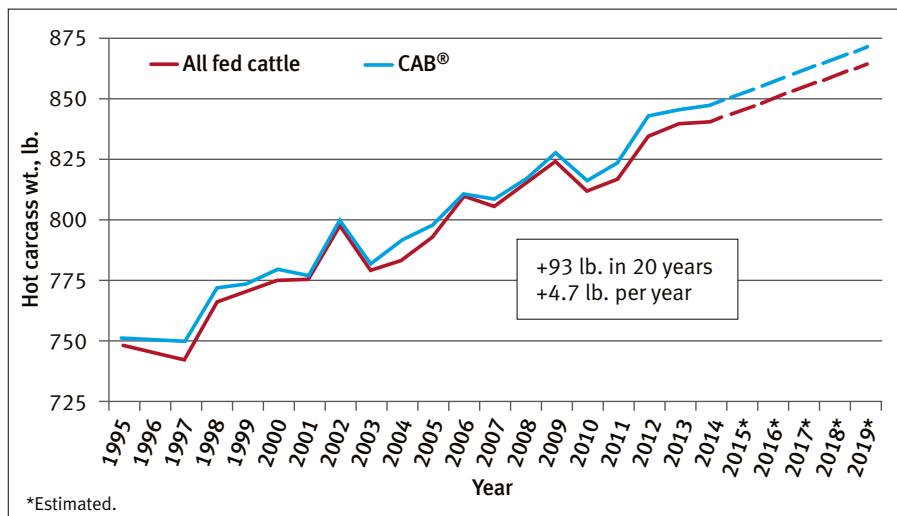
"We looked carefully at the relationship between individual carcass weight and subprimals, finding most of those would increase about a tenth of a pound," he notes.

"I don't think a 50-pound difference in the whole carcass weight should make a difference to us," says Kip Palmer, president of Palmer Food Services, Rochester, N.Y. Palmer serves on the CAB Board with Angus producers.

"The price of corn and cattle tells us those weights are just going to keep increasing," he says, "but the brand specification to keep ribeye size between 10 and 16 inches will still maintain consistency in the boxes."

Stika says the science-based decision to adjust weights was made "parallel to our firm commitment to uphold the premium quality of our brand within the economic realities of the production sector."

**Fig. 1: Carcass weight trend since 1995, fed cattle**



**Editor's Note:** Steve Suther is director of industry information for Certified Angus Beef LLC.