

# Angus Along the Hudson

National Angus Conference & Tour gives educational program and tours of New York ranches.

Just like suspenders support a wardrobe, the Angus family supports its members, Phil Trowbridge, American Angus Association president and chairman of the board, told more than 220 participants of the 2013 National Angus Conference & Tour (NAC&T) in Albany, N.Y., Aug. 28-30. The conference was sponsored by Purina.

This year was the first time the NAC&T has been this far east, Trowbridge said, welcoming attendees to New York and encouraging them to be comfortable talking with staff and board members.

Participants heard about:

- ▶ genomic updates from Tonya Amen, genetic services director of Angus Genetics Inc.;
- ▶ harnessing your passion from Chef John Doherty, formerly of the Waldorf=Astoria and now of Merchant Hospitality;
- ▶ the business side of beef from David O'Diam, assistant director of business development for Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB);
- ▶ telling the beef story from Debbie Lyons-Blythe, author of *Life on a Kansas Cattle Ranch* blog;
- ▶ marketing Angus genetics from Eric Grant, Association director of public relations and communications;
- ▶ end-product marketing from Kip Palmer, CEO of Palmer Foods; and
- ▶ preparing for the future of agriculture from Scott Vernon, professor of agriculture communications at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo.

## Passion: Path to Vision

"There are no great people, just ordinary people who do extraordinary things," says Chef John Doherty.

These ordinary people can accomplish excellent things when they apply their passion to a clear vision. Vision is necessary to success, and so is initiative, effort, knowledge and walking the walk, he said.

"We as people don't grow or learn when we just sit back and enjoy life. There are moments when we're supposed to enjoy life, but we're not growing. God put us on this Earth to grow," he asserted.

Surround yourself with good people, he said, and your level of success is dependent upon your ability to help good people reach their full potential. To do this, there are two



PHOTO BY ERIC GRANT

▶ In his experience delegating at the Waldorf=Astoria, Chef John Doherty learned that instead of telling someone how to do something, he got better results when he asked them how they were going to accomplish the task.

schools of thought. The first is to "beat" it out of them with fear and intimidation. The second is to inspire people to have the desire to get the best results.

He elaborated that effort is fueled by desire; desire comes from passion; passion comes from appreciation; and appreciation comes from knowledge. Knowledge is the seed of passion, and it is important to create an environment conducive to learning and growth. This can be done with vision, structure and discipline, knowledge, accountability, and communication. He quipped that the simple things needed are the hardest to accomplish.

In his experience delegating at the Waldorf, he learned that instead of telling someone how to do something, he got better results when he asked them how they were going to accomplish the task. No one likes to be told what to do, he noted. By listening to their thoughts, he can offer advice, but they take ownership of the task.

"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care," he concluded.

— by Kasey Brown, associate editor

## The Business Side of Beef

"A lot of things have changed in a short number of years," said David O'Diam as he provided an overview of the beef industry. O'Diam is assistant director of business development for CAB. In this role he works with producers of *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand products and helps to link

availability with end-user demand, as well as forecasts market conditions and provides weekly and monthly updates to internal sales staff.

O'Diam began his remarks by offering what he called a "50,000-foot view of the industry." He noted, "Not that long ago live cattle were selling below \$90 per hundredweight (cwt.). Now, they're at \$126 per hundredweight."

Additionally, he reported, U.S. cattle numbers have shown a sizable decrease in inventory during the last several years, with total cattle numbers down 3.7% compared to 2012. O'Diam said it looks like cattle numbers will remain flat at best in 2014, with some possible rebuilding of cow herds after that, depending on drought conditions.

As a result of the decreased inventory, total slaughter has also been down — by 1 million head in 2012, and by about half a million head in 2013, O'Diam reported. Plus, the lower cattle numbers have had a tremendous impact to the feeding and packing sectors, he noted.

In a nutshell, O'Diam said, "There are less cows, and they're more expensive."

Despite fewer numbers, O'Diam shared that CAB has had record acceptance rates (24.4%) this year, and is up more than 6% in pounds sold. He added that CAB has seen a tremendous amount of growth in all segments of retail (2.8%), foodservice (6.1%), international (16.4%), and miscellaneous (11.9%).

Comparatively, non-CAB beef sales in retail, restaurant and international for the industry will be down this year, O'Diam



PHOTOS BY KASEY BROWN

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explained. “These numbers show the value of the CAB brand.”

O’Diam also noted, “International, especially, has been a rising star as we’ve seen access to Japan.”

He credited CAB’s growth to great partners in retail and foodservice who value the brand and feature promotions to help move increased volumes of CAB product. For the future, CAB will continue to work with partners on their marketing and promotion efforts, as well as working to add more West Coast licensees.

In closing, O’Diam stated, “The beef industry has gotten pricey for product, but we can use more CAB. We can get it sold. Demand for CAB has never been stronger.”

— by *Kindra Gordon, field editor*

## Listening and Communicating

Debbie Lyons-Blythe told attendees she started blogging because of a relative just one generation removed from the farm who started asking her about antibiotics in beef and hormones in milk during a yearly visit. She said she finished her first blog post before that relative had made it home to Colorado.



► Debbie Lyons-Blythe shared that 95% of consumers trust farmers and ranchers to provide safe, nutritious food. She said that doesn’t mean to her, however, that what farmers and ranchers do is more important than any other job.

Lyons-Blythe said telling her story has changed since that first post in 2009. She said there must now be a conversation; she can’t talk exclusively about agriculture or cattle because no one wants to hear about it nonstop. She said she takes the opportunity to connect with her audience (mostly moms who are not involved in agriculture) through stories about her kids or with recipes. She uses those shared interests to provide positive facts about animal agriculture.

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to her, however, that what farmers and ranchers do is more important than any other job. Lyons-Blythe said one way to connect with consumers is to respect what they do (teaching, working in tire factories or wastewater treatment plants, etc.), while helping them be aware of the work farmers and ranchers do and the level of care they provide for their animals.

“Most consumers are just doing the best they can,” she said. “They are just like us.”

Lyons-Blythe said she knows she can’t change an activist’s mind; she just hopes to be able to influence one mom’s thinking when confronted by the often subtle anti-meat propaganda used by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and many other activist groups.

She talked about how she uses Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest to promote her weekly blog posts, and that she often tweets and posts photos using her phone while on the tractor, in the truck checking pastures or doing other chores.

She has also advocated for agriculture with farm and ranch tours, reading at schools and by handing out samples in grocery stores. Lyons-Blythe agrees with the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) that many phrases used by farmers and ranchers are buzz words that have “factory farm” connotations. She uses the term “the beef community” instead of “beef industry” to talk about what she and her family do. She said she is careful to always say they raise “traditional” beef, not “conventional” beef, and she identifies herself as a “cattle rancher,” not a “producer.”

Lyons-Blythe ended her presentation by saying blogging isn’t for everyone, but everyone in agriculture can be involved in advocacy by looking at the other interests they have and using those as opportunities.

“How can you connect? With dads? Do you golf? Do you know people who knit? Do you have grandkids in a local school? Everybody has a way they can relate,” she said.

— by *Linda Robbins, assistant editor*

## Marketing Angus Genetics

The key to successful marketing is to balance traditional print media and digital media, said Eric Grant, director of public relations and communications for the Association. This balance will help you keep your current customers and gain new ones.

We are in an age of disruption, he said. Digital is changing everything about marketing by decreasing some print avenues, yet expanding capabilities and reach for those willing to adapt. Digital media can give instant feedback, like knowing exactly how many hits you have on YouTube. The pace of change accelerates, and today’s

new technology will be tomorrow’s old technology, he noted.

While the marketing platforms are different by generations, he shared some advice from his grandpa, like don’t hit the snooze button because someone else will be up and at ’em while you sleep. Invest some time each day to think about how to market your cattle. Contrarian thinking can be beneficial and set you apart. Finally, fail forward. It is ok to fail, as long as you use the experience to learn and move forward.



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Grant offered his tactics for both digital and print platforms.

### His advice for the digital age:

- Don’t be afraid to hire a “kid;” they have grown up with social media and are comfortable with technology.
- Capture, store and maintain customer information, including information from your interactions.
- “Put some hay in the barn.” Photos, words and video are the currency of marketing and advertising, so document your ranch’s story. You can’t use it if you don’t have it.
- Develop a social media presence, but don’t do it unless you are committed. Make your Facebook and Twitter accounts about your customer, not you.
- Be smartphone-friendly. Have your phone number, email and physical address be clickable so customers can contact you easily.
- Build a simple website with current content.
- Launch a YouTube Channel for individual cattle videos that are no longer than 20-30 seconds.
- Email this around, like links to your video. Keep your customers engaged.
- Measure what you do. Digital gives good feedback.

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**His advice for print:**

- ▶ Contrarian thinking helps. Write handwritten letters because they get noticed. Go see people, especially those on the fence about doing business with you.
- ▶ Build color into your brand.
- ▶ Recognize that the sale cycle on an individual animal starts at breeding.
- ▶ Words matter, so you must have a narrative of what you do.
- ▶ Teach. The most successful seedstock breeders are teachers.
- ▶ Timeliness is imperative. You should capitalize on the interest within three days.

— by Kasey Brown, associate editor

**Marketing the End Product**

“I carry my CAB card with me every day, because I believe in it,” said food distributor Dwight “Kip” Palmer.

Palmer provided the audience a glimpse of his family’s 163-year evolution in the food business, which his great-great-grandfather initially started by selling fresh fish as a retailer in 1850 in Rochester, N.Y. Palmer is now the fifth-generation carrying forward the family’s food business, which today he describes as a broadline foodservice distributor and redistributor with special focus on refrigerated and frozen proteins, including CAB.

Palmer currently serves as the CEO of the Palmer Family of Companies, which includes Palmer Food Services and G&C Food Distributors, which is located in Syracuse, N.Y. He has a 26-year-old daughter — the sixth generation — working with him in the business. Palmer also currently serves on the CAB board.

He explained that as a broadline distributor, his company offers 8,000 active items — from desserts to coffee. However, they particularly bill themselves as a “protein” specialist and are proud to offer CAB. They buy 2 million pounds (lb.) of boxed beef per week and also have an in-house meat department that is able to cut meat to the client’s specifications. They serve 1,000 active clients, located primarily in central and western New York.

Palmer said the key to their success in the meat business has been the ability to buy in large quantities and then sell to retailers and smaller distributors. He points out that this is one way they have helped create demand for CAB.

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To further help promote CAB, Palmer Food Services spends \$250,000 for an annual Savor Local Restaurants TV and web advertising campaign, which promotes vendors who offer CAB products.

Additionally, Palmer is dedicated to educating its sales force about the CAB product. Five Palmer sales representatives have attended and passed the Masters of Brand Awareness Program offered by CAB. Palmer called the program “phenomenal” and said, “We want to send every salesperson we have to this program. It makes evangelists for the [CAB] brand.”

For the sales force, Palmer also utilizes center-of-the-plate “talking sheets,” which feature different weekly products, including CAB. As well, Palmer sales associates have CAB stickers on their laptop, so it’s the first thing a client sees as they work on their order with their sales representative.

Additional CAB promotion efforts include CAB signage in the Palmer retail store, CAB decals on all of their delivery trucks, CAB articles in Palmer’s customer and internal newsletters, and CAB product information featured on their wholesale and retail websites.

Another unique approach Palmer Foods offers is a custom-grinds option for customers to create their own signature ground-beef blend for burgers. Palmer said, “We want to use CAB as the cornerstone of their high-end ingredient profile.”

Palmer concluded, “We continue to educate

clients on the features and benefits of using CAB products to help enhance their menus.”

Toward this effort, Palmer specialists engage clients in personal meat cuttings and comparisons, walking tours of their meat-fabrication facility and frequent trips to the CAB Education & Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio.

Palmer noted that he himself has now been in the food business for 46 years. He shared that his philosophy is we exist “to make this world a better place,” noting that it is essentially the golden rule of treating others the way we want to be treated.

“We — all of us in this room — serve others by providing, supplying superior product in this continuum of conception to consumption,” he said. He credited the American Angus Association and CAB for being progressive organizations and noted, “I am very honored to be associated with you.”

— by Kindra Gordon, field editor

**Preparing for the Future**

“Farming without economic incentive is gardening. Gardening won’t feed the world,” said Scott Vernon, professor of agricultural communications at Cal Poly—San Luis Obispo and founder of the “I Love Farmers; They Feed My Soul” movement. “We need science to tackle this task.”

There are challenges to agriculture that will require change, said Vernon, adding that change often starts on the edges of the country and works its way to the center. To anticipate the future, he suggested staying abreast of issues on the coasts.

We live in an age that is constantly changing, he noted, pointing to the explosion in digital technology. Older generations are “digital immigrants,” he explained, while younger generations are “digital natives.”

Vernon emphasized that agriculture must invest in its youth. He said agriculture does a great job of teaching integrity, work ethic and the pursuit of excellence. However, today’s youth must be prepared for jobs that don’t even exist yet, because the digital era has generated a paradigm shift.

Agriculture has been the brightest spot in the declining economy, Vernon said, citing a study that indicated there are more than 50,000 jobs available in the ag industry and only 29,300 graduates from agricultural colleges. There are more options in agriculture involving business and management, science, and environment. That attracts employees without an ag background, too. Vernon said a background in agriculture isn’t necessarily the most important quality of a job applicant. Rather, he said, most important is a willingness to learn.

It is this willingness to learn that sparked



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the creation of “I Love Farmers; They Feed My Soul” (ILF). Targeting urban youth 14-24 years old, the movement seeks to initiate conversations about agriculture. The group celebrates choice in food.

Ag opponents tend to use emotion in their arguments, Vernon said. Responses based on logic and science don’t resonate successfully. The ILF movement opens conversations with “pennies and passion.” More information can be found at [www.ilovefarmers.org](http://www.ilovefarmers.org).

— by Kasey Brown, associate editor

Association CEO Bryce Schumann wrapped up the conference and addressed the recently announced developmental duplication (DD) genetic condition.

“As Angus breeders, we’re used to dealing with dominant traits, not recessive traits. However, our experience now makes us more flexible, and our members have the tools to manage for this condition more creatively and efficiently,” he reassured.

“We are presented with the challenge, and we can either fix it, accept it or play the victim. We don’t become victims, we fix problems,” Schumann said. For more information about DD, see the stories in this issue and visit the Association’s information portal at [www.angus.org/pub/DD/DDInfo.aspx](http://www.angus.org/pub/DD/DDInfo.aspx).

On the tour, participants enjoyed seeing New York’s rolling landscapes and learning

more about its agriculture. The first day of the tour included Garret Farms, Hillsdale; the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass.; and ended at Trowbridge Farms, Ghent. Interested tour attendees were invited to stay for the Trowbridge sale.

The second day of the tour included Heathcote Farm, Amenia; Walbridge Farm and Market, Millbrook; Hyde Park, which included tours of the Vanderbilt mansion and Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s home; and Rally Farms, Millbrook. After the tour, interested participants were invited to attend the Garret Farms sale.

Angus enthusiasts can plan to attend the 2014 National Angus Convention in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 4-6, 2014.



**Editor’s Note:** The Angus Journal provides online coverage of the National Angus Conference & Tour at [www.nationalangusconference.com](http://www.nationalangusconference.com). Visit the News/Audio page for summaries, PowerPoint presentations and audio of the conference program, as well as photo galleries of the tour stops. More details about each tour host are available on the Tour Stops page.

## Mutations and available selection tools

“Mutation is a necessary and vital thing in order for species to be able to thrive and survive over generations and centuries and millennia. It’s very important,” said Tonya Amen, genetic services director for Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), during a special briefing preceding the 2013 National Angus Conference & Tour in Albany, N.Y., Aug. 28-30.

Every animal and human is a carrier of multiple genetic conditions within their genome, she said, but most of them are recessive, so they are never expressed. A mutation is simply a change in genetic material. Mutations are important because they create new raw material for evolution and are the source of genetic variation.

There are many selection tools that can help manage these mutations, especially recessive conditions. DNA tests can identify genetic conditions in simply inherited traits, and expected progeny differences (EPDs) and DNA trait tests are useful for performance traits.

As a reminder, she emphasized, EPDs can compare expected differences in performance within a breed, but they do not predict actual performance. In other words, they can’t predict whether calves out of a certain bull will weigh 75 pounds (lb.) when born, only that Bull A’s calves, on average, are expected to weigh 5 lb. more than Bull B’s calves.

Dollar value indexes (\$Values) can also serve as selection tools. EPDs measure the outputs of your operation, but indexes take both outputs and inputs into consideration. They are hard to develop, but easy to implement, and they analyze multiple traits along with their economic impact. \$Values are expressed in dollars and cents.

Amen suggested that breeders really evaluate the end point of their operation before placing too much emphasis on a certain



index. The weaned calf value index (\$W) looks at the factors of getting a calf weaned. This would be useful to cattlemen who don’t retain ownership in the feedyard, but instead sell their cattle at weaning. The beef value index (\$B) looks at postweaning traits. Both feedlot (\$F) and grid (\$G) values contribute to \$B. Amen said if a breeder retains ownership in the feedyard, \$B is certainly a useful index for selection. For more detailed descriptions of EPDs and \$Values, visit [www.angus.org/Performance/Default.aspx](http://www.angus.org/Performance/Default.aspx).

Angus breeders have two options for genomically enhanced EPDs (GE-EPDs), and both options are high-density. The Zoetis HD 50K and GeneSeek Genomic Profiler (GGP) are both \$75 and offer parentage verification. They differ in that Zoetis HD 50K offers GeneMax™ (GMX) Sire Match, and has a calving ease direct (CED) correlation of 0.61. The GeneSeek test offers discounts on genetic condition tests and has a CED correlation of 0.34.

Coming in December, a second recalibration to increase accuracy will be released to coincide with publication of the next *Sire Evaluation Report*, she added. For a description of how genomic information is incorporated into Angus EPDs, visit [www.angus.org/AGI/GenomicEnhancedEPDsMay2013.pdf](http://www.angus.org/AGI/GenomicEnhancedEPDsMay2013.pdf).

The last selection tool Amen described, GMX, was developed for commercial producers to use in selecting for marbling and postweaning gain. The test is provided through Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and Zoetis, she noted. This helps with selection of replacement heifers and feeder cattle by providing a score for gain and marbling. For additional information on GMX, visit [www.cabpartners.com/genemax/index.php](http://www.cabpartners.com/genemax/index.php).

— by Kasey Brown, associate editor