

Real-world Lessons

Angus youth focus on feedlot-to-plate aspect of beef industry at junior national.

by *Jamie May*

The National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) brings together the best breeders from across the nation to compete in the showing. However, while the showing is their passion, Angus producers know where their product really shines — the supermarket.

To acknowledge the importance of high-quality Angus beef, the NJAS annually holds a carcass contest to provide youth real-world insight on the commercial aspect of the beef industry. Eighteen steers were brought from seven different states to the 2009 NJAS in Perry, Ga., July 19-25 to see how they would perform from a carcass perspective.

Hannah Wright, Spring City, Tenn., participates in the contest because she recognizes the importance of Angus cattle in the consumer sector.

“The carcass is the bottom line,” she explains. “It is why we are Angus producers. We have the best breed, we have the best data, and our consumers expect it. We must continue to excel by giving the consumers what they desire.”

This year the NJAS chose to use ultrasound technology provided by The National Centralized Ultrasound Processing (CUP) Lab and Technology Center to process the results. Technician Andy Meadows demonstrated the technology during an educational clinic. Meadows

► Technician Andy Meadows demonstrated the ultrasound technology during an educational clinic.



PHOTO BY JAMIE MAY

taught NJAS exhibitors the finer points of ultrasound technology and helped them understand why this tool is so important to Angus breeders.

“Ultrasound technology is the foundation of carcass EPDs (expected progeny differences),” Meadows explained. “It is so beneficial to the youth of the Angus breed to understand the tools we have to collect carcass data and EPDs. Efficiently utilizing

ultrasound technology allows these young breeders to improve their programs and carcass data.”

Meadows walked the curious group of both adults and participants through an ultrasound scan, pointing out how they use the information to collect the most accurate results. He explained what the results meant and how he would scan and process their entries.



PHOTOS BY AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

► Hannah McCabe (left), Elk City, Kan., and Hannah Wright (right), Spring City, Tenn., claimed grand and reserve grand champion carcass steers, respectively. Curtis Long, Briarwood Angus Farms, Butler, Mo., presented the awards.



► From left, Long presents the champion and reserve champion state carcass group honors to Kansas juniors Ethan and Hannah McCabe, Elk City; Mycah McCole, Baxter Springs; and Esther McCabe, Elk City.

Wright, also the owner of the reserve champion entry, walked away from the clinic with a better understanding of how ultrasound technology plays a role in herd improvement.

“Carcass value traits are essential to the producer and are of extreme economic importance to our customers,” she says. “As producers we must make decisions based on lean yield grades, ribeye area and marbling scores. Collecting ultrasound data allows us to make genetic improvements at a lower cost without harvesting the animal, making it useful on steers, bulls and females.

“As breeders of this great breed, we need to continue to educate ourselves on the tools available. The clinic was extremely useful for me not only as a participant, but as an Angus breeder,” continues Wright, who plans to use the technology in her own herd in the future.

Contest results

When the results from the ultrasound scans returned only a day later, Hannah McCabe, Elk City, Kan., owned the grand champion carcass steer entry. Sired by CA Future Direction 5321, the steer weighed in at 1,085 pounds (lb.) with a ribeye area of 11.3 square inches (sq. in.). He had a Modest degree of marbling and 0.21 inches (in.) of backfat. He had an estimated yield grade (YG) of 2.0 and graded average-Choice. McCabe’s steer also met specifications for *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB).

Wright entered the reserve champion carcass steer. Sired by Boyd Prime Plus 4122, the steer weighed in at 1,325 lb. and had a ribeye area of 12.7 sq. in. and an estimated YG of 2.7 and graded low-Choice.

Kansas swept the state group carcass contest, as they won both grand champion and reserve champion state carcass groups. Hannah, Ethan and Esther McCabe, all of Elk City, owned the champion group. Hannah and Ethan McCabe, Elk City; and Mycah McColm, Baxter Springs, owned the entries in the reserve champion group.

The carcass steer contest was established in 1985 in an effort to increase awareness among Angus juniors of the important role that Angus cattle play in the beef industry. Cash prizes for the top 10 entries are supported by Curtis and Ann Long of Butler, Mo., through their permanent endowment fund established through the Angus Foundation.

