



# Next Generation

► Postcard from an NJAA director and state spotlights

## Beef labels: fact, fiction or ...

*I am certain all of us have been exposed to the various labels currently being penned to beef products. Advertisements of these labels are everywhere, gazing at road signs, shopping for groceries or reading the newspaper. All this labeling is creating confusion in the marketplace for the consumer.*

### What's the difference?

Case in point, one evening my boss came home with groceries. She had purchased a couple of organic steaks to prepare for dinner. As she explained how organic beef has more to offer her family, I wondered how



Jaclyn Upperman

much of this was true. Which beef is better? There are many different labels, so let's get to know them better.

#### Grass-fed beef

is beef that has been completely fed on pasture the animals' whole life. This beef is mainly produced in areas where climate conditions can support grass all year round. It is not necessarily organic, because cattle can be given Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved antibiotics and/or hormone supplements.

The main market aim for consumers is the concept of cattle grazing through the final stage of production. Grass-fed beef is said to have double the amount of omega-3 fatty acids compared to grain-finished or conventional beef. However, research has not proven this to its entirety, and beef is not the No. 1 source for omega-3 fatty acids. Also, grass-fed beef has a distinct taste to the palate.

**Natural beef.** Beef that is labeled

“natural” is beef that has no additives. This beef has restricted types of feed and/or the use of pesticides, antibiotics and growth hormones.

All beef is considered natural to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), unless there is a label added that includes marinade or solution. Natural beef does not have any relation to how the animal was fed or raised.

**Certified Organic Beef** is a beef product set under tight standards by the USDA National Organic Program. The standards are: Cattle must be fed 100% organic feed with vitamin and mineral supplements; cattle may not be given hormones or antibiotics; and cattle that are being grain-fed must have pasture contact. Organic beef is alleged to be healthier and nutritionally better; however, no studies have proven this accurate.

**Conventional beef** is the most familiar USDA-graded beef. Most conventional beef is grain-finished. Cattle are pasture-fed then placed on grain in the last 120 to 200 days. The corn-based ration helps to tenderize and give a rich taste for the consumer's palate.

**Branded beef.** There are many types of branded beef. Breed-specific brands include *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®), which uses Angus-based cattle. Other branded beef products include company and store brands. All branded programs are unique. Each brand has strict specifications — which may

involve grade, age and some offer a guarantee of satisfaction.

After getting to know the different labels, which is really the best? It pretty much depends on your tastes and beliefs. We as producers need to focus on the overall picture. Beef is beef! All the different labels just make it confusing for consumers. Beef still contains all the outstanding nutrients and vitamins needed for healthy living, and it satisfies our appetite. It is these premises we need to use to inform our consumers and defend our industry. Allow them to prefer the organic over the conventional, just make sure it's *beef* at the dinner table.

— Jaclyn Upperman, Pennsylvania

► Idaho Jr. Beef Expo Angus Show, Filer, June 18-19



PHOTOS COURTESY AMERICAN ANGUS ASS'N

► Idaho Angus royalty are (from left) **Shane Kerner**, Weiser, queen; and **Michelle Malson**, Parma, past queen and present Western States Angus queen.

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Visit the NJAA web site at [www.njaa.info](http://www.njaa.info).

► **Eastern Regional Jr. Angus Show, Bloomington, Ill., June 24-26**



► **Left:** These juniors received their Bronze and Silver awards, the first two levels of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Recognition Program. Juniors must apply for the awards and then meet point requirements in many areas of participation before receiving them. Pictured are (from left) **Jared Radcliffe**, Schofield, Wis., Bronze Award; and **Jessica Radcliffe**, Schofield, Wis., Bronze and Silver awards. Presenting the awards is Jerry Cassady, regional manager for the American Angus Ass'n.



► **Right:** **Josh May** (left), Hurricane Mills, Tenn., receives his Silver Award from Robin Ruff, director of junior activities for the American Angus Ass'n.

► **Louisiana Jr. Angus Field Day, Lecompte, June 11-12**

► Skill-A-Thon contest winners are (front row, from left) **Destiny Jones**, Ruston, first-place junior; **Andrew Graves**, Prairieville, second-place junior; (back row, from left) **Katelyn Corsentino**, Denham Springs, first-place intermediate; **Cheyenne Jones**, Franklinton, second-place intermediate; **Harold Mizell**, Covington, third-place intermediate; **Jacob Chicola**, Deville, third-place senior; **Joshua Scott**, Loranger, and **Avery Boone**, Calhoun, tied for second-place senior; and **Nancy Bickham**, Saint Francisville, first-place senior.



► **Joshua Scott** (left), Loranger, and **Destiny Jones** (right), Ruston, won the pop tab contest.



► **Samantha Yantis** (left), Bunkie, receives the Leadership Award from Richard Dyar, American Angus Ass'n regional manager.

► **Minnesota Jr. Angus Ass'n Field Day, Pipestone, June 25-26**



► **Alisha Nord** (right), Wolverton, receives her Bronze and Silver awards from Vern Frey, regional manager for the American Angus Ass'n.

► **Pennsylvania Angus Breeders Jr. Show, Huntingdon, June 18-19**



► **Left:** The top five girls' livestock judging contest winners include (from left) **Jessica Cole**, Bentleyville, first; **Lindsay Upperman**, Chambersburg, second; **Kayce Myers**, Wellsville, third; and **Amanda Cole**, Bentleyville, fifth.

► **Right:** The top five boys' livestock judging contest winners include (from left) **Ryan Nolt**, New Holland, first; **Kyle Livingston**, Dover, second; **Cody McKean**, Mercer, third; and **Justin Welk**, Strasburg, fourth.

