



Setting the PACE

► by **Susan Rhode**, director of communications and public relations

Become a student of the Angus brand

Almost all of us have had a friend, neighbor or customer walk up and say, “Hey, I had one of those Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) steaks the other day.” And of course, our response is, “Well, how was it?”

After asking the question, did you get the answer you’d hoped for? Did that person have the out-of-this-world eating experience we want every consumer to have when they eat a CAB product? Not always. And more times than not, it’s because what they ate wasn’t really a CAB steak.

Cause for confusion

Have you looked in your grocer’s meatcase lately? There’s a host of products labeled with the Angus name. In fact the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognizes 25 brands that use the Angus name. The quality specifications of those programs vary from moderate or higher marbling to the USDA Select grade, which explains why we hear about bad eating experiences. Consumers are justly confused by Angus brands.

As an Angus breeder and as a resource consumers look to for information about Angus products, it’s time to learn more about Angus brands, the equity the Angus name gives to a brand and why consumers are confused by varying product quality.

No organization knows the value of a brand better than Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB). CAB is not only the brand Angus breeders have built, but also the one they own through their membership in the American Angus Association. CAB was the first Angus brand and is the most successful one on the streets today. That’s why it has top-of-mind-awareness with consumers.

For this month’s column I’ve invited Tracey Erickson, vice president of CAB, to offer some perspective on brands. Here’s what she had to say:

Brand recognition

Consumers rely on brands they trust, but often use generic words on their shopping lists. When a list includes Tide®, toothpaste, beef and milk, the detergent purchase is easy. The shopper goes to the orange bottle with bold blue lettering. Tide delivers on its promise and has earned a loyal customer.

In the toothpaste aisle, with no brand noted on the list, the shopper still recognizes the brand her family prefers. The consistent

packaging grabs her attention, and she selects the Crest® brand.

As she steers her cart into the meat department, she is now greeted by brand names in what was historically “the sea of red.”

When she rode in that cart as a child, there were no beef brands. But USDA Choice stood for higher quality than it does now, so her mother had only to think about which cuts and how to cook them. Today’s beef consumer must learn about brands. Do I recognize this one? Did it perform the last time I purchased it? Above all, is it going to taste good? Am I willing to pay a premium? Is it the same brand I purchased at another store?

For consumers, the “Angus” name is synonymous with quality beef, but they see all Angus brands as the same. Educating them about the Angus “category” is our biggest challenge, as well as our greatest opportunity.

Just as Angus producers differentiate their cattle from other breeds with black hides, we must differentiate Angus at the consumer level.

Consumers want a variety of alternatives when buying beef, and different Angus brands can meet those needs. Some are looking for a lean, Select product, while others shop by price. Many want beef that is highly marbled for good flavor and juiciness.

It’s a challenging hurdle for consumers. In other areas of the store, brands make their buying decisions easier. Because they see all Angus brands the same, they expect them to deliver the same quality product. But the variation in beef marketed under the Angus name doesn’t ensure that.

As the original brand, started by Angus producers to benefit all Angus producers, the CAB brand is focused on its mission to

increase demand for registered Angus cattle. It will support that mission by delivering high-quality, consistent beef to consumers, standing true to the science-based specifications set forth by the USDA in 1978 — something of which you as an owner can be proud.

The market will continue to reward high-quality Angus cattle, with the highest premiums for achieving the highest quality levels. But as the popularity of Angus beef grows, so will the need to explain the brand revolution and quality differences.

The quality specifications of all USDA-certified brands can be found at www.usda.gov in the livestock and seed division’s meat grading section. I challenge you to spend some time with this list and discover why consumers need our help when it comes to buying Angus beef.

— **Tracey Erickson**

Become a student

Tracey offers some good perspectives on the impact the Angus name has on consumers and their buying habits, as well as the value that brands add to various products.

There’s no question Angus breeders are proud of the leadership role CAB has taken in the meat industry. We can all work together to enhance the reputation CAB has achieved for providing quality beef to consumers.

It’s important to be aware of what consumers are seeing and hearing. Now, more than ever, the Angus name has power in the meatcase. Likewise, high-quality Angus programs create a tremendous market for Angus genetics.

As an Angus breeder, it’s your task to become a student of the brands that impact your business. So, the next time a consumer tells you they had a CAB steak, you can help them understand the differences in Angus beef and help all of us set the PACE!

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The Last WORD...

Be grateful for what you have, not regretful for what you have not.”

— **Unknown**