

# Bravery Speaks Up

NJAA members fight off stage fright to compete in the prepared public speaking contest.

by *Chelsea Good*

**A**re you afraid of death? What about heights, financial ruin, or spiders? According to most Americans, these all rank lower on the “scary scale” than an activity 51 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members participated in at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Tulsa.

“According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking,” comedian Jerry Seinfeld says. “Death is number two. This means, to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

NJAA members are far from average. They know what doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger. So, they gathered the courage to compete in the prepared public speaking contest Tuesday morning at the NJAS. For some, it was challenging. They were scared and nervous. Others said it was easy; they’ve always loved to speak in front of crowds.

Panicked and calm contestants alike faced the judges to present their speeches and answer questions. Their courage was rewarded.

The *Angus Journal* awarded scholarships to the top three senior speakers. The top three participants in all divisions also received cash prizes.

Beating out 17 other 9- to 13-year-olds, including his twin brother who stood second, Cole Gardiner of Ashland, Kan., won the junior division with his speech about freeze-branding. Hannah McCabe of Elk City, Kan., received top honors in the 14- and 15-year-old intermediate contest with her speech about *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®). There were 12 people in her division.

In the 16- and 17-year-old intermediate division, Courtenay DeHoff of Tonganoxie, Kan., was named the top speaker from among 11 participants with her speech about niche marketing. Peter Sharpe of Arlington, Minn., rose to the top of the 10, 18- to 21-year old speakers with his speech about the reality of the Angus advantage. Here are their speeches.



## Junior Division

# Freeze-Branding

by *Cole Gardiner, Ashland, Kan.*

Think back to Old West times. A tumbleweed rolls across the prairie. People are riding horses and wagons down Main Street. And across town, two cowboys are trying to wrestle down a calf, while a third tries to burn a mark into its hide.

Today, times are different. People are turning away from that old style of branding and turning to the cutting edge — freeze-branding. This new style of branding was invented by Dr. R. Keith Farrell in 1966 and is the practice of using a super-cooled iron to identify an animal by killing the color follicles in the hair and turning the hair white.

If you decide to make this exciting advancement in branding technology, then you will need the proper equipment and procedures. You may also want to hear the advantages and the disadvantages of this process.

### The proper equipment

First, let’s start with the basic equipment you will need to properly freeze-brand. A chute will be needed to hold the cattle, a pair of clippers to shear the brand site, and you will also need an alcohol sprayer filled will

99.9% alcohol to clean the site of branding and to help conduct the coldness of the irons. This high concentration of alcohol is needed, because if any water is in the solution, it may lessen the visibility of the brand.

Another thing you will need is a cooler to hold the irons. You will also need a large amount of coolant to cool the irons, preferably dry ice in alcohol as this is shown to have the best results, but acetone, gasoline and liquid nitrogen have also been used. A stopwatch will be needed to time the branding. Lastly, you must have solid copper irons for the branding process.

For optimal results, the irons need to be 4 inches (in.) tall, and the face should be ½-in. thick. The cost of all the items, excluding the chute, is approximately \$200.

**“Freeze-branding is benefiting producers across the nation, and people are leaving behind their old-fashioned ways.”**

Once you have all of the equipment, you are ready to start your freeze-branding operation.

### The process

The first step to freeze-branding is picking the correct time. The best time of the year to freeze-brand is during the spring or fall when a new coat of hair is coming in so that the brand will appear quicker. You will need to set aside a large amount of time for branding, depending on the size of your operation, because you can only freeze-brand six to eight animals in an hour.

Once your time is set, you are ready to begin the actual freeze-branding. First, place your irons and cooling agent inside the cooler, and, since it will take the irons half an hour to reach the correct temperature, -157° F, you can place your first animal in the chute and prepare it for branding. Take out your clippers, and shave off the branding site close to the skin.

Now, take out your sprayer and clean off the hide. Once the irons have cooled off, take out the sprayer again and dowse the hide with alcohol so that it will better conduct the

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coldness of the irons. Next, set your timer for 45 seconds and take out the iron you wish to use. Start the timer when the iron touches the animal's skin.

Make sure that all of your irons are placed evenly with the animal's tail line so that the brand will appear straight and neat. If the brands are even slightly slanted, it will appear that the animal's hips are sloping off, which can decrease the value of your cattle.

Press the brand firmly against the hide with about 50 pounds (lb.) of pressure, and rock it slightly back and forth to make sure that all of the iron is touching. Continue this until the timer goes off, and then take off the iron. Repeat this process until all of your cattle have been branded, and remember to let the irons cool for at least two minutes in between each use.

For the first few minutes after branding, the skin will be frozen, and then it will swell up for the next few hours. In a few weeks, the brand will start to peel, and it will be completely visible within two to three months.

### **Advantages, disadvantages**

Some people may be wondering what the advantages of freeze-branding are, and these advantages are very obvious. For starters, it is much easier to identify your cattle. This method also helps the hide industry by not ruining the branded section of the cattle's skin and allowing a larger byproduct to be sold. Freeze-branding is also superior to hot-iron branding, because it causes less stress on the animal.

While there are advantages to freeze-

branding, there are also some disadvantages. One of these is that freeze-branding does cost more than hot-iron branding because of the price of equipment. Another is that it is a little bit slower than hot branding; and a third disadvantage is that if you are using gasoline for a cooling agent you could be risking your life, because 1 gallon (gal.) of vaporized gasoline is equal to 83 lb. of dynamite.

All in all, however, freeze-branding is benefiting producers across the nation, and people are leaving behind their old-fashioned ways. So remember, unless you want to keep on wrestling calves in the OK Corral, why not take a step into the future today?



## **Intermediate Division**

# **The Rules**

by **Hannah McCabe**, Elk City, Kan.

The rules have changed. It took 22 months to sell the first million pounds. Today, we sell a million pounds every 22 hours. Of course, I'm talking about *Certified Angus Beef*,® or the CAB® brand.

Now, what has caused this phenomenal growth since the CAB program started in 1978? I believe that it is demand of the consumer, in both the United States of America and abroad, for a high-quality, consistent and pleasurable eating experience. In addition, no other branded beef product has the full-time and dedicated staff that CAB has standing behind it.

Can you imagine going to the supermarket and instead of purchasing a name-brand product, such as Tide®, Coca-Cola® or Fritos®, you had only one generic selection, such as soap, cola and corn chips?

Before Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) changed the standards under which beef was merchandised, that's exactly how beef was presented to consumers in supermarkets and restaurants. One USDA Choice steak, hamburger or roast was equal to the next. Much like soap, cola and corn chips.

### **A higher standard**

*Certified Angus Beef* starts with genetics at the farm or ranch, which sets a higher standard that goes all the way to the consumer. These new rules developed by CAB have built a trust relationship with the consumer, much like we all trust our favorite brands to deliver satisfaction, time after time, whatever the product may be.

*Certified Angus Beef* was the first-ever branded beef product developed. While it took a lot of courage for the Board and staff at the American Angus Association to

change the rules from a commodity beef system to a branded beef product that the consumer knows and trusts, that one decision has totally changed the beef industry as we know it.

However, not just any animal can earn the trusted *Certified Angus Beef* brand. They must meet rigid specifications, starting with the genetics of the animal, the licensing of the packing plant and the criteria to be met as a finished product. In addition to being at least 51% black-hided and exhibiting Angus-type characteristics, or originating from the AngusSource® program, there are 10 specifications that make CAB so special compared to competitive branded beef products.

These requirements were just updated this past January. According to the web site [www.cabpartners.com](http://www.cabpartners.com), the new requirements are:

- (1) The cattle must have a Modest degree of marbling or higher.
- (2) The marbling must be of medium to fine texture. Marbling is the tiny flecks of fat that you see in your meat. It is the main contributor to beef flavor, tenderness and juiciness.

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(3) The cattle must be of “A” maturity. This includes cattle ages 9 to 30 months.

(4) The cattle cannot have a hot carcass weight (HCW) exceeding 1,000 pounds (lb.).

(5) They cannot have a fat thickness exceeding 1 inch (in.). These requirements are to ensure that the cuts do not exceed consumer preferences.

(6) They must have a ribeye area of 10-16 square in. This is to ensure consistent sizing and a boxable product.

(7) The cattle cannot have a hump on their neck exceeding 2 in. in height.

(8) They must exhibit moderately thick or thicker muscling characteristics. These requirements (7 and 8) eliminate any significant Brahman or dairy influence. Research shows that cattle that have a high percentage of Brahman in their genetics tend to compromise the tenderness of the beef.

(9) There must be no evidence of internal hemorrhages. These tiny blood spots on the

ribeye area tend to have a negative effect on consumer satisfaction.

(10) Lastly, no dark cutting characteristics are allowed. (When an animal becomes excited or stressed just before harvest, the glycogen level drops dramatically, possibly resulting in a product that is dry, tacky and very dark in appearance.)

Only about 8% of all beef cattle actually meet these stringent requirements.

### Targeting the brand

I realize the importance and the challenges of meeting these goals. As a contestant in the National Junior Angus Association’s (NJAA’s) carcass contest for the past six years, I have had hands-on experience in striving to produce a product that meets these goals through genetics, feeding and management.

At this contest, each junior member of the American Angus Association is allowed to enter up to two head of registered Angus steers. The cattle are then loaded onto a

semi-truck the first or second day of the contest to be taken to the plant for harvest. The information is then released back to the competitors by the end of the week for results. It is an excellent opportunity to receive real-world experience at the world’s largest, single-breed beef show.

While *Certified Angus Beef* has cleared the trail for a multitude of competitive, branded beef products, no other product comes close to the size and the scope of CAB. Not only has CAB instilled confidence in the consumer, but it has also made the farmer or the rancher who buys registered Angus bulls confident that he is purchasing a superior product that will sire calves that will be worth more dollars to the feedlots and packers.

Demand for Angus genetics has never been better because of one decision a few men made in 1978. They truly changed the rules.



### Intermediate Division

# Grass-Fed, Organic, Natural — Hype or Real?

by *Courtenay DeHoff, Tonganoxie, Kan.*

Fourteen years ago, a 28-year-old chef borrowed money from his dad to open a *taqueria* in Denver, Colo. Today that *taqueria* is Chipotle Mexican Restaurants, and founder Steve Ellis’s fortune has soared to more than \$100 billion! I was intrigued by this, as my Lawrence, Kan., family contributes to Steve Ellis’s fortune weekly after church. It’s our place, and standing there I’ve noticed Chipotle is organic in its meats right down to its organic black beans.

Chipotle has joined Wolfgang Puck and the second-largest U.S. burger chain, Burger King, in the animal rights kingdom. This trio of food outlets has fallen prey to the false extremist idea that U.S. animal agriculture doesn’t properly care for their animals or care about consumer health.

Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck has a theory on why he is changing his culinary animal use. Puck swears that growing up on his Australian farm his cattle and swine roamed freely. He then goes on to label U.S. slaughter houses factories with no standards and accuses them of hiding the way food is created. He admits, “We want to take care of ourselves, the environment and make sure everybody is happy, especially in Hollywood.”

Puck’s restaurants are creating new healthy items to fit his slogan “Eating, living and loving well.” He is working with the humane society to obtain what he believes is fair animal treatment. Good luck making everybody happy in Hollywood, Puck — Hollywood, where substance rarely takes a leading role over perception.

As far as Burger King is concerned, they haven’t taken on the beef community in animal treatment but are currently asking for only free-range chicken eggs and uncrated pork.

This trio’s misguided production will harm our animals and have a negative impact on our Angus beef demand. Now, standing in line at Chipotle or even an upper-end steak house, I ponder plain old beef vs. natural, grass-fed or organic beef. Does this trio have a point? Many consumers don’t know what the difference between the three is or even understand fair animal treatment. However, 5% to 7% of consumers are plunking down \$2 per pound or more for high-end cuts of beef known as niche beef.

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Despite the rising demand and the fact people believe they need these natural, organic foods, there are no clear government definitions for these organic/natural food options. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) told the *Washington Post* that there is no clear government definition for “free-range” beef. The USDA does have a proposal for beef labeled grass-fed, however, and that is steers that have eaten grass 99% of the time from weaning to slaughter.

This may sound healthier, but as a Texas A&M ag economist pointed out, 80% of cattle born in the U.S. are born in the spring and weaned in September and are grazing on grass roughly most of their 20 to 30 months of life anyway. Most organic steers still spend their last 120 days finishing on grain, which in return gives their steaks the white fat and marbling we like as opposed to the yellow, odd-looking fat you find on steers that are only grass-fed. Grass-fed cattle’s meat also tastes different.

So what exactly are the restrictions for organic beef, and what is it? Organic beef must come from [cattle] that have not ever received hormones or antibiotics. All their feed, from cow’s milk on, must be certified organic. Organic beef is often touted a safer bet from contracting “mad cow disease,” [the term often used to describe bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)]. Neither organic nor “common” steers in the U.S. are allowed to consume feedstuffs with protein from mammals, since the USDA banned the practice (believed to be the route of disease transmission among livestock) in 1997.

### **CAB joins niche marketers**

Now that we have narrowed down the three types of niche beef, what do we do as Angus producers to meet the relatively small demand for niche beef? Certified Angus Beef Supply Development Director Mark McCully said CAB’s historical point of view on natural or organic beef had been that

there’s no good science to show health benefits, so CAB had chosen to stay out of the market.

He stated recently that CAB staff asked themselves, “Are we consumer-driven, and if so, what are consumers asking for?” People now choosing organic or natural beef probably hadn’t been purchasing CAB previously anyway. Yet in 2007 CAB chose to modify their view and entered the market with a CAB Natural niche. If you want to produce Angus cattle with detailed records that show no antibiotics or hormones ever and your steers meet the CAB live requirements, you’re in!

CAB currently has two licensed companies to produce for the CAB Natural niche. They’re Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. and Niman Ranch. Niman Ranch has been written up by acclaimed food editor Ed Behr as truly caring about the well-being of their animals and practicing animal husbandry as their grandparents did before them.

## **Senior Division**

# **The Reality of Today’s Genetics**

by **Peter Scharpe**, Arlington, Minn.

Take ordinary, real people, not paid actors, and give them the minimum needed to survive or put them through a complicated series of tests. Let the TV viewing audience vote for their favorites, or have the contestants battle it out among themselves, and the last person standing is the winner. This scenario is repeated over and over by the latest in television programming, reality TV. Reality TV has had an impact on everything we watch and even the musical entertainers we listen to.

This time, take real cattle, add real Angus genetics and watch as the next calf crop grows into higher-quality and more profitable cattle. But there is more — programs designed specifically for commercial cattlemen. Angus genetics have a real impact on every aspect of raising commercial cattle.

Today, I will discuss the impact that Angus genetics have on the commercial beef industry. I will reveal the quality Angus genetics can add to commercial cattle, and the programs the American Angus

Association has developed that give commercial breeders the opportunity to add the value that only Angus genetics can bring. Quality, opportunity and value, these are the impacts of Angus genetics.

### **Angus provide the basis**

It is the characters of the reality TV program that give it its appeal. The talents and personality of characters make the basis for the show. The basis for improved commercial cattle is Angus genetics. EPDs, or the expected progeny differences, predict what the possible genetic trait will be. Choosing EPDs for growth, carcass and maternal factors will impact the quality of each offspring.

**“Quality, opportunity and value — these are the impact of Angus genetics.”**

One important factor that concerns the commercial breeder is growth. Growth can be defined as the rate of gain for an animal, weaning weight or carcass weight. The producer strives for the highest number of pounds in the shortest time, with the most efficient use of feed.

An article published by the University of Missouri-Columbia’s beef economist Vern Pierce, appearing in the March 2001 *Angus Journal*, explained that the use of bulls with good growth EPDs can add 5 pounds (lb.) to the herd’s average weaning weight. The impact of Angus genetics for growth on weaning weight can be summed up like this: If 100 feeder calves are sold, this added weight could essentially mean an extra calf is marketed.

There is more to quality. Angus genetics make the most desirable product and a more consistent high-quality carcass. Carcass traits for marbling, fat thickness and ribeye size impact the end product that reaches consumers. High marbling and



When I questioned Mr. McCully about CAB's opinion of "free range" or natural cattle health, he said separating Angus producers from the beef industry would be offensive to other breeds. Therefore, CAB supports the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) on their guidelines and views on humane and ethical treatment of our U.S. cattle herds.

What about health benefits to these carefully raised and monitored cattle? CAB feels there are no health benefits to natural, grass-fed or organic beef. Research done by Auburn University, Auburn, Ala., claims niche beef may sometimes have a slight nutritional advantage.

Niche grass-fed beef may sometimes contain from two to 10 times the amount of omega-3 fatty acids as regular beef. These healthy fats are known to be important for the heart and brain. Plus, grass-fed beef has a healthier ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are known to be

more advantageous for our health. Grass-fed beef may exhibit increased carotene levels, which we turn into vitamin A.

But what about taste? Two-thirds of consumers prefer standard beef to natural, grass-fed beef. Standard beef is also less expensive.

Finally, what about consumer demand? Temple Grandin, an animal science professor at Colorado State University, said, "When the big boys move, this makes the entire beef industry move." Yet, when it all gets down to it, it's what the average housewife purchases that indicates food trends. Only 6% to 7% of consumers want organic, which is roughly \$1 billion out of an \$80- to \$90-billion-a-year industry.

So, in summary, I keep eating at Chipotle and go natural once a week, but CAB will always be a natural choice for most. After all, it's all in the brand.



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tenderness allow for a more enjoyable eating experience. It is what the consumer wants.

The maternal trait impacts the quality of cattle raised in two distinct ways. Angus cattle are proven to be excellent mothers and to have good milking ability. Choosing sires with low birth weight EPDs will reduce calf loss through calving difficulty. Together these maternal factors impact the commercial beef industry by producing calves that are stronger and healthier.

### Behind the scenes

The reality TV programs that we see are only a small portion of what goes into making a popular series. We never see the behind-the-scenes staff that are there to coach, protect and advise the contestants.

The American Angus Association has its own set of behind-the-scene programs. The Angus Optimal Milk Module, AngusSource® and the Beef Record Service (BRS) provide commercial cattlemen who choose Angus genetics the opportunity to utilize the resources of the American Angus Association.

Angus Optimal Milk Module is an online computer program that allows cattlemen to input their average herd factors, such as number of cows, current milking ability and annual feed costs. The program will then determine the best range of milk production

EPDs for each producer's individual herd that will increase profit.

AngusSource, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) process-verified program (PVP), documents Angus-sired calves. With today's emphasis on identification (ID) systems, this program is a real benefit to commercial cattlemen who choose Angus genetics.

Another opportunity available to the commercial producer is the Beef Record Service. This [service] provides commercial producers the same opportunity that Angus breeders have through the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®). It allows producers to keep performance data on individual animals thereby providing the necessary information to make educated decisions regarding sire selection.

Many of the winners of reality TV programs have gone on to successful careers impacting them financially. Angus genetics have an impact on the bottom line for cattle producers.

Remember that EPD for growth? Angus calves are more efficient than many other breeds. How about the maternal factor? Angus-influenced cows provide more milk, decreasing the need for creep feed. So, calves as well as feeders will gain more on less feed, lowering costs and increasing profit.

Perhaps the ultimate reality of using Angus genetics is the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) program, a most desired, high-quality branded beef product. Cattle that meet the first step of live animal identification, being either 51% black-hided or enrolled in the AngusSource program, and meeting the remaining carcass specifications may be selected as CAB. These specifications ensure that CAB provides consumers with a flavorful, juicy and tender product each time. There is the impact of the carcass EPD factors.

Today's markets pay producers premiums for cattle on a value basis. These premiums may be as much as \$5 or more per hundredweight (cwt.). The factors of efficiency, higher market value due to high-quality carcass or selection as CAB impact profits.

By examining the real factors of Angus genetics, I have explained how choosing these genetics has an impact on the quality of the animal, the opportunity breeders have for information, and the value in terms of profit for the producer.

Ordinary people, placed in challenging situations may make up reality TV, but the reality for commercial cattlemen is Angus genetics.

