



CAB Corner on Quality (graphic file logo for heading available on request)

November 2002

“Is the Internet here to stay?”

By Dave Shock, CAB Information Systems Director

It wasn't long ago, people actually asked if the Internet was here to stay. Their next questions became, “What should I do with the Internet?” “Do I need a Website?” “What should I put on our Website?” These questions should be asked, and the list added to, as long as there is an Internet. It isn't going away, but it will continue to change with its users.

At Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), my job as director of information systems is to oversee computer-based programs and any other related equipment like the phone systems, cellular phones and communication lines used by our staff. Naturally, this division maintains the CAB Website technical aspects.

When you set your Internet browser to www.certifiedangusbeef.com, you will find a site that was created to share information with a wide audience. Consumers can explore the site for recipes, nutrition information, and an e-store to purchase steak knives, caps, shirts and jackets, or just for entertainment. Plus we have the FlavorFinder™, wherein consumers can locate CAB-licensed restaurants and grocery stores by entering a city, zip code or simply clicking on a map.

Nearly 10,000 CAB licensed partners around the world—remember, it is a World Wide Web—use the site to find information about the services we offer, newsletters, monthly statistics, and calendar of CAB events. We try to add to and change the content as often as possible.

Cattle producers can also find many interesting items. In fact, we have a special direct address set up for them at www.cabfeedlots.com, where they can research our licensed feedlots,

programs being offered, articles, and newsletters. We have links to the American Angus Association, Angus Journal, and many industry sites such as Beef Quality Connection. CAB licensed feedlots can enroll cattle and request carcass data from this site.

The CAB Websites see hundreds of visitors every day, and volume is growing. If you have not yet tried to use the Internet, you could be leaving a valuable tool on the table. Before the internal combustion engine was invented, draft animals tilled the soil. Today, you would not consider farming a thousand acres without a tractor. In today's world, you need to evaluate the cost and benefits of using the Internet to reach new customers and service the ones you already have.

A Website has a life of its own. To keep people coming back it needs to find what they need. The bad news is, not everyone needs the same thing. The good news is, you can use the Web to research what they do need and even monitor how many times they look at a new feature you might add on a trial basis.

CAB is just finishing a major redesign of its Website, so check those addresses again. During the planning process we identified our target audiences as consumers, potential licensed partners, currently licensed partners, and potential employees. With each group we asked, "What do they want? How do they want it? Is there anything they need but don't even know they need yet? How can we service the needs better?"

Check out our Website and see if you agree with the answers we found for those questions. Meanwhile, develop your own questions and answers starting with those few at the beginning of this column. Think about how your business could benefit from a Website, or from continually making enhancements to the one you have. Remember, if you do not use every tool available, your competition will. Happy surfing.

END