



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

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Under the black hide

By Steve Suther, CAB Industry Information Director

Not all registered Angus seedstock produce calves that are accepted as *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand. There are many reasons for missing the boat, but research shows the biggest factor by far is lack of marbling. Other research shows you can include positive marbling as a selection criteria without derailing other economically important traits. Still other work indicates management errors or environmental stress can easily defeat the best marbling genetics.

Amazingly, there are Angus cattle that miss the mark because they have evolved away from high quality beef production. Some registered Angus producers let “breed type” carry the marbling torch, reasoning that because this breed is known for marbling, and customers want to use bulls for crossbreeding, there is no reason to add more marbling. CAB acceptance in some of those herds that ignore marbling is below the national average for the 11 million generic black-hided cattle.

Other registered Angus producers say their goal is to produce 100% CAB. They know that’s just about impossible with the uncontrolled variables of a biological system that depends on weather and human management. But because of that focus, they and their customers sometimes have CAB acceptance rates above 80%.

That’s a big deal when you consider it comes with historical average Choice premiums of at least \$7/cwt. and a stable to rising CAB premium of \$3 to \$5/cwt., not to mention the extra bonus for any Prime carcasses. Last year CAB-licensed packers paid producers more than \$23 million in direct grid

premiums for CAB alone, and that much more in cash sales. There are also many examples of achieving high quality standards along with excellent cowherd and feedlot performance

Most commercial producers are aware of the CAB Program and have seen the premiums grow, but many aren't sure how to "get involved." Many will ask their bull supplier. And since Cattle-Fax research completed last winter says CAB sales add at least an extra \$500/head to your Angus bull values, it's in your best interest to explain how they can do that.

It will help if you have included positive marbling as a selection criteria in the bulls you offer for sale. Otherwise, you might lead customers on, and they may fare no better in achieving CAB premiums than if they bought an unknown black bull at the cull market. You know that a black hide doesn't say much about a bull; be sure your customers know it doesn't mean much just to be registered Angus. You should explain why the Angus bulls they bought will make them more money while continuing to build the Angus advantage.

Once you point out that the bulls are above breed average for marbling, you should point your customers toward marketing options to get the most out of that higher end value. That could be as simple as drafting a letter to use in marketing calves. If you have several customers interested in value discovery, you can work with them to monitor how well your Angus genetics work in their herds.

The simplest way to do that is through the 79-yard CAB network of the Feedlot Licensing Program (cabfeedlots.com). Contact a licensed feedlot online or call the CAB Feeder-Packer Relations office at 785-539-0123. A recent survey of these yards indicated 90% of them will return carcass data and feedlot information to Angus producers, even without retained ownership. That's because they want to feed good cattle, and they want to earn your future business by acting in your interest now.

Working with a CAB feedlot is the best way to minimize the risk of management errors that could prevent your Angus cattle from realizing their genetic potential. It's also the best way to be sure the cattle are sold in ways that reward their level of CAB acceptance.

So, when customers ask you how to get involved in producing for the CAB brand, tell them, "You are already involved, by using the kind of registered Angus bulls that enhance your calves' CAB

acceptance rate, and by having this conversation.” That’s all there is to it: communication and feedback up and down the lines of production as the growing network of Angus producers works toward improving both profitability and consumer demand for beef.

The CAB supply development branch exists because the brand wants a closer connection to the producers it serves. If the feeling is mutual, give us a call to ensure a brighter future for everyone associated with the best in the Angus world. For more information, call Steve Suther, Director of Industry Information, toll-free at 877-241-0717, or e-mail info@certifiedangusbeef.com.

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