



*CAB Corner on Quality*  
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## Given a lemon. . .

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Just reading or listening to the news over the last several months, many cattlemen have put on a sour face. A financial mess has us questioning the consumer's ability to buy beef; there's talk about new environmental regulations on cow emissions; input costs are rising but cattle prices are depressed. The list goes on to paint a pretty gloomy picture.

But as the old saying goes, when life gives you a lemon, make lemonade. History proves that some of the best ideas are born in times of difficulty. The *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand wasn't built when the Angus breed was dominating market share. In fact, during the 1970s the breed was losing ground at an alarming pace to the large-framed Continental breeds. Experts predicted those "new breeds" were the future of beef production, a future where just producing pounds of lean beef was the key. Fortunately, some wise Angus breeders saw an opportunity to focus on the consumer and forge a branded beef program that, 30 years later, is held up as an icon for doing the right thing. It wasn't easy, nor was the path crystal clear, but out of a desperate situation came a revolutionary idea that changed the way we market beef and Angus cattle.

So where does your silver-lined opportunity lie? Maybe with your bull customers: odds are, they are looking for some help right now. Commodity calf prices have struggled, weighed down with calves that range from ordinary to, frankly, lemons. Your customers have invested in better genetics, records and management that add value. If you provide ideas on how to capture more of that value, you can improve their bottom line – not to mention the likelihood that the next Angus bull they purchase will come from your place.

Helping your customers market their calves may seem complicated and risky, but it doesn't need to be. Even little steps can help. If you are like most Angus breeders, you probably don't know a lot of feedyard managers, but there's a resource list of potential partners who would welcome your contact. The CAB Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) comprises more than 60 knowledgeable cattle

feeders around the country who have demonstrated their ability to feed Angus cattle to a high-quality end point, often sharing full data to allow continuous improvement. They know about financing and partnership arrangements, and are always looking for ways to attract high-quality customers and calves.

When the summer days are too hot to do anything outside, pour yourself a glass of lemonade and spend an afternoon on the phone getting to know some of these professionals. Better yet, take a trip to meet the management teams and see their operations firsthand. Explain to them what you are doing with your genetic program, along with your network of bull customers and the opportunities for partnering. Invite those interested feedlot managers to your place and tour some of your network's farms and ranches. Build some good relationships; have those feedlots represented at your sales and events; let your customers know you are serious about their business.

Other options could be working with your local auction market to hold a special sale or designate the front end of a regular sale day to your customers. Smaller producers can go together and jointly promote a special sale. If your customers qualify, the AngusSource® program is an affordable option to get their calves age-and-source verified. And if they have truckload lots of calves for sale, you can work through the CAB office to get that information sent out to all licensed feedlots. The key is to find ways to bring your customers ideas and marketing options they didn't have on their own.

So what kind of lemonade will you make out of these lemons? It might be marketing assistance for your customers or it might be something else. Focus on the positive, and find ways to make your business more successful for the long haul. Stay alert, because many of the best ideas show up disguised as problems.

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