



CAB Corner on Quality
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The proactive payoff

By Amanda Barston, CAB Brand Assurance Director

Whether it's cattle on the hoof or beef on the plate, sales make up the lifeblood of our business. Customer service keeps it pumping. The *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand has been around since 1978, and some Angus ranches trace back through the generations. There have always been customers, but new ideas in recent years have helped us all put the customer first.

Only since 2004 has there been a formal Customer Service department at Certified Angus Beef LLC. It didn't just spring up because we thought it would be nice, but because we saw a real need to build relationships and help licensed retailers and restaurants get the most out of being a partner in the branded beef business. The new department brought greater stability to sales and provided a home to handle the regular consumer inquiries.

Since its inception, this branch of the Brand Assurance Division has taken on a range of responsibilities from licensing to placing point-of-sale (POS, like banners, signs, labels and apparel) orders for licensees. The team also serves as liaison for our regional sales staff who working directly with the licensees in their regions. As a result, we stay in touch with all of our "customers," from the consumer on up the chain to the restaurant, grocery chain or licensed distributors that service them.

Each month, our Customer Service crew fulfills more than 550 POS orders, grants nearly 200 new licenses and fields scores of other calls. One new process the team will embark upon in 2010 is calling new licensees three months after they sign on, just to check in and see how things are going. During the licensing process, the restaurant or retail store staff is so busy with menus or display case arrangements that they often don't have time to think about other services we offer to keep that excitement going in a focused way. If you call on bull customers after the sale to make sure they are ready to use their new investments properly, you can identify with this strategy.

These calls let the customers know that we appreciate their business, and that includes our assistance in helping them succeed with CAB. We invite them to our website, offer a plaque to hang in their place of business and review all POS materials. We check to see if they've reviewed the materials

in their “Welcome Package,” conducted any training with their staff on the merits of the brand, and in general, if they have any questions.

You can help new Angus seedstock customers become committed, “old customers” by visiting their farms and ranches to see how the cattle are performing, offering tips and discussing selection, health and marketing. You might even bring along some “POS” materials such as the CAB Best Practices Manual, Targeting the Brand stickers or other educational support.

Another benefit that comes from a dedicated focus on customer service is the ability to proactively find and fix problems, often before they can have any negative impact. In those cases, attention to detail creates a positive impact and builds a stronger relationship.

At CAB, the “issues” have always found their home within the Brand Assurance Division. After five years of a more proactive customer-service approach, we have seen the early identification of these issues in the first weeks of licensing lead us to a lower turn-over rate, and more dedicated accounts promoting the brand.

That lets the rest of our brand assurance team put a proactive focus on other areas of our database and information resources to help every licensee realize the benefits of offering the Certified Angus Beef brand. That builds value in the marketplace all the way back to the ranch.

If you have questions, we have the answers for producers at www.cabpartners.com, on the consumer side at www.certifiedangusbeef.com, or of course you may call us at 877-241-0717.

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