



CAB Corner on Quality
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Can you beat that?

By Laura Nelson, CAB Industry Information Specialist

About a decade and a half ago, nothing was more thrilling to this young 4-Her than walking into the Kimball County fairgrounds with my prized show steer. After a whole summer of tugging this animal around our front yard and lugging buckets of carefully measured corn to the bunks, it was all about to pay off. I kept my eyes intently glued on the judge as he circled the ring, not because that's what my showmanship club leader told me to do, but because I was waiting for the slightest sign the judge was heading my way to award that rosette.

With all the excitement going on in the show ring, I didn't understand why my dad suggested one year that I pick out an extra calf to enter in the carcass contest. There were no judges, no purple rosettes, and no walk through the Parade of Champions for the winner of the carcass contest. Heck, you didn't even find out who won until two weeks after the fair. It was just another bucket of corn to haul.

I was sure this was simply another form of pointless torture that farmers conspired to put their children through. It was "good for us," like pulling rye, cleaning grain bins and building fence. "It's just a way to get a feel for how our cattle match up against everyone else's," he said. Another one of those lessons he was sure I would appreciate "some day."

Well, that some day came about two weeks after the fair when dad showed me the carcass read-out sheets. I had no idea at the time what any of it meant. But I understood one thing clear as day: the winner of this contest was based on the dollar premium that carcass fetched, and mine was almost \$100. Suddenly, the \$5 premium I got for a grand champion showman rosette was mincemeat next to the carcass contest premium. Maybe dad was on to something after all.

He wasn't the only one. Another decade and a half earlier, the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand started a program that would generate carcass premiums by identifying Angus beef at its best, working with commercial cattlemen to document the value in Angus genetics. In the 1980s and '90s, that was mostly through sire testing. Then the Value Discovery Project, Best of the Breed, National

Angus Carcass Challenge and now the AngusSource® Carcass Challenge (ASCC) roused interest in proving who can best hit the CAB brand target.

Since 2008, the ASCC has captured the national spotlight for Angus genetics that live up to the breed's potential. In 2009, a harvest group of more than 90% CAB Prime and premium Choice steers was only good enough for fourth place.

The top two groups, 79 head that beat the 92% CAB and Prime mark, were “nothing really special” according to the winners, Pete Mitts and John Osborn of Savannah, Mo. There are many more like that among the hundreds of steers they feed every year from a local herd of 1,000 cows or more. The cows are part of a community network of a dozen or more owners, all cattle bred up from a 1990s base through a combination of careful sire selection and keeping replacements that beat their moms in every way.

Their 2009 ASCC entries more than quadrupled national CAB acceptance rates, but that's not good enough. “I want them all to be Prime,” Pete says. “Financially, that's the name of the game.”

They were awarded \$500 and some nice AngusSource jackets for winning the contest. If this were a county fair, that would be like getting the best of all worlds – the rosette, the competitive satisfaction and the dollar premium at the end of the day.

Are you ready to find out how your cattle measure up to the likes of this Missouri duo? Entries in the ASCC must be enrolled in the AngusSource genetic, source- and age-verified program. Eligible groups of at least 38 head must be fed at a CAB partner yard.

Whether you've been honing your herd genetics for years to meet carcass quality standards or just want to see how you compare to the neighbor's, entering the ASCC will return carcass data you can use and, if applied properly, profit from.

For more information on the ASCC, visit www.angussource.com or call 816-383-5100. If you have other questions, we have the answers for producers at www.cabpartners.com, or of course you may call us at 877-241-0717.

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