



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

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Bookmark cabpartners.com

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If you have explored or “surfed” the Internet’s World Wide Web, you may have bookmarked a Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) site. You may want to hit “reload” and resave the new address.

CAB’s Information Systems and Supply Development staff recently transformed cabfeedlots.com into cabpartners.com. The old site had been around for five years—a long life on the Web. It had outgrown the old structure, graphics and approach to providing information. It was overdue for an update.

The overhaul process for a Web site is from the foundation up. We took all the pieces apart, laid them out, and began reviewing what was posted and why. We boiled the parts down into what still worked, what needed to be rewritten, and what wasn’t there. We had to fill the holes that let us meet our goal of becoming a beef industry information leader. A new layout of pieces took shape.

Once everything was on the parts table, we had to make intuitive groups, refine the copy and design the connections to lead users through the new site quickly and easily.

Creating an efficient, engaging and informative site involves some tradeoffs. Most users expect to get exactly what they want, when and how they want it. We have to design for the most impatient user, making it obvious how to get exactly what they want, and fast.

Web users also want a site that looks nice, loads quickly, and is easy to read and navigate. Unfortunately, you don’t all agree on what it takes to meet those wants. We have to evaluate what we think the majority of users want, and design for them.

There are a lot of programs that let your computer surf the Web. These Internet “browsers” have built-in differences, from Microsoft Internet Explorer to Netscape Navigator, Mozilla, Firefox, America Online, and so on. Web development goes on at such a frantic pace, operating standards are not 100% common to all browsers.

Each interprets a Web site a little differently, perhaps subtle but sometimes glaringly obvious. Graphics may not appear, text may not align, and advanced features may not be available. We have to identify our users, study their habits and tailor the site to the majority.

A large majority of cabpartners.com visitors use Internet Explorer 5.0 or newer. However, the trick to good Web design is making the site at least functional in as many browsers as possible. We also have to have faith that users stay up to date on browser versions. That’s free and easy at such sites as

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/> or <http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>.

After settling on those tradeoffs, we had to find the best way to present what you want. That meant making large amounts of text quickly downloadable and readable. Our site features a big resource library of beef industry articles, but studies show most users won't tolerate reading large amounts of text on screen.

Once you find what you want, you hit print or save. That's why cabpartners.com provides most articles in Adobe PDF (portable document format). You can also bookmark any of our reference pages in your "favorite places," for an easy return trip.

We can't please everybody all the time, but we do "aim high" to fit as many browsing methods as possible. That's done with multiple navigation schemes. The main page links appear in a horizontal list across the home page, and they remain as you move through the site. Once you open any other page, sub-category links appear as a vertical list down the left-hand side.

You can also navigate using the search function, available on the left-hand side of all pages. Search by keyword. Search only cabpartners.com or expand your search to include all the consumer information at certifiedangusbeef.com as well.

A Web project is never done, thanks to the fast pace of information and technological change. Each visitor to cabpartners.com, or any other site, will get different results depending on their browser, type of Internet connection, what they are looking for and what links they follow.

We built on the foundation of knowing our audience to create a dynamic site for America's Angus cattle producers. Bookmark it—don't be a stranger. We'll keep updating the site even as you update your genetics and management.

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