

for immediate release  
**NEWS**

September 16, 2007

**Executive Office**

206 Riffel Rd.

Wooster, OH

44691-8588

Phone: 330/345-2333

Fax: 330/345-0808



**Manhattan Office**

1107 Hylton Heights Rd.

Manhattan, KS

66502-2822

Phone: 785/539-0123

Fax: 785/539-2883

**Japan Office**

Japan Business Center

WBG Marive East 14F

Nakase 2-6 Mihama-ku

Chiba-shi, Chiba 261-7114

Japan

Ph.: 011/81-43-297-3363

Fax: 011/81-43-297-3374

www.

certifiedangusbeef

.com

Contact:

Miranda Reiman, Industry Information Specialist OR Jim Skavdahl, 308/665-1127  
Certified Angus Beef LLC  
785/539-0123 [MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com](mailto:MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com)

Downloadable photos available at [www.certifiedangusbeef.com/press/ac](http://www.certifiedangusbeef.com/press/ac)

## Every little bit adds up

*Western Nebraska ranchers win CAB honors*

Little at a time, Jim and Maureen Skavdahl's Lower 33 Ranch near Marsland, Neb., has steadily grown and improved over the years.

Both came from ranching roots, but made their own way acquiring land and cattle. The Skavdahls now run 800 of their cows on 24,000 acres, and manage another 600 cows on 17,000 acres, all in the rolling Sandhills of western Nebraska.

Jim first leased the ranch with an option to purchase—one he and Maureen exercised when they married in 1976. They bought cows from Jim's dad and a neighbor's dispersal, and have been building and fine-tuning ever since.

"We always made sure that gentleness, udders and function—the basic fundamentals of a good cowherd—came first. Then we added carcass," Jim says.

They've been able to track results through performance and carcass data from Beller Feedlot of Lindsay, Neb. The Skavdahls have fed part of their calf crop with the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB)-licensed feeder for the past five years, typically retaining a percentage ownership.

Owner-manager Terry Beller nominated the Skavdahls for CAB's 2007 Commercial Commitment to Excellence award, which they accepted September 15 at the CAB annual conference in Savannah, Ga.

"Their grade and performance have improved every year," Beller says. Yield grade 4s have simultaneously decreased. "They're really consistent and gain nearly 3.5 pounds per day. We don't push the implants, so the cattle are doing that on their own."

Growth has always been important to the Skavdahls.

"You can't lose sight of performance," Jim says. "It doesn't make a difference what their carcass is if they don't convert."

From 2003 to 2005, the ratio of feed to gain improved from 6.79 to 6.35. Three years of carcass data show that came with a growing emphasis on marbling. In 2003, the cattle were well

above the national average at 19.3% *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>), but improved to 33.8% in just two more years.

“The carcass thing starts on the ranch with good nutrition for the cow and a good vaccination,” Jim says. “Then you get the calves to the feedyard, and they have to know how to feed them.”

Maureen adds, “But you’ve got to start out with the right genetics, so it’s all a big ball of wax.”

To make genetic change more quickly, the Skavdahl’s artificially inseminate (AI) all heifers and their top 100 cows.

“We’ve really seen improvement in the heifers’ progeny,” Maureen says. If improvement falls short, there’s room to cull: they keep back more replacements than needed and sell 3- and 4-year-old bred females. That gives them extra evaluation time and earns a premium over selling bred heifers.

Structure, disposition and now feedlot traits sort out which cows stay and which ones go.

“We’re just getting situated to be able to cull cows based on carcass traits,” says Jim. Of course, identification and data have always been on an individual basis. “If you’ve calved them out year after year, you know. You know cow number 260 and what you bred her to.”

They’re starting to realize the exact value of eliminating outliers. Skavdahl heifers brought home the Heifer Division Champion honor in the 2006 National Angus Carcass Challenge (NACC) at 47.2% CAB and Prime, with no grid discounts.

As their cowherd increases in quality, the Skavdahls plan to keep improving the land, too. They’ve planted windbreaks and become active in protecting the water supply.

“Most ranchers are real stewards of the land,” Maureen observes. “This is how we make our living.”

Besides the home ranch, they run cattle on the nearby, historic Agate Springs Ranch, and manage the Carlson Ranch. They share equipment among all three places, but manage the herds separately.

Jim and Maureen’s four children are spread across the country—as a cardiologist, veterinarian, teacher turned full-time mom, and one studying law—but stay connected to the ranch.

After graduating from the University of Wyoming, where they met, there was never any doubt Jim and Maureen’s future was in the beef industry.

“We’re lucky that we’re both interested in range and livestock,” Jim says. “We make a better team because we both enjoy the same things.”

END