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NEWS

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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
(785) 539-0123, MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com

Photo available at: http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/Mike_Beller_01.jpg
http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/Mike_Beller_02.jpg

Beller wins 2008 CAB Quality Assurance award

Mike Beller, Lindsay, Neb., never expected recognition in the beef industry, but attention to detail at his family's feedlot earned him Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) honors this fall.

Rather than a cowboy hat, boots or buckle, the 2008 CAB Quality Assurance Manager of the Year sports a baseball cap and tennis shoes.

In college, Beller didn't major in ranch management or animal science, but in the electronics field that fits his current work toward a master's in software engineering.

"I don't fit the mold of a typical cattleman," he says. "My value comes from my technological knowledge."

CAB's Paul Dykstra, beef cattle specialist, says, "They may have broken the mold after Mike, but his talents fit the beef producers' ever-increasing need for information management and technology. He stands out as one of the best in the industry."

The streamlined system at Beller Feedlot handles financial records, carcass and performance data, inventories, contracts and environmental compliance documents with ease, Dykstra says. But Beller took a roundabout path to become a feedlot quality-assurance manager.

In 1958, his father Jim established the feedlot where Beller remembers learning from his dad and older brothers about cattle and the value of a family-owned business. After college, marriage and a move to Colorado where he was an engineering manager at Hewlett Packard, Beller and his wife Julie came back in 2003 to raise their sons in a rural setting.

"It seemed odd to me that I would be working in the feedlot again, but at the same time it just seemed to fit," Beller says. The feedlot had been CAB-licensed for a few years, so there was an increasing need for feeding and carcass data management.

Beller began recording all data electronically and managing the operation's accounting with a computer. He also encouraged producers to enroll their cattle in age- and source-verified programs. In 2007, he helped the feedlot become the first approved for AngusSource[®], a USDA process verified program (PVP).

“The producers do most of the work,” Beller says. “My job is to verify that all of the information is accurate and organized. Then if one of them loses a tag, I know the information and we can get it retagged without making a mistake.”

Beller says he has helped bring the feedlot up to date in an increasingly high-tech market: “Technology is becoming a big part of the cattle business and that’s where I bridge the gap.”

He works with producers to get data collected through CAB-licensed packers and coordinated with the CAB office in Manhattan, Kan. During the past year, more than 32% of enrolled cattle at the 4,800-head capacity feedlot qualified for the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand with 78.2% USDA Choice.

Beller encourages producers to retain ownership on feed, and helps them with records so they can improve their cattle.

“If you maintain your records, you will eventually find out what works best for you,” he says, “whether it is your bulls, cows or even your nutritional program.”

The feedlot only has four full-time employees, so Beller isn’t spending all of his time in front of the computer screen.

“Even if there was only one person here, the cattle would get fed,” he says. “There aren’t many feedlots where every employee can manage the operation.”

Beller also enjoys the camaraderie that goes along with being a small yard.

Ranchers are much easier to work with than the clients of a big computer corporation, he adds. “They understand if it takes you a couple of hours to return a phone call because you are at the pediatrician,” he notes as an example. Ranchers understand a value close to Beller’s heart: family.

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