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NEWS

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Knight Feedlot becomes licensed CAB partner

Central Kansas yard finds one more way to serve customers

By Lindsay Domer

There's no such thing as too much contact, says Knight Feedlot, Inc., assistant controller Tim Kratzer. Staff at the Lyons, Kan., yard tries to update customers on everything involving their cattle.

The continual communication has built many long-term relationships.

"We treat everyone as an individual and customize a feeding program to suit their marketing goals and the pen of cattle they are feeding," Kratzer says.

About 75% of customers have been doing regular business for more than 10 years. They come back because of service, and because they continually see familiar faces, Kratzer says. The average Knight employee has worked there for 20 years, some as long as 32 years.

It's more than a frequent chat with old friends, however. For many years, Knight has been giving customers something to talk about – like all of the carcass data they can get their hands on.

"We share information with everyone," Kratzer says. "We even provide data to our producer-customers that don't retain ownership. That's the best way for producers and feedlots alike to improve."

When Knight Feedlot owners and managers decided to become a licensed Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) partner last month, it was in recognition that they stood on common ground with the leading brand. CAB provides detailed carcass data to its licensed feedlots free of charge, while helping to put that in context with 1.4 million records from other producers over the past decade.

Kratzer says one of the deciding factors for licensing was the link between CAB and the Beef Marketing Group (BMG), of which Knight is a charter member. Nearly half of the cattle at the yard are BMG-owned and have a history of qualifying for CAB's Natural target.

"We try to get our customers all of the premiums we can and CAB is on the top of our priority list," Kratzer says.

Managers ensure calves are capable of qualifying for premiums by giving them a fair chance in the yard. The staff works hard to keep pens clean, but also goes as far as putting down straw bedding when the pens are too wet to clean out.

Wind breaks on the north and west provide protection in winter, and sprinklers are used in the summer to keep the primarily-black cattle cool. A full-time veterinarian and a nutritionist keep calves healthy and well-fed on appropriate rations.

Knight's excellent customer service and attention to detail has meant steady expansion since the yard was founded in 1972. Kratzer says capacity will stand at 20,000 head by summer, allowing room to build strong relationships with new customers while keeping longtime patrons happy.

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