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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: Julie Vrazel, Industry Information Intern
Certified Angus Beef LLC (254) 697-1937; jvrazel@certifiedangusbeef.com

Photo available at http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/FQF_photos/mccully_mark_mug.JPG

Consumer desires guide cattle plans

With so many brands and cuts of beef available in the grocery store, quality is more important than ever to the consumer. Good eating experiences and high-quality taste keep them coming back for more beef.

The link between beef quality and consumer satisfaction was a classroom topic in January, during Cattlemen's College at the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association annual convention in Lexington, Ky. An assistant vice president for supply with Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), Mark McCully walked cattlemen through Meat Science 101 and shared related research.

"Overall eating satisfaction is determined by flavor, juiciness and tenderness," he said.

Even with the struggling economy, consumers are still purchasing beef over poultry and pork, to the extent that they remain satisfied with their eating experience, McCully explained.

"Consumers place the most emphasis on taste, and as long as the brand performs to their standards, studies show they will keep buying," he said.

When the consumer is in the grocery store looking at the meat case, it can be difficult to choose. The *Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand aims to produce the highest quality beef, and Oklahoma State University research suggests reasons for consumers to take note, McCully said.

The odds of eating a slightly tough or tougher USDA Choice strip steak is one in 13, compared to just one in 50 for a CAB steak, according to the study. Higher quality beef doesn't have the variability, which consumers shouldn't have to deal with, McCully noted.

To continually produce high-quality beef, producers must take into account genetics and judicious use of growth technologies, along with herd health and nutrition. "We must remember it's a marathon, not a sprint," the CAB officer said. "When evaluating the management program, find the highest risk area and start implementing a strategy to improve."

The bottom line: as long as beef quality meets or exceeds expectations, consumer satisfaction will remain high.

"Beef production is a continuous process, which we are always trying to improve," McCully said.

CAB is a not-for-profit subsidiary of the American Angus Association and owned by its 30,000 producer members. Its mission has always been to increase the market value and quality of Angus cattle through a specification-based branded beef program. The brand maintains a consumer website at www.certifiedangusbeef.com and a producer information site at www.cabpartners.com.

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