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Cattle tales connect with consumers

Cattlemen tell stories in a lot of ways – across a fence gate, over coffee at the feed store, through the pickup window or atop a good horse in the back of the ropin' pen. Now, producers focused on quality can also tell their stories on the internet's World Wide Web.

Ranchers from nearly every state grace the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand's consumer site (www.certifiedangusbeef.com/producers) right next to the product they work to create.

"It comes down to consumers making that connection to the stories behind the brand," says Christy Johnson, CAB special projects manager. "This is one way we can help."

The site features a diverse set of ranches, from sprawling hundred-thousand-acre Southwestern spreads to quaint New England farmsteads. Despite differences, each producer shares a desire to grow something consumers enjoy and understand.

"People in our country don't always associate beef with producers or the company behind it," says rancher Brian McCulloh. "They associate it with the grocery store or the restaurant where they buy it." A partner in one of the featured operations, Woodhill Farms, Viroqua, Wis., McCulloh says consumers want to know more about where their food comes from.

Meeting that need makes consumers happy and should lead to producer benefits, he says. "This is taking the branding efforts of CAB one step further and putting a face to the brand. Ultimately, that should create more pull-through for our product."

That's especially important, Johnson says, in areas that have high consumer and low producer concentrations. "I hope this helps consumers gain a deeper appreciation for the brand and the producers who are a part of it," she says. "When they buy our product, now they can feel like they're not just feeding their family, but also supporting the farmers and ranchers in their states."

McCulloh says the features also create a transparency that drives quality. Licensed retailers and restaurants are monitored for quality, but producers are only driven by their own goals, he points out.

"I hope that as Angus producers, we can each look at this and ask if I'm doing all I can to ensure the quality and wholesomeness of my product." The bottom-line significance of having your face linked to the brand? McCulloh says, "It means we as producers must uphold our end of the deal."

Those who target the CAB brand quality standards and would like to join in sharing their story may contact Christy Johnson at cjohnson@certifiedangusbeef.com or call (800) 225-2333. ###