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Where commitment begins

Consumer satisfaction doesn't just happen. It takes commitment, according to Joe Boutté, of Perry's Grille & Steakhouse.

"The initial commitment producers make to aim for the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand is a commitment to quality," Boutté told commercial Angus producers at meetings in September. He credited the "consistently superior eating experience" that CAB brings as a reason for the success of Perry's CAB-licensed and Houston-based steakhouses, meat markets and Italian grill.

"We need that commitment, and the resulting CAB product, which is the best of the best," Boutté said. "We need more of it."

So how do producers meet this demand? The question was answered in a series of three "Black Ink Basics" seminars in Texas August 21 to 23. Boutté spoke at the Crockett and Waco gatherings about the need for providing those consistently superior eating experiences to achieve consumer satisfaction. Ron Boatright, of the Dallas-based Freedman Meats, Inc, addressed the same topic at the Sulphur Springs seminar.

Producers at all three seminars, numbering about 140 in all, heard CAB supply development director Mark McCully address the premium beef market and CAB brand.

"As a U.S. beef industry our competitive advantage is in quality," McCully said. Showing the numbers that point to strong demand for the CAB brand, he said quality genetics are the foundation for fulfillment.

"We cannot manage beyond genetic potential," McCully said. "That's why it's so important to start with animals that have the genetics to marble well."

The next step is management to help cattle realize their full genetic potential. Dr. Glenn Rogers, managing veterinarian for Pfizer Animal Health, explained strategies of a quality-focused calf health and implant program at weaning.

“The concept of lifetime health is largely determined by the environment and experiences during development,” Rogers said. He added that sickness is more than an immediate expense to producers because it also affects carcass quality.

Purina Mills’ representatives added to the management discussion with a presentation about the role of calf nutrition in marbling development. Dr. Chance Farmer presented in Sulphur Springs and Dr. Doug Hawkins spoke in Crockett and Waco.

Hawkins stressed the importance of creating marbling fat cells at a young age through feeding starch early. Maintaining a high-energy ration is necessary for those fat cells to fill, he said, and warned against allowing the fat cells to empty, either through sickness or a slip in nutrition.

The final session featured value-added marketing tips for value-added calves. Gary Fike, a beef cattle specialist for CAB, led the discussion. Fike said producers can always sell quality cattle for commodity prices. However, if producers document that they have something better, quality-focused feeders will be willing to pay a lot more for them.

Purina Mills LLC, Pfizer Animal Health and CAB sponsored the seminars where producers didn’t just hear about the CAB difference, they experienced it firsthand with CAB steaks for dinner.

Attendees left with a new appreciation for how the CAB brand helps restaurants provide enjoyable dining, plus new insight into how to meet the demand. They were sure to remember McCully’s summary: “Those who plan and coordinate their genetics, management and marketing will reap the premiums.”

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