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**Peterson Livestock wins CAB award**

**WOOSTER, Ohio**-Sept. 15, 2008-Tough times have some ranchers wondering. Can they maintain the same production goals while whittling ever-deeper on cost efficiency? The answer may come from tough places, like the high desert range of south-central Wyoming.

Some cows there can scrape up a living without extra inputs or sacrificing growth or carcass quality in their calves. Adaptation likely requires some tradeoffs between cow function and chart-busting growth, but it's not an "either/or" case. Peterson Livestock LLC, of Rawlins, Wyo., is running proof.

The outfit switched from primarily sheep to solely cattle in the early 1970s. It was then that Elmer Peterson, who had acquired the ranch from his uncle, asked his daughter Pam and son-in-law Bob Hones to come back to the ranch.

They now manage it with full-time assistance from daughter Diane Peterson and her husband Josh. Older daughter Katherine Hones-Hullinger, a practicing veterinarian, and construction-contractor husband Shawn help when their schedules allow.

The family won the 2008 CAB Commercial Commitment to Excellence Award for their focus on raising high-quality calves that fit their environment. Bob and Pam accepted the award the annual conference Sept. 13 in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Adaptation was a big reason for the change from sheep to cattle. "The sheep were phased out due to the labor and coyote problems," Bob says. "It became almost impossible."

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Pam says the ranch would lose 5% of the calf crop annually were it not for an intense predator control program.

Winter storms are reason enough for Peterson Livestock to postpone calving until later in the spring, but there's no rush. The ranch runs all of its calves as yearlings before sending them to the feedlot.

"We have always watched quality grade closely," Pam says, "so it just makes sense to retain ownership to reap the benefits of that."

Besides, Bob says, "If we didn't go all the way to the packer, we'd have to fine-tune things a little – somehow get a heavier, earlier calf [to sell at weaning] – or we could start calving even later."

Outside of the low-lying meadows, the landscape is dotted in sagebrush. The ranch is made up of deeded land next to Bureau of Land Management and Union Pacific leases, with elevations up to 8,000 feet.

The past eight years of drought spurred development of solar-powered pumps on stock tanks, to make use of the vast acres their cows have to cover. "Our cows still have to walk a ways to water," Pam says, "but we've sure made it better."

The cows are hardy and bring in a stout calf without much help, but even more impressive is the performance of the calves as yearlings and finishing in the feedlot.

Since 2003, the custom finisher has been Darnall Feedlot, just east of Harrisburg, Neb., where data proves consistent excellence.

Gary Darnall, who manages the business with his son Lane, nominated Peterson Livestock for the CAB award. "They're hard-working people trying to do everything right to increase performance and carcass quality," Darnall says.

And the cattle? "As far as carcass quality and performance, they would be in the top 1% or 2% of the cattle we feed," he says. "They're not big-framed cattle, but their performance in the feedlot is very good. They have a lot of acres, and those cows are not pampered – if I sent my cows up there, I don't know if they would survive."

The past five years show a few thousand fed steers and heifers with an average of 81% USDA Choice or higher and 36% *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand acceptance while keeping yield grade (YG) 4s and 5s to a respectable 11%. A recent closeout on 434 head showed a 51% CAB acceptance rate.

"They're very good at using the data to make good decisions," Darnall says. But Bob and Pam credit others for helping them, and place trust in their feeder.

"When it's blowing snow, the Interstate is closed and the cattle are 200 miles away, you just can't step out your door and take a look at them," Bob notes.

Addressing the genetics, Pam places her confidence in primary seedstock supplier, GR Angus of Oak, Neb. That's Gary Rupp, DVM, and Ronda Jaeger, who have provided bulls for the past decade or so.

Rupp applauds the selection of Peterson Livestock for the award. "I can't think of another commercial breeder that has delivered more quality cattle to the marketplace with the Angus name on them," he says.

Certified Angus Beef LLC celebrated 30 years of premium branded beef at its annual conference Sept. 11-13 in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. More than 14,300 partners sell *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> brand products throughout the United States and internationally. Annual sales top \$2.5 billion. The *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> brand, introduced in 1978, is *Angus beef at its best*<sup>®</sup>. Less than 8% of beef achieves the brand's benchmark standards that ensure mouthwatering flavor, juiciness and tenderness. For more information, visit [www.certifiedangusbeef.com](http://www.certifiedangusbeef.com).

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**Editor:** Additional information about award winners is available at [www.certifiedangusbeef.com](http://www.certifiedangusbeef.com) or by contacting Beth Barner at 800-225-2333, ext. 279, or [bbarner@certifiedangusbeef.com](mailto:bbarner@certifiedangusbeef.com).