



Quality TimeTM

Quality news and features for farm broadcasters from Certified Angus Beef LLC
Contact: Steve Suther, CAB Director of Industry Information (ssuther@certifiedangusbeef.com)

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Technology in balance

Growth-promoting technologies let beef producers add more pounds, more efficiently. Some say that win-win deal could lead to the blind, but widespread use of beta-2 agonist feed additives. John Stika, president of Certified Angus Beef LLC, shares a big-picture view.

Q: We're glad to have you with us, John. Why should caution be used with respect to these new tools?

Actuality, Stika: 26: The first thing to keep in mind is that the industry has benefited dramatically by improvements in growth technologies that we've seen over the years, from implants and even the beta-agonist as it relates to its ability to produce more pounds of beef, more efficiently, especially as we look at the cost of inputs today. The challenging part that we have is trying to find the balance between any potential negative impacts against those benefits that those technologies bring.

(LINK: http://cabpartners.com/news/radio/stika_beta2_qt3_8_1.mp3)

Q: ...those technologies bring."

Q: Certainly, we've been using some of these products for a long time, but those like Zilmax are just coming into the marketplace. What kind of downfalls are you talking about?

Actuality, Stika: From a Certified Angus Beef standpoint, our concern is what we've seen, especially in the beta-2 agonist, is the drop in quality grade that we see and the potential challenges with tenderness in that product long-term as well.

(LINK: http://cabpartners.com/news/radio/stika_beta2_qt3_8_2.mp3)

Q: ..long-term as well."

Q: So you're talking about a decline in marbling, which will affect flavor, tenderness and juiciness. What kind of a drop is typically expected when feeding these additives?

Actuality, Stika: 14: Those researchers who have been involved in studying the impact when fed for 20 days have indicated that the marbling score is reduced by about 22 points. That doesn't sound like a lot. What we find is that this relates to roughly a 32% reduction in Premium Choice carcasses—so, very significant, where a small change in marbling score eliminates a high percentage of cattle from hitting the premium grade.

(LINK: http://cabpartners.com/news/radio/stika_beta2_qt3_8_3.mp3)

Q: ...the premium grade."

Q: I can see how that drop in marbling would hurt your brand. Why do you see this as an industry-wide issue?

Actuality, Stika: 23: The long-term challenge is remembering that all dollars in our industry come from the consumer. And trying to find ways to continue to please the consumer, to satisfy their needs to where they are interested and willing to spend their meat purchasing dollars on beef rather than other proteins, yet still make sure we find a way to be profitable in this business as well.

(LINK: http://cabpartners.com/news/radio/stika_beta2_qt3_8_4.mp3)

Q: ...business as well.”

Q: In closing, do you have any ideas on how these technologies might fit into the industry?

Actuality, Stika: 34: We believe that there's demand for different types of products, obviously the high-end, high-quality products, where Certified Angus Beef would operate in the industry. There's growing demand that we see in our sales. But we also know there is demand for lower-quality products, more price-sensitive products, the Select-grade and so forth. The ultimate goal for the industry is logically to get the best of both worlds. We see an opportunity and perhaps a need to manage cattle for a specific endpoint, rather than simply managing all cattle the same, particularly those cattle on the two ends of the quality spectrum.

(LINK: http://cabpartners.com/news/radio/stika_beta2_qt3_8_5.mp3)

Q: ...the quality spectrum.”

Thanks, John. An interesting viewpoint on a hot topic in today's cattle business.

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