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From potential to profit

Angus Value Discovery Contest winners named

by Nicole Lane Erceg

If anyone else had made the phone call to Jamie Hoffman, he'd have thought it was a mistake or joke. The manager of Hoffman Angus Farm, Otwell, Ind., was on the line with his bull supplier, a beaming James Coffey, who told his customer of four years he'd just won the inaugural Angus Value Discovery Contest.

"We've known for a long time, we have good ones that grade, but as many people as there are feeding cattle out there, it was incredibly humbling and surprising news," Hoffman said.

Coffey, who nominated him and manages Branch View Angus, Hustonville, Ky., wasn't shocked.

"From my first conversation with Jamie, I knew he and his wife were dedicated to raising and feeding high quality Angus cattle," he said. "This group that won didn't happen by chance. They've concentrated on raising the right kind for years."

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) organized the contest as a way for Angus seedstock suppliers to reward commercial customers who invest in top genetics and finish the progeny.

Pens of 30 head or more were evaluated on feedyard performance, quality grade and yield grade (YG), as well as grid premiums and discounts. Closeouts for each pen were assessed based on the grid average at harvest time in CAB-licensed packinghouses through July 31.

Hoffman's Grand Champion entry of 40 graded 100% Choice or better, with 75% qualified for the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand, including 32.5% Prime.

Great cattle, but not the highest grading pen.

What set Hoffman's cattle apart was a lack of discounts, with no death loss or even sickness on feed, said Justin Sexten, CAB director of supply development.

"They demonstrated quality and leanness with a high percentage earning YG1s and 2s that produced a significant percentage of CAB and Prime," he said. "But there were no YG4s or 5s and no heavyweights."



Hoffman said it's a disciplined focus on the details of animal care he learned from his father, along with quality carcass genetics selected for moderate frame, and feeding them a corn silage ration at home.

"Most Angus cattle can grade well," he said. "But I wait until my cattle are ready before selling them to the plant. Oftentimes I have to tell my buyer no, I need to feed them another 30 to 45 days to ensure I get the expressed value from my genetics and on-farm investment."

The Reserve prize went to a partnership that spans the beef industry. Mark Gardiner of Gardiner Angus Ranch, Ashland, Kan., nominated long-time customer Randy Bayne, of nearby Protection, Kan., along with his feeding partner and veterinarian, Randall Spare, Ashland.

Bayne and Spare's pen of 67 head all made Choice or better, with 89.2% earning the CAB brand, including 54.3% Prime.

"The reserve winner excelled in quality grade, which earns exceptional premiums," Sexten said. "However, each carcass only retains the full value of premiums if it simultaneously avoids discounts. The pen had a large percentage of YG4s and some 5s, causing discounts that left them in second."

A Gardiner customer for more than 20 years, Bayne said he leans on his suppliers' expertise when selecting carcass genetics and Spare for creating the optimal health program. Gardiner and Spare credit Bayne's management and business sense as keys in producing high-performing, profitable cattle.

Gardiner said the "disciplined" cattleman works "toward selecting cattle that are in the upper percentiles without compromising reproduction and maternal function."

Spare manages health programs for both Gardiner and Bayne.

"The thing I appreciate about Randy is his understanding of genetics and how to maximize them to their environment," the veterinarian said. "We come alongside him and make suggestions to help facilitate that optimal expression and eliminate the infectious process so every day can be a good day in the life of these calves."

The first year of the Angus Value Discovery Contest drew 27 nominations by nine suppliers on 1,914 finished cattle from across the country.

"We all like to compete whether it's in ball or cattle," Gardiner said. "The benefit for everyone isn't about who wins, it's about what we can learn from looking at the data. We find out who is doing it well and how we can apply what they've learned to do better on our own operations."

Contest winners earned trips to the National Angus Convention, in Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 3-6, 2017, where they received the awards. Hoffman's Grand Champion pen merited \$2,000 in credit towards his next bull purchase with Branch View Angus, while Bayne earned a \$1000 credit to spend with Gardiner Angus Ranch.

Nominations to the 2018 Angus Value Discovery Contest are open for pens harvested August 1, 2017, running through the end of this coming July. A simplified entry process requires only completing an online form at <http://www.cabpartners.com> and submitting harvest reports on 30 head or more by scanning those documents. For any current questions, email Klee@certifiedangusbeef.com. ### END

