

2019 CAB Chairman Jerry Connealy says it wasn't until he visited CAB headquarters in Ohio in 2014 that he realized just how important the brand was to his business and to those of his customers.



2019 CAB Chairman Jerry Connealy emphasizes importance of the brand to commercial customers.

by Chelsea Dinterman, Certified Angus Beef LLC

Fifth-generation Nebraska rancher Jerry Connealy brings a lifetime of experience to his role as chairman of the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Board of Directors.

Growing up on the Sandhills ranch near Whitman that his great-great-grandfather homesteaded, Connealy took classes to learn how to artificially inseminate (AI) cows before he learned to drive. He watched his father purchase their first Angus cattle and slowly helped him build their registered herd.

He came back to the ranch in the 1970s with an animal science degree from the University of Nebraska and focused more attention on the Angus herd.

"Since then, I've grown the numbers significantly," he says.

A supporter of the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand in general since its inception in 1978,

Connealy decided five years ago to run for the Board and was elected. It has been an educational, as well as leadership, experience, he says.

"In 2014, I made a trip to Wooster (Ohio) and really delved into the inner workings of what CAB was and its pull-through effect in the market," Connealy says. "It wasn't really until then that I realized how big it was and how impactful it was on my

business and on my customers' business."

In November 2018, Connealy was elected board chairman for a year.

"I was honored to be chosen," he says. "My expectations for the year were high because I was aware of how supportive the team has been, but those expectations have been more than met."

To hear him tell it, the rancher simply presides over meetings, confers with CAB President John Stika and "acts as a cheerleader" for the brand.

"The leadership team at CAB is more than capable without me," Connealy says. "In this position, and as a seedstock producer, I do everything I can to allow CAB to grow."

To hear Stika tell it, Connealy has continuously pushed the brand to focus on the

future, challenging leaders to seek innovation.

"Jerry is a firm believer that there is always room for improvement," Stika says. "His forward-looking leadership exemplifies the phrase, 'Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.'"

"The brand has benefited from his support to foster a healthy sense of urgency," he adds. That means identifying, vetting and then pursuing any opportunities that can better position CAB "for continued success to deliver greater benefit to registered Angus breeders."

Connealy typically takes little credit, but shares excitement about progress the brand has made during his term.

"It has been a privilege to work with the team and see the inner workings at CAB," he says. "Acceptance rates for

the brand have been at an all-time high, and product continues to move out the door. Those are the things that make me smile."

The rancher doesn't see an end to growth.

"The sky is the limit," he says. "We're going to continue to set records and grow, and tap into those future customers who don't yet know about CAB. I see the brand as a huge wheel that struggled to get turning; but now that it is turning, it's going to be hard to stop."

Though his term ended in November, Connealy will keep translating his years of board experience to active support on his family ranch.

"I'm going to put the pressure on high-marbling genetics," he says. "I'll be educating my producer customers with what that means, because driving commercial operations toward quality makes us all profitable." ■

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Editor's note: Chelsea Dinterman is a producer communications intern for CAB. Visit the CAB Cattlemen Connection website at www.CABcattle.com for more stories like this.