

EAGER TO LEARN, READY TO TEACH



Ohio cattleman John Grimes completes his term as *Certified Angus Beef* Board chairman.

by Kylee Kohls, *Certified Angus Beef LLC*

Thick fog lifts out of the valley at sunrise, unveiling steep hills of green pastures and black cattle. The soft lowing of calves calls John Grimes to his morning trek to the barn.

For as long as he can remember, there have been Angus cattle to feed.

It's a call to serve, the same that led him to run for the American Angus Association Board of Directors. The sun now setting on his second three-year term, he

reflects on his leadership as chairman of the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Board.

The head of Maplecrest Farms in Hillsboro, Ohio, says there's no instant gratification in the cattle business.

"No question, things are going to

keep changing," Grimes says. "We have to be nimble enough as a breed — and as a brand representative of the breed — to stay in the forefront of change and consumer demand. We can't be complacent. We will do what the consumer and foodservice industry need in order to maintain the trust we've built."

A teacher, the retired Ohio State University Extension agent says every day is an opportunity to grow.

He points to the registered Angus cattle in the pasture while explaining history and improvements. A few taps on his phone and the data that back up his understanding light up the screen. Expected progeny differences (EPDs) illuminate, too.

A *Targeting the Brand*™ logo in the corner of the EPD report is his visual reminder of the brand's production goal of 2 billion pounds. Grimes and his customers use the logo to identify genetics with more potential to qualify for CAB.

Protecting the sweat equity and years of dedication that built the brand drives his



service on the Board. The biggest challenge for any board is respecting tradition yet recognizing the need to move forward, he says.

“There’s no doubt in my mind CAB will adapt to the changes in the world,” Grimes says. “But the industry as a whole? There are still a lot of factors no single

person has control over.”

What if they work together? Regardless of age or the scope of an organization, Grimes advocates for participation and leadership.

“I encourage producers and anyone involved in the food industry,” he says. “If you have a voice, express it.”

Grimes enjoys most the

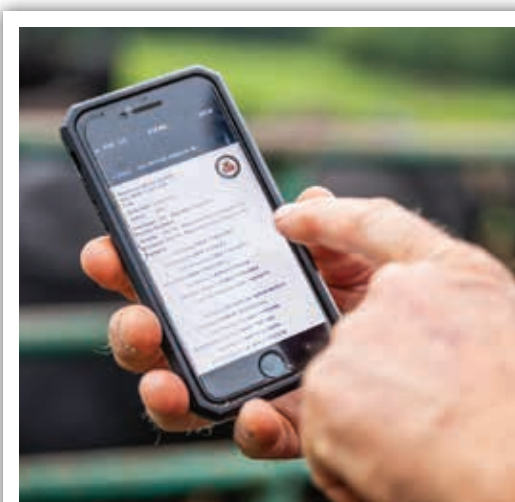
conversations and connections with cattlemen across the country. He attributes these relationships to making him a better Angus breeder and cattleman.

“Have we got it all figured out? No, but it’s almost like you’ve got your own in-house library of knowledge and experiences you can tap into,” he says.

“Whether it’s the American Angus Association, CAB or my time with Ohio State, the relationships I have throughout the industry are difficult to put a price on.”

Being open to conversations and learning more about other sectors of the food-supply chain, Grimes credits his relationship with CAB to learning more and connecting with folks in the restaurants or grocery stores selling his steaks.

“I think this year opened our eyes to how fragile the supply chain can be, but we producers weren’t the only ones affected,” he says.



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For the first time in more than a decade, CAB won’t experience sales growth in 2020 (see story on page 104).

“I’d be lying if I didn’t take some good-hearted ribbing over it,” Grimes says with a grin. “We’ve gotten so used to growth, but I’m proud of the work the folks in Wooster have done this year. I won’t take any credit for it, but the fact we will still be over a billion pounds speaks highly of the brand.”

Progress remains top of mind.

Grimes concentrates on quality, trust and sustainability to increase international growth and a qualifying supply to help meet demand.

“If we are going to ask a consumer to go to a nice steak house and drop \$30 to \$50 on a steak, it has to be good,” he says. “It can’t be mediocre. To me, that means we have to constantly raise the bar. We can’t assume we are always going to be on top. We have to stay aggressive, aiming to improve our cattle and product.”

The work begins on the ranch but extends throughout the beef supply chain.

“Quality control has to be good all the way through,” says the cattleman, from genetic decisions on the farm to all that determines the final eating experience. ■

Editor’s note: Kylee Kohls is a brand communications specialist for CAB.

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“Have we got it all figured out? No, but it’s almost like you’ve got your own in-house library of knowledge and experiences you can tap into,” says John Grimes of his affiliations with the American Angus Association, Certified Angus Beef and Ohio State University.

