

Best of *the* Breed Update



Donnie Gast, Nevada, Mo., enrolled 331 steers in the Best of *the* Breed (BoB) contest last October. The steers are being fed in four groups at Irsik & Doll. He planned to send more to area feedlots by March. [PHOTOS BY STEVE CUBBAGE]

Story by
STEVE SUTHER

With 3,600 Angus-based calves enrolled in the Best of *the* Breed (BoB) contest as of Jan. 11, the national Angus challenge has begun to see the first harvested cattle, contest director Amy Fahsholtz reports. Those were from Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri, representing regions 3 and 7. All seven regions are represented in current enrollments, which are expected to increase greatly by early spring, Fahsholtz says.

Among the first to enroll was Sam Hands, Triangle H Grain and Cattle Co., Garden City, Kan., and 100 calves from his fall-calving Angus herd were harvested in January.

"At first I was skeptical that this was just another game to glorify premiums regardless of profitability," Hands says, "but I looked at their [BoB] long-term goals and what the contest can be.

"I decided to try it and see what we can get. We all need to know how we can meet these carcass value goals, and do it profitably," he continues. "This can be a great educational tool when we look at how the winners arrived at their goals."

As a Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB)

licensee, Triangle H was among those feedlots automatically approved as a location for feeding BoB cattle. Hands says he has had several inquiries since the contest opened last fall and has enrolled two more pens, including 90 purebred steers from South Carolina.

"With that kind of money [a total of up to \$343,000], you create a lot of interest," he says.

Also at Garden City, Irsik & Doll Feedyard trades off with Supreme Feeders, Liberal, Kan., week to week, for the distinction of having the most BoB cattle on feed. Between them, the two CAB-licensed yards had more than 1,300 head enrolled, with more than 1,400 additional cattle projected to be enrolled by March 1.

Stocker operator enrolls

Donnie Gast, Nevada, Mo., enrolled 331 steers in four groups at Irsik & Doll last October, and he planned to send more to area feedlots by March. Gast represents the stocker operators in this contest, of which there are several. "We try to buy high-quality Angus calves from the local auction markets here in southwest Missouri," he says.



In the past he has sold feeders as well as retained ownership on some. "We always had it in mind [to get] more of these cattle involved in the Certified Angus Beef program," Gast says. "When Best of *the* Breed came along, we ultrasound scanned some to see if they were good enough. The technician couldn't believe how well-marbled they seemed to be, so we're feeding them at CAB yards and aiming at that high-value target."

Gast usually buys calves weighing 350 to 500 pounds (lb.), working with the same veterinarian, sorting to groups and growing them to 800 lb. on fall fescue and supplement before selling or shipping to finishing yards. "I think we have some of the best Angus cattle in the country right around here," he says. The first of those cattle are projected for harvest in late February.

Going for the added cash

Thirteen of the currently enrolled pens are 100% Merial® SureHealth™ certified, making them eligible for Merial's offer to match the \$100,000 offered for the grand prize. Fahsholtz says SureHealth-certified numbers are expected to increase in future enrollments, but it was too late for some of the first pens to commit to the program.

Irsik & Doll manager Mark Sebranek sees great potential for BoB. "We could feed 70 or more contest pens this year. I know there will be a lot more come in this spring and summer," he says. Nearly 300 of the early enrollees were SureHealth-certified, he notes, including some from Missouri and Texas. "Some of our customers (Gast, for example) ask us about BoB, and we bring it up in talking to others who have CAB-quality cattle."

Pfenninger Cattle Co., Scott City, Kan.; McPherson County Feeders, Marquette, Kan.; and North Platte (Neb.) Feeders round out a list of CAB feedlot partners with three or more pens of BoB cattle on feed. John Tucker, quality assurance officer at North Platte, credits the contest for bringing in new business, including those first enrollments from Black Ranches, Lakeside, Neb. "If they [Black's steers] win the value contest, they will have done it all," says Tucker, "because their average daily gains are in the 4s and they were converting in the 5s."

The 3,600 cattle enrolled as of Jan. 11

are in 41 pens in 18 feedlots. They represent 34 owners in 12 states and all regions. Although cattle from each region are currently represented, some areas have more competition than others.

Since cattle are not required to enroll upon placement in the feedlot, it is estimated that many pens of cattle currently on feed will enroll prior to the deadline of 100 days before harvest.

Fahsholtz says leaders will be listed by region at the contest Web site, www.bestofthebreed.com, as pens are harvested and valued on the BoB grid. For more information, visit the Web pages or call Fahsholtz at 1-866-BoB-1160.



Table 1: Enrollments in the Best of *the* Breed contest — September-December 2001

Name, City, State	Feedyard	No.		Harvest date	Merial
		Enrolled	Origin		
Christine E. Mahoney, Rio Vista, Calif.	Supreme	80	CA	May 1, 2002	N
John David, Lenora, Kan.	David Ranch	80	KS	May 1, 2002	N
Lyman Goetsch, Brewster, Kan.	Carpenter	82	KS	March 10, 2002	Y
R.V. Mills, Florence, Kan.	Supreme	110	KS	Feb. 11, 2002	N
Sam Hands, Triangle H, Garden City, Kan.	Triangle H	90	KS	March 14, 2002	N
Sam Hands, Triangle H, Garden City, Kan.	Triangle H	100	KS	Dec. 20, 2001	N
Steve Bell, Rogler Inc., Emporia, Kan.	Supreme	110	KS	March 8, 2002	N
Bob Richter, La Grange, Mo.	Supreme	117	MO	Jan. 23, 2002	N
Donald Gast, Nevada, Mo.	Irsik & Doll	80	MO	March 16, 2002	N
Donald Gast, Nevada, Mo.	Irsik & Doll	80	MO	Feb. 27, 2002	N
Donald Gast, Nevada, Mo.	Irsik & Doll	80	MO	Feb. 17, 2002	N
Donald Gast, Nevada, Mo.	Irsik & Doll	91	MO	March 25, 2002	N
Larry Bock, Boonville, Mo.	Supreme	90	MO	Feb. 19, 2002	Y
Mark Akin, Circle A Ranch, Iberia, Mo.	Irsik & Doll	100	MO	May 1, 2002	Y
Pat Goggins, Billings, Mont.	Supreme	85	MT	May 15, 2002	Y
Greeley Creek Ranch, Livingston, Mont.	Hergert	82	MT	June 1, 2002	N
Butch Black, Lakeside, Neb.	N. Platte	80	NE	Jan. 24, 2002	N
James Burtwistle, Ewing, Neb.	Brookover CC	84	NE	May 20, 2002	Y
Tim Freeman, Holdenville, Okla.	Pfenninger	85	OK	June 13, 2002	Y
Rafter J Ranch, Fort Worth, Texas	Supreme	90	OK	April 15, 2002	N
Kevin Yon, Ridge Spring, S.C.	Triangle H	90	SC	March 28, 2002	Y
James J. Fuqua, Quanah, Texas	Irsik & Doll	103	TX	June 30, 2002	Y
Russell & Kothman, McLean, Texas	McLean	84	TX	May 10, 2002	N
Bryan Luckwiller, Lewisburg, W.Va.	Gregory	80	WV	April 20, 2002	Y
24 Enrollments		2,153			