



# CAB Focuses on Winning Partners

Story by **LANCE ZIMMERMAN**

At its 2004 annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) turned the spotlight on cattlemen who have excelled at the cow-calf and feedlot levels in achieving the

goals of the CAB Program. Mike Kasten, winner of the 2004 Commercial Commitment To Excellence Award, is featured in the cover story of this issue. A summary of some of the other winners follows.

**Feedlot Partner of the Year**  
**>15,000 head capacity**

Enrolling 20,000 cattle in the CAB Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) in one year creates a commanding presence. Add the precision of manager Jerry Bohn to those numbers, and it is easy to see how Pratt Feeders LLC, Pratt, Kan., is getting quality cattle to perform efficiently.

The 38,000-head commercial feedlot's efforts to feed and gather information on an increasingly Angus-based inventory helped it win 2004 CAB Feedlot Partner of the Year for feedlots with capacities of more than 15,000 head.



**General Manager Jerry Bohn says one of the goals at Pratt Feeders, Pratt, Kan., is to help Angus producers identify bloodlines that have the best combination of traits. [PHOTOS COURTESY OF CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC]**

“Since licensing, Jerry has taken the issue of collecting carcass data very seriously,” says Paul Dykstra, CAB feedlot specialist. “Follow-through on this mass of cattle has been tremendous, given the amount of effort required to keep up with all shipments, closeouts, performance and carcass data. When Jerry Bohn and his staff say they are going to do something, you can bet they will deliver.”

Pratt Feeders is one of the most efficient feedlots, where average daily gain (ADG), feed conversion and cost of gain will be among the best in the industry, Bohn says. “One of our goals is to help seedstock Angus producers identify those bloodlines that can do it all and have the best combination of traits. We believe as our customers learn more, we can attain above-average levels of CAB acceptance.”

Bohn sees great potential in early coordination with ranchers. “We realize this is a tough time to make an impression on cow-calf producers because of record-high calf prices. We know we won't just wake up tomorrow and find it in place, but through creating additional networks, we are going to establish those ties on the ranch,” he says.

“Willingness to share is still new in our industry,” Bohn adds. “We're sharing as much as we can to help the producer have a better set of cattle. We are all beef producers, selling to the

consumer. We have a role to play in producing more higher-quality beef that we can sell at a higher price.”

#### Winning runner-up honors:

Feeding cattle is a tough, competitive business. That's why even the most solid feedlots keep looking for an edge. Darnall Feedlot, Harrisburg, Neb., and CAB made a good match from the time the feedlot became licensed in early 1999.



“We try to keep abreast of new technology,” says Gary Darnall, manager of Darnall Feedlot, Harrisburg, Neb. “It is important to us to be quicker, better and more accurate for our customers.”

The relationship reached a new level this fall, when Darnall Feedlot was named CAB 2004 Runner-up Feedlot Partner of the Year among yards with capacities of more than 15,000 head.

“Darnall Feedlot has as good a reputation as anyone in the feeding business for managing lightweight calves from weaning through the finishing period,” Larry Corah, CAB vice president, says.

The 20,000-head-capacity feedlot has found its edge with CAB. During the last 12 months, Darnall Feedlot has posted one of the highest acceptance rates — 23.4% on 3,888 carcasses that were 99% CAB eligible — among all CAB partner feedlots. “It is impressive to post that kind of carcass performance on this volume of cattle,” Dykstra says.

Giving customers back data they can use is important to manager Gary Darnall.

“We like to provide the services that our customers want,” he adds. “We try to keep abreast of new technology. It is important to us to be quicker, better and more accurate for our customers.”

From science to philosophy, Darnall makes it a point to sit down with the customer and explain the details behind the cattle being fed.

#### Feedlot Partner of the Year <15,000 head capacity

The only thing small about MPK Land & Livestock LLC (MPK), Lebanon, Kan., is the number of commodity cattle in its pens. Manager Steve Peterson wouldn't have it any other way. His feedlot focuses on making customer cattle profitable on a value-based grid.

Whether it's customer commitment, cattle management, marketing opportunities, industry knowledge or feeding philosophy, MPK has shown it can keep customers focused on raising cattle that reach a high-quality carcass target.

That is why it was named the 2004 CAB Feedlot Partner of the Year among feedlots with capacities of less than 15,000 head.

“Steve takes value-based marketing to the next level,” Dykstra says. “He works hard to create relationships with ranchers to get their cattle to hit the carcass targets, and his work makes a difference. MPK is in the top 25% of all feedlots harvesting 500 head.”

MPK's acceptance rate for 2004 on 1,266 head was 22.2%, and as more customers realize the potential for genetic

improvement in their herds, those numbers will rise.

“We would love to increase our acceptance rate in the coming years, but we enroll a lot of cattle that we know absolutely nothing about,” he says. “Until we work with those customers to fine-tune their genetics, their acceptance rates will

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“The main reason I wanted to be licensed was to find a better way to capture data,” says Steve Peterson, manager of MPK Land & Livestock LLC, Lebanon, Kan. “And with the different programs CAB has available to promote a feedlot, it hasn't been difficult to get cattle enrolled in the program.”

## CAB Winners *(from page 29)*

not increase a whole lot.”

The 5,500-head feedlot was focused on herd improvement long before it became licensed in May 2002. Peterson's hard work equates to constant and progressive change. It also means higher profits for his customers and a continuous message that, even while operating in the black, there

are still opportunities for improvement.

“There is always going to be some management strategy that you change to try and improve what you offer,” Peterson says. “Sometimes you might stumble, but oftentimes that is a sign you are on the front end of the newest trend.”

**Winning runner-up honors:** Highland Feeders, Belgrade, Neb., was

named 2004 CAB Runner-up Feedlot Partner of the Year among those with capacities of less than 15,000 head. The 4,000-head feedlot became a CAB-licensed partner in 2002, soon after its purchase by a quality-minded producer group.

“CAB is a status symbol,” manager Bill Robinson says. “The publicity and recognition as a quality-focused feedlot helped us crack the surface and get noticed.”

That's important when an existing facility comes under new ownership and management. Highland has taken great strides in a couple of years.

“Highland Feeders is right on track,” Dykstra says. “They have an outstanding acceptance rate of 29.2% on 1,496 CAB-eligible cattle enrolled in the Feedlot-Licensing Program.”



Increasing the number of customers retaining ownership and using the carcass data is important, says Bill Robinson, managing partner of Highland Feeders, the 2004 Runner-up Feedlot Partner of the Year.

Operating on a smaller scale enables Highland to be more personal with customers while being more precise managing the cattle. “I am very particular about bunk reading, correct implanting and managing health,” Robinson says. “They all add up to the bottom line.”

Despite the success, improvement is a continued focus for Highland Feeders. Reducing stress on weaned calves is at the top of Robinson's list. “Modifying even little things can add up to big things in the future,” he says.

“We just try to do a good job and are fortunate to get good cattle,” Robinson adds. “We try to do things right and improve. But really, it comes down to the cattle.”

## Progressive Partner of the Year

Wheeler Feed Yard Inc.'s dedication to quality in an otherwise commodity cattle environment has done more than separate it from most Texas yards. The Wheeler, Texas, feedlot was recognized as the 2004 CAB Progressive Partner of the Year for finding innovative ways to incorporate a quality beef production and management focus into its daily operations.



Wheeler Feed Yard Inc., Wheeler, Texas, is recognized as the 2004 CAB Progressive Partner of the Year for finding innovative ways to incorporate a quality beef production and management focus into its daily operations.

“A feedyard sells feed, but most people do not come to us just because we have a better or cheaper feed,” says manager and co-owner Stacy McCasland. “Producers like to work with us because we have credibility and offer them services as CAB partners.”

One of the trademarks for Wheeler Feed Yard is how it satisfies its diverse customer base (see January 2004 *Angus Beef Bulletin*, “Angus Quality, Texas Style”). Most of its customers buy cattle a few at a time and feed unknown mixed pens to an average finish, but McCasland is beginning to forge links with producers of known, higher-quality Angus cattle.

As one of only a few CAB-licensed feedlots in Texas, Wheeler Feed Yard can offer opportunities producers might not find in other yards. The feedlot’s well-kept facilities, risk management experience and sorting abilities also attract customers.

Feedlot manager Jon Vanwey says it is just a matter of “giving producers whatever they want.” He says some want the top price regardless of data, while others focus on the data as much as price. “We have worked really hard to get different people involved,” Vanwey says. “CAB is helping us do things a little bit different to make that possible.”

Through new retained ownership options, letters and customer-appreciation events, McCasland has even been able to help cattle buyers understand the value in paying for Angus genetics.

and children, follow a tradition of science over fad. Science led them, 40 years ago, to base their Ashland, Kan., Angus herd entirely on artificial insemination (AI). Frustrated by a lack of unbiased information on bulls, Henry weighed and measured everything he could and sent progeny data to the Association for all the world to see.

“We tried the old way — the so-called

‘eye of the master,’ where a really good cattleman was supposed to be able to look at an animal and tell if it was going to be calving ease and have growth and carcass,” Henry Gardiner says. “We couldn’t make purple-ribbon genetics work. But where traits are highly heritable we can make rapid progress, record it generation after generation and make decisions based on data.”

The Gardiner Ranch was a “virtual off-site experiment station for scientists from many universities,” says Corah, who served 25 years as a Kansas State University (K-State) Extension beef specialist. “Henry’s vision told him data was only valuable if shared, and that’s why he has been a tireless speaker at cattle conferences around the world,” he adds.

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### **Seedstock Commitment to Excellence**

Considering Gardiner Angus Ranch’s focus on high quality, Angus and branding, it was fitting it received the 2004 CAB Seedstock Commitment to Excellence Award.



**CAB 2004 Seedstock Commitment to Excellence Award winner Henry Gardiner, Ashland, Kan., understands the value of branding.**

“When the industry was concentrating on growth and leanness, Henry (Gardiner) pioneered the use of carcass data to focus on the consumer in making genetic decisions,” Corah says. “His foresight helped lead the American Angus Association to its position as industry leader in carcass EPDs.”

Henry and Nan Gardiner, with sons Greg, Mark and Garth and their wives



### **National Junior Angus Association**

Members of the National Junior Angus Association pay an annual fee of \$20, and junior privileges expire at age 21. Junior members have access to all services offered by the American Angus Association, and they receive two issues of the *Angus Journal* per year and the NJAA newsletter, *Directions*.

**To apply for membership in the National Junior Angus Association, visit [www.njaa.info](http://www.njaa.info) and download a printable application, or call (816) 383-5100 to request the application.**

## **CAB Winners** (from page 31)

The Gardiners bring science to bear on every production problem as soon as possible, but that must be balanced with the risk of falling off the cutting edge. "We look at new ideas all the time and experiment with them enough to look for advantages in predictability and quality," Gardiner says. "Until we see those advantages, new technology has no value for us."

When those advantages appear, no brand will employ new technology more aggressively.

### **Recognized for volume**

CAB created its Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) nearly six years ago with realistic goals. Licensed yards would never feed a majority of the cattle evaluated for the CAB brand. Rather, they would serve as a focal point, where high-quality Angus cattle could be channeled for increasingly specific management. Angus producers could depend on these feedlots to help build an Angus feeding database, while letting their calves realize their genetic potentials.

Still, volume is one measure of commitment to the brand. That's why CAB honors its Top Volume Award partners each year.

At the top of the list for 2004 is Pratt Feeders LLC, from which 1,703 CAB carcasses were gleaned.

Second in volume, with 1,334 certified carcasses, is Beller Feedlots, Lindsay, Neb. Beller recorded the highest percentage of Choice or higher grading cattle overall, at 76.8%, among the top 10 in volume. Managed by Terry Beller, it logged 173 more 30-0 cattle for the period, eclipsing 500 cumulative head and winning "Bronze Status" in that program.

The third yard in volume, at 1,099 certified carcasses, is Darnall Feedlot. The feedlot had the second-highest Choice percentage in the top 10 volume yards and added 171 On-Target, or "30-0," cattle for the period.

Fourth in volume is Hays Feeders LLC, Hays, Kan., with just fewer than 1,000 head certified from June 2003 through May 2004. During that period, the feedlot managed by Bill Saba also had 134 On-Target cattle with 30% or more Prime or CAB acceptance and no discount animals.

Hergert Feeding Co., Mitchell, Neb., rounds out the top five with 852 certified carcasses for the year. Managed by Wayne Smith, the feedlot achieved such volume with the highest CAB-acceptance rate (28%) in the top 10 and the lowest percentage of discount cattle in the top five. Hergert Feeding Co. led the FLP in 30-0 numbers for the year, adding 448 head.