



# Your Link to



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## Anatomy of an expert

It's getting hard to be truly independent out on the farm or ranch. Blame the advance of technology, a bigger population, more information demands or pesky neighbors. Each reminds us of the challenges in making it alone.

Sure, your city cousins seem dependent on everyone, and by comparison agriculture has always taken on more of an independent stance. But times are changing. Sometimes convenience and higher profit potential direct you to others for help and advice.

Look up and down your side of the beef production chain. It's probably not hard to think of at least a half dozen people you depend upon regularly for answers. In return, you may be on their team of expert advisors as well.

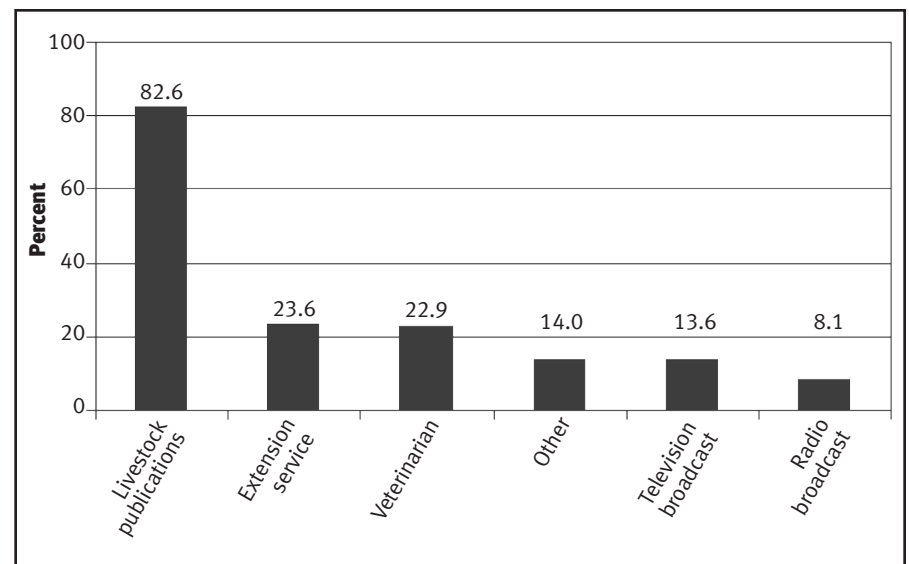
Play out a few scenarios and you can see where many otherwise independent producers may consult experts:

- ▶ Many of your month-old calves appear to be sick, and a harsh winter storm is on the way.
- ▶ Hay samples test very low on protein, and you want to buy the most cost-effective supplement that will provide quality results.
- ▶ Bearish beef news plays on the midday Futures report, and a penny-a-pound price drop could cost you thousands of dollars.

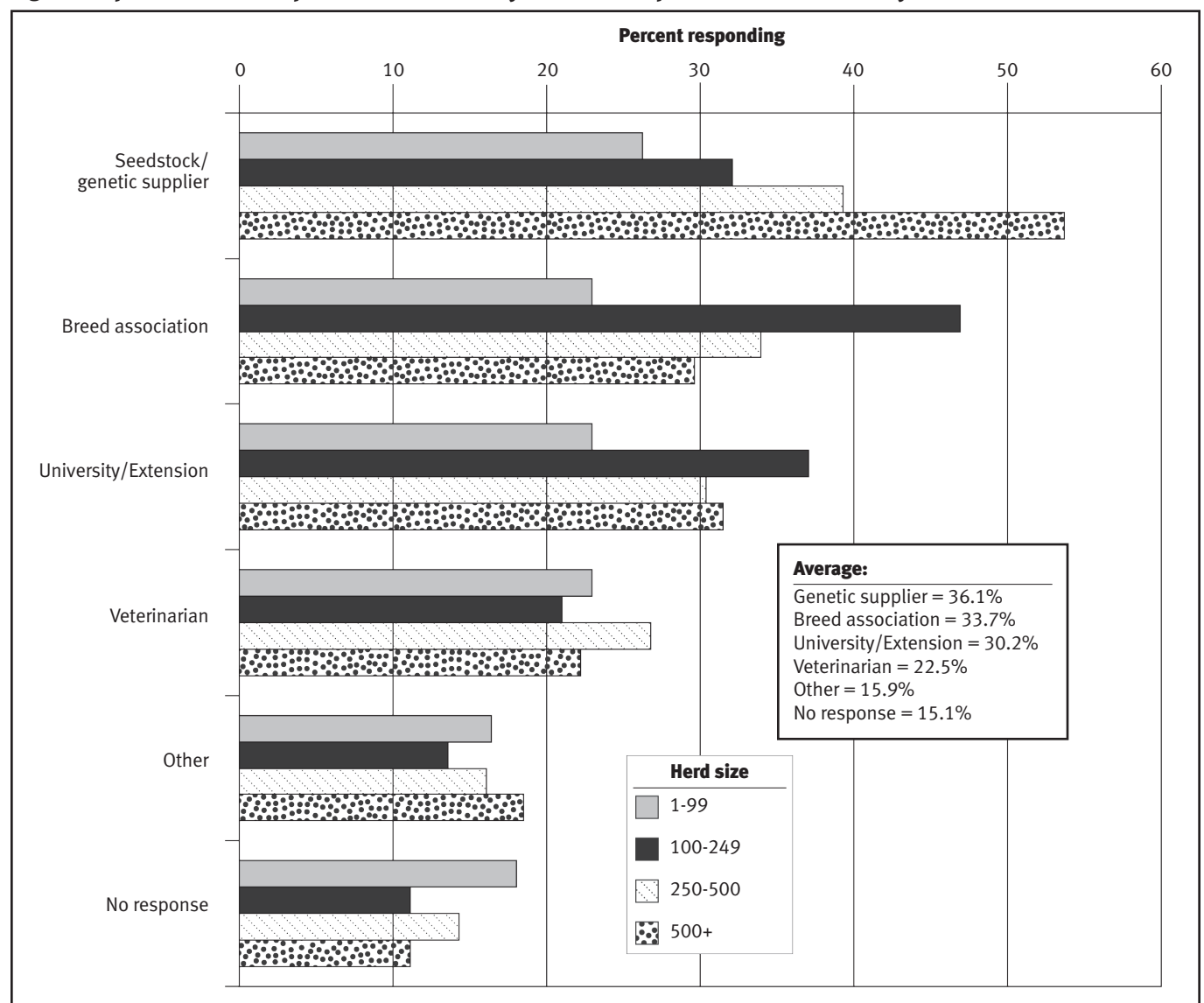
Different situations call for different specialists. Regardless, each person comes with an informal résumé as varied as their experiences. How do you know who to trust?

*(Continued on page 50)*

**Fig. 1: Response from Texas producers on their source for industry information**



**Fig. 2: Response from Texas producers on who they turn to for expert advice broken out by herd size**



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**Your Link to CAB** (from page 49)

Maybe you turn to friends for referrals. An advertisement might say all the right things. A qualified spokesperson might endorse a company worth considering. Or a logo could have caught your eye and brought to mind a past experience. Sometimes all of these factors work together and point you in one direction.

**Information sources**

In summer 2006, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) surveyed 950 commercial Angus producers in Texas to find what production topics they wanted to know more about, and when, where and how they consulted experts.

Nearly 260 producers responded. They identified marketing and genetics as their top two information needs (see Table 1). So, where did they go to learn more?

Livestock publications were easily

**Table 1: Response from Texas producers on the areas of the beef industry they would like to know more about**

Topic	Percent
Marketing	53.9%
Genetics	36.1%
Carcass quality	31.8%
Health	31.4%
Nutrition	29.1%
Other	13.2%
No response	6.2%

the top source (see Fig. 1, page 49) with 82.6% citing magazines; 23.6% listened to the university Extension service; and 22.9% talked to a veterinarian. Responses of television and radio broadcasts finished further down the list at 13.6% and 8.1%, respectively.

The producers' most-referenced experts mirrored their information sources (see Fig. 2). Seedstock suppliers, breed associations and Extension specialists were options selected more than 30% of the time, while veterinarians received a 22.5% response rate. These four selections were marked more frequently than other options, including bankers, neighbors, family members and nutritionists.

Choice of expert changed slightly as herd size increased, the most significant being an increased reliance on the genetic supplier.

The survey results help CAB develop educational programs and resources for producers in specific areas. But, the answers can also give you a chance to think about where you turn for outside help.

What genetic or marketing ideas do your Angus seedstock producers have? How many Extension programs fall in line with your ranch goals or needs? Who else can you call upon in surrounding yourself with experts to make your operation more profitable?

**One click or call away**

The beef industry is becoming more interdependent. Each day experts from

across the beef industry, from conception to plate, represent the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand. A team of more than 90 people works with producers, restaurateurs, retailers and nearly every contact in between.

As the brand has grown, one thing has held true: Consumers prefer the product represented by the brand's quality-based specifications. That has been translated into premiums conveyed all the way back to the original owners of high-quality Angus cattle.

Each week, producers call or e-mail the office requesting information on how to raise cattle that meet the CAB brand specifications. They want to know more about the brand and understand more about how to market cattle through, or to, a CAB-licensed feedlot.

CAB staff welcome the calls. It's all part of being an expert on your team. There are also many other CAB resources that are only a click or call away.

In fall 2006, CAB produced *Supplying the Brand*. The 40-page publication outlines how to participate in the CAB program, market incentives for producing high-quality cattle and some of the production variables that influence CAB supply.

*Supplying the Brand* always informed, but often left producers asking, "How do I orient my herd to hit that CAB brand target?" Using research from some of the nation's leading experts in beef production, CAB developed the *Best Practices Manual: A Cow-Calf Guide for Targeting the Brand* in fall 2007.

The 24-page booklet highlights the management, genetic, health, nutrition and marketing practices that can help you raise cattle for the CAB brand. You can receive these resources by calling 1-800-225-2333, ext. 298, or by visiting [cabpartners.com](http://cabpartners.com).

Many times, producers simply want to know how they can connect with feedlots to retain ownership, partner or find a prospective buyer. Next time this comes up, consider visiting the feedlot section at [cabpartners.com](http://cabpartners.com). Check out the licensed feedlot map for yards in your area, or look at the feedlot listing and read more about those that interest you.

Throughout the industry, the CAB brand is recognized as a quality beef brand and trusted resource. How can you build on your position as a trusted source of quality cattle and expertise?

Subscribe to a few new publications, attend a few industry seminars this winter before calving or breeding seasons get into full swing, or extend an informal coffee-break invitation to a group of your experts and debate production issues on the ranch.

Profitability doesn't come easily these days. While you might be riding the fences alone, your decision-making process doesn't have to be an individual pursuit. Check out what others are doing in the business, and share what you can, too. Within each of us, there is the anatomy of an expert.

