



Up Front

by **JOHN CROUCH**, executive vice president, American Angus Association

Riding for the brand

Louis L'Amour would have to be considered one of the most prolific writers in Western history, having authored more than 100 novels and many short stories about good guys and bad guys in the West. In a sense, his stories were always romantic and steeped in keeping with the code of the West. Right always prevailed, and his leading characters always rode for the brand. This thought kept running through my mind as I returned home from the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Annual Conference in Seattle, Wash., in mid-August.

All sectors

What a tremendous event it was. The conference was well-attended by some 400 of the most enthusiastic wholesalers, retailers, restaurateurs, foodservice people, feedlotters, packers and ranchers one could imagine.

This by-invitation-only event recognizes various levels of

achievement by licensees in each of these categories. It also highlights up-to-date and pertinent information relative to each facet of the food business.

The *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand is most unique in that it was not only the first major branded beef program in the world, but it is the largest one in existence today. The reasons for this success are many. The program identifies Angus-type cattle that pass a series of physical and end-product requirements that contribute to consistently providing consumers with a delightful eating experience. Attesting to this success is the prediction that fiscal year (FY) 2006 will be the second best in the history of the program.

The process begins with genetic selection at the seedstock level. Angus breeders and commercial producers have access to the most comprehensive performance database in the world, and they have put it to good use in

selecting seedstock that excel in the characteristics that influence the taste and palatability of beef.

The process continues through the feedlot, the packer, the retailer, all the way through to the actual consumer. Every segment of the industry endeavors to add value to the product. The support of the almost 35,000 life, regular and junior members of the American Angus Association and the dedicated support of the professional staffs of the CAB program, Association, Angus Productions Inc. (API) and the Angus Foundation makes the team effort complete.

It's riding for the brand.

Beyond our gate

As previously indicated, all segments of the beef chain were discussed by licensees and invited speakers. One such speaker, Randy Blach of Cattle-Fax, gave a stirring presentation wherein he explained that while per capita consumption of beef

at 63-65 pounds (lb.) had not changed during the past few years, beef demand had increased a whopping 25% within the past 15 years. This he attributed to improved genetics, enhanced marketing and new product development.

These changes did not just happen. They were brought about as a result of paying attention to what consumers told us about our product. Likewise, we in the purebred industry must do the same. We must pay close attention to what the commercial industry tells us. You are our foremost customers, and we must never forget that without your support, the chain is broken.

Let us continue to ride for the brand and to assist our customers in doing the same.

