

Conversations About Beef

by
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With all the work there is to do on a farm or ranch, cattle producers don't have time to spend hours in front of a computer. It may seem ironic, but that's why the

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Supply Development Team has entered into the "social media" scene.

"We want to help producers get the

timely news about quality-focused beef production. We'll help them wade through all that information and point out the highlights," says Laura Nelson, CAB industry information specialist.

The *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand created a Facebook page to communicate with restaurants, retailers and consumers last February.

"We soon discovered many of our fans were not just consumers, but also producers," Nelson explains. "Although they surely appreciate the recipes and other tidbits from that side of our business, we saw this as a growing forum to share research and news updates with cow-calf producers, feeders and allied industry folks."

So, under the trademarked name Black Ink®, CAB branched into Facebook and Twitter, and most recently launched the "Black Ink with CAB" blog (<http://blackinkwithcab.com>).

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— Laura Nelson

"If you've heard some of the baby names that come out of Hollywood these days, you might think that a moniker doesn't mean a whole lot, or have to make any sense," the blog explains. "But out here in cattle country, we still put a bit of stock in a good name."

It's an extension of the Black Ink column that has run in newspapers across the country for more than a decade, and the color reference is not about CAB's black hide requirement.

"The message focuses on production and management ideas that can add black ink to a ranch ledger's bottom line — as opposed to those negative, red numbers — regardless of breed, color, ranch size or history," it says.

Nelson, along with industry information director Steve Suther and assistant director Miranda Reiman, posts regular updates and inside stories. They distill the essence from interviews with

beef cattle professors, market analysts and ranchers, along with new ways to think about common production happenings.

Suther shares his experiences as a commercial Angus producer in the “Purpose Driven Herd” thread.

“My key contribution may be writing and editing to make a direct connection with the day-to-day concerns of commercial cattlemen,” Suther says in one post. “I know what can be done, how much it costs and how long it takes. I know the risks and rewards of retained ownership. I know that we all take risks to stay in this business because, at least in most cases, we love it.”

Other areas of discussion will include “At the ranch,” “On the road” and “Mythbuster Monday.”

“I really encourage producers to subscribe to the blog as a way to get regular updates from us,” Nelson says. “This isn’t junk mail — it’s just an easy way to keep up on what we’re keeping up on.”

Those who are already on Facebook can “like” CAB’s Black Ink page (www.facebook.com/BlackInkBasics).

“There are pictures from the road, regular links to quality-focused magazine and newspaper articles from all over, and interesting bits of information from our camp,” Nelson says.

Following BlackInkBasics on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/BlackInkBasics>) will allow instant updates from conferences, feedlot visits, ranch tours and other production-related events.

The information shared in social media is not just on the surface or a regurgitation of everything that is printed in the popular ag press, Nelson notes.

“We’re using these venues to develop new content and give a behind-the-scenes look at what our team does and how we work with producers,” she says. “Plus, it’s interactive. People can ask questions and get answers and really have a conversation.”

“This is a very progressive way to get information, but the fact of the matter is, it’s also one of the most convenient,” Nelson says. “It’s quick, it’s small bites and it’s pre-selected for you. If you’re looking for quality beef production information, it’s the most concise, simplest way to get that.”

Visit the www.CABpartners.com homepage to find links to all of these new communication ventures.



Editor’s Note: *Miranda Reiman is assistant director of industry information for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*