

Best Management Practices to Reach CAB® Target

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Mark McCully, vice president of supply for Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), noted some bad news/good news to open the education series on producing for the consumer.

Overall, he said, cattle harvest in the United States has declined 4.1 million head per year since 2000, nearly 57 million fewer cattle during those 14 years. Yet, incredibly, the supply of cattle qualifying for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand has increased by 1.5 million head per year during that time, amassing 20 million more head of cattle.

The dramatic shift to quality has come from the producer response to market signals, using ever-better registered-Angus genetics and selection tools, along with focused management, McCully explained.

Not surprisingly, the share of Angus-influenced cattle in the harvest mix moved up half a percentage point to 63.5%, he said. The most significant shift was in the share of those cattle accepted for the brand, a record 27%.

“We monitor why the others don’t make it,” McCully said. Insufficient marbling was a factor in 94% of those falling short in 2008, and that edged up to 95% in 2012. No other of the 10 specifications comes close, but oversize ribeyes and heavy carcasses are growing in importance as disqualifying factors.

“In 2000, we used to hold up anyone who could hit 30% CAB as a great example of what’s possible, but all of the black cattle have done that some weeks this year,” McCully said. “So we looked at what the feedlot groups look like that averaged more than 40% CAB in the last two years.”

They averaged 93.2% Choice or better, 52.8% CAB with 8.1% Prime, and Yield Grade 2.9 at 834 pounds of carcass weight. They averaged 105 head in the pens.

“Anybody can get to that level today,” McCully said, showing examples from harsh environments in Wyoming and Oklahoma, where ranches have produced thousands of calves exceeding 60% CAB, and noting a single generation of breeding to the best Angus bulls can make a dramatic first step.

He advised a “holistic approach” to management, since environmental factors account for 60% of each animal’s ability to qualify: “We can screw those genetics up in a lot of ways.”

After reviewing dozens of specific recommendations from

the brand’s “Best Practices Manual,” available at www.cabpartners.com, McCully said the best way to make that attention to detail pay is by keeping good records

and bringing them to bear on individuals in the herd, then selling calves through value-based marketing channels.



Editor’s Note: *Steve Suther is the director of industry information for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*