

Vow for Quality

Nebraska couple named Feedlot Partners of the Year.

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For many couples, their first joint purchase is an appliance or furniture, or maybe a house. Ryan and June Loseke jumped “all in,” buying a feedyard just days before they were married. They were just about to enter their junior year of veterinary school, so the purchase would direct where they’d live, who they’d work with and even how they’d make a living.

Twenty-some years later, the feedyard north of Columbus, Neb., has grown into the base of a family operation that includes crops, trucking, and a veterinary

and consulting business.

On Sept. 19, Loseke Feedyard was named Feedlot Partner of the Year at the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand’s annual conference in Marco Island, Fla., for dedication in feeding high-quality cattle.

Angus heritage

“Angus cattle were in our wedding vows,” Ryan jokes.

Maybe it wasn’t that blatant, but June’s family always fed and raised Angus cattle on their ranches near Verdigre, Neb.

When they moved back after earning their veterinary degrees in spring 1995 and found the feedyard filled with “striped, sheepish” cattle, June said, “Never again. No.”

It’s been Angus ever after.

“The predictability is good,” Ryan says. “You know what you’re going to get from a health and performance standpoint.”

Most of the calves come from ranch-direct purchases out of Montana, which the couple credits with keeping their mortality rates low, at 0.75% or below.

“You find the longer you’re in practice, the answers are very rarely in the bottle,” Ryan says. “It’s holistic, and there are many factors that influence the end product.”

Most cattle are preconditioned for four to six weeks before they arrive at the feedyard, where they get a 24-hour rest period before processing.

“We’ve never really had a wreck, but we don’t buy high-risk cattle, either,” Ryan says.

So far this year, the feedyard has posted a 38% CAB acceptance rate, 14 points above the national average and more than triple that of a decade ago.

Sharing the information

Although they purchase all the cattle, the Losekes share all carcass data with their suppliers.

“It gives them a chance to see how they’re doing,” Ryan says. “If the industry wants to make improvements, it needs to go back to the seedstock guys to really see a change.”

Shawn Christensen, of SpringVale Ranch, near Hot Springs, Mont., has sold cattle to the Losekes for 20 years.

“I feel like I’m on track, but it’s a slow-moving train,” he says. Christensen uses performance and carcass data, along with feedback on health, to help make genetic and management decisions. This year he hit 100% Choice or better and up to 62% CAB.

“I don’t think you can have too much marbling,” Christensen says, noting he also sells replacement heifers. “The sisters

of those steers have got to go out and make tremendous cows and go out and grow the same product as those steers are, if not better.”

The producers talk several times during the feeding period, and the Loseke family has even visited Christensen’s ranch on vacations.

Staying busy

“We don’t like to sit still much,” June says.

They start each morning at the feedyard riding pens, treating cattle and reading bunks before Ryan jumps in the feed truck. June heads down the road to Loseke Veterinary Services P.C., or to local swine facilities and feedlots where they consult. That is, unless it’s planting or calving or harvest season.

“Since we’re in production ourselves, it seems our clients are much more ready to take our advice,” June says, and Ryan agrees.

“It helps keep me practical in my recommendations. You appreciate what it takes to feed cattle,” he says.

If they do get time to sit down, it’s likely you’ll find them catching up on bookwork. From 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. most nights, June completes health papers online, keeps feedyard and veterinary practice finances on the computer, and recruits a little help where possible.

The crew includes their nephew Jake Bartos; Ryan’s dad, Wayne; and their four children, Elisabeth (18), Erika (15), Carsten (12) and Cort (10).

It wasn’t the plan June had when first entering veterinary school, but she’s convinced it was all part of a greater plan.

“We are thankful He created Angus cattle and allowed us to be stewards of some of His land and livestock,” she says.

