



Rural Matters

There is power in individuals in rural areas working together.

by **LINDA ROBBINS,**
assistant editor

Chuck Schroeder, director of the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska, said it is imperative that rural areas attract the people who can make small communities the better choice. Schroeder said rural communities matter economically, socially, culturally and environmentally for the counties and states in which they are located and for the entire country.

“We have to take what we have and what we know and turn it into what we want,” Schroeder asserted. “We look for local leaders who say, ‘We’re not ok with the way things are, and we’re going to do what it takes to make it better.’”

Schroeder said there are many challenges to rural development, including job creation, business development, leadership, youth engagement, education, health care, childcare and more. He said it comes down to individual responsibility and individual contributions that lead to a better community and a better country. Schroeder said many of the graduates the institute surveys every year and many young people who started their careers in large urban areas would like to live in smaller communities with some chance to make a positive difference.

“There are legitimate opportunities in rural areas for innovators and entrepreneurs,” Schroeder said. What the Rural Futures Institute hopes to do, he added, is build the capacity of individuals and build their confidence. Schroeder said impacting and imparting hope — genuine hope — matters.

Schroeder quoted Shane Lopez, “Hope is an active choice. Hope can be learned. Hope can be shared.” Schroeder said the Rural Futures Institute wants to make hope contagious. He said they use information from the Nebraska Rural Poll, which has been ongoing for 19 years. Though 65% or more of the respondents say they want a thriving rural community, only 30% think it is possible in the next 20 years.

Schroeder said hope inspires young people and agricultural leaders to strengthen rural communities and, thereby, strengthen America.

Schroeder spoke Wednesday, Nov. 5, during the Angus University program featuring “A Story of A Steak.” This extension of the award-winning series of articles in *High Plains Journal* and segments on *The Angus Report* was sponsored with support of Merck Animal Health. For more information about the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show, visit www.angusconvention.com.

Best Management Practices to Reach CAB® Target

by **STEVE SUTHER**,
Certified Angus Beef LLC

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.*