

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & NCBA Trade Show

Vision Honored

Johnson receives Beef Industry Vision Award.

Story by
CRYSTAL MEIER

Fred Johnson, patriarch of Summitcrest Farms, Summitville, Ohio, and co-founder of the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand, received the 2007 Beef Industry Vision Award from the National Cattlemen's Foundation (NCF). The award was presented Feb. 3 at the 2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and NCBA Trade Show in Nashville, Tenn.

The Vision Award, sponsored by Micro Beef Technologies, recognizes beef industry leaders for incorporating innovation into their operations in an effort to enhance not only their businesses, but also the industry as a whole. Nominees were evaluated on effective use of technology, effect on production costs, ingenuity of implementation, innovative marketing, effect on the industry and optimum resource management.

"Summitcrest has been involved in every aspect of producing quality seedstock for the showing and for commercial cattlemen to operate more successfully," said John Crouch, executive vice president of the American Angus Association. "Fred is an innovator — a person who can project a new idea and see that it is carried forward. His contributions to the beef industry through genetics have been tremendous."

An Angus cattle breeder since 1949, Fred's belief in total seedstock performance led to a worldwide market for Summitcrest genetics. It also helped him establish one of the largest cattle operations in the country. Three locations — in Summitville; Fremont, Iowa; and Broken Bow, Neb. — total 17,000 acres, 1,500 Angus cows and 1,200 commercial animals.

"Dad has always kept our focus on improving the land, improving the breed in every aspect of the business," said Sam Johnson, his eldest son and Summitcrest president. "By the 1970s, beef quality and the CAB brand became the target for his efforts. Our carcass testing, ultrasound and DNA work became focused on identifying and producing cattle to meet that specification."

To stay on target, Fred began his focus on customer-based production by generating carcass data and opening ranch records to all who purchased or considered purchases. He led Summitcrest's creation of the largest private database of sire- and dam-identified carcass information in the world. It is the largest source of carcass

data for the American Angus Association's Sire Evaluation Program.

Annual Summitcrest bull sales are held in Iowa and Nebraska. Maximillion, the 1957 International champion, led the ranch's sales in the 1950s. Semen and embryo sales became driving forces in the mid-1970s. By the 1980s, PS Power Play became one of the first heavily used performance bulls with expected progeny differences (EPDs) that benefited all involved in the beef industry, from producers to grocery stores.

Through his leadership, Fred has demonstrated how customers can feed and market cattle on a grid to benefit their operations. The ranch has an additional 400 steers on feed to add to its carcass database this spring.

"His focus on beef quality has helped the seedstock sector become profit-oriented," Sam added. "It's now a matter of selecting for the most profitable genetics that satisfy consumer demand. And that demand is driven by the CAB brand."

Fred was among the visionaries who conceived the CAB program in 1978. As its chairman of the board for six years, his business savvy helped establish the organization's structure and focus on offering quality beef with integrity. Thanks in part to his leadership, CAB became the No.1 branded beef program in the world, with sales of 544 million pounds (lb.) in 2006. More than 25 million Angus-type cattle have been marketed by the brand, generating more than \$200 million in premiums for Angus producers since 1998.

Fred's focus on the end product also led him to the Beef Promotion and Research Board, now the Beef Checkoff Program, in 1986. Serving as treasurer for its first two years, he used his banking experience to help establish a sound financial structure. He then served as board chairman its third year and later as chairman of its Foreign Marketing Committee.

Nominated by the Ohio Cattlemen's Association and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), Fred and his wife, Betty, have driven innovation while serving as role models in the cattle industry. In 1996, they passed their interest in Summitcrest Farms to the third and fourth generations. Then, they purchased Loup River Ranch, in Milburn, Neb., for their retirement years and stocked it with purebred and commercial Angus cows. The ranch is an ongoing and substantial part of his career.



William "Bill" Pratt, president of Micro Beef Technologies, presented the Vision Award to Fred Johnson, Summitville, Ohio, during Saturday evening's Grand Finale. Also pictured is Bob Josserand, 2006 Chairman, National Cattlemen's Foundation. [PHOTO BY MICKY WILSON]