

Producers, Retailers Must Work Together

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Certified Angus Beef: The Beef That Just Tastes Better." Kober noted that the Certified Angus Beef Program produces a 94- 96 percent satisfactory eating experience rate (Prime holds almost a 100 percent satisfactory eating experience rating.)

In the Clemens ad, consumers are enticed to buy the Certified Angus Beef boneless strip steaks for \$3.99 a pound. The ad reads: "It's okay to drool. . . We have plenty of napkins."

"The eating experience is going to be superior," said Kober. "I want a 99.9 percent satisfied customer every time they buy beef at Clemens."

Consumers, he noted, are willing to pay more for Certified Angus Beef "because it's worth it." Kober noted they have some evidence of the worth of beef promotions. They did a survey of thousands of customers recently.

The number one reason given for remaining faithful to a certain store or going to another store to buy food is the "quality of the meat," he noted.

Also, the store can produce more cash flow with the meat department than with any other.

Clemens also works to promote pork through its "Clemens 5-Diamond Certified Pork By Hatfield," he noted. This store "branding" offers a clear advantage over competition.

So the word to producers: "Raising cattle to grade Select is anti-productive to increasing product consumption," said Kober.

To achieve that goal, it's important for producers to know where the cattle come from, what their genetics are, how they will perform in the feedlot, and, ultimately, how they'll grade.

But producers should understand that not all meat that's important to supermarket sales is "four-legged." Eventually, perhaps the beef industry can produce a product, like poultry, that is "case-ready, prepriced, no labor, able to put on the shelf, portion-controlled, with recipes on it. Like chicken, pork is case-ready. All we do is price it."

Clemens offers training to meat case workers, offering food preparation instructions, cooking tips, and other materials. The effort works to change the idea of "meat people at the retail level" from mere cutters to "center-of-the-plate solution" managers.

Mopac's Customers

George Wean, senior sales and marketing representative at Mopac, spoke about the company's beef procurement efforts. Mopac, Wean noted, has been in the beef business for 125 years.

Mopac processes about 1,800 head of beef per day, including 1,400-1,600 head of finish cattle and about 200 cows.

Thirty-four percent of their market comes from the Mid-Atlantic states, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Making up the remaining percentage of beef supply: 18 percent from Ohio, 12 percent from New York, 10 percent from the southern

states, 8 percent from Canada, 7.5 percent from Indiana and Kentucky, 7 percent from the Midwest, 4 percent from Michigan, and 1 percent from New England.

Most cattle in the Mid-Atlantic region are from Pennsylvania, Wean noted.

The beef is marketed to the following industries:

- Club stores, including Walmart, BJ's, Price Costco, and Sam's at 2.19 percent.

- Food service, including Wendy's patties, and chain restaurants, make up 7.66 percent.

- Further process, cooked beef, brisquets, sausage manufacturers, make up 14.56 percent.

- HRI, or steak cutters, Philly Steak manufacturers, and restaurant distributors make up 10.84 percent.

- Ortiz for Japanese export make up 10.33 percent.

- Pet Food makes up .13 percent.

- Pharmaceutical research, including the marketing of teeth, eyeballs, and fetal calf blood to hospitals, colleges, and schools is .17 percent.

- Retail Chains are the largest single customer base. They include Pathmark, Acme, Super G, Stop and Shop, and Super Fresh, all Choice grade cattle, is 42.33 percent.

- Trading companies, livers to Russia, etc., is .73 percent.

- Wholesale grocers, including co-ops, Wakefern, Super Value, and IGA, is .82 percent.

- Wholesalers, distribution warehouse, is 10.24 percent.

Of overall product quality from Mopac, 78-82 percent of the products grade Choice, 18 percent Select (marketed to some retail stores), and 14 percent other.

The Japanese markets want a product that is high-end Choice with a high degree of marbling.

Some Certified Angus Beef markets on the East Coast are looking for more Choice yield grade 2s and 3s, with a high proportion of meat to bone, grain-fed, high genetic animals that are mature and consistent in their meat quality. Meat that is graded dark cutter or bruised is subjects to deep discounts and is hard to move.

Upgrading Feedlots

At the Cattle Feeder's Day, producers spoke about their efforts to upgrade their feedlots during a panel.

Glenn Binkley is a cattle feeder based in Columbia who previously worked as a dairyman. Binkley manages about 200 acres and finishes about 240 head of cattle per year.

In March 1994, the business was recovering from a fire which destroyed a barn. They lost half the dairy herd and needed to rethink and retool their business.

With help from experts in the field, Binkley decided to start a beef herd, but had much doubt about building a modern facility. The fire left only three upright silos and a manure storage area.

One of the reasons Binkley switched to a beef finishing operation was he wanted more time to his family and to pursue an interest

in hunting. So the idea of having a beef finishing herd appealed to him.

A Virginia-style barn was completed in the fall of 1995. It measures 72 foot wide by 36 feet deep on a counter-slope design (at 1 inch), with an eight-foot deep manure pit underneath (12 feet in center). No bedding is used. The back is curtain sided and there is a 12-foot overhang in the front to protect the bunk from rain and snow. Having the overhang paid off that winter, when the area was deluged with lots of snow.

A one-stop enclosed mixing area is right next to the silos.

Plastic feed troughs are rounded, with no corners, and provide a smooth surface for the cattle. Binkley feeds twice a day.

The only change he would want to make would be to alter the manure storage to a consistent 12-foot depth.

Darwin Nissley farms with his brother, Bernard, in Mount Joy. They've been in partnership on the farm since 1983.

The cattle feeding business has been expanded in the past year. The Nissleys finish about 2,000 head a year.

A new barn measuring 61- by 241-feet with a 10-foot deep manure pit was constructed last summer. The facility adds to an existing bank barn at the farm. With the new facility, cows are cleaner, less stressed, and that comfort extends even over to the managers.

There is 13 feet of room to unload feed from a mixer wagon

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