



# BEST PRACTICES MANUAL



# MEET YOUR CONNECTION TO THE CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF® BRAND

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## OUR TEAM IS YOUR PRODUCER RESOURCE FOR THE WORLD'S LEADING BRAND OF BEEF.

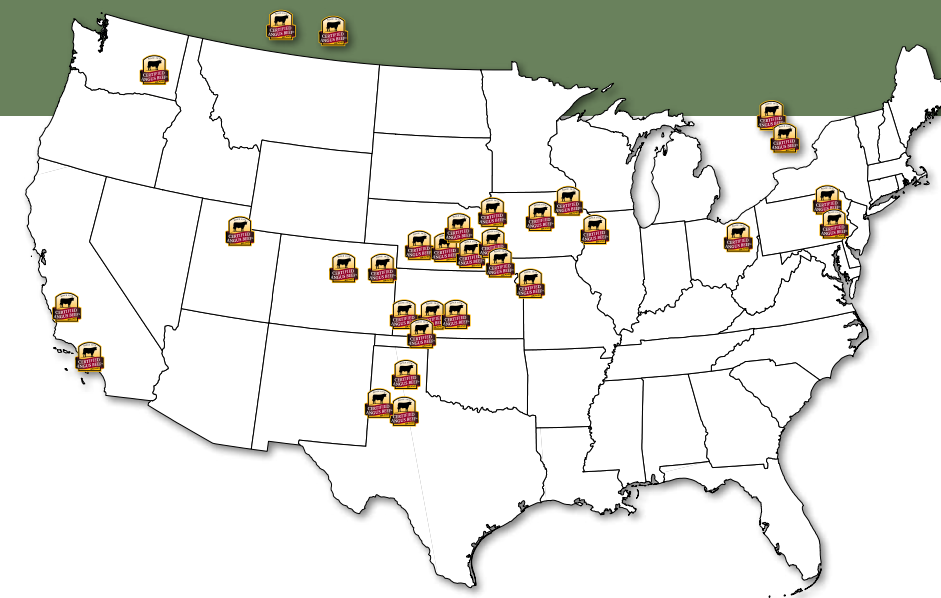


*We'd love to hear from you!*

## WHAT IS YOUR QUALITY TARGET?

There's Angus – and then there's the *Certified Angus Beef®* brand.

With dozens of other branded programs in the marketplace, it's important to understand what sets the *Certified Angus Beef®* brand (CAB) apart, and more importantly, how you can get your cattle certified into the brand. It's a simple three-step process.



### STEP 1:

Cattle must be sold to a packing plant licensed by CAB. Over 85% of the packing capacity in North America is licensed to produce the brand.

Over 30 plants in the US and Canada are licensed to produce CAB.

### STEP 2:

Cattle are identified at harvest as Angus influenced based on phenotypic evaluation. Cattle must be predominantly solid black with no other color behind the shoulder or above the flank.



### STEP 3:

Carcasses must meet 10 specifications to ultimately earn CAB certification. All 10 specifications serve a purpose in quality assurance, but there are a few in particular cattlemen can focus on to ensure a higher CAB acceptance rate.

## 10 CARCASS SPECIFICATIONS

- Modest or higher marbling
- 10- to 16-square-inch ribeye area
- 1,050-pound hot carcass weight or less
- Less than 1 inch fat thickness
- Medium or fine marbling texture
- Only "A" maturity accepted
- Superior muscling (restricts dairy influence)
- No neck hump exceeding 2 inches
- Practically free of capillary rupture
- No dark cutters

## TOP REASONS ANGUS-IDENTIFIED CATTLE FAIL CAB CERTIFICATION

**92.6%** Do not have enough marbling

**11.2%** Ribeyes are too large

**9.1%** Carcass weights are too heavy

**3.5%** Excessively fat

\*Based on 2016 data. Some carcasses may be discounted in multiple categories.



GENETIC SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

The trait most related to achieving the CAB target is marbling, reported by the American Angus Association® as “Marb” for the expected progeny difference (EPD) that predicts genetic potential for marbling.

The Association has developed index tools that combine various trait EPDs and economics for ease of selection. The indices are called \$ Values. Realizing that carcass weight, ribeye area, and fat thickness also impact CAB acceptance, \$ Grid (\$G) combines marbling and these genetic traits that influence CAB acceptance rates.

Since marbling is the most limiting factor in CAB acceptance, you should always consider both Marb and \$G to ensure continual progress toward brand certification.



Targeting the Brand™ genetic recommendations are breed average or better for Marb and \$G of non-parent Angus sires. When making your genetic selections with CAB standards as your end target, consider choosing herd bulls or AI sires that meet these minimums.

Some registered Angus breeders may use the Targeting the Brand™ program in their bull sale catalogs to identify bulls meeting these requirements with the logo for easy identification.

Targeting the Brand™ Genetic Recommendations

	Value
Marbling EPD (Marb)	+ 0.53
Dollar Grid Carcass Index (\$G)	+33.97

WHEN TO AIM HIGHER

The amount of marbling needed when selecting a herd sire depends on the cow herd he will service. If carcass merit has been a focus of genetic selection within your herd for several generations, you can continue a trend toward quality by starting with the Targeting the Brand™ requirements. However, if carcass quality has been a lower priority for selection up to this point, it is recommended you select sires from a higher percentile than what is suggested here.



OR



If your cow herd is of Continental or highly crossbred genetics, or if your Angus cows are not sired by bulls meeting Targeting the Brand™ recommendations, you should consider a higher target for Marb and \$G to make more dramatic progress. If the herd is Angus-based and known to produce calves that grade well, then Targeting the Brand™ recommendation minimums may be sufficient. When purchasing herd sires, consider those that have been DNA tested and have genomic-enhanced EPDs because they will have greater accuracies.

THINK YOU HAVE TO SACRIFICE YOUR COW HERD FOR THE SAKE OF MARBLING?

THINK AGAIN.

Many cattlemen have proven you don’t have to. Genetic improvement can be made for carcass traits without negative impact on reproductive, maternal or growth traits.

In fact, improvement can be made in all of these areas at the same time.

When choosing sires for your herd, it is important to consider traits relevant at the ranch and the feedlot. Using EPDs, you can select sires to complement your maternal goals without sacrificing improvement of carcass potential of your feeder cattle.



As heifers are retained or purchased, superior marbling genetics should be a key consideration in a balanced-trait selection strategy. Retaining and developing your own replacement heifers can be a good way to improve your herd with known genetics and management, but sorting the right ones should be a strategic and well-rounded process.

Identify heifers born earlier in the calving season

- These heifers are born to cows that fit your production and management system, and will be more productive over their lifetime than late-born heifers.

Give careful evaluation to structure and soundness

- Increase the longevity of females in your herd by eliminating heifers that do not pass a feet and leg structure assessment or otherwise do not fit your environment.

Cull any replacement prospects that show signs of nervous disposition

- Research shows flighty or excitable cattle have more health problems than others, risk injury to handlers and produce lower grading carcasses.

Consider genomic evaluation

- Genomic testing your commercial Angus females increases the known information for their genetic potential on both maternal and terminal traits. For more information about testing options available to commercial cattlemen, visit [angus.org/AGI](http://angus.org/AGI).



## HERD MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Multiple studies prove marbling is a lifetime event for calves. Genetic selection and calf management are key, but there are several other basic cow herd management strategies that can influence your potential for achieving optimal carcass quality. Here's a checklist of strategies to implement to let your herd reach its full potential:

- Maintain a calving window of 90 days or less to maximize effectiveness of vaccines and achieve a uniform marketing group for your calves.
- Consider breeding heifers to calve 30 to 45 days before your mature cow herd to allow first-calf heifers more recovery time prior to rebreeding while remaining in the desired calving window for future calf crops.
- Adapt a comprehensive herd vaccination program and develop a health protocol for deworming and fly control. **Always consult your veterinarian to develop health programs that are best for you.**
- After calving, consider early branding, vaccination and castration to reduce stress and improve lifetime immune system function.
- Make sure you are meeting the nutritional needs of your cows.
  - This may vary at different stages of grazing and gestation, so consult a ruminant nutritionist to balance the year-round nutritional and mineral needs of your cows. Manage your cows toward a body condition score of 5 by calving for optimal performance of both cow and calf.
- Test your forages to adjust supplementation needs.

# WEANING MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY

## Successful Strategies

Many variables influence the decision of when to wean. Consider calf growth, forage resources, cow condition and market opportunities. Early weaning (60 to 150 days of age) can be considered when calf performance is limited by cow productivity or pasture conditions.

If not weaned early, match weaning time to the calf's growth potential. The industry standard of 205 days may be too late for today's higher growth genetics, as milk without supplementation may not meet the calf's energy requirements. Consider weaning calves when they have reached approximately 45% of their expected finished weight. After weaning, a 45-day minimum preconditioning period is recommended.



## Health

Complete a vaccination and booster program prior to or at weaning. Always consult your veterinarian to create a health protocol to match your pre- and post-weaning management strategies.

Make every effort to reduce stress at weaning to optimize vaccine response and immune system function. Consider a fence-line weaning strategy to allow calves to adjust to new feed and forage while minimizing the search for the cows.

## Implant Use

Successful weaning should always consider proper timing, health and nutrition. Many producers use additional technologies such as growth-promoting implants. Implants administered at or before weaning may increase gain prior to marketing, however without adequate nutrition or improper implant selection, marbling levels at harvest may be reduced.

For implant benefits to be expressed, calves need to gain at least 1 pound a day. If you are considering the use of growth-promoting implants, work with your nutritionist to develop an implant program matched to the calves' nutrition. Implant potency can increase as the nutrition improves, but using an aggressive implant when nutrition will not support the increased growth may increase weight gain, but grade will suffer over the long term.

## Nutrition

Since marbling is a lifetime event and weaning is the most nutritionally challenging period, weaning diets are important. Dietary starch contributes to marbling development over time so include starch (such as corn) in the weaning diet. The fermentation process removes starch, therefore distillers grains or corn gluten feed, while excellent protein sources, should not make up more than 20% of the diet to continue marbling enhancement.

While ingredients are important, the nutrient amount is as important as the source. If calves are moved from a high-energy diet to a lower energy growing diet, they will not continue to develop marbling at a high rate. A good rule of thumb is to target 2 to 2.5 lb. of gain per day during the 45-day preconditioning period.

Consult your nutritionist and veterinarian to determine if feed additives (ionophores, antibiotics, direct-fed microbials) are a good fit for maintaining health in your post-weaning ration.



# PREPARING TO SELL YOUR CATTLE

## BUILDING A FEEDER CALF RESUME

From traditional auction markets to direct selling to feedlots with a range of ownership options, there are several outlets for marketing your calf crop.

Regardless of how and when you intend to sell your calves, documentation of the value you've added is key. Here's a short list of primary value factors to record:

- **Weight**
- **Weaned Status**
- **Age Range**
- **Health program**
  - Vaccine companies and veterinarians offer systems to validate your program.
- **Genetics**
  - Breed profile of cows, breed and EPD profile of sires, any scores affiliated with verified feeder calf programs
- **Open/Exposed Status of Heifers**
- **Nutrition Program**
- **Timing of Delivery**

For some marketing outlets, additional verified programs may add value to your feeder calf resume. The American Angus Association® offers several USDA age-and-source or management-verified programs through AngusSource®. The Angus Link<sup>SM</sup> feeder calf program also offers verified genetic information on your calf crop for potential buyers.

For more information on the marketing options available through these programs, visit their respective websites.



[www.AngusSource.com](http://www.AngusSource.com) [www.AngusLink.com](http://www.AngusLink.com)

## RETAINED OWNERSHIP AND GRID MARKETING

One of the best ways to realize the full feeding and carcass value of a set of cattle is to consider some format of retained ownership. Top performing cattle sold on a value-based marketing grid or formula can pay significant premiums, which producers can reap if some ownership is retained. Retain up to 100% ownership in the calves through finishing, or partner with your cattle feeder while retaining anywhere from 75% to as little as 25%. Many feedyards also offer up to full-term financing, using the cattle as equity.

Retained ownership through finishing may not be best for producers with unknown genetics or those who take no steps to coordinate health and weaning. Alternatively, current market conditions or cash flow requirements of your business may dictate whether or not retained ownership is the right choice for you.

## IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT FEEDING PARTNER FOR YOU

In any level of retained ownership, it is important to identify the feedyard that is right for you. Here's a checklist of considerations and questions to ask during your selection process:

- Familiarize yourself with the benchmarks and metrics used by a cattle feeder.
- What is the feeder's strategy for maximizing the value of your cattle?
- What are the specific costs, such as yardage, processing, feed, etc.?
- Does the yard have experience with grid marketing and if so, do they focus on quality or cutability?
- What financing options are available?
- What are the options and terms for partnering on cattle?
- If it fits your situation, can the feedyard work with multiple producers pooling calves together in one pen (apportioning feed bills, etc.)?
- Is the yard willing to capture and return carcass data? If so, in what detail?
- Ask for a list of past or current customers for references.
- Make plans to go see your cattle on feed while they are at the yard.

Your choice of which cattle feeder to partner with is a personal preference. However, if you would like a list of past CAB Commitment to Excellence Feedyard award winners to use as a starting point for your selection process, visit [CABcattle.com](http://CABcattle.com).

## SPECIALTY FEEDER CALF SALES

Many state, regional and county livestock organizations and universities hold special sales in cooperation with auction markets or video and internet auction services. These sales aim to assemble large groups of like-managed cattle to entice multiple buyers. Investigate the options and consider using a sale that works for your scenario. Since each sale will have unique requirements for participation, develop a management plan well in advance of the marketing date so your cattle are ready to sell when lots of buyers are in the market.

If you find no sale in your market that meets your needs:

- Look into finding a video sale representative in your market to explore video sale options.
- Visit with your seedstock provider and local auction market about their willingness to hold an event.
- Consider working with other producers who have similar goals when organizing your own event. If you don't have enough for an entire sale, try to get a section of an existing sale devoted to your group.
- Promote your participation in any sale to prospective feedyards and order buyers.





# DIRECT MARKETING TO FEEDYARDS

Feeder cattle buyers have access to more calves of Angus influence than any other class. Amid the marketing claims, buyers are likely to focus only on cattle that, with proven quality and management aspects, add value to the best known Angus genetics. Highlighting your valuable management efforts can add demand to your cattle above similar-looking calves.



It pays to do some homework on potential buyers ahead of time. Work on marketing the documented value you've built into your calves and follow up with your buyer. Go see the cattle after they have been on feed for a while. Ask your buyer about the possibility of sharing data to improve your cattle over time, even if you have to purchase this data from the feeder. The transfer of information allows you to make management changes in your operation that will benefit both you and your cattle feeder long-term.







For more information on the *Certified Angus Beef*® brand or to contact our team,  
please visit [www.CABpartners.com](http://www.CABpartners.com)  
References available upon request.