



2006 National Angus Conference & Tour



From Conception to Carcass

by Micky Wilson

BOISE, IDAHO (Sept. 26, 2006) — Good genetics do pay the commercial cattleman, and the data prove it, Mike Kasten told participants of the 2006 National Angus Conference & Tour, headquartered out of Boise, Idaho. A commercial rancher from southeast Missouri, Kasten shared his perspective on the beef industry and what he and other commercial producers need from their seedstock suppliers.

With an operation that includes 350 cows, Kasten's ranch utilizes total performance records, retains ownership on its calves to get carcass information and sells replacement heifers at a premium through the Missouri Show-Me Select Replacement Heifer Program.

To expand the operation, Kasten initiated a beef alliance about 10 years ago. In the alliance, he leases bulls, provides females and contracts to buy the calves. The nine producers involved cooperate to collect data from weaning, yearling and carcass information.

Kasten told the audience his operation and the alliance were started under the premise that genetics would pay in the beef industry. After 18 years of collecting carcass data and 10 years working with the alliance, experience has proven that genetics do pay, he said.

Kasten started with carcass information and worked backward to conception, using examples from his own herd. The last 972 head Kasten marketed garnered a quality premium of \$55,602.64 — an average of \$57.20 per head. Kasten shared that 88.2% of those cattle graded Choice or better, with 36.7% meeting *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) specifications and 7% grading Prime. And while yield grade discounts did cost him \$6.44 per head, the net premium was still \$50.76 per carcass.

University research analyzing Kasten's data shows the advantage of stacking generations of carcass genetics, Kasten said. Stacking one generation for marbling resulted in progeny 11% more likely to achieve a Prime quality grade. Stacking two generations increased the likelihood to 19%. Stacking three generations increased the likelihood of hitting the Prime target 23%.

Additional premiums Kasten has earned through genetic selection, in addition to carcass premiums, are premiums on replacement heifer sales. Kasten reported that the added value of artificially inseminated (AI) bred heifers is an average of \$327 per head. The value, he said, comes from the data that is available on that particular female, the data available on the female's sire, and carcass data from steer-mates.

Additionally, Kasten said, long-term genetic progress through bull selection is important, but the real progress is seen through quality replacement females. Kasten's own replacement females are developed through the Missouri Show-Me Select Replacement Heifer program.

And once those females have developed, reproductive management is extremely important, Kasten noted. At his ranch, reproductive management is accomplished through AI, synchronization, and, most recently, timed-AI breeding.

Kasten said he has added value to his cattle through genetic management. "Genetics are going to pay me in this industry," he said, adding that he feels genetics are a risk-management tool.

Another great tool, one he calls a risk-reducer, is the seedstock supplier. As genetic suppliers to commercial cattlemen, Kasten said seedstock producers must breed cattle that perform in the pasture, in the feedlot



"We are in the end product business," commercial producer Mike Kasten said. "I like to put something on somebody's plate that they'll enjoy, so that's been our focus." The Missouri producer relayed how good genetics pay the commercial cattleman.

and in the cooler; maintain a high-quality database and expected progeny differences (EPDs); help producers with profitable management practices; and help producers market the genetics they have provided.

In his closing comments, Kasten complimented the American Angus Association for their aggressive approach to the many segments of the cattle industry through the development of CAB and open AI. He encouraged the Association to take the next bold step by being the leader in providing EPDs on commercial cattle.

You can listen to the audio of Kasten's presentation while viewing his PowerPoint® by accessing the files in the newsroom at www.nationalangusconference.com.

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