

# SHARED VALUE SQUARE B'S QUALITY BEEF PROGRAM TRACKS VALUE FROM START TO FINISH.



Andrew Beeman - Windsor, Mo

**A**fter speaking with his cattle buyers last spring, Andrew Beeman had a decision to make.

The third-generation commercial cattleman from Windsor, Mo., was glad to receive positive reviews about how his calves performed. But he wondered if his family's 600-head cow-calf operation could do a better job of capturing the extra value his calves were bringing through harvest.

"We believe in buying genetics to increase the herd's productivity," Beeman says. "But we were leaving some money on the table when we were selling at weaning. I felt like we should be getting more."

That's when Beeman Farms started looking for ways to not only improve herd genetics, but to also track the value of calves through the chain.

One program offered both: Quality Beef.

## MORE DOLLARS. SAME RESOURCES

"A set of calves may appear uniform, but significant variation can exist in terms of real value," says Mike Kasten, longtime Missouri cattleman and head of the Quality Beef data-sharing program from Square B Ranch, Warsaw, Mo.

"Identifying those high-quality calves and then helping producers capitalize on that value is why Quality Beef was created."

With origins at the University of Missouri, Square B acquired the Quality Beef program to help its commercial producers track calf performance from conception to carcass — realistically.

The goal is to capture more value from cattle raised on the same resources. Kasten says that in the average pen of cattle, Quality Beef numbers historically show a gross value difference of about \$1,000 per head, on

average, for top-performing feedlot cattle versus their costlier counterparts.

"We can look and have our favorite cow, but until we start getting that data back that shows performance level and what product that animal is producing, we can't prove that cow is creating more valuable calves," Kasten says. "We have to get it from records and we have to get it in data."

## PARTNERING TO REDUCE RISK

Matt Henderson, an Edwards, Mo.-based cattleman and father of five, says he doesn't have time to sift through mountains of performance and carcass data. That's why he likes the Quality Beef model.

"It takes the same amount of inputs to raise a cow that's going to produce a subpar calf as it does to raise a cow that will benefit your program on the back end," he says. "This program will give me genetic recommendations based on the revenue a cow is generating for me. And data collection isn't a burden because Quality Beef now helps me to do that. They're doing all the legwork."

Quality Beef starts at the beginning, assisting producers in matching genetics to the existing herd, then partnering with Select Sires to develop a fixed-time AI program. Cows are ultrasounded 90 days post-breeding to record conception rates and to track fertility. Once born, calves are tagged with EID for seamless tracking of weaning weights and other performance measures, and later, gain and feed conversion.

Producers determine what retained ownership situation works best for their individual programs and have the option to partner with Square B and the feedyard on calves through harvest. Henderson says that offers peace of mind.

"We haven't retained ownership before, so I feel really good about that option. I'm not out

there alone doing this. I have a genetic supplier who believes in this program enough that they'll invest in my cattle," Henderson says. "They're committed to me just as much as I'm committed to them."

Square B owner Brian Bell says that concept is at the heart of Quality Beef. Once harvest data is available, producers can make keep-cull decisions and determine which bulls to use during the next breeding season.

"That's why we say 'your choice is our obligation,'" Bell explains. "You're going to move the needle on quality of female. You're going to move the needle on quality



of carcass. And you're going to get all the information back that you need to make good decisions going forward."

Henderson's decisions start with a strong maternal component. "I like Square B's emphasis on the maternal side as well," he says. "You can't look at one trait and build on it alone. You have to start with a good, solid cow and look at every aspect."

## THE PAYOFF

Beeman and Henderson bred their females this fall as the first step in the Quality Beef program. And, while it will be more than two years before they get carcass data back on their calves, they know improvement in the cattle business is a long-term proposition.

"We've got to start making change now if we want to see a payoff down the road," Beeman says. "The industry pays for quality, and that's why we were seeking a retained ownership opportunity. I don't think we will stay profitable 20 to 30 years from now if we aren't producing quality beef."

Henderson agrees. "Through Quality Beef and Select Sires, you're partnering with guys that are the best in the industry. That's what you want when you're talking about your livelihood."



Mike Kasten sharing the program



Producers interested in the program should contact **Mike Kasten at 573-979-0889** or **Brian Bell at 660-438-2188**. Quality Beef is beginning the process of enrolling commercial producers for 2018 breeding seasons.

