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NEWS

Contact: Miranda Reiman, Producer Communications Director
Certified Angus Beef LLC MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com (308) 784-2294

South Dakota rancher earns CAB honors

Hadrick wins 2017 Progressive Partner of the Year

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WOOSTER, Ohio-Sept. 25, 2017-When Troy Hadrick returned to his family's Faulkton, S.D., ranch he may have heard a tick-tock in the back of his mind.

"I was thinking at the time, 'Okay, I'm in my late 30s. How many years do I have in this business and can I get my cow herd where I want to be in that amount of time?'" the commercial cattleman asked himself.

Ever a student, with more determination than doubt, Hadrick tackled the challenge head on.

"I think you've got two choices," he says. "You can either be a victim of the market, and just be willing to take whatever they give you that day. Or you can put some effort in, change some things and produce cattle year in and year out that will generate more money than the commodity cattle."

Hadrick's use of technology, his ability to make rapid change and willingness to share earned him the 2017 Progressive Partner Award from the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand.

In 2010, the family, which includes his wife, Stacy, and children Teigen (14), Olivia (11) and Reese (9), moved just a quarter mile down the road from Hadrick's "home place."

"It wasn't necessarily easy, but that was exciting for both of us and we're pretty happy to be where we're at," Hadrick says. Stacy helps him set and stick to goals while he dives deep in the details.

The operation includes corn, soybeans, wheat and forage, but as older family transferred the diversified business to the next generation, they each established their own roles. Hadrick's two cousins lead the farming enterprise, while he focuses on the livestock.

"I didn't want the cows to be the thing that we got to when we weren't busy farming because I don't think you're going to fully realize the potential of your cow herd if they're all kind of an afterthought," he says.

By 2012, the rancher was in the driver's seat—just in time for Mother Nature to deliver her first test.

"You get all excited for that first year, and you feel like you're ready to go out and set the world on fire, and then, when it forgets to rain, it changes all your plans," he says.

They implemented deep culling instead of the retained ownership they'd planned.

"We didn't have a measuring stick," he says, but improvement continued regardless.



That year, Hadrick artificially inseminated every single cow, to sires with above-average calving ease, high beef value (\$B) and marbling expected progeny differences (EPDs), with below-average yearling height.

“We made a lot of changes in a hurry,” Hadrick says, but marketing was the biggest. Selling feeder calves each winter turned into a September weaning, with a 5-month stay in the family’s grow yard before they shipped the 2013-born calves 600 miles south to Irsik & Doll Feed Yard (IDFY) near Garden City, Kan.

“I don’t think there’s anybody who goes through [the data] as deep as Troy does,” says manager Mark Sebranek. “When they have the passion, it drives me to have the passion also.”

The first results showed 89% Choice or better, with 32% CAB qualifiers.

“I want to get to where we have everything CAB or Prime, because that’s the way you really see the premiums stack up,” the rancher says.

He wondered if commercial DNA could speed up progress.

“If I’m going to spend the money, then I’m going to believe the data until it proves me wrong,” Hadrick says. “I had to commit to using the data to improve.”

Most of the steers harvested in three drafts this summer made 83% CAB, with 35% CAB brand Prime. They gained 3.8 pounds (lb.) per day in 185 days on feed, requiring just 5.7 lb. of feed per lb. of gain. The average grid premium was just shy of \$100/head.

“People keep asking, ‘What are you sacrificing?’” Hadrick says. Carcass weights, ribeye area and yields have remained fairly steady. Cow size is decreasing. “Nothing,” is the quick reply.

“We don’t have any magic pixie dust that we sprinkle on anything. We don’t have any super secrets that nobody else knows,” Hadrick says. “We’re just implementing some of the technologies that are out there.”

This year, he’s even trying long-range, ultra-high-frequency (UHF) tags, that can be read from up to 25 feet and immediately synch to a “cloud” accessible by any device.

“We know when the data is in good useable form, we’ll make money from that,” Hadrick says.

Net profit is a powerful motivator, but Hadrick’s goals look beyond that.

“I marvel at what my grandfather was able to do coming through the Depression and keeping it together. I marvel at what my dad and uncle were able to do in the ’80s, keeping this place together,” he says. “I don’t want to be the generation that screws it up.”

End

