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NEWS

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Completed circle

Stucky Ranch honored as 2017 CAB Ambassador for ideal outreach

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By Steve Suther

WOOSTER, Ohio-Sept. 25, 2017-Gordon Stucky was always a fan of the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand, but two terms on the American Angus Association board and serving as president in 2014, galvanized that into a passion.

“I’ve always thought, we need each other,” the Kingman, Kan., rancher says, calling the brand “a perfect fit for what we’re doing on the ranch.”

A “Targeting the Brand” logo appears in Stucky sale catalogs as a selection aid for customers since 2011, a watershed year for the growing relationship.

“We decided we were going to ride for the brand in every way possible,” Stucky says, signing on as host for an educational program called “Masters of Brand Advantages” early that year, and for some CAB group every year since.

Enthusiasm and ability to connect with the entire range of partners along the supply chain at their unique location helped Stucky Ranch earn the brand’s 2017 Ambassador Award to be presented at the CAB Annual Conference Sept. 27-29 in Nashville, Tenn.

The ranch business is built on sustainability and relationships, starting with God and family, looking back and well past tomorrow. Interaction with tour groups keeps the family focused, says Stucky. With Caroline and his son Jesse, they prepare for each tour day as if it were a bull sale.

“These folks are extremely important for the role they play in our supply chain,” he says, noting some deep discussions. “We had the question a couple years ago, what sustainability means to me. The first thing that came to mind was my dad.”

Martin Stucky had come to Kingman County in 1937, where his father soon helped him and a brother start on the roots of today’s ranch. Youngest son Gordon bought the family’s first registered stock as a 16-year-old in 1976. His mentor and partner conveyed a guiding wisdom and rationale in their 17 years in business.

“He’s been gone a long time now,” the son notes, “but he helped provide the start we could build on.”

In discussions on animal welfare, Stucky talks about thoughts on waking each morning: “We have that frame of mind that we want every animal under our care to have the best day they’ve ever had.”



Relationships are no less a part of sustainability, and “Targeting the Brand,” which entails much more than simply raising cattle that can grade.

“It’s a people business, so we grow it by long-term attention to what our customers need,” he says. “You build those relationships over the years to where they feel like you’re a part of their team.”

Some customers sell calves at weaning but an increasing share participate in the backgrounding and finishing phases to get more return on their investment in genetics. The 200 Circle-S-Bar bulls sold annually and their average productive life means they generate up to 20,000 commercial Angus calves each year.

“We track every trait and expected progeny differences (EPDs) to make sure we offer bulls that are the most economically relevant to those customers, and also give everything the ranching eye for conformation and soundness,” Stucky says.

Posting CAB logos next to qualifying bulls in the catalogs, and photo sections recapping tour visits by international guests all tend to raise the Stucky Ranch profile as a genetics provider, the cattleman says. “They come here with heightened expectations, just knowing we have these balanced cattle and the relationships with end users from all over the world.”

Two-way education takes place when those tour buses arrive.

“They have flown over our ranch at 30,000 feet,” Stucky says, “but we give them a feel for what it’s like to spend a day in our boots.”

There’s an information exchange, “but it’s mostly connecting people. They want to know what’s behind the CAB product, but they also want to know Jesse Stucky and the name of the horse he rides,” the father says. “Some of them seem to fall in love with Jesse and his horse, but it’s all just part of understanding our life.”

“Having these tours, everything we do is under the microscope,” Stucky says. “Whether it’s a tour day or not, we’ve always got that in the back of our minds—how we care for things, and do things on a daily basis—even if no one sees, it’s part of the program we continue to build, and part of our story.”

The tours made the family realize how their location and Angus program are uniquely suitable for the sharing. Seedstock operations with multiple breeds or Angus breeders not attuned to the quality side may not feel such an affinity with the brand, Stucky suggests.

“For us, it’s just a perfect fit. We enjoy hosting tours for any groups, but the CAB tours are special because that interaction completes our business model,” he says.

CAB is headed for another record year and Stucky figures there will be more of the best beef next year.

“We’re going to make more and better, so we have to keep working at this together,” he says, with advice for the brand: “Keep letting the consumer know it’s there. They’ll spend a few more pennies for it and be happy, and we’ll make that circle complete.”

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