

Add Value with Commercial Programs

Association provides Angus breeders customer-service options.

Story & photo by **Barb Baylor Anderson**, field editor

Angus producers can add value to the cattle they offer to their commercial customers. That was the message from Joe Mayer, commercial cattleman from Guymon, Okla., and Ginette Kurtz, director of commercial programs for the American Angus Association, during the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show's marketing session Tuesday, Nov. 4.

Mayer, who was the 2013 recipient of the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Commercial Commitment to Excellence Award, raises about 1,400 head of straightbred commercial-Angus cows. He uses the AngusSource® age- and source-verification program to add value to his cattle and GeneMax® Focus™ to more accurately make genetic selections.

"Our direction is to raise better cattle and make a little bit more money," said Mayer. "We were part of the AngusSource program from the beginning."

AngusSource is a USDA Process-verified Program (PVP) for Angus-sired calves that documents source, group age and a minimum of 50% Angus genetics, explained Kurtz, who is also a beef producer. "We work to provide commercial cattlemen with the tools they need for success, and that includes AngusSource."

"Enrolling and getting genetic verification is a great value of the program," said Mayer, who sold all of their cows in 2011 due to the drought. When they received some rain, they bought more cows.

"We didn't get enough information at the time of purchase, so we GeneMax-tested 10% of each of the five bunches of cows," he said. GeneMax Focus is used with commercial-Angus replacement females, cows or feeder cattle. The test includes genomic predictions for feedlot gain, carcass quality grade and combined genetic merit for gain and grade.

"We tried to test the ones who we thought were best, because we didn't want to multiply cattle that would not rail," said Mayer. "Of the cows we 'GeneMaxed,' two bunches had scores of 80 or above. That is the number we chose to work with as a minimum score. Of the other



► **Ginette Kurtz** (left), director of Association commercial programs, and **Joe Mayer**, commercial cattleman, say AngusSource® and GeneMax provide premiums.

three bunches, we sold all but the ones in the 10% group that scored well. We had a \$31-per-head cost, and kept about one-fourth of the cows."

Mayer also uses GeneMax to determine which bulls may be sires of every calf. They use multi-sire breeding groups matched with certain heifer genetics. All sires are DNA-tested with the high-density panels.

"Calves may look good, but they may not marble, so make selections based on GeneMax scores," he said. "Our kill data show we are getting better since going on genomics."

"You can get dramatic progress in one generation, and we have done three generations with kill data now and get a \$159-per-head premium and have 97% Choice or above," he continued. "Marbling is the key for CAB and is how you get paid. We are 25% Prime now versus 2% Prime when we started, and that is the big payday. We can get a \$200-per-head premium for Prime."

Mayer said cattle customers will pay a premium for heifers that are sold with GeneMax scores. Kurtz issues to 600 order buyers and feedyards every Sunday and Tuesday an email that lists AngusSource cattle for sale that contains information about the cattle, dollar value indexes (\$Values), sale information and contacts so producers can pursue cattle of interest.

"It is online marketing support for Angus breeders," said Kurtz.

"You need a baseline to start, so GeneMax your heifers. You can get an idea of where you want to go from there," said Mayer. "We have made more progress the last two or three years with these new tools than we made in the previous 20 years."

Mayer and Kurtz spoke during the Business Workshop Tuesday afternoon, Nov. 4. For more information about the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show, visit the Newsroom at www.angusconvention.com.

