

2007 Beef Improvement Federation 39th Annual Meeting

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Quality Factors

Pete Anderson presents an environmental perspective on why the beef industry hasn't made more progress in adding quality grade.

by **Eric Grant**

FORT COLLINS, COLO. (June 8, 2007) — Ensuring your cattle marble well — and reach desirable USDA Choice or Prime quality grades — is a commitment that begins when a calf is born and continues from the ranch to the feedyard.

“Marbling deposition is a lifetime event, not something that takes place during late stages of feeding,” said Pete Anderson of VetLife Technical Services. Anderson spoke at the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) conference in Fort Collins, Colo. The VetLife Benchmark Performance Program gathers performance, carcass and financial data on approximately 40% of all fed cattle.

Research shows that “marbling is different from subcutaneous fat. They are different tissues with different regulatory pathways, he said. “Marbling results from a different embryonic tissue layer than subcutaneous fat.

At birth, cattle have nondifferentiated cells within their muscles that have at least three choices: turn into muscle cell nuclei, turn into fat cells, or do nothing.”

“Any nutritional insult — at any time in the life of an animal — will reduce marbling. That’s why it’s critical for cattle producers to keep a close eye on health and vaccination programs and other factors,” he said.

Stressors that cause reductions in marbling include drought, poor-milking cows or health.

“Cattle that go off feed expend more



PHOTO BY MATTHEW ELLIOTT

► “Any nutritional insult — at any time in the life of an animal — will reduce marbling,” said Pete Anderson of VetLife Technical Services.

energy fighting the negative effects of the disease” rather than depositing fat, Anderson said. “It stands to reason that those cattle that suffer disease at any time in their lifetime could have an impaired ability to deposit marbling regardless of how fat they ultimately get.”



Look for the PowerPoint and audio file for this presentation in the newsroom. A proceedings paper is available on the “Symposium Papers” page.



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