

Ahead of the Curve

Missouri Shorthorn Breeder Uses GeneSTAR® to Guarantee Tenderness

More than a decade ago, Don and Marylou Mayse identified a demand for locally grown, guaranteed-tender beef — before it was the popular thing to do.

“Luckily, we live 10 miles from a university town with 100,000 people who are very demanding when it comes to food purchases,” Marylou says.

Meeting Local Demand

This demand, coupled with one of the country’s premier farmers markets in Columbia, Mo., opened the door for Show Me Farms Born Tender Omega Beef. Growing up in the meat business, Don was interested in exploring options for raising cattle that could help meet the demand for locally raised, guaranteed-tender products. He landed on a program that starts with Shorthorn cattle.



“We tried several different breeds of cattle, but Shorthorns had the best combination of traits for what we needed, and they are extremely easy to work with,” Don says. “We feed out all of our calves on a flax seed-based ration, do not use implants and employ antibiotics only on a very minimal basis.”

A Favorable Eating Experience

In addition to specific production practices, key Show Me Farms’ breeding stock are tested for tenderness with GeneSTAR® from Pfizer Animal Genetics. Don and his cattle manager, Jerome Grethen, say GeneSTAR gives them another management tool to help guarantee the most favorable experience for their customers.

“Since there are no phenotypic traits that we can use to predict tenderness, we have turned to DNA testing to identify cattle that are superior for the trait,” Don says. “All of our meat also is shear force tested, and those scores have improved by 30 percent since we began using GeneSTAR tenderness testing.”

Grethen says although they must avoid single-trait selection, the ability to help predict tenderness with DNA testing gives them a powerful tool.

“We look at a combination of traits, specifically performance, tenderness and flavor. DNA testing can help us ensure we are selecting genetics that are pointing our cattle in the right direction for tenderness,” he says. “There are a lot of environmental factors that can affect tenderness also, but it is important that we start with cattle that have the genetic potential to produce a tender product.”

Making Changes with an Integrated Program

The Show Me Farms’ team not only is supplying a demand for a niche market, but it believes all beef producers can learn from an integrated program. Grethen is involved in



Don Mayse
Show Me Farms

every part of the production process, which has helped him gain valuable information that has turned into changes in Show Me Farms’ program.

“All producers should be present when their cattle are harvested — they would do a lot of things differently,” Grethen says.

The combination of marketable management strategies with GeneSTAR tenderness testing has proven successful for this integrated operation — so much so that demand for its product sometimes exceeds its supply.

“Our meat is available in a variety of locations ranging from the health foods section at a local HyVee to the farmers market, as well as our website and a few local restaurants,” Don says. “There are times that we fall behind demand, but our customers are very loyal and patient because they continue to be satisfied with the quality of our product.”

For more information about Show Me Farms, visit www.showmefarms.com.