

Feedlots backbone of the area ag economy

If the question is "where's the beef?" then Thomas County may be the answer.

Eight feedlots dot the landscape of the County from the east to west, and the United States Department of Agriculture lists the county as having a total of 49,800 head of cattle on feed. Sources such as dairy, farmers with cow-calf operations and small feeding facilities bring the numbers of cattle in the county to a grand total of 61,500 head.

Heading the county's cattle feeding industry in size is Thomas County Feeders located nine miles east and two miles south of Colby. Owners Innovative Livestock Sciences from Great Bend own a total of eight feed lots throughout Kansas and Nebraska.

The feed pens, grain storage, sorting pens, weigh station and office cover about 250 acres, and takes 25 employees including five pen riders to run the operation.

The feed yard, which has its beginnings in the early 1970's, has grown and changed with the times to keep up with the demand for a pure product. It is unique in that it is believed to be the only all-natural feeding operation in the country.

"We're fairly sure, but it hasn't been verified yet, that we are the only 100 percent all-natural yard," said manager Mike Hunter. "Our goal was to aim for that Certified Angus Beef (CAB) brand, and we received Program Partner of the year in 2007 for Certified Angus Beef, and several awards for excellence for certified angus."

"When I got here in 2000, there were around 5,000 head and very few Angus. Now it is all black when you look across the pens. The Beef Marketing Group has helped them to fill that need," Hunter said.

Feeding cattle is a science, said office controller Bill Adams, and the key to success is to pay attention to detail.

"The cattle normally come into the lot from 500 to 900 pounds,

and finish out at 1,200 to 1,400, with a daily gain rate of 2 to 3 pounds a day, which may not be quite as good as when the cattle are on growth hormones or implants," Adams said, "But the premium for all natural is worth it."

The feedlot provides a local market for dry corn. They have their own flaker, and steam flake it before mixing with other feed. They put hay, cane and roughage through the grinder, and add stillers to the feed ration. Stillers are the "leftovers" from grain used to make ethanol. "We buy as much feed and hay locally as possible," Adams said, "and we run our lagoon water through a pivot to grow some of our own. We feed from 4,500 to 5,000 bushels of corn a day, and buy liquid supplement from outside sources."

The feeding operation adheres to tight quality control. When cattle come in they are inspected as to state of health, place of origin, get an electronic ID, and age verification.

"We have to keep impeccable records, and there's tons of paper work, but the all-natural demand is on the increase. That is what has created a need for stores like Whole Foods," Adams said.

Finished cattle are shipped to Tyson in Hastings, Neb., where one day a week is set aside to slaughter all-natural beef.

Filling the spot of second-largest feedlot in the county is Carpenter Cattle Company north of Brewster. Wayne and Leisha Carpenter have a capacity for 7,500 head and market about 8,000 head a year through U.S. Premium Beef in Liberal and where the Carpenters are stock holders.

"You have to qualify to send beef to U.S. Premium Beef," Carpenter said, "and there is a \$35 dollar a head premium."

The Carpenters grow a lot of their own corn and hay, and buy locally for the remainder of their needs. Stillers is added to the ration because of the high protein content. It is trucked from the



Campus ethanol plant. He does some backgrounding with young cattle and then sends them to grass before bringing them back into the feedlot. He also utilizes the lagoon water by sending it through a filter and through a pivot system to irrigate hay ground.

Carpenter fills about 75 percent of his feed operation with his own cattle and devotes 25 percent to custom feeding.

Brott Land and Cattle Company is four miles west and 2 miles south of Colby. Nolan Brott has the distinction of being "new kid on the block," and has 4,600-head capacity. He feeds mostly his own cattle, and custom feeds several pens of bulls for another customer.

Brott also feeds a mixture of corn, roughage and stillers.

"Right now, the lot isn't full, he said, "but that will come."

He sells to Premium Protein Products, in Hastings.

Four Mile Feeders, owed by Ken and Pam Mosier, is across the road from Brott Land and Cattle. It is an 1,800-head feed yard, and he finishes about 200 head a month. He markets his finished cattle with Tyson in Hastings and U.S. Premium Beef in Liberal and Dodge City. He feeds all his own cattle and does no custom feeding.

Other feedlots in the county are Stephens Feed Lot at Menlo, owned by Charles and Kent Stephens, the Schwartz Feed Lot at Menlo, owned by Vic Schwartz, Midway Feeders of Oakley, and Cranston Enterprises, Inc., south of Brewster.

Don Cranston, feedlot manager, said he has dropped his capacity to 999 head. He runs around 400 head of cows, and background the calves after weaning, to about 600 pounds, before sending them to grass or market. He winters the mama cows who are waiting to calve in dry lots when the weather is bad.



CRANSTON TRUCKING, INC.
1240 S. Country Club Drive
Colby, KS 67701

Thanks BEEF Producers!

Off: (785) 460-1973
Fax: (785) 460-1974
Cell: (785) 694-3332 (866) 663-5846

Colby Livestock Auction
125 S. Country Club Dr.
Colby, KS 67701
Leland Wilson, owner

THANKS FOR MAKING OUR BUSINESS A PART OF YOUR BUSINESS!

785-460-3231 (Barn) 785-462-3769 (Home)
785-443-0272 (Leland's cell)

Cattle—every Thursday, 12:00 Noon CT
Hogs—every 2nd and 4th Thursday
Sheep & Goats—1st Monday of Month, 11:00 am & 3rd Thursday (after cattle)
Horse & Tack Sale—1st Monday, 6:30 pm

WOOFER PUMP & WELL INC.
1024 Oak Ave.
Hoxie, KS 67740

Office Phone 785/ 675-3991 Fax: 785/ 675-3990
Shop Phone 785/ 675-3023 E-mail: woofpw@ruraltel.net

- Irrigation Pump Repair
- Irrigation Well Drilling
- Domestic Well Drilling & Repair
- Environmental Drilling

For all your irrigation needs call:
Doug Holzmeister 785/675-8508
Heath Paxson 785/675-8503

COLBY IMPLEMENT
Colby, Ks.
785-462-3391 or 800-532-6529

THANKS CATTLE PRODUCERS.

WELL DONE!

OAKLEY IMPLEMENT
Oakley, Ks.
785-672-3272 or 800-209-4001

Beef Month

is a time to reflect on the importance of cattle and agriculture to the state. Kansas beef producers play a vital role in providing the safest and most wholesome supply of beef to consumers around the world.

Beef Month May

Peoples STATE BANK

MEMBER FDIC Equal Housing Lender

CONGRATULATES OUR AREA CATTLEMEN FOR A JOB WELL DONE!

100 S. Range, Colby, KS • 1302 Main, Goodland, KS
940 Oak Avenue, Hoxie, KS • 304 Rawlins, McDonald, KS
610 W. 2nd, Oakley, KS •

We Salute

National Beef Month

Your

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. 5th St.
462-3963