



The Pick of the Plate

Greater Omaha named 2014 Hereford Industry Innovator for its dedication to Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®).

by **Christy Couch Lee**

As executive vice president of Greater Omaha Packing Co. Inc., Angelo Fili sees it all.

This Omaha, Neb.-based company processes many types and breeds of cattle on various feeding and care programs including all-natural and non-hormone treated.

And, personally, Fili says, nothing beats Hereford and the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) product.

“In my house, when we serve chefs or friends, the product we serve is Hereford,” he says. “Of all that I could choose, I take home the Hereford.”

Because of Greater Omaha’s dedication to the Hereford breed and CHB product for 15 years, Fili and his company were presented the American Hereford Association (AHA) Hereford Industry Innovator Award Jan. 17 at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president, says the relationship between CHB LLC and Greater Omaha is second to none.

“It’s rare that producers can sit down at the business table and talk about supply chain management issues, premiums and

how to get more animals into the pipeline,” Huffhines says. “The CHB staff is locked at the elbow with Greater Omaha to develop retail supermarket and restaurant demand for CHB. This partnership has changed the demand for Hereford-influenced feeder cattle.”

The partnership between Greater Omaha and CHB has led to great things for the Hereford breed. And it’s no surprise: Greater Omaha’s dedication to and focus on the client has led to a legacy of quality in the industry.

Building a legacy

From pasture to plate since 1920, family-owned Greater Omaha has been known for quality beef products, service and delivery.

Greater Omaha employs nearly 900 people and generates more than \$1 billion in annual sales. Total weekly production approaches 14,000-15,000 and yields approximately 150,000 boxes of beef and variety meats, which are sold throughout the U.S. and exported to more than 50 countries around the world.

“They have an extremely strong export market, with high demand in Asia,” Huffhines says. “Their focus is on buying cattle from smaller farmer-feeders in the Midwest.”

Their cattle buyers source Hereford and Angus cattle within a 250-mile radius of the Omaha facility. These cattle make up 95% of Greater Omaha’s production.

And what a facility it is. Greater Omaha operates one of the most sophisticated beef processing facilities in the country, completed in 2012.

“They have one of the newest facilities in the country — a state-of-the-art processing facility — with millions spent on quality and food-safety interventions,” Huffhines says.

The facility utilizes the newest technologies available to remove bacteria during processing, Fili says. In a 12-step process, the controlled atmosphere includes steam vacuums, hot water, acid rinse cabinets and steam pasteurization cabinets.

Greater Omaha is renowned for supplying the high-end restaurant trade with highly marbled beef. It also boasts for producing one of the highest percentages of top Choice and Prime graded carcasses in the industry.

And since 1999, Greater Omaha has certified more than 1.15 million head of CHB carcasses and sold more than 250 million lb. of product.



Greater Omaha Executive Vice President Angelo Fili says when he chooses beef to serve his family and friends — his first choice is Hereford.



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The Hereford advantage

Fili says the relationship with CHB has been positive from the start.

“When we got involved with CHB 15 years ago, our sales people began to immediately get positive response on the taste and tenderness of the product,” Fili says. “The product has helped market itself. The tenderness and the value at the packing house speaks for itself. It’s been one of the greatest-strength breeds for 15 years.”

Chefs who prepare the CHB product also tout its benefits, Fili says.

“Chefs have their ways of using olive oil or sea salt — their special seasonings — to make a product taste

good,” Fili says. “But when a steak is tough, it’s the first thing to turn a customer away. Herefords excel in tenderness. And, in turn, our chefs see less complaints from customers.”

Fili says Hereford breeders are the No. 1 reason for CHB’s quality.

“I think the entire success of the CHB product is the Hereford breeder,” he says. “I can’t add much at the packing house. Beef is the type of product that has to stand on its own. Seeing these animals in the Yards at the National Western, I can see the breeding is working. The direction this breed has gone will help it continue as a restaurant breed.”

The camaraderie of Hereford breeders also helps set them apart from the others, Fili says.

“The people are so friendly,” he says. “The Hereford ranchers I’ve worked with are closer than any breed I’ve dealt with. They believe in what they’re producing. And Greater Omaha believes in it, too.”

Without a doubt, the partnership of Greater Omaha and the Hereford breed is a winning combination — a combination sure to result in benefits for years to come. **HW**