by Rob Ames, CHB LLC executive vice president

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Loading the Toolbox

Do some people perpetually know you by the wrong name? I get that once in a while. To some I'm Ron or Rod. I always have been and even after correcting the record probably always will be. In the case of Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC, some of our customers know us as the "Certified Hereford Beef Association." And the name really fits the function. To them, we are the rancher organization that advocates CHB® product. We don't buy or sell. We are marketers backed by the growers.

Names aside it is sometimes a struggle to explain, succinctly, what the six CHB LLC employees do. At American Hereford Association (AHA) gatherings we get a lot of questions about how whitefaced feeder cattle are best marketed and how they measure up on the rail. In a customer setting the questions are about marketing beef — developing the catch phrases and delivering the messages that make the CHB brand meaningful to consumers.

So what do we do? In as short as I can explain it the CHB staff does: customer service, sales, consumer marketing, packer relations, revenue development, supply assurance, brand development and industry communication. The purpose of this column is to explain how we go about business and to share the results we're getting.

This summer we've put a lot of effort into our customer service and consumer marketing pieces. We service customers by providing marketing tools they wouldn't otherwise come across, much less use, to promote their (your) beef.

New photos, recipes

Starting in 2005 CHB LLC began a multi-year process of developing an exclusive photo and recipe library that can only be used by our customers in connection with CHB products. The purpose of this was to unify the look and feel of program materials so that our customers and consumers would come to think of CHB as an elite, quality beef, but also a product that you could, would and will prepare in your home.

This year we've added to this library, which is distributed to all customers in a user-friendly disc format. Ad designers at our customer locations can literally cut and paste our recipes and photos directly into their CHB print ads or billboard layouts. Our newest additions include such unique items as CHB short ribs and carne asada.

New wellness program

Back in August I wrote a column about literary food — the kind that tells a story about its origin and ethic that often trumps its functional value and supersedes its appropriate price. CHB LLC has created a wellness program to support and explain its positive contribution to nutrition, health and the environment.

You've traditionally seen these messages from checkoff-funded organizations. Our effort is to package the good news about CHB under the brand banner and to not allow our product (your product) to be defined by the media and competition as anything less than wholesome, safe, healthy and clean.

Tools in the toolbox include ad-ready messages and a brochure from CHB Dietitian Valerie Bailes. For the future we're developing product demonstrations that will show consumers, butchers and servers how to use CHB in ways that promote both enjoyment and good health.

New consumer Web site

In November we'll debut our new consumer-focused Web site, *www.herefordbeef.net*. Unlike our past Web productions, this site will steer clear of industry news and producer information. It will directly address consumer issues and questions, and provide a training resource to the most important CHB sales people — the butchers and servers who present our product to the public.

The Web site will look at the program through the consumers' eyes. In other words, it will answer questions about how CHB applies to my enjoyment, my lifestyle, my values and my budget.

A significant portion of staff time goes into listening to customers and creating these tools. Our retail point-of-sale program has been entirely re-invented and our food service marketing program is expanding as sales grow. These are just a couple of the many things we do to help customers help themselves to the advantages of CHB. **HW**