

Beef Leaders Institute



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By Sarah MacDonald
Canadian Angus Association 2023 Intern

Brad Gilchrist of Lucknow, Ontario had the opportunity to be part of the 2023 class of the Beef Leaders Institute. From June 13–17, Brad, along with 20 other delegates, spent five days touring Missouri, Nebraska and Ohio. Each tour stop highlighted a different stage of the beef industry supply chain.

Brad and his wife Kristie are cattle producers as well as business owners. They run a purebred Angus herd of 150 cows and hold two sales annually. About four years ago they began to direct market their beef products through local farmers’ markets. The farmers’ markets gave them an opportunity to interact with the end consumer and tell their story.

Over their first two years of direct marketing, they saw demand rapidly increase. “We were at the point where we couldn’t get more spots in the local abattoir,” said Brad. With an increase in demand but a delay in their own supply chain, Brad and Kristie found themselves in a position where they needed to make some business decisions, leading them to eventually purchase the Beefway Meat Shop & Abattoir in Kincardine, Ontario. Since beginning this business venture, Brad has learned more about how cattle are processed and how to market their products, which led him to take part in the Beef Leaders Institute.

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and selling the final product,” explained Brad.

Beef Leaders Institute is a five-day event designed for individuals age 25–45 who want an in-depth look at the cattle industry beyond their own operation. Beef Leaders Institute is hosted by the American Angus Association and sponsored by Certified Angus Beef (CAB).

Beef Leaders Institute delegates began their five-day expedition at the American Angus Association headquarters in St. Joseph, Missouri before they hit the road to further expand their knowledge of the beef value chain.

The first few stops gave participants a chance to explore production and processing sectors at Weborg Feeding Co. in Pender, Nebraska, and Tyson Fresh Meats in Dakota City, Nebraska. Next, they travelled to Northwood, Ohio and visited the Buckhead Meat and Seafood processing facility. A stop at ST Genetics in Tiffin, Ohio allowed delegates to observe the impact of genetic selection.

They spent the final day of Beef Leaders Institute in Wooster, Ohio at The Certified Angus Beef Culinary Center and discussed CAB’s 10 specifications for quality. They further explored their learning through a hands-on beef fabrication demonstration in the meat lab and a steak tasting. The delegates’ recently acquired knowledge was put to the test when they prepared their own steaks with guidance from world-renowned chefs.

“I thought I was pretty decent at barbecue before,” joked Brad, “but a few simple things that they (world-renowned chefs) taught us made a huge difference.” For Brad, who runs a retail store at the Beefway, he now has the expertise to better serve their customers. He says that what he learned from the chefs has made it easier to have a conversation when a customer asks for cooking advice.

Brad described the Beef Leaders Institute as not only incredibly eye-opening, but also a humbling experience. He was reminded that the cattle industry is growing at an incredibly fast pace and that lifelong learning is a key to keeping up. “Just because we reach an age doesn’t mean we should stop learning or stop taking on opportunities to broaden our vision,” Brad said, when asked what advice he would give to others. The Beef Leaders Institute was a chance for him to learn, ask questions, be part of conversations, and see what direction the beef industry is going in.

“The opportunity was amazing,” Brad said, adding that if he was asked about participating again, “In a heartbeat, I would be on that plane to do it one more time.”

Interested producers can apply to the annual Beef Leaders Institute through an application form found on the Canadian Angus Foundation website (www.cdnangus.ca/foundation). The deadline to apply is February 15. More information can be found on the American Angus Association website (www.angus.org).