

World Angus Forum

From the Andes to the Atlantic Ocean, Argentina and Chile are amazing countries. Angus breeders discovered that firsthand during the 1989 World Angus Forum tour.

by Keith Evans



This Chilean Cowboy on a Criollo horse displays the traditional dress.

The Seventh World Angus Forum in Mar del Plata, Argentina, Nov. 5-9, 1989, provided the springboard for an American Angus Association sponsored tour. This tour covered Argentina from the Andes Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean and gave the group a glimpse at the booming economy of Chile.

Forty-nine Angus breeders from the United States and Canada left Miami International Airport on Oct. 27. After a non-stop, eight-hour flight to Santiago, Chile, the group was joined by Bernardo and Anna Velez of Medellin, Colombia, which made the group truly international.

Santiago, Chile

This modern city, with the Andes Mountains at its back and the Pacific Ocean just 40 miles from its front, was the first tour stop.

On a trip to a Criollo horse farm west of the city, the new development and industry in Chile was evident. Economic growth in the country's free market

system has averaged well over 12 percent in the last few years.

Criollo horses are the native Chilean breed developed from the animals brought by the Spanish. The tour group inspected prized studs owned by the Cordero family, then was given a dramatic demonstration of Chilean rodeo. It is nothing like North American rodeo.

Mendoza, Argentina

On Oct. 30 the tour went by private bus over the rugged Andes Mountains to Mendoza, Argentina. The route passed by Mount Anconcagua. At 6,960 meters (22,834 feet) in elevation, it is the highest point of the Andes.

Mendoza is a beautiful city, west of Buenos Aires, in the high desert area. Nearly everything that grows here must be irrigated. It is also a place where San Martin, after liberating Argentina from the Spanish, left to cross the Andes to help liberate Chile and then Peru.

Nearly every community in these three countries has a San Martin street, square and statue.

The customs in Mendoza and rural Argentina reflect life of a century ago. Shops and businesses, which open at 9 a.m. each morning, close down from 12:30 to about 4:30 p.m. Then they reopen until about 9 p.m. Lunch is the big meal of the day and the dinner hour is from 9 to 10 p.m., a custom that North Americans adjusted to in varying degrees.

Argentina is a country of some 30 million people, mostly of European descent. Nearly half the population lives in the Buenos Aires area. The countryside is sparsely populated.

Argentina stretches from the cold, southern tip, a stone's throw from Antarctica, to jungle area in the north, above the tropic of Capricorn.

The Pampas, which include some of the most productive land in the world, are roughly in a 550-km (340-mile) radius of Buenos Aires. Here, 85 percent of the cattle are raised.

Cattle came to Argentina in 1580 from Paraguay. They were descendants of Spanish cattle and developed into wild herds on the lush Pampas. These cattle

were used for hides and some meat. By the turn of the century, Argentine cattle were among the best in the world.

At that time, and until Juan Peron took over as dictator before World War II, Argentina was one of the richest countries per capita in the world.

The view you take away from an Argentina trip is that it's a sleeping economic giant with potential that could amaze the world.

Angus cattle were imported into Argentina in the 1800s, before they arrived in the United States. The ancestors of Carlos Guerrero, who was chairman of the Seventh World Angus Forum, imported the first registered Angus. Angus is the dominant breed today.

People in Argentina love beef. In 1988 they consumed 87 kg. or about 192 pounds per person. The best beef is delicious and cheap by U.S. standards. Most of it is grass fed, but that term has a different meaning in Argentina.

The best Angus beef is finished by allowing the steers and heifers to graze on oats or barley that is headed out. This produces well marbled, tender and delicious beef.

A 14 ounce strip sirloin steak in one of the best steak houses in Mardel Plata sold for about \$3.50. A mixed salad was less than \$1; a bottle of Argentine wine was \$2 to \$3.

San Rafael

The Angus tour left Mendoza for San Rafael, through the irrigated fruit growing area. Near San Rafael, they stopped for lunch at a winery owned by the Goyenechea family. It's a small family-owned operation that produces, among other things, a wine labeled "Aberdeen-Angus." This wine is available in some parts of the U.S.

Pico & Hale

From San Rafael the tour traveled to Pico, on the edge of the Pampas. The drive went through very dry grazing land, then land that resembled West Texas with sparse grass and Mesquite-like brush, then to a combination of grazing and farming land.



A herd of puro por cruza Angus cows and calves at El Boneti near Tandil, Argentina. This ranch is a major supplier of Angus bulls.

The following day, traveling from Pico to Hale, the tour covered the driest of the dry Pampas to the edge of the wet Pampas. The first Angus herd visited was at Estancia La Nicolasa at Hale, where the tour group was the guests of Guillermo and Alberto Busquet and their families. Here they were treated to a delicious barbecue and a display of the Busquet registered Angus herd, Criollo horses and Shetland ponies.

The Angus cattle on display were all sired by U.S. Angus bulls or sons of U.S. Angus bulls that the Busquet family had



Gary Dameron, 1989 Association president, addresses the crowd at the World Angus Forum. At left is Carlos Guerrero, Forum chairman.

bred. They have two sales a year at the ranch, supplying bulls to many commercial cattle producers. They have exhibited many Palermo Show champions.

Olivarria

After a night at Olivarria, another interesting small city that serves the surrounding agricultural area, the group visited the large and beautiful Cabana Don Alfredo. Our host was Alejandro Bengolea. This farm has shown many champions at the Palermo Show and uses embryo transplant extensively. A few

Angus females have been imported from the U.S. over the years and U.S. bulls are widely used in their breeding program.

That same afternoon, the group visited Tres Marias on the way from Oliverria to Tandil. This well-known Angus breeding farm is owned by Horacio F. Gutierrez and his

family. Gutierrez is president of the Corporacion Argentina de Aberdeen-Angus (the Aberdeen-Angus Breeders Association).

Tres Marias also has won numerous awards at the Palermo Show and sells several hundred bulls each year to commercial herds.

Tandil

The final leg of the tour included stops at El Boneti, near Tandil, a puro por cruza or puros controlados herd. Technically, a puro por cruza herd is one that has used registered Angus bulls for at least four generations. The bulls produced are inspected and those found to be suitable for use on commercial cows are branded with an "a."

It was this program in the 1940s that helped turn Argentina's Pampas black. Today it also is a program that generates revenue for the Argentina Association.

The El Boneti herd, with some 1,000 cows, is all puro por cruza. Registered bulls used on the straightbred, unregistered cows produce cattle for commercial use.

Mar del Plata

The group was joined by Gary Dameron, 1989 president of the American Angus Association, his wife, Sharon, and Richard Spader, executive vice president, at Mar Del Plata. Dameron and Spader were official U.S. delegates to the World Angus Forum.

Alter the Forum, the group traveled by train to Buenos Aires for a two-night stay in this cosmopolitan, capital city. At this point they split up; 38 people traveled to Iguazu Falls and then on to Rio de Janerio before returning to the U.S. The remainder of the group returned home directly from Buenos Aires.

