

Angus International

Interest in the Angus breed is global — and so are the opportunities.

by *Crystal Albers*

Selling your Angus seedstock requires a good marketing program and — for some — a translator.

At least, that's the case for a seemingly increasing number of Angus breeders who are looking overseas for expanding opportunities.

"There's a lot of possibility for the Angus breed internationally," says Bill Davis,

American Angus Association president based in Sidney, Mont. "The potential is there for marketing and collaboration among other nations looking to improve herd genetics and to feed growing populations."

Like other industries, U.S. agriculture has increased its global reach during the last several years thanks to technological advancements. The result is an

interconnected global agriculture community.

"Weather patterns in Brazil now have an effect on the corn market in the U.S.," Davis says. "Every country and every sector of agriculture is becoming increasingly affected by another."

Joe Hampton, Association vice president and Mount Ulla, N.C., Angus breeder, concurs.

"Interest and opportunities among our international counterparts seems to be expanding," Hampton said.

Earlier this year, Hampton and Davis were invited by Angus entities in Australia and Russia to visit their respective countries and discuss the American Angus Association, breed advantages and opportunities for growth.

Angus down under

To most ranchers, Australia is a world away. So what could cattlemen across the globe and U.S. producers possibly have in common?

"Plenty," Hampton says. "There's a lot of commonalities and a lot of opportunities."

Hampton and his wife, Robin, traveled to Australia this spring for a 14-day tour. The country is similar in land size to the United States, but it has the lowest population density in the world.



► Joe (left) and Robin (center) Hampton visited with several Angus cattlemen during the tour portion of their trip to Australia on the invite of the Angus Society of Australia.



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— Joe Hampton

For more information about the Angus business in Australia, visit www.angusaustralia.com.au.

Hampton was asked to speak at Angus Australia's National Angus Conference in Albury. Upon their arrival, Hampton noticed differences in the people and culture of the region, but saw similarities in the Angus cattle.

"Angus is only dominant in the southern temperate region of the country, but they're expanding, and many of the cattle there had Angus genetics," he said. "There was a tremendous amount of genetic diversity, but I did recognize several lines from the U.S."

That's significant in a country that has more than 25.4 million head of cattle and is considered one of the largest beef exporters, Hampton said.

At the conference, Hampton joined other speakers discussing production, marketing and selection tools, including the American Angus Association's adoption of genomic-enhanced expected progeny differences (EPDs) and DNA technologies.

"The Australians are working to implement genomic technology and were very interested in how we've been able to accomplish that," Hampton said. "We're certainly ahead of the pack in terms of genomic advancements, and our approach seems to have been well-received there."

Like the U.S., the technology has much potential in the rugged Australian environment where at least half the nation's cattle are finished on grass and emphasis is placed on early-maturing cattle.

Export markets are also extremely important to the country's small population. A relatively aggressive \$6-per-head checkoff is used to cultivate overseas markets.

"The Australians manage for a particular export market. They determine where their cattle are going to be marketed, then they manage for it, from conception to the final product," Hampton says. "In this way they remain efficient."

Hampton noticed this efficiency mind-set during the farm tours that highlighted his 800-mile trip between Melbourne and Sydney.

Not only were they mindful producers, he said, they were extremely hospitable.

"They're a very open, warm and genuine people," he said. "They opened their homes, showed us their operations and went above and beyond what we expected. The people were what impressed me most."

"It was a good reminder that the world doesn't stop at our borders anymore," Hampton said.

Russian Angus revolution

Further north in the forested terrain of east-central Russia, Bill Davis and other U.S. Angus cattlemen arrived in late-May to attend what was promoted as the country's



first Angus bull sale. Fifty U.S.-bred Angus bulls registered at the American Angus Association were sold during the Angus Genetics of Russia sale.

Davis spoke to attendees prior to the event about the U.S. Angus business.

"They're making a real effort to increase the food-producing capabilities of Russia right now and seemed very dedicated to making that happen," Davis says.

In a post-Communism era, Russia currently imports about 80% of its food, and about 60% of Russians' wage dollars go toward the grocery bill, he says. Of the country's food grown domestically, beef accounts for only 2%.

"The possibility of exporting cattle to Russia is extremely real," Davis said. "They are very interested in numbers and admired our database and the possibilities for genetic evaluation."

Although discussions are under way to start a Russian Angus association, Davis says the American Angus Association will likely see more registrations from Russian breeders thanks to the Association's reliable evaluations and extensive genetic selection tools.

"Other breeds export to Russia, but none to the extent of the Angus breed," Davis says. "Angus are going to be at the forefront of the beef cattle industry for exports."

Of course, Davis admits, there are obstacles in the form of political red tape, quotas, health tests and shipping costs, but Russian breeders are persistently working to supply a ready-and-willing consuming public, he adds.

"People there love beef. When they eat a *Certified Angus Beef*® steak in Moscow, they just can't get enough of it," Davis says. "One restaurant was selling a steak for what would be equivalent to 125 American dollars."

Beef supply is a problem, with lagging infrastructure, crumbling and poorly connected highways, few semis and even fewer cattle trailers. There, Russian cattlemen

► **Above and below:** American Angus Association President Bill Davis visited Russia to attend the first Angus bull sale in that country and to visit with Angus enthusiasts as they start a fledgling Angus business of their own.



are battling a lack of fences, neglected grasslands, and primitive feedlot and processing facilities. But, Davis says, they're making progress thanks to government subsidies and cooperation from U.S. ranchers.

"Over there, if you buy land from the government you have to equal or surpass the production from when it was a state farm," he says. "They're getting a lot of that done by continuing to use Angus genetics."

In fact, Davis returns to Russia this month for the country's Golden Autumn 2010 trade show, where he'll answer questions and help distribute more information about the American Angus Association and Angus breed.

But he's not worried about creating competition with Russian breeders any time soon.

"They'll be working to feed their own country," Davis says. "Opening dialogue with them not only creates another market, it creates worldwide acceptance of Angus beef — and I don't see where that can hurt anybody in the long-run."



Editor's Note: *Crystal Albers is assistant director of communications and web editor for the American Angus Association.*