

INTERNATIONAL GUESTS VISIT

Three Chinese brothers and one South African Angus breeder made the National Angus Convention & Trade Show a priority.

Story & photos by *Paige Nelson*, field editor



► From South Africa, Renier Theron visited North America for the first time to attend the convention and meet the breeders of genetics he uses back home.

Not only did Overland Park, Kan., draw Angus members from the United States for the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show Nov. 3-5, 2015, the host city lured visitors all the way from the eastern hemisphere.

Renier Theron of South Africa and John, Owen and Tom Dae of China, spent their convention days learning about American Angus cattle production. Although they hail from different continents themselves, the collective conclusion from both parties was the desire to attend another convention in the future and the admiration for the vast mechanization of U.S. cattle production.

Impressions from a South African

Theron first heard of the convention through Facebook. He had never visited North America before and was eager to see the United States. After he saw the Facebook post, he said he immediately began searching for more information on the convention, but it didn't take long for him to book his trip.

"I decided to come here and meet up with Angus breeders ... and see how Angus

genetics are progressing in the States," he says.

As a progressive Angus breeder, Theron has been artificially inseminating his cattle with U.S. bulls for years. So, meeting the breeders of those bulls at the convention was an added bonus for him.

Plowman 1627 of MillBrae, for example, produced a great cow for him — a coincidence that made the first stop on the Kansas Angus Tour, Mill Brae Ranch, a special one.

"One of the greatest things for me was meeting the breeders. I've met Connealys. I've used their bulls over the years. In real life, I actually met them and tell them about the great bulls I can breed out of their genetics. So that was pretty awesome to me," he admits.

Not one to be afraid of international logistics, Theron said he has also imported embryos from Schaff Angus Valley in North

Dakota. He intended to visit Sydenstricker Genetics in Missouri before he left, and he declares on his next visit to the United States he will be stopping at Thomas Angus Ranch of Oregon.

While a highlight for Theron was being an eyewitness to the American Angus Association's embrace of genetic technology through the genomic symposium and Angus University, he couldn't help comparing U.S.

breeders' situations with his own.

For Theron, genetic analysis and embryo transfer in South Africa have posed problems. Currently, South Africa doesn't have the capability to do genomic analysis, so he must send everything to the University of Iowa. He would also like to import embryos from Argentina, but South Africa doesn't have the sanitary protocol in place to allow it.

A diverse panoply of genetics is crucial to Theron's breeding

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NATIONAL ANGUS CONVENTION

program as he tries to cater to the needs of his customers.

“I have variation in my herd,” he says. “You won’t find in my herd that all the frame scores are the same because I’ve got different regions with different needs.”

He says South Africa’s varying geography contributes to distinct preferences among his customers — from almost low-line-type cattle to 6.3-6.5 frame scores.

Universally, however, it is safe to say his customers want “a bull with good feed conversion rate and growth rate. That’s what they are basically looking for. But also maternal traits are still very important to us. A cow must be able to raise a calf under any conditions.”

As for his convention experience, he says his expectations were exceeded.

“I came here with a lot of expectation. It’s been more than that even. This is way above what I expected, and I’m very glad and privileged to have been here.

“I’ve already posted a few pictures on my Facebook page, and I think you will definitely see some South Africans coming over in the future. I’ve got a lot of things to take home with me that I can share with my fellow breeders back there. The Angus family worldwide seems to be a great family. I’ve picked up the same spirit in Argentina, as well. We’ve got that same spirit where we are,” Theron concluded.

Introduction to Angus

For the Dae brothers from China, attending the National Angus Convention was for the purpose of learning about Angus cattle and cattle production in general. They heard about Angus cattle from a mutual American friend and decided to come see for themselves.

Despite all the Kansas Angus Tour, International Angus Genomics Symposium and Angus University had to offer, it might have been Chef Tony Biggs with Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) who sold the benefits of the Angus breed to the Chinese brothers the best.

Not only did Chef Tony prepare *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand roasts in delicious fashion, he had also spent time in China and was really able to connect with them.

Besides tasting great beef and nearly winning the Cat® 262 Skid Steer Loader, Tom explained they were considering importing Angus cattle for their own cattle operation.



► Chinese brothers Tom, John and Owen Dae came to the convention to learn about Angus in American cattle production.

“We have 300 (Chinese-bred) cow(s). We’re growing into [a] 500- to 600-[head] operation,” says John. Yet before the growth can happen, the brothers learned that a lot goes into raising cattle.

“We are overwhelmed by the things that we have seen and we have learned. In this country, it seems cattle raising is everywhere. Your whole industry is very completed. You have all the things: the infrastructure, the

tools, the machines, the medicine. Everything is made possible for a ranch manager to grow their cattle, but in China, we don’t have that yet. It’s just started. We have a long way to go,” he explained.

Tom, who currently resides in California, noted, “We have learned that this requires a lot of effort, a lot of time to study, to learn. We have some stuff in China. We have land and some cows, but not like this as professionally to raise the cow.” Tom shared his admiration for how people handle the cow, and handle the land.

“I think we’re going to become Angus Association members to learn from other guys, and hopefully you guys can help us to improve a lot,” he says.

John says the biggest barrier to intensive cattle production in China is finding qualified people.

“We need people that really understand this business and focus on the key areas of this business, of this industry, so we know what other things we should be doing.”

Why Angus?

“Meat is good,” smiles John. “Good taste. It has more economic value. If we grow the local native cow, it’s not as good as we do with Angus.”



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Editor’s Note: Paige Nelson is a freelance writer and cattlemaster from Rigby, Idaho

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