

Set Out for Texas Angus

Angus Convention participants invited to the National Angus Tour, hosted by the Texas Angus Association, Friday, Nov. 3.

by Jena McReil, digital editor

As they say, everything's bigger in Texas. That's certainly the hope for the National Angus Tour set to be Nov. 3, just prior to the 2017 Angus Convention in Fort Worth, Texas.

The National Angus Tour is an annual favorite for American Angus Association members, allowing them to travel the countryside, visit with new and old friends and experience the Angus breed in a landscape different than their own. The Texas Angus Association will host this year's National Angus Tour and anticipates a record-large turnout for the event.

"We expect this will be one of the best tours that we've ever had, and we think

that when people visit who haven't been to Texas before, they'll be impressed with the ranches, the people and the quality cattle we have here," says Radale Tiner, American Angus Association regional manager for Texas and New Mexico.

The tour involves two stops: Hoofstock Genetics and Wilks Ranch. Participants will have the opportunity to spend time learning about the operations, hearing from speakers and, of course, viewing outstanding Angus cattle.

"The two destinations on your tour this year will give you a nice perspective on beef cattle operations here in Texas," says Mark Ahearn, Texas Angus Association

tour leader. "The embryo transfer (ET) and IVF (*in vitro* fertilization) lab that you will see complements some of the registered seedstock breeders here in Texas. Then you'll also have a really nice opportunity to see one of the larger ranches here in Texas at the Wilks Ranch."

Along the tour

Tour buses will depart the Fort Worth Convention Center at 7:15 a.m., Friday, Nov. 3. In just an hour's drive, participants will arrive at Hoofstock Genetics near Ranger, Texas. An elite ET and IVF facility, Hoofstock Genetics represents the beef cattle industry's most innovative reproductive science.

Tour participants will have a chance to hear from Hoofstock Genetics founder Todd Stroud, explore the facility and gain a firsthand look at the technology in action. The company handles IVF flushing for operations across the United States, and it's



►Below: "When participants come and visit, they're going to see a ranch that is focused on producing the best Angus genetics that we possibly can. We're continually learning," says Aaron Kiser (left), Wilks Ranch seedstock manager, who has been with the team since the start of the Angus program. Also pictured is Kevin Reed, Wilks Ranch asset manager.



►Above: "The two destinations on your tour this year will give you a nice perspective on beef cattle operations here in Texas," says Mark Ahearn, Texas Angus Association tour leader, pictured here with wife Cindy. Tour-goers will visit Hoofstock Genetics, an ET and IVF lab, and Wilks Ranch, one of the larger ranches in Texas.

►Right: Wilks Ranch is home to about 700 cows, with nearly 375 of those being registered Angus females.



Country

an operation many Angus breeders don't have an opportunity to visit every day.

"What I want people to take away when they come here is, I want them to be as excited about this process as I am, because I see a lot of potential in this," says Janine Neely, Hoofstock Genetics IVF lab director. "Assisted reproduction is a very helpful tool in shortening the generation interval, as well as enhancing superior genetics in this industry."

Also while at Hoofstock Genetics, the tour will feature educational speakers and sessions, including a look at genetic programs and services through the American Angus Association. It's guaranteed to be a morning of insightful learning and a glimpse into the future of beef cattle production.

"Hoofstock Genetics is a different type of stop than what we've traditionally done on the National Angus Tour, and our hope is that people can see and learn something new that they haven't experienced before," Tiner says.

At around 11 a.m., the tour will depart for the Wilks Ranch near Eastland, Texas. Only a short drive to the southwest, the group will enjoy lunch in the wide-open spaces of the ranch's beautiful landscape.

Brothers Dan and Farris Wilks started in the cattle business out of their home near Cisco, Texas, and quickly expanded from a small family farm with a few head of cattle to the large holdings Wilks Ranch employs today. In 2013, the brothers established a registered seedstock operation in an effort to improve their commercial ranches, which are found in four states: Montana, Oregon, Idaho and Texas.

"We're all still in the business of cattle ranching, but in different parts of the country we have different climates," says

Kevin Reed, Wilks Ranch asset manager. "It's great to see different ranches and how they perform, and the adversity you have to go through to make it through the years."

Wilks Ranch is home to about 700 cows, with nearly 375 of those being registered Angus females. They will transfer anywhere from 350 to 450 embryos per year, and partner with Hoofstock Genetics to provide their assisted reproductive technology. Wilks Ranch also has a bull

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development center, where they're caring for about 550 Angus bulls.

"When participants come and visit, they're going to see a ranch that is focused on producing the best Angus genetics that we possibly can. We're continually learning," says Aaron Kiser, Wilks Ranch seedstock manager, who has been with the team since the start of the Angus program. "I hope participants see that there are breeders here who are investing a lot of resources into the Angus business and the direction that our Texas breeders are going."

Also at Wilks Ranch, several members of the Texas Angus Association will have cattle on display and there will be plenty of time to ask questions, view the cattle and gain an understanding of the various breeding programs.

"We hope that you'll enjoy having the opportunity to meet Texans and see some of our landscapes," Ahearn says. "Texas is a very diverse state, and cattle operations have to survive in different environments. We really think you'll get a nice taste of Texas, you'll see some really nice land and really good cattle."

The tour will be at Wilks Ranch until a

little before 3 p.m., and will return back to the Fort Worth Convention Center around 4:15 p.m.

Learning from others

Whether it's visiting on the tour bus, catching up over lunch or chatting while looking over a pen of bulls, the National Angus Tour is a true highlight for American Angus Association members. Not only are they given a chance to see how Angus cattle fit varying environments, but also to connect with like-minded cattlemen and women with a passion for the Angus business.

By experiencing a new approach and vision for raising cattle, participants return home with new energy and enthusiasm.

"I hope that everyone can come and see a lot of good cattle, meet a lot of good people, and remember the Texas hospitality we have to offer," Tiner says. "Our main goal is to showcase what we're doing in the state, and the outstanding genetic programs found here."

"We'd just like to welcome you to Texas," Reed said. "We look forward to the opportunity to show all the convention participants a different side of cattle operations, which is the Texas side. We welcome everyone to come."

Reserve your place on the National Angus Tour July 1 at www.angusconvention.com. Convention registration and hotel reservations will also be available at that time.

Registration for the National Angus Tour is \$75 to ride the bus, or \$40 if driving separately. That's in addition to the overall Angus Convention registration price, which is available at a discounted \$75 until July 31.

Visit the Angus Convention website for more information on the American Angus Association's premier event Nov. 4-6 in Fort Worth, Texas.

