



DOUBLE BRED ANGUS

John McCurry named recipient of the Young Breeder Award.

by Max Stewart, American Angus Association

In the heart of central Kansas, the McCurry family stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the Angus industry. As the family approaches a century in the business, the echoes of their commitment resonate through the years, shaping a narrative that intertwines dedication, tradition and a love for the cattle industry.

The success and longevity of a reliable pedigree requires two things — good cattle managed by good people. It's always easier said than done, but John McCurry, recipient of the American Angus Association's inaugural Young Breeder Award, might prefer the tougher, more educational route.

Eyes on the future

"I can remember my dad; he was fed up. We didn't know where we were going, who was going to do the work," McCurry remembers. "We were fall calving, and he told me he was going to turn Hereford

bulls out on all those cows and just make the best baldies we could and go commercial."

With graduation from Kansas State University (K-State) on the horizon, McCurry was torn between seeking employment outside the farm or returning home. When he heard his father's new plan, he skipped a week of school and his Thanksgiving break to go home. His focus stayed on registered Angus cattle.

"I synchronized those cows and got them all artificially inseminated, and really, then and there, I knew I was committed," McCurry remembers. "That calf crop would arrive next fall, and we would keep the ball rolling."

"Keeping the ball rolling" has been the McCurry way for quite some time. Beginning their journey into farming and raising cattle in the early 1900s, the original McCurry brothers — including McCurry's father,

Andy — paved their legacy with competitive triumphs across the country in the 1960s and 1970s. The show ring became a stage where they captured the attention and admiration of fellow breeders.

"They had success anywhere they went across the Midwest. Multiple state fairs, and of course the bigger shows like Denver and [at that time] Arizona," McCurry says. "Dad would be the oldest son, and he left the operation in 1975 and was the only McCurry boy that did so. He made it about fifteen miles down the road before ultimately returning to Burrton after meeting his wife, my mom, Mary."

No stranger to the breed, Mary was the third generation on her family's Tennessee farm to raise black-headed cattle. She was working towards her master's degree in meat science from K-State when she met Andy.

The pair moved to Burrton after

marrying, bringing their two children, McCurry and his sister, Emily. Both kids were active in the National Junior Angus Association, and McCurry went on to serve as a green coat from 2001 to 2003.

“The values learned from the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and conferences like LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) are unmatched in the industry,” he says of his time as a junior.

The NJAA was McCurry’s first real introduction to the value of networking. He and his sister received multiple awards and scholarships through the junior Angus program.

“I had a cousin once tell me, we don’t choose this, it chooses us,” McCurry says. “That’s always set with me.”

Between the shows and conferences, working with those Angus cows grew from a simple passion to McCurry’s livelihood.

During his time on the K-State livestock judging team, McCurry met his wife, Melody, also a livestock judging competitor at Oklahoma State University. Today, they have three children, Aubree, Molly and Drew. All three share the McCurry love for



John McCurry of Burrton, Kan., was presented with the American Angus Association’s inaugural Young Breeder Award. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey Theis, Miss American Angus; Drew, Molly, Aubree, Mary, Melody and John McCurry; and Mark McCully, American Angus Association CEO.

the agriculture industry, as they help with chores on the farm and compete at the NJAS in contests like team sales, photography, carcass contest and more.

“All of them are very active in sports, and as we get going that will be difficult to balance, but their heart lies in the cattle industry,” McCurry explains. “They really want to be a part of that. They all have their own Angus cows that they take care of.”

Always extend a hand

The evolution of the McCurry operation is evident in their annual bull sale, marketing around 200 bulls and pioneering a commercial female sale. The latter, now in its ninth year, not only showcases the family’s commitment to their customers, but also serves as a platform for community collaboration.

The 1,500-head commercial

female sale is a testament to their understanding of the industry’s dynamics and the importance of creating spaces for transactions within the Angus community.

“It’s a great place for our customers to trade and do business with each other,” McCurry adds.

The recognition that there’s no one-size-fits-all approach to breeding underscores their inclusive mindset. In a community that sometimes leans towards segmentation, the McCurry family advocates for unity, reminding breeders that, despite differences, they are all on the same team with a shared goal of promoting and improving the Angus breed.

“There are so many great people that breed great cattle regardless of their breeding focus,” McCurry says. “You need to breed what you can market or sell or where that fan base is that follows you, and I’m a cheerleader for everybody and every avenue. It’s important for breeders to remember that we’re all on the same team. We can all sell different things to different people and have different breeding goals in mind.” 

