



COMMON GROUND

by Mark McCully

CEO, American Angus Association

Innovation Leads to Success

The famous Frank Murphy painting of the first Angus bulls coming to the Kansas prairie hangs in my office. For me, it serves as a reminder of the influence one person making bold moves can have.

George Grant was an innovator of the purest kind. He wasn't afraid to think differently, the hallmark of true innovation.

In his wildest dreams, I can't imagine Grant could have envisioned the legacy his move of bringing the first Angus cattle to the United States would have on the beef industry.

Today, more than 80% of commercial cow-calf producers say Angus is a primary breed of their cow herd, valued not only for their maternal characteristics and growth potential, but also their ability to produce high-quality, consistent meat.

Success hasn't come without significant advancements since Grant's time. As I think back, innovation was, and will continue to be, a part of the Angus legacy. Our breed's history is rich with pioneers who understood genetic improvement relied on collecting and reporting data, even when doing so was not popular or financially rewarding. Today the American Angus Association leverages the largest, single-beef breed database of more than 80 million data points to deliver the most industry-leading selection tools.

Later came a group of innovative Angus breeders with the idea of building a brand of beef focusing

on quality and marbling — a novel idea running contrary to the push for low-fat and lean beef prevailing at the time. Forty-five years later the *Certified Angus Beef*® brand is the leading fresh-beef brand on the globe and generates millions of dollars in premiums for users of Angus genetics every year.

Innovation has translated to success in our past and no doubt will be crucial for the future. The world around us continues to change, and at a faster pace than ever before. I recently read a prediction that 40% of today's Fortune 500 companies will not exist in 10 years.


That's an uncomfortable thought, regardless of your tolerance for change. Even in agriculture, which tends to be a more traditional industry, we see new technologies, new markets, new companies, new partnerships and so many changes to how we do business.


Angus is highly relevant to the beef industry today because the breed provides the most profitable genetic solutions for commercial producers. The Association has stayed laser-focused on that single priority for decades. Dedicating resources to put the most comprehensive selection tools in the hands of Angus breeders while simultaneously growing

demand for Angus-sired cattle has delivered us the market share we enjoy today.

I am confident staying consistent with these priorities and strategies will ensure a successful future for the breed and Association members. But as in the past, innovative people implementing innovative technology will be key. We need to recognize that the industry is changing and so is our competition.

In the successful future of Angus, things may need to look different. We will likely conduct business and breed cattle differently than we do today. Likewise, the marketing of our cattle and beef will not be done the same as it was in the past. But at the core will be a dedication to keeping the Angus membership innovative, growing, successful and relevant.

In this world of disruptive technologies, your breed association can be innovative and relevant to help you meet those challenges in future. While each member is different from the next, the key is staying well-informed and engaging in open and candid dialogue to build a future our innovative pioneers will be proud of. 


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