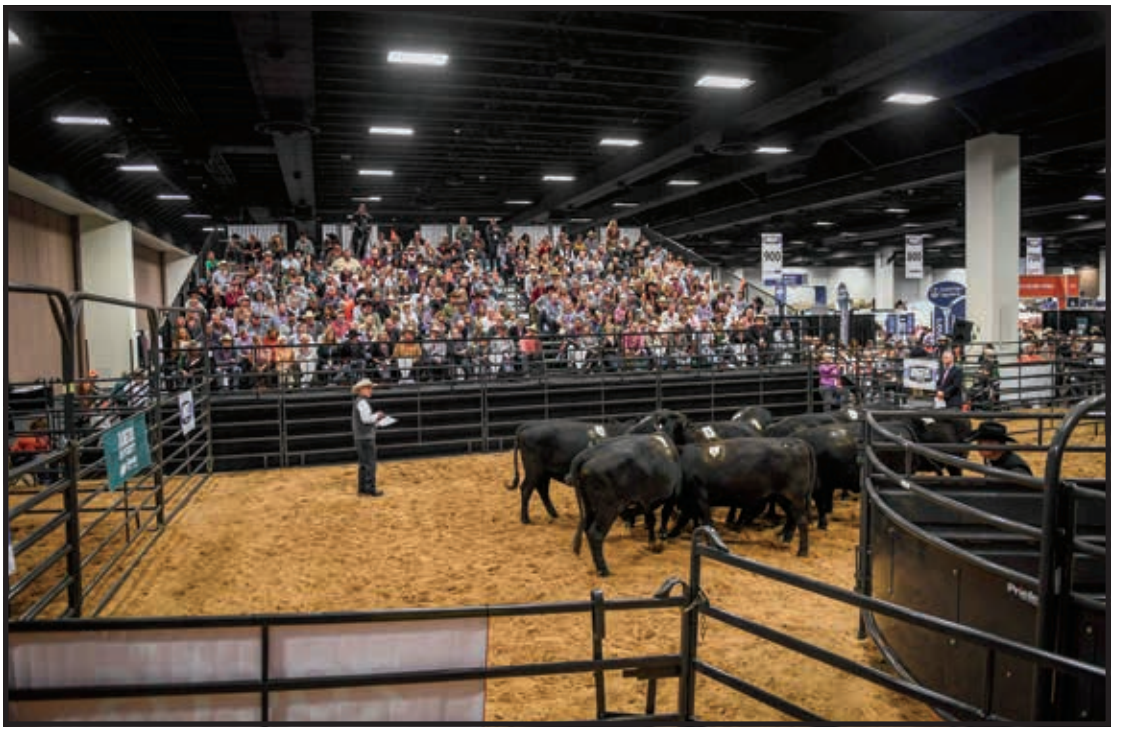


Progress from DNA Testing

Angus breeders share how genomic testing has advanced their herd performance.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

What if you could improve your herd genetics to 100% Choice and greater than 80% qualifying for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand in just four years? Or how about moving a herd from greater than 50% being deficient in trait categories to less than 5% being deficient?

Angus producers have found that it is possible through the valuable data from genomic testing to guide their selection and mating decisions.

Faulkton, S.D., Angus breeder Troy Hadrick, along with Jimmy Taylor, Cheyenne, Okla., and Lacy Cotter-Vardemann, Slayton, Texas, shared their experiences with genomic test results during a panel discussion at the 2017 Angus Convention in Fort Worth, Texas, in early November. The discussion was moderated by Kent Andersen with Zoetis and Kelli Retallick with the American Angus Association.

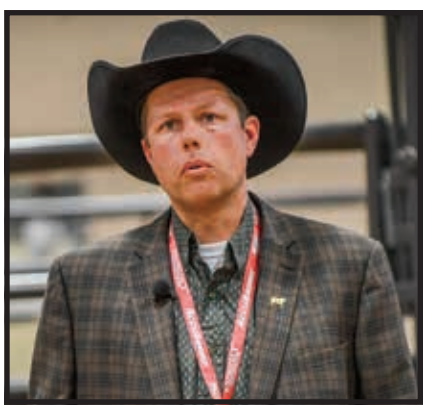
Above: *Kent Anderson (pictured) with Zoetis and Kelli Retallick of the American Angus Association moderated an innovations workshop featuring DNA technology.*

"You make one mistake and it can set you back a couple years. So I buy bulls from breeders who offer information. He with the most data wins."

— Troy Hadrick

Getting better

Faced with a need to enhance profitability on their South Dakota operation, Hadrick told the audience, "We couldn't get bigger, so we had to get better." Hadrick set his goal on raising higher-quality cattle that would return more money to the ranch. To do so, he turned to using genomic testing, using the GeneMax® Focus™ test, four years ago.



Troy Hadrick uses GeneMax Advantage genomic profiling to add value and profit to the cattle on his Faulkton, S.D., ranch.

He began by gathering genomic data on a set of steers, and he told himself "to trust the data and make decisions from it."

The initial data — which had Hadrick's calves 90% Choice and 30% CAB — convinced Hadrick to retain ownership on future calves. Plus, he adds, "It set us on a path of wanting all the data we could get. The more we use it, the more we've seen our bottom line improve."

In the second year, using a different sire, Hadrick reports his steer crop went to 13% Prime, 95% Choice, and 60% CAB. This past year, the fourth year of testing, their steers finished 35% Prime, 100% Choice and 84% CAB.

"I don't want to sell average cattle," Hadrick said. "I want to sell cattle that make us money."

He noted that since they've also started testing heifers and putting their calves into the herd, they've really seen their performance improvement take off.

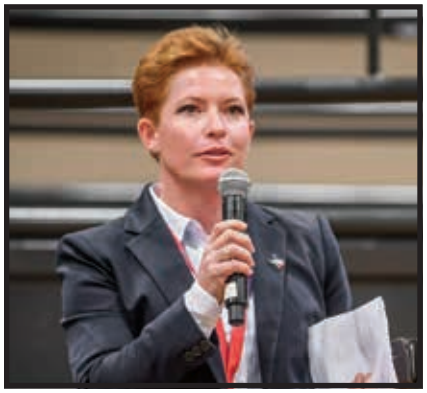
Regarding bull selection, Hadrick said, "I'm very picky about the bulls we are going to use. You make one mistake and it can set you back a couple years. So I buy bulls from breeders who offer information. He with the most data wins."

More improvements

In her challenging Texas environment, Cotter-Vardemann began genomic testing to use the technology to better mate cows to produce calves that could optimize supply-chain productivity.

"The feeder numbers are the ones I look at most, and marbling also means a lot to me," she said. "The better my calves do in the feedlot, the better the ranch does with profit."

Cotter-Vardemann said she started using the genomic test a few years ago, after her father passed away. She explained that for two years, while



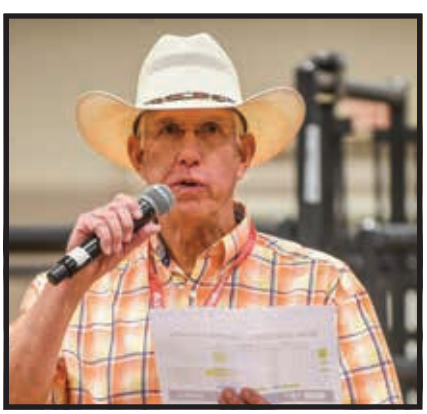
Lacy Cotter-Vardemann shared that she uses genomic profiling to match cows to her challenging Texas environment.

she helped him battle cancer, the cow herd took a back seat, and then she had a bit of a genetic mess.

"Genomic testing helped me clean house, and today we are refining things," she said of their ability to better manage sire selection and matings. "I like information; the more information you have, the better herd you can build."

Similarly in Oklahoma, Taylor shared, he initially started using genomic testing in 2012 as a culling tool. In his initial test on heifers, 52% were below average in certain trait categories. Four years later, just 4% have below-average deficiencies.

"I've made that much improvement and use these numbers now to make better mating decisions," he told the audience.



"I won't buy a bull that isn't 50K-tested, and I won't use an AI bull without knowing the 50K raw data," said Oklahoma cattleman Jimmy Taylor.

Regarding sire selection, Taylor likened genomic testing to a carpenter's toolbox.

"If you need to pound a nail, you're going to use a hammer," he explained. "If you need to cut a piece of lumber, you'll use a saw ... Genomic testing tells you what tool you need."

He continued: "If you've got an animal with too much milk, you can use a sire that will help bring that down. If you are concerned about fertility, you can use a sire who will boost that. If you retain ownership, like I do, and you don't want a bunch of Yield Grade 4s, you can select a bull that throws leaner calves."

> *"I don't want to sell average cattle. I want to sell cattle that make us money."*
> *— Troy Hadrick*

Today, Taylor said, "I won't buy a bull that isn't 50K-tested, and I won't use an AI (artificial insemination) bull without knowing the 50K raw data." That said, he added, "The bulls I use are more diverse today because with genomic testing I know I need different tools [traits]."

On all sires, he also pays attention to tenderness — and encourages other breeders to do the same. Taylor flags cattle that fall in the bottom 35% for tenderness and then strives to mate them with a sire that is in the higher percentage of the breed for tenderness to address that.

"I think tenderness needs to be part of every operation if we are going to please the consumer," Taylor concluded. "Marbling is flavor, but we also need tenderness." AJ

Editor's Note: *Kindra Gordon is a freelance writer and cattlewoman from Whitewood, S.D. This article is part of Angus Media's coverage of the 2017 Angus Convention available online at* www.angus.org/Media/News/AngusConvention.aspx.

VARILEK ANGUS

66TH ANNUAL ANGUS BULL SALE

Saturday, February 17, 2018 • 1 p.m.

Sale at the ranch
7 miles south of Geddes, SD

Selling 170 Registered Angus Bulls
- 110 Yearling Bulls (January)
- 60 Two-Year-Old Bulls (February)

40 Registered Angus Heifers
- 20 Open Heifers
- 20 Bred Heifers

The entire offering has Genomic Enhanced EPDs and are parent verified & carcass ultrasounded.

SIRES:
3P Epic
4M Element
KM Broken Bow
Quaker Hill Rampage
SAV Resource
Vision Unanimous
Varilek Relentless
KC Solution
Baldridge Bronc
Varilek Product
SAV Ten Speed
Varilek Dependaball
Basin Easy Decision
Connealy Black Granite

Sale Offering

Name	Reg.No	BW	WW	YW	MILK	Marb	RE
Varilek Epic 7114 48	18886488	-.1	+36	+107	+36	+.86	+.62
Varilek Element 7058 01	18886478	-1.8	+72	+115	+38	+.20	+.31
Varilek Element 7058 02	18886476	+.5	+39	+101	+28	+.57	+.63
Varilek Epic 7101 30	18886510	+1.8	+39	+106	+36	+.59	+.46
Varilek Relentless 7033 45	18886445	+1.3	+80	+135	+37	+.62	+.32
Varilek Rampage 7107 24	18886500	+2.1	+82	+107	+33	+.48	+.83
Varilek Dependaball 7080 48	18886488	+2.8	+80	+140	+31	+.31	+.57
Varilek Discovery 7028 118	18842489	+0.3	+87	+154	+31	+.55	+.58

EPDs as of 01/01/18

Varilek Broken Bow 7068 12
Reg. No. 18886468 • Calved: 1/12/15
BW WW YW Milk Marb RE
+1.1 +35 +128 +31 +.95 +.68

Varilek Solution 7152 62
Reg. No. 18886298 • Calved: 1/27/15
BW WW YW Milk Marb RE
-2.1 +67 +135 +29 +.36 +.36

Varilek Element 7051 04
Reg. No. 18886482 • Calved: 1/11/15
BW WW YW Milk Marb RE
-.8 +68 +116 +32 +.67 +.51

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44th Annual "Focus on Performance" Sale

Saturday, February 24, 2018 • 1 pm

At The Ranch • 5 miles west and 1 mile north of Britton, SD

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Sires Represented:

Featuring:

Free delivery — 500 miles
Contact us for a sale book.

"Performance is our Product"

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Photos and more information will be on our website:

www.bushangus.com

Premium Genetic Bull & Female Sale

Tuesday March 6, 2018

Wamego, KS – Kansas Bull Development

Angus | Red Angus | Sim Angus™ | Simmental

Fall Angus
AAA# [illegible]

Fall Angus
AAA# [illegible]

Fall Angus
AAA# [illegible]

Fall Red Angus
RAAA# [illegible]

20 Simm / SimAngus • 20 Angus • 15 Red Angus Bulls
15 Simm/Sim Angus Open Heifers • 6 Angus/Red Angus Heifers

Dikeman Simmental
[illegible], KS
[illegible]
Michael Dikeman
[illegible]
[illegible]

Huninghake Angus Ranch
[illegible], KS
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Rusty Huninghake
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DVAuction