

# More Than a Pedigree and a Prayer

*AGI president and director of performance programs aims to provide tools to breeders.*

*Story & photos by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers*

Dan Moser's deep interest in animal breeding and genetics reaches back to his childhood. At age 8, he bought his first Angus heifers from the Laflin Ranch near Olsburg, Kan., a family-owned operation that maintains one of the oldest registered Angus herds in the United States. Moser was so proud of his purchases that he cut out their pedigrees from the sale book and pinned them to a bulletin board in his bedroom.

When the time came to choose a sire for his first 4-H heifer, his more experienced father helped.

"Dad read through all the numbers and bull profiles in the Curtiss Breeding Service catalog," says Moser, now president of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) and director of performance programs for the American Angus Association. "Finally, Dad gave me the choice between two bulls. I was nervous, because in those days, all I had was a pedigree, a picture and a prayer."

Raised on a small seedstock operation near Effingham, Kan., Moser worked hands-on with livestock and observed every year how new progeny turned out.

## Putting it together

"I participated in 4-H and junior cattle programs," he says. "I had a real interest in seedstock cattle, and my favorite subject in school was math. I especially enjoyed calculus, but I didn't know how to put them together."

After high school, Moser attended



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Kansas State University (K-State), where he took an animal breeding class.

"We'd sit in that class and talk about genetics applied to livestock, using math and statistics," he says. "To me, that was so much fun! I didn't mind the homework in that class at all.

"When I was a senior in 1990," he continues, "I attended an animal breeding and genetics research meeting in Manhattan, Kan., and got to meet professors and researchers in the genetics field. That meeting confirmed what I wanted to do as a career."

At K-State, Moser received a

bachelor's degree in animal sciences. He went on to earn his master's degree and doctorate in beef cattle genetics at the University of Georgia.

## A teacher first

"At that time, there were no jobs available in breed associations working with performance programs," Moser says, "so I got involved in teaching as a grad student and enjoyed it."

Moser spent the next 17 years as a faculty member, first at the University of Nebraska and then at K-State, teaching genetics and animal breeding and some applied animal science classes.

"I enjoyed the work," he says, "but I always wanted to work directly in the industry."

## Real-world application

That opportunity came along in August 2014 when the AGI Board of Directors unanimously named Moser as the new president of AGI and Association director of performance programs.

His eagerness to start showed. Before he was officially on the job, Moser reported to Saint Joseph to meet with industry journalists. Then he set to work learning the Association's ins and outs.

"After I was hired, one of my first priorities was to understand how all the systems work, such as data analysis and delivery," he says. "I also spent time getting to know breeders and how they use the information we provide and what their needs are."

Then and now, Moser connects with Angus producers as much as he can.

“Because of my background, I think a lot as an educator,” he says. “I’m always wanting to find out what tools and training Angus breeders need. How can we empower them to make better use of the information that we provide and better explain that information to their customers? I spend a lot of time thinking about all that.”

“In my conversations with producers, I’ve heard a very broad range of feedback,” Moser continues. “I heard some breeders say that there’s a lot of information they want that we don’t have yet, and I



heard some say it’s just too much information. Overall, we at AGI are trying to provide as much information as we can in a user-friendly format.”

At home, Moser and his family live on a small farm in Westmoreland, Kan. He’s married to Lisa Hawkins Moser, who grew up in the Angus

business and was a field editor for the *Angus Journal* in the mid-1990s. They have three children: Justin, who’s a sophomore at K-State; Ryan, a junior in high school; and Allison, a seventh grader.

“Our kids do 4-H, so we have a handful of cattle, but no Angus because of a potential conflict of interest,” he says. “Still, my kids are learning the same

life lessons about responsibility and being around animals. That’s what matters.” **AJ**

*Editor’s Note: Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a freelance writer and photographer from Blanco, Texas.*

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