



A KINDRED SPIRIT

The National Angus Tour reminds producers from across the country how much they have in common.

by Megan Silveira, associate editor

“Seashells.”

The simple word silenced the bus for a few long moments, as cattlemen from across the country looked out the windows to the Florida landscape. While the cattle — animals with familiar black hides, but novel traits like floppy ears and small neck humps — were the stars of the tour, Angus members realized just how unique the 2023 National Angus Tour was when it was revealed the road beneath their bus’s wheels was made of crushed seashells rather than gravel.

This year’s tour — an annual event and highlight of the Angus Convention schedule — allowed producers to explore some of the six million ranching acres that make up the Sunshine State.

“I think if you want to have your eyes opened, one of the greatest ways to be exposed to different production techniques and

Kempfer Cattle Company is a family operation that has been in the central Florida area for more than 120 years. They currently have cattle on nearly 25,000 acres, and supplement their ranching income with hunting, timber and sod businesses.

practices is to go on the Angus tour,” says Steven Herbst.

The cattleman has attended nearly every Angus Convention since the event’s inception, and he’s tried not to miss a single tour.

“They’re always informative and educational,” Herbst explains. “It’s always fun to meet new people and see new production practices in different parts of the country.”

The tour lets Herbst get out into the country, so he can feel the sand, see the native grass, shake hands with local producers. In his mind, it’s the best type of education. This year in particular, Herbst says he learned a lot.

“The landscape here in Florida is completely different,” Herbst admits. “I never envisioned it being this way.”

Valleys and mountains built on land made of rich clay make up the terrain in Salmon, Idaho, where Herbst runs his Angus herd. Visibility is limited compared to the vast Florida landscape, and heat isn’t a concern for Herbst like it is to the staff at Deseret Ranch and Kempfer Cattle Company who hosted this year’s tour. The emphasis Herbst and his peers at home have on PAP (pulmonary arterial pressure) testing is equivalent to hair shed for Florida cattlemen. But the biggest difference? Water.

“In our country, if you don’t irrigate, you don’t have anything,” Herbst says, noting the stark disparity between his annual expectation of 12-13 inches (in.) of rain compared to the 100

in. Florida sees each year. “So it’s stark differences, but very educational, informative, about different sectors and ways that the beef industry has adapted to the different climates in our great country.”

In the mind of Pat Durden, president of the Florida Cattlemen’s Association and the tour guide on Herbst’s bus, that was the entire goal of welcoming American Angus Association members to his state: to emphasize shared values and the strength of the Angus breed.

“I think the group enjoyed the uniqueness that Florida presents. We obviously have a lot of *Bos indicus* cattle in Florida, but I think both ranches showed them how you can utilize Angus genetics to improve your marketability,” Durden says. “Ranching is the same everywhere. It’s hard work, and you’re basically just trying to feed that cow what she needs. We do it in Florida in just a little bit different way sometimes.”

Clint Richardson, general manager at Deseret Ranch,

Florida Fast Facts

- CATTLE HAVE BEEN IN FLORIDA FOR MORE THAN 500 YEARS.
- NEARLY 1.7 MILLION BEEF CATTLE CALL THE SUNSHINE STATE HOME.
- ABOUT 700,000 CALVES ARE SHIPPED OUT OF STATE ANNUALLY.
- FLORIDA’S WARM WEATHER DRAWS NEARLY 160 MILLION VISITORS EACH YEAR.
- THE AVERAGE COW-CALF OPERATION CAN MANAGE A PAIR ON SIX ACRES. MOST PRODUCERS HAVE 300 HEAD.
- CLOSE TO 300 AG COMMODITIES ARE PRODUCED IN FLORIDA.
- THE HARVESTING AND SELLING OF CABBAGE PALM TREES ARE A RELIABLE SOURCE OF INCOME FOR MANY CATTLE PRODUCERS.
- ALLIGATORS CAN BE A THREAT TO YOUNG CALVES, BUT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IT’S RANCH DOGS THAT THE ALLIGATORS WILL SNATCH.

reminded tour attendees that while he leans a bit heavier on heterosis, he still can appreciate the Angus cow for what she does. The ranch has 15 locations scattered across the United States, but Richardson says no staff member ever loses sight of the ultimate goal.

“It’s probably a similar goal that all of you guys have ... but it’s trying to strive to be better stewards of the environment, of our animals, of our people and of our communities,” he explains.

For Herbst and other Angus members, that might be the most gratifying part of attending the tours: realizing that no matter the

location, no matter the challenges, the beef industry is kept alive thanks to the foundation of good animal husbandry.

Reminding cattlemen that the industry is tied together with an internal bond, on the flip side, is a gratifying experience for Durden and others who lead tours.

“We all have a kindred spirit of taking care of the land and land stewardship and animal husbandry,” Durden says. “It’s always a joy to be able to have fellowship and visit with folks from other parts of the country.” **AJ**

Deseret Ranch’s 15 locations are spread across the United States. The operation is a fully integrated system, and their 400,000 head are managed in a two-breed rotation.

