

Harold and Barb Andrews manage careers and Andrews Angus.

ANDREWS ANGUS

Fifteen years ago when they decided they wanted to get in the cattle business, both Harold and Barb Andrews were working full-time in town. They intended to quit their jobs, buy 200 cows and the land to support them, then devote 100% of their time and energy to ranching.

That's what they intended, that is, until they sat down and penciled out the costs. Faced with what seemed like astronomical figures (especially when compared to their assets), they realized that, if they wanted to own cattle, they would have to approach the subject differently.

So they kept their jobs, decided to go into the cattle business on a smaller scale and in 1965 bought 78 acres south of Gill, Colo., a small town just east and a little north of Greeley.

Since then the 78 acres—Andrews Angus—has seen several changes, undergone improvements and become home for 23 Angus cows. And since then Harold and Barb have learned a lot about budgeting time and a lot about the cattle business. While they were at it, they increased their cow weights from 800 lb. to 1,200 lb. They shortened their calving season from about five months to about a month. In just four years they put 110 lb. on their average bull weaning weight, 55 lb. on heifers. And they put height on their cows; none of them measures less than 50 inches at the withers.

Didn't Know Cattle

Although they both claimed rural

backgrounds—Harold grew up on a row crop farm near Eaton and Barb was raised just north of there in the small farming community of Ault—neither knew much about cattle.

But Harold had been looking at Angus. "They stood out from all the rest," he says, "and the closer I looked, the better they got. I became interested in their performance and decided I needed to learn more about the breed."

So began part one of a several-part learning process.

The Andrewses set about educating themselves—reading, talking to Angus breeders, visiting with their county extension agent. Both literature and cattle people indicated Angus generally were quite self-sufficient, had few problems with sickness, didn't need dehorning, weren't bothered with pinkeye, had few calving problems—just the ticket for two people whose time was going to be limited by those jobs in town.

So the decision to phase out the small commercial herd they'd stocked the farm with originally and to replace them with registered Angus wasn't difficult. Nor was buying Angus; there were plenty of them around. The difficult part was knowing what to look for, how to buy, then knowing what to do with the cattle once they bought them.

So began part two of the learning process.

They Were Black

About all that could be said for the Andrewses' first Angus purchase (through a local livestock auction) was that there were five of them and they were black. The next 17 (which completed the original Andrews Angus herd) fit right in. "We really didn't know what we were doing," Barb says. "We didn't know what we were looking for. And at that time we didn't have enough Angus background to know which bloodlines were considered desirable. We also didn't realize how important pedigrees could be in determining prices. So we stumbled through our earlier buys, learning from our errors."

During those early years the price paid for each animal was determined by gut feeling and the checkbook. The checkbook could have suffered.

But by this time Harold and Barb had done two things that were to help them tremendously. They joined an Angus

association (the north central Colorado group) and, because of their daughter Sandi's interest, they started going to junior shows.

Sandi, incidentally, became interested in showing through 4-H. And Buster Sharp, an Angus breeder whose by-then grown children had participated in 4-H, gave her her first show stick and her first lessons in fitting and showing. Then Colorado youth programs gave Sandi ample opportunity to try out her new skills.

One Show Led to Another

Between May 1 and Nov. 1 there are a number of 1-day 4-H and FFA shows held throughout Colorado. Friends of the Andrews family, the Richard Heckendorfs, were showing at these events and offered to take Sandi and her Angus along. Participation in those small shows led to the county fair, then to the state fair, then to a couple national shows and the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

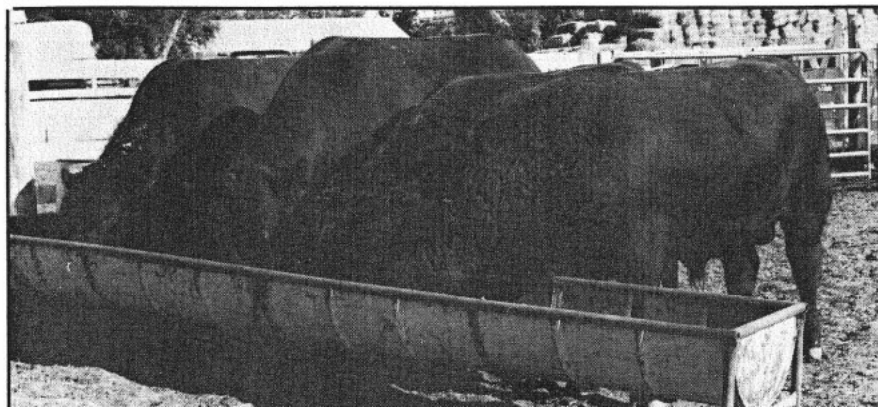
Throughout her junior career, showmanship contests were Sandi's favorites, she says, because she felt more personally involved in them. She did well in them, too, and in 1978 was one of 15 finalists at the National Showmanship Contest held in Des Moines, Iowa. (Incidentally, she feels participation in that contest is most valuable for older showmen.)

Now Sandi does all the showing for Andrews Angus; but she has help from her parents when it comes to fitting. That's something all three Andrewses enjoy doing, and they've been rewarded for their efforts with favorable comments from judges and show spectators.

The whole family caught the show bug, they all enjoyed attending; but probably most important, says Barb, shows provided them with a means of contact with other Angus breeders.

As did participation in association activities. And through these two things—junior shows and association events—the Andrews family had an opportunity to listen and to observe. Observation proved the best teacher, says Barb, and by the time they were ready to purchase some replacement heifers, they'd gained both knowledge and confidence, so those replacements were an improvement over the original 22 cows. (They came out of a herd owned by a breeder they knew, and by now the Andrewses had a fair idea of what

It's chow time at Andrews Angus.



they wanted.) As proof of Harold and Barb's progress, some of those replacements' daughters are still in the herd.

Scared to Death

In buying their first bulls, the Andrewses stayed on the conservative side; in fact, when they decided it was time for one of their first bulls to move on, he brought more money on the hamburger market than they had paid for him as a herd sire. When Harold and Barb decided it was time to invest more heavily in a bull, the thought scared them to death, they say, but after due deliberation they paid \$3,000 for CSU Diplomat 4110, a son of FR Diplomat 152 bred in the Colorado State University herd. They picked him for his size, his conformation and his pedigree. That was five years ago. The Andrewses ended up using the bull three years and were happy with the results.

Then two years ago they bought their second bull, going to the Ken-Caryl herd at Littleton for Ken Caryl Controller 668, a son of Northern Prospector 1125. They were still scared, says Barb, especially since he was a yearling and they weren't sure how he'd grow out. But they'd studied their lessons well and he grew out as they'd hoped, is doing a good job for them and, interestingly, is siring some top calves out of daughters of the CSU bull.



Sandi Andrews helps out on weekends.

Today, with 15 years of trial and error behind them, Harold and Barb feel comfortable buying cattle. They are familiar with pedigrees, know what they want in an animal and about what they should have to pay.

The Next Lesson

Buying cattle, however, hasn't been their only lesson. When their herd reached 35 head, the Andrewses began culling on the conviction that for them low numbers necessitated high quality. So began another part of the learning process.

In 1974 with the help of county extension agent Gene Inlos, the Andrewses started keeping track of weights—birth, weaning

and yearling—as well as daily gains, and that information became part of their selection criteria. "We use performance records," Harold says, "although we don't base our selection totally on them. We take a good long look at everything—the pedigree, eye appeal, over-all balance and conformation, structural soundness. Then we decide."

Even so, the real burden of proof lies with the calf crop. A cow must produce a calf that's up to Harold and Barb's standards or she's ticketed to the local auction—with two exceptions. An Andrews cow does get a second chance if her calf dies from something other than poor mothering. And if a calf is well-raised but unacceptable structure-wise, then that calf's dam has a second chance—bred, of course, to a different bull.

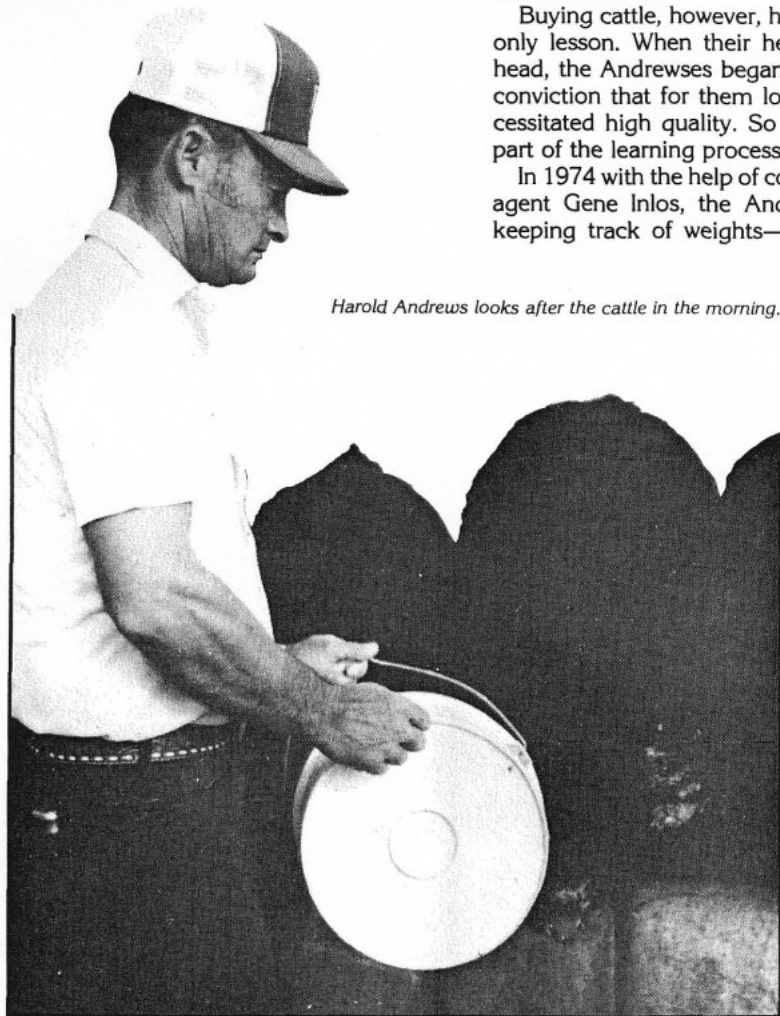
And it's all these selection criteria that put 110 lb. on the bulls' average weaning weight, 55 lb. on the heifers in four years.

And as it turns out, record keeping not only helped add pounds to the calf crop, it's paying off in another important area—merchandising. Harold and Barb market their cattle privately as well as through two sales, the Colorado Angus Assn. state sale and the North Central Colorado Angus Assn. Back to Grass event. And they've found prospective customers are more apt to purchase an animal with performance than one without.

Cattle and Career Co-Exist

Throughout the learning process, the Andrews herd has had to share time with two careers.

Harold, deputy sheriff for 10 years, is now into the third year of his 4-year term as sheriff of Weld County. Weld is one of Colorado's largest counties, covering 4,060 square miles, and it's up to Harold to keep peace there, to maintain a jail facility for 95 inmates and to oversee 165 employees ranging from law officers to those involved in administration to social workers.



Harold Andrews looks after the cattle in the morning.

It's not an 8 to 5 job. Late night calls and emergencies have a tendency to lengthen Harold's working hours. "At the end of the day," he says, "I can't lock my responsibilities in my office and go home. There are times when I'm on duty 24 hours a day. Being sheriff is demanding on me and my family, but I enjoy it."

While Harold is seeing to law and order from his Greeley office, Barb spends her days on the other side of town tending to alumni affairs for the University of Northern Colorado. As assistant director of alumni relations, she keeps tabs on and plans functions for the school's 38,000 alumni. She normally has plenty to do, but around homecoming and reunion time, Barb says, "it's hectic—but I like it."

Family-Powered Operation

Obviously, both Harold and Barb hold down demanding jobs. And now even Sandi, who has helped with the cattle since she was old enough to do so, is gone during the week, attending Northeast Colorado Junior College at Sterling. She's home every weekend, though, to lend a hand in what necessarily (and the Andrewses say enjoyably) has become a family-powered operation.

During the week, the care and feeding of the stock is up to Harold and Barb. They

take turns with chores—Harold takes the morning shift, Barb the evening. These daily chores are kept simple. Hay and grain is fed and cattle are checked quickly, twice a day, for obvious problems. Major projects are saved for weekends when the work crew is complete.

The Andrewses budget their time, looking over the farm each week, deciding what needs to be done, listing priorities, then setting tentative completion dates.

And there's an occasional trade-off when paychecks help buy time. For example, they have hay custom-stacked in locations convenient for feeding (something they have to do from about October to April). They buy grain pre-mixed and supplemented (and to save the 12-mile trip to town, either Harold or Barb picks up feed on the way home from work).

The farm, which is on flat land surrounded by fields of sugar beets, pinto beans and corn, is irrigated. Five years ago the Andrewses invested in a sprinkling system with eight towers that can cover most of their 78 acres. Consequently irrigation, which used to be a major summer project, now amounts to turning a switch on or off.

A.I. and Synchronization

In interest of herd improvement, A.I. entered the picture in the spring of 1979. The Andrewses worked closely with Chuck Swenson, an American Breeders Service representative, who did the inseminating for them. As a result, last spring 13 of the 23 Andrews cows dropped calves by Thomas Flash, Thomas Chaps and Happyvale Adventure 048H. The remaining 10 calves were sired naturally by their Ken-Caryl bull.

Then last breeding season, with an eye to a short calving season, the Andrews herd was synchronized, something that had to be a definite plus, they felt, for people with limited time. They're expecting a 4-week calving season this March and those calves, incidentally, will be by Sir Wms Warrant, reigning national grand champion.

Calving season, by the way, has never presented any serious problems even though the Andrewses can't monitor their herd during the day. They do check the cows before and after work as well as during the night if they think that's necessary. And if they suspect problems, they do bring a cow up to the barn for closer and easier observation. But probably most important, they feel, they chose Angus and their easy calving qualities in the first place. And now they look for easy calvers and avoid using bulls with high birth weights. (Ideal birth weight, they say, falls in the 75-85-lb. range.)

100% Calf Crop

The Andrewses have been rewarded for their caution; last spring their 23 cows presented them with 23 live healthy calves. And only twice in the herd's history have they had to help a cow deliver.

So the Andrewses have learned to handle projects like calving, irrigation, haying, chores—and careers. And they are no

longer newcomers to the Angus business. But they are still learning. And they have remained very active in Angus-related organizations; more than one person has been heard to say the Andrews family is the backbone of at least a couple of Colorado's Angus associations.

Harold, who is now advisor to the state junior association, put in two years as president of the North Central Colorado Angus Assn.

Barb recently completed a 2-year stint as secretary-treasurer of the Colorado Angus Assn., and thanks to the time she spent, she feels there's a good working relationship among the 150 members. She also started a state newsletter, something that's helped unify an association separated by geography (namely the Continental Divide), and she's encouraged the state association to encourage the junior association, something that's paid off in terms of increased junior membership and more junior activities.


Sandi's been president as well as treasurer of the Colorado Junior Angus Assn. and was 1978's junior Colorado Angus queen. An agricultural journalism major, she is currently in charge of public relations for the state junior group.

Time and Effort Well Spent

Although all three have devoted time and effort to Angus organizations, they feel they've received much more than they've given. And they recommend participation in similar organizations to all Angus breeders. "If you limit yourself to your cattle and your farm," Barb believes, "you are cheating yourself. You can't learn, you can't change and you can't grow by doing that. You as well as your cattle will benefit if you go to fairs, meetings, programs, other related activities."

The Andrewses, by the way, still have their sights set on that 200-head herd. But for now the job situation won't change. As Harold puts it, "Without our jobs we couldn't make it. We want to be self-sufficient raising Angus but it's not possible yet. Right now our jobs put bread and butter on the table."

The small herd does pay its own way, though. But that doesn't mean the Andrewses intend to stand still on that front. The size of the farm precludes increasing numbers, but nothing can stand in the way of quality, they've decided, and quality is their goal. According to Barb, their definition of that goal changes as they learn and as their cattle improve. "Over the years," she explains, "we've discovered you can learn from others—but you have to set your own goals. Then you have to re-evaluate where you want to go as you go. Ten years ago we would have been happy to be where we are today. Now, though, we're not satisfied. So we're culling harder and intend to A.I. more, breeding for consistency in our cows—consistency in femininity, in reproduction, in size.

The learning process continues. 

Barb Andrews does the evening chores.

