



# Working for Future Angus Generations

*Matt Perrier's ranching roots benefit NJAA members.*

BY LORI MAUDE

When Matt Perrier began his Angus career at the age of nine, he probably never saw himself as chairman of the largest junior breed association in the United States.

Last July in Louisville, Ky., Matt became just that when he took over the reins of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). With 8,000 plus members, NJAA membership has been on the rise the past five years and the Angus breed is enjoying immense popularity, says this young man from Eureka, Kan.

A fourth generation Angus breeder and fifth generation Greenwood County rancher, Matt began his Angus herd in the third grade when he traded labor for a heifer out of his parents' herd.

"I tried to buy a heifer from outside our herd once in 1984 or '85 but that didn't work out very well," explains Matt. "From that point on I added to my herd using genetics from our own operation."

Matt's parents, Tom and Carolyn Perrier, were honored as 1995 Seedstock Producer of the Year by the Beef Improvement Federation. The family's operation, Dalebanks Angus is located on land settled in the 1860s with the Homestead Act.

The Perrier Family Angus roots can trace back to Matt's great-grandfather, Bert Barrier. Barrier had heard about these Aberdeen-Angus cattle that were to be on display at the American Royal.

Barrier searched and searched for these cattle and finally someone showed him where to find the exhibit, explains Matt. Under a stairwell in the old American Royal building, Bert Barrier found the solid black cattle that began the Dalebanks Angus legacy.

With a deep history in the breed, Matt looks to the future of the breed.

**A senior in animal science** at Kansas State University, Matt is a unique member of the NJAA Board because his experience in the Angus business comes from the commercial angle versus experience in the show ring. He also never held an office or position in his state association.

Matt explains that he has only shown in two or three state Angus shows over the years because his summers were already filled with activities. Involvement in football and basketball camps, 4-H and work on the ranch, didn't leave Matt the time it requires to get animals ready to show.

Still, when Matt attended state Angus meetings he always tried to have an active part and offer input on business of the association. He also took part in the team sales contest at the state and national level.

At the 1992 National Junior Angus Show, Matt represented Kansas in the national showmanship contest. He has also taken part in the herdsman quiz and the cow-calf computer game.

"I enjoy the contests that deal more with performance information and the commercial end of the business," admits Matt.

Elected to a two-year term on the NJAA Board at the 1994 National Junior Angus Show in Des Moines, Iowa, Matt began what has been an eye-opening experience.

"I went into this position with no preconceived notions about what to expect because I didn't know what to expect," says Matt.

The biggest challenge Matt faces as chairman of the board is trying to be a respected leader but also a friend to the members of this growing association.

"It's not as hard within the board because I've never seen 12 people work together so

well without any unfair division of work," explains Matt. "The challenge comes when working with state groups or other groups of juniors. There is such a fine line between discipline and friendship in these situations."

Matt wanted to share his insight with the board and come up with more ways to include the junior members that don't show.

"I think it's important to cater to those members who don't show because they are just as important to the future of the industry as those who are involved in the show ring," stresses the K-State senior.

James Fisher, director of junior activities for the American Angus Association, says Matt brings several strong and useful qualities to the 12-member NJAA board.

"Matt brings a great ability to listen and he encourages discussion among the board to search for answers to the hard questions," says Fisher. "He is forward thinking in his ideas for the junior association. Matt always asks what the board should be doing to make NJAA better for all its members."

Fisher says Matt's background is ideal for his position, especially as the NJAA continues to diversify its programs to include more members.

"We look for leaders beyond the show ring and want youth leaders with knowledge of the entire beef industry," explains Fisher. "We want to use the shows as a reason for the junior members to gather, not as the only activity for them. We feel leadership and personal development is more important."

Matt saw a board position as a chance to expand his leadership abilities. The position did make him prioritize his activities on-campus, where he serves as president of FarmHouse Fraternity and as vice president of Block and Bridle.



*"I believe strongly in some of the things we are doing in our Angus operation and I want to be apart of the decision making."* -Matt Perrier

"I want to be in activities where I feel I can make a difference and that I will get a lot out of," says Matt. "The NJAA is one of those activities. We need to educate the younger generation of beef producers on new ways to improve our industry and I feel we do that in our organization."

His own future is a bit uncertain after graduation. Matt is looking at a job in the animal science industry but also has a desire to go back to the family ranch.

"I believe strongly in some of the things we are doing in our Angus operation and I want to be apart of the decision making," says Matt. "But I also would like to see what the business world is like."

Despite his future uncertainty one thing is for sure, Matt Perrier wears his green jacket of the NJAA Board with pride and he does it proud with his actions.

AJ