

# Quiet Voice, Loud Influence

*The 2021 Angus Herdsman of the Year lets his work speak for him.*

*by Megan Silveira, assistant editor*

The feedtruck rattles driving down the old dirt road, and one has to lean in a little closer to listen as Alex Bauer describes the views between each pasture and points out specific cattle with just a single glance. While his voice may be quiet, there's no doubting the passion behind his words.

Bauer considers himself just one of many dedicated and passionate cattlemen in the Angus world, but the rest of the industry sees him as a step above the rest. His love for the livestock and devotion to personal growth are just a few of the reasons the 29-year-old was recognized as the 2021 Angus Herdsman of the Year.

"It was humbling," he says, reflecting on the moment the award was announced Jan. 8 at Cattlemen's Congress in Oklahoma City, Okla. "You hear your name called out, and you immediately think of all the other people you know who are talented and deserving. I'm honestly just humbled and honored."

## A modest start

Bauer has called Conley Cattle home for the past four years, as he works as herdsman for the Sulphur, Okla., operation. Despite the favor he now expresses for black-hided cattle, Bauer admits he was not always tied to the breed.



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Bauer grew up in Willard, Ohio, where he found himself drawn to the livestock industry because of the stories his father and aunt shared from their younger days exhibiting market steers in 4-H.

He spent his youth around club calf steers, but became hooked on the Business Breed when he started working at Champion Hill in Bidwell, Ohio. Bauer credits Jon Davis for the love he has for the Angus breed.

"I had grown up around cattle, but going down there and seeing

that many cows with things I appreciated helped me latch onto the Angus breed," he explains. "I respect what the Angus female brings to the table. These cows do exactly what they were made to do."

Bauer says he has always felt the Angus industry has a focus on "the real world." He describes Angus cattle as being easy keepers with natural maternal instincts and longevity in the herd.

After Champion Hill's dispersal sale only a year after Bauer started working full-time, the new Angus enthusiast found himself debating between finding another job with the Business Breed or returning home to Ohio to farm.

When Bauer was offered the

opportunity to transition into a role as herdsman for the Conley family of Conley Cattle, he found himself moving to Oklahoma in June 2017.

As herdsman, Bauer says his job description means “doing what needs to be done.” From working with cows and monitoring calves to running the show barn and prepping sale cattle, Bauer says his role is to help the Conley family with whatever they need on the operation.

“Alex has a strong work ethic to get things done and finish jobs,” says Kyle Conley, owner of Conley Cattle. “He is a guy you can trust. We rely on him day in and day out.”

Bauer admits the Conley family has helped him as much as he helps them. Kyle; his wife, Amanda; and their two children, Case and Jack, have become a second family, Bauer says. Kyle and Amanda serve as Bauer’s mentors while the boys act as Bauer’s little brothers.

“It’s honestly been really fun working with this family,” Bauer says. “They’ve been awesome to me, and they’ve taken me under their wing.”

Kyle adds he and his family consider Alex to be a “first-class guy” who they are honored to have on their team.

Bauer says he was the first of his family in Ohio to leave the nest, and moving to Oklahoma was a bit of a culture shock for him. With the title of herdsman, Kyle and Amanda taught him about raising livestock, but Bauer says they also taught him a lot about life.

“I’ve really grown up since I’ve been here,” Bauer says. “When I came here, I had spent some time working in the sale environment, but I needed real exposure to large numbers when it

came to the cow-calf side.”

Exposure is exactly what he got. With a herd of 250 head, the Conley family gave Bauer the opportunity to grow as a cattleman.

Conley Cattle has a focus on raising phenotypically elite cattle, but Bauer says the operation also understands the importance of numbers. Kyle has taught him how to merge the two worlds of looks and data in livestock, Bauer adds.

Kyle says Alex consistently offers a new and exciting opinion on the cattle industry — a view he believes has helped the entire operation grow.

“Alex has brought another point of view for us to have,” Kyle explains. “He always has a good point, and we take his ideas seriously.”

Between hours spent in the pasture to time on the road with Kyle traveling to look at different types of livestock in environments across the country, Bauer says he and his

thoughts on cattle production have evolved over the past four years.

More importantly, Bauer’s time with Conley Cattle helped him find his path.

“When I first got here, I didn’t know if this was something I truly wanted to do for the rest of my life or if it was just a good learning experience,” he says. “In the four years that I’ve been here, watching the operation grow has made it hard for me to think about doing anything other than raising cattle.”

### Support system

As he spent more time in the Angus industry, Bauer says he continually felt more at home around the members of the Business Breed.

“I’ve always felt like I’ve been welcomed in with open arms,” he says. “I’ve had so many people that I’ve been able to ask questions to and consider friends and learn from. It



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feels like one big family.”

Bauer names Dave Schrock, Harris Penner and Tyler Cates as just a few of the many faces in the industry who played a vital role in making him feel at home.

This sense of comradery is what led Bauer to introduce his sister, Maddie, to the world of Angus. He purchased her a heifer at a 2015 Champion Hill sale.

“I wanted to share that experience with her,” he explains, “and now it’s evolved into something we both have a passion for and have turned into a career.”

Alex was so instrumental in building Maddie’s love for the breed that she now serves as the events coordinator at the American Angus Association. Alex says he and his sister are close, making the moment even more meaningful when Maddie was the one to present him with the herdsman award.

“I was so proud in that moment,” Maddie says. “The fact that Alex’s hard work was being recognized by his peers was reward in itself, but me being there and presenting the award was priceless.”

Maddie considers her brother more than deserving, and says he is a humble, caring person who never strives for anything less than success.

“Alex likes to keep his head down, nose to the grindstone and work as hard as he can,” she explains. “He is a man of few words, but he cares deeply about his family, his work and the people around him.”



**Alex Bauer was presented the Angus Herdsman of the Year award by his sister, Maddie Bauer.**

Watching that care and passion turn into the career of Alex’s dream has made Maddie prouder than she could have ever imagined. She recalls late nights in the barn with Alex before they had found their place in the world, remembering the dreams they shared.

“We’ve always talked and had a lot of dreams together,” Alex says. “It all had seemed a little far-fetched when we were kids. For all of these things to come together and to be recognized for something like this was really neat.”

Maddie isn’t the only family member who has influenced him during his journey. Alex says the unwavering support of all his siblings and his parents has kept him focused on achieving his dreams. Even outside of the family tree, Alex finds

himself surrounded by like-minded individuals who help him be his best.

While the family behind Conley Cattle are proud to claim Alex as one of their own, Kyle says their customers are just as devoted to Alex.

In addition to the Conley family, he names his peer, Cole Atkinson, as a valuable member of his cattle family who has influenced his personal successes. Atkinson is a key member of the Conley team, and Alex considers him a friend and valued co-worker who brings a lot to the operation in terms of passion, work ethic and knowledge.

No matter what the future brings, Alex says he knows cattle will always be a part of his life. He hopes to continue making a difference at Conley Cattle, but says he has plans to start building up his own herd of Angus cattle.

“Time at Conley Cattle has shaped that goal,” Bauer explains. “If I wouldn’t have been here, I don’t know if I would’ve had that desire. I’ve realized this is so much more than just showing Angus heifers.” 