

Colorado Cattle Couple to Illinois Angus Family

Double Diamond first-generation Angus breeders take nothing for granted.

by Barb Baylor Anderson

Scott and Cindy Anderson thought they'd come full circle when their heifer was chosen Grand Champion Angus Female at the National Western Stock Show Roll of Victory Show in 2012. The first-generation Angus breeders, based in Chrisman, Ill., were winning close to their home roots.

"Scott and I are originally from Colorado. It was so much fun taking that honor back on our old stomping grounds," says Cindy, who owns Double Diamond Angus with her husband, Scott.

Cindy grew up on a dairy and commercial beef herd operation in Brighton, Colo. Scott, from Eaton, Colo., showed steers in 4-H from his family's feedlot/commercial herd operation. The pair met at Colorado State University and married in 1987 while Scott finished his final year of veterinary school. He graduated with his doctor of veterinary medicine degree in 1988.

Building an ET business

Scott began his professional career in 1989 under the supervision of Kirk Gray, a veterinarian with Granada Genetics in Texas. Scott later moved to Granada's Oxford, Ind., satellite on Brost Angus Farm to run that part of the operation. Granada went bankrupt shortly thereafter.



Family is the guiding principle for the Andersons' embryo transfer and Angus businesses.

"We managed to purchase the business and keep the embryo transfer (ET) clientele while leasing the facility from Brost Angus Farm," Scott says. "That was October 1991. We got to know the industry and people in it rather quickly. We became good friends with a lot of our customers."

In spring 1992, the Andersons bought their present location in Chrisman, Ill. With two small boys, Double Diamond Genetics, Inc., was open for business in a new state.

"We started from scratch, and we worked hard. Nothing was passed down to us from previous generations," Cindy says. "Now I would say the guiding principle in

both our ET and Angus business is family. We have built up a reputable business and are known nationwide."

Over the past 30 years, Double Diamond Genetics has completed more than 10,000 collections and 40,000 transfers. They offer ET donor cow management in a grazing/pasture environment and offer on-the-farm ET. Clients are from across the nation, but the majority of their work is in Illinois and Indiana. They can house up to 45 donors in-clinic with access to various recipient pools. In addition to collections and transfers, they freeze, store and ship for clients.

"We were conventional flushing, and now IVF (*in vitro* fertilization) is

heavily used in this area. We started in Illinois and have spread across the Midwest for all cattle breeds,” Scott says.

Adding an Angus herd

The Andersons brought more than their ET business to Illinois from Brost Angus Farm. They also purchased their first Angus heifer there with designs on building an Angus cow herd.

“We began with Angus by purchasing cattle from our clients, and it escalated from there,” Cindy says. “We paid our dues in the beginning, standing towards the middle to the bottom of classes. Over time we learned more and, eventually, showed up at the top a time or two.”

Other initial Angus heifers were purchased from Anderson Circle Farm, Costin Angus and Wilson Cattle Company, all ET clients for whom Scott and Cindy wanted to reciprocate support.

“Investing in females was a way to have animals to breed and sell to

customers,” Scott says. “We chose Angus to create income from a strong breed, not only in the show ring, but on the rack as well. Black hides are the best in the feedyard.”

WCC Barbara M84 was the family’s first major purchase as a foundation female, with her offspring now part of the herd. She has produced many champions and has progeny sales surpassing \$200,000.

The Andersons added a new foundation family from the 2011 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) Grand Champion Owned Female and 2012 National Western Stock Show Grand Champion Female, Dameron Northern Miss 0109, purchased from Dameron Angus.

“She is the one who put us on the Angus map,” Scott says. “We also recently purchased SCC SFC Phyllis 034 from Stertzbach Cattle Company and are very excited about her as an addition to our program. Other donors include the Forever Lady family from EXAR.”

Major winnings during the last decade include several state fair and Angus show champions, North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) champions and additional NJAS and National Western Stock Show champion bulls and heifers. Cindy says the 2015 NJAS Bred and Owned Grand Champion Heifer was a family highlight. The Andersons were also named the 2020 Illinois Beef Association seedstock breeder of the year.

Focusing on future success

“We strive to produce an elite herd of cows that perform in the show ring and in the pasture,” Scott says, adding that cow families are a strong part of sale and show ring genetic decisions.

The Andersons do not keep bulls on the farm, instead using artificial

insemination (AI) or ET on all females. Today the herd has about 60 mature cows — about half calve in the spring, 10-15 calve in

the fall and six-seven are donors for the embryo business. The majority of Double Diamond calves are from sexed semen, so they can have primarily heifers available to sell for the show ring. Any bulls are sold.

“We watch numbers in selecting genetics for heifers because they ultimately have to be cows. We want them to be productive females,” Scott says. He looks for structurally sound feet and legs and body pattern, adequate rib shape, good maternal scores for milk and udder, and docility.

And while he says ET speeds up the selection process significantly, it is not without challenges. With a range in expected progeny differences (EPDs) on flush mates, accuracy is still a moving target.

“Flush mates can come out completely differently,” he says. “We have seen totally varied EPDs on birth and weaning weights, for example, so the EPDs are not entirely predictive. You can’t take the selection pressure off yet, although ET is the quickest way to improve your genetics.”

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Scott Anderson began his embryo transfer career more than 30 years ago. Today Double Diamond Genetics, Inc. serves clients across the country and has expanded to offer *in vitro* fertilization.

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Scott selects individuals in their herd he considers superior, and then propagates those individuals with multiple progenies each year.

“You can use multiple sires on the same individual, because you can collect so many times, and you can get multiple matings on the same female in the same year,” he says. “With conventional flushes, you can do them every six weeks.”

Genetics decisions have paid off for Double Diamond in the sale ring as well as the show ring. They have sold cattle at the National Western Stock Show, Illinois Angus Futurity and online sales with Angus Live and SOnline Sales in the spring and fall.

Their own online sale, “Diamonds in the Rough,” debuted in the fall of 2012. They market their early spring-born calves online in the fall and do a spring sale for fall-born calves. Others are sold private treaty.

“We are not big enough for a production sale, and the online draws good participation for us,” Scott says.

As first-generation breeders, Scott and Cindy jumped in right away to participate in activities with their children. They were Illinois Junior Angus Association (IJAA) advisors for seven years, helping organize the 2010 Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show. Scott is a past Illinois Angus Association president. Their four children, Kyle, Shane, Chase and Reese, all have shown Angus on local, state and national levels



PHOTO BY PEARLS PICS

First-generation Angus breeders Scott and Cindy Anderson say their genetic decisions have paid off in the show ring and sale ring.

while growing up, and continue their Angus passion into adulthood.

“To make the businesses grow, we had to work not only as a family, but also as a team. We all play a part in the businesses and contribute in different ways,” Cindy says.

Oldest son, Kyle, currently works as herd manager for the farm. His wife, Kayla, is a loan officer and the current IJAA advisor. They have two children. Son Shane is in his second year of medical residency in New York, studying to be an orthopedic surgeon, while third son, Chase, works for Central Illinois Transportation in Springfield. Daughter, Reese, is a high school sophomore and continues to show Angus and Red Angus.

“This is the first year we purchased an Angus heifer for Reese to show. We have always shown bred-and-owned heifers,” Cindy says. “We are looking forward to seeing her participate this summer.”

The Andersons say they have learned lessons during their successful journey into the Angus

business. Among those lessons are to treat everyone with courtesy and respect and maintain strength of character to always do the right thing, even when there are easier options. Furthermore, they advocate to volunteer, get involved, work hard and step out of the comfort zone. From the start, newcomers should ask questions, build a network and have fun.

“We know the start-up cost is limiting. It was hard for us to get into the Angus business, even with having the ET company,” Cindy says. “I am thrilled to have our kids as the next generation of Angus breeders. We need to advocate for this lifestyle, now more than ever, and I look forward to the day when as grandparents we can simply support the kids from the sidelines.” 

Editor's note: Barb Baylor Anderson is a freelance writer from Edwardsville, Ill.