

One Good Thing Leads to Another

Byrd Cattle Company proves you can be successful with a small Angus herd.

To the north, Mount Shasta looms like a giant ice cream cone. Snow capped mountains consume the eastern horizon. The valley floor is waking to spring. In this beautiful setting south of Red Bluff, Calif., Dan Byrd gazes proudly at his cows — all 15 of them.

He has proved you can be successful with a small herd. Byrd Cattle Company is a family operation. Dan, his wife Chris, and their children, Ty and Brooke, run it together.

Dan and Chris have full time careers that have paid the bills over the years, but their cattle more than pay for themselves. The cattle have paid for the ranch they bought 17 years ago. There is money



Family operation — Both the work and rewards of raising Angus are shared by the Byrds, (l to r) Chris, Brooke, Dan and Ty.

set aside for college for Ty and Brooke.

"We paid \$900 for a Schearbrook Conductor daughter 10 years ago," Dan says. "She and her daughters have brought in over \$50,000. Nearly every cow in our herd goes back to that cow."

This breeder learned long ago to use only proven bulls. If you have only a few cows, you cannot afford to experiment. They use many of

the same bulls their neighbor, Bill Borrer of Tehama Angus Ranch, uses. Dan says Tehama's cattle are proven and among the best in the industry.

One of the Byrds' outstanding bull calves, BCC Garth, was the bull calf champion at the National Junior Angus Show in Columbus, Ohio, and the performance bull champion at the

STORY & PHOTOS BY BARBARA LABARBARA

California State Fair in 1992. In 1993 he was performance bull co-champion at the Western National Angus Futurity and supreme champion bull over all breeds at the California State Fair Junior Show. He was the high grading and indexing bull at the Stockton bull sale in 1993 and topped the sale.

His new owners P.J. and Carol Burgess, Cold Springs Cattle Co. in Oregon, bought his younger brother, BCC New Image, at the National Western Bull Sale in 1994 for \$7,700. He was the eighth high selling bull. Ben Houston and Dallas Horton bought BCC Mega Trend, the fourth high selling bull at \$10,000 in the 1993 Denver Bull Sale. Both years in Denver the Byrds exhibited reserve division champions.

"For us to maximize our operation, we have to participate in consignment sales," says Dan. "If we sold all of our cattle at private treaty, we would not be where we are today."

Nor would they be where they are today without the help of Bill and Wanda Cox, Virginia Greib, Chet and Ruth Moon, Harold and Dyan Catlin, Bill Borrer and many other breeders from the Pacific Northwest and other areas of the country who have encouraged and advised them. Dan attributes much of their recent success to Jack and Mary Ann Ward from Indiana.

Many of Byrds' bull calves are sold to repeat customers as soon as they are weaned. They keep a few bulls for consignment sales. They have topped the Red Bluff Bull Sale three of the last four years and have had the champion at Klamath Falls and Stockton Bull Sales. Their bulls have sold into several states throughout the country.

A few of their top heifers are marketed at events like California Angus Days, where they had the top selling female at \$5,300 and averaged \$4,000 on four head consigned. Two years in a row they had the high selling female at the Golden One Sale in Galt. In 1993 they topped every open consignment sale they entered.

"Our biggest challenge is not having enough numbers to meet our demand," Dan says. "However, because we don't have the numbers, we're able to help our customers market their bulls. That pays big dividends and creates good will."

Besides selling their own cattle and acting as a consultant and sales agent to their customers, Dan has been involved with the FFA advisory committee, Shasta College advisory committee,

POST CARD



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Dan Byrd*

**TO: Angus Friends
USA**



This is Dan Byrd's ideal cow-calf pair.

and served as a director of the Western States Angus Association and California Angus Association.

He has worked for Western Farm Credit Bank, the largest agricultural lender in the western United States, for more than 21 years. He is in charge of appraisal review for northern California, southeast Idaho, western Wyoming and Nevada. He finds having a full-time career and running cattle difficult to juggle.

Because his job demands he travel much of the time, Chris, Ty, and Brooke take care of things during the week. But they are busy too. Chris is director of the Tehama County Independent Home Study Program. Ty, 18, is a recent graduate of Red Bluff High School and Brooke, 12, goes to Sacred Heart Middle School in Red Bluff.

Dan and Chris bought their first Angus 20



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years ago. It wasn't until their children showed an interest in the cattle that they got serious about raising quality, performance cattle.

"God gifted us with two wonderful kids, a good set of cows and great friends," Dan says. "Raising Angus cattle has been a good thing for our family."

Ty is in FFA, Brooke is in 4-H and both are active in state, regional and national junior Angus associations. Two years ago, Ty represented California in the National Junior Angus Show in Columbus, Ohio. He took two animals to the show and won bull calf champion and reserve bred-and-owned heifer calf champion. Three years ago, he exhibited the bred-and-owned and owned champion females at the first Great Western Jackpot Show in Tulare, Calif., taking home \$2,712 in premiums.

In her first show, the Tehama County Fair, Brooke showed the champion Angus heifer and reserve champion steer. She

won showmanship in her age division at 1993 state field day.

At the Western National Angus Futurity in Reno this year, Ty showed the grand champion bull and grand champion bred-and-owned heifer in the Junior Show as well as being named Premier Breeder. In the open show he had the reserve champion cow-calf pair and a reserve division champion bull. In all, he won six classes.

Both Ty and Brooke are outstanding students. Even though Ty misses 25 to 30 days of school a year attending cattle functions, he carries a 3.67 GPA.

"I'm not a fan of the show ring," Dan admits. "We allow the kids to show because it helps them mature, learn to accept adversity and be humble. It is also a place to meet people and make friends."

"I don't know that what goes on in the show ring has much to do with what is going on in the real cattle world. We don't breed for show, we breed for performance with eye appeal. Our winning has been done with performance cattle."

Their 15 cows are moderate in frame, weighing 1,200 to 1,250 pounds. They are on pasture year round and winter 30 miles from home. The cows milk well and wean

off calves at 800 pounds.

All cows are artificially inseminated to calve within a 45-day period. Because Dan and Chris work and the kids are in school, they use a gomer bull for heat detection and light birth weight bulls to prevent calving problems. In the last 10 years their most profound improvement has been in growth expected progeny differences (EPDs). This year they are concentrating on carcass data as well as growth EPDs because that is what their commercial customers need.

"We try to run our herd like commercial cattle," Dan says. "Commercial cattle don't

get a second chance, neither do ours. Culling in a small herd is easy because the culls eliminate themselves. I have found that by eliminating cattle with problems, we eliminate problems."

Years ago Willard Catlin, a respected breeder in Oregon, told Dan that if he took care of the commercial trade, the purebred end of it would take care of itself. Byrd Cattle Company is one more example he was right.