

More Than a Century in

BRAZIL

Angus cattle have a rich history
in this large country.

by **Stefan Staiger Schneider**



Brazil is a country of continental size. In its southern region, the climate and culture are more similar to that of Europe — reasons why, perhaps, the breed found that area as its national home. This is where all four seasons are well-defined and where most German and Italian immigrants arrived and formed their families.

It's a subtropical region, differing from the rest of the country, which is described as tropical. During the winter, the lowest temperatures may reach 27° F during the night and 41° during the day. During the summer, the highest temperatures are likely to reach the 104° mark in the central, western and southern areas of the state.

Developing the breed

In the second half of the 20th century, starting in the 1960s, Brazilian Angus breeders began attending the Perth Angus Exhibition in Scotland to buy some of the best available bulls and females in the world to improve the quality of their herds. Today the state is considered the main domestic bovine genetic source for the rest of the country, not only of the Angus breed but of other British and European breeds as well.

However, the breeding system needed to be more objective so the owner could have a clear path to follow to achieve his desired goals, like breeding his best female with the correct bull.

Expected progeny differences (EPDs) were officially introduced in Brazil in 1974 by the National Breeders' Association Herd

Book Collares [*Associação Nacional dos Criadores Herd Book Collares (ANC)*], which is located in Pelotas, RS. It resulted from the master's dissertation of Luis Alberto Fries, under the orientation of American veterinarian Joel Kemper, and was based on the rules of the U.S. Beef Improvement Federation (BIF). The initiative represented a very important improvement in the cattle industry.

The ANC program is called PROMEBÓ, *Programa de Melhoramento de Bovinos de Carne* (Beef Cattle Improvement System). ANC provides this service to the Brazilian Angus Association as well as to other cattle breed associations.

Brazil's association

The *Associação Brasileira de Angus (ABA)*, Brazilian Angus Association, initially named *Associação Brasileira de Aberdeen-Angus*, Brazilian Aberdeen-Angus Association, was established in 1963 in the town of Uruguaiana, on the federal border of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and Argentina. Its 52 co-founders represent some of South America's most traditional breeders.

Today the organization is located in the state capital, Porto Alegre, and it has already passed the mark of 450 associated breeders. Both black and red Angus cattle are registered with no distinctions. There are two different animal blood categories — *Puro de Origem (PO)* and *Puro por Cruzada (PC)*, which mean full-blood and purebred-commercial, respectively.

While the South has a large concentration of British and European breeds of cattle, the rest of the Brazilian territory shows more interest in the Nelore (Brazilian Brahman), which is the No. 1 breed in population nationwide.

Aberdeen-Angus cattle have been in Brazil for more than 100 years. The first animals arrived in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul (RS), in the 19th century. The first official importation was registered in 1906 and was from Uruguay. The bull was purchased by Leonardo Collares Sobrinho of the municipal district of Bagé, RS. During the following years, cattle entered the country from the British Isles, Argentina and Uruguay.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Southern cattle shows and auctions of the spring — the period in which most bulls are sold every year — began to receive many cattle producers from the central, west central and northern areas of Brazil who wanted to buy British and European breeds to cross with their cattle to increase productivity and carcass quality and to get earlier-maturing cattle. Because of the Angus breed's excellence in fertility, longevity, calving ease, milk, precocity and beef quality, it rapidly became the preferred breed. In the last decade, it has experienced an impressive expansion throughout the 27 Brazilian states, in terms of live animals, embryos and semen.

In 2000, a total of 5,769,348 doses of semen were sold in Brazil, of which 2,337,540 were from milk breeds and 3,431,808 were from beef breeds of cattle. Angus sold 1,054,258 doses of semen and topped the national semen ranking for the second consecutive year (1999 and 2000). Never in the history of the Brazilian beef industry had a British breed sold more semen than the Nelore, a *bos indicus* breed, of which Brazil has become the largest breeder. Angus kept similar numbers in the semen market but the Nelore sold more in 2001 and 2002 and, consequently, reclaimed the No. 1 position. Maybe next year the business breed will top the ranking again!

The main use of Angus semen in Brazil is to cross with the Nelore and Nelore-influence cattle. In regards to the semen used in the country, 51.5% comes from sires in the United States, Canada and Argentina while 48.5% is from bulls that are in Brazil, including imported individuals.

Brazil has the world's largest commercial herd and, year after year, it's being dominated more by the Angus breed, as the Angus-Nelore cross produces cattle with great performance for the various conditions, producers and styles of raising cattle in the country. In the last decade, the beef industry started to increase its exports to Europe and Asia and, because of market and consumer requirements, the quality had to be elevated to maintain the rise in exports. The exporters found the answer for that situation in Angus genetics.

Moreover, registrations of full-blood cattle are increasing. According to ABA, the estimated national full-blood Angus herd in reproduction today is 250,000 head, plus about 750,000 purebred-commercial Angus cattle. Outside the Rio Grande do Sul state, the ABA is sponsoring new cattle shows and auctions to promote the breed. Besides the Expointer Show (in Esteio, RS), Latin America's largest agriculture

exposition, the association and its breeders are building strong new markets at strategic points in response to the demand for Angus cattle. These points are located in the states of Paraná, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul and Minas Gerais. In terms of cattle sales — both at private treaty and auctions — the averages are increasing every year and new sale seasons were created to offer bulls according to the producers' demand.

For the future, the ABA board of directors has as its objectives promoting the breed through this huge country, expanding crossbreeding programs with other breeds

and implementing genetic improvement programs, besides stimulating the breeders to expand Angus cattle into new regions and taking part in exhibitions and auctions. More difficult than reaching a top position is staying on top; this is the responsibility Angus breeders have for the 21st century.



Editor's Note: *Stefan Staiger Schneider is the international secretary and Angus news coordinator for the ABA, which provided this article.*