

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Tackle the “big rocks” first

Early in my professional career, I took a time management class and used the day planner offered by Franklin Covey. I later read the book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” by Stephen Covey.

I have continued to study time-management strategies over the years and admittedly still have a lot of room for improvement. But there was a concept introduced in those early lessons that will always stick with me — tackle the “big rocks” first.

Our class instructor asked a student to fit four large rocks and a pile of pea gravel into a container. If the student started with the gravel, it would fill too much of the container to hold the large rocks. However, when the large rocks were placed in the container first, the gravel filled all the little gaps and the container was easily large enough.

The lesson was clear: do the big things first, and the little details will fall into place. There are enough hours in the day to accomplish the important and urgent, but you must do the big things first.

While this “big rocks” concept was used for managing a calendar, I think it also applies to so many other parts of our lives. I believe effective business owners understand this concept, and I have no doubt successful Angus breeders do, too. The historic herds highlighted in this edition were able to stand the test

of time and weather the storms and trends, because they focused first on getting the big things right.

To me the “big rocks” in breeding Angus seedstock revolve around the responsibility of making problem-free genetics that add value for our commercial cattle producer. Cattle

that are fertile, calve easily, stay healthy, grow fast and efficiently, and produce a high-quality end product should be the goal.

I believe the stockmen and women of these historic herds


understood their commercial customer, the type of environment and management they had on their operations and provided Angus seedstock that fixed problems and kept their customers in business.

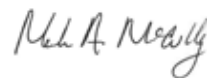
Evaluate the big rocks

In the past I have written about the complexities of this business and the ever-increasing pace of change. While still true, I do believe it’s a very healthy exercise to step back from time to time and evaluate the big rocks.

Are we putting the appropriate amount of energy and resources into the really important and fundamental parts of breeding good

Angus cattle? Have we gotten so caught up in some of the details of our program that we won’t have room for the big and important priorities in the end? Have we spent too much time worrying about a marketing footnote that we run the risk of failing to make this generation of Angus cattle fundamentally better than the last?

I don’t know what it’s like at your place, but I’m guessing that staying focused on the big rocks isn’t always easy. For me, I must stay intentional. I must keep reminding myself about those big rocks, and realigning my time and energy with them in mind. I believe the same goes for our Angus breed. And just like the historic herds showcased in this magazine, if we get the big things right, everything else will fall in place. 



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