

State Spotlight Series:

This is the seventh in a series of articles featuring the programs and services of some of the leading state Angus associations.

Staying Power

With a state association formed prior to 1918 and 10 regional associations, Ohio boasts of an active producer base.

by Janet Mayer

Located east of the Appalachian Mountains, the state of Ohio's flat terrain lends itself nicely to the agriculture industry that sprawls across almost half its acreage. Named for the Indian word "good river," the state is known as the birthplace of not only eight U.S. presidents, but also Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB).

In addition to CAB, which is still headquartered in the state, the Ohio Angus Association (OAA) has earned a place in the state's agricultural history, dating back at least to the early part of the 19th century, or possibly earlier. While nobody seems to have an exact date for a first meeting, the association lists its presidents dating back to

1918, with 45 names following that of O.E. Bradfute, who served from 1918 to 1927.

Without a doubt, the Angus breed has staying power in the course of the state's history. In 2003, there was an impressive 5,221 Angus registrations from the state, ranking it 21st nationwide. In overall beef production, the state ranked 28th in the nation, producing 459 million pounds (lb.) of beef annually with about 275,000 head of beef cows. In a land area covering 40,948 square miles, Ohio has some 17,000 beef cattle operations.

Jerry Ballard, secretary/fieldman for the OAA, reports many herds in the state are Angus-based, with the majority having 10 head or less and several larger operations in the mix.

"There is a great deal of interest in Angus cattle in our state," Ballard says. "We have a sizable state association, plus we have 10 regional Angus associations spread throughout the state.

"It really goes without saying that Angus beef is popular. Ask almost any consumer what kind of beef is the best, and about 90% will say Angus, even though they might not know for sure what Angus is all about," he continues. "There

is no question that the carcass quality and CAB have driven this freight train that has contributed to an increase of Angus cattle. We also have to give credit to Fred Johnson and

Harold Etling who started the CAB program 25 years ago, because not long after it was started, all the sale barns began to pay 15¢ [more] for black-hided feeder calves. Angus is just strictly a quality product."

Breed popularity has helped grow both the state's adult and junior Angus associations.

John King, vice president of the OAA and advisor to the Ohio Junior Angus Association, says membership in the OAA has grown from around 300 members in 1995 to nearly 600 in 2004 for several reasons:

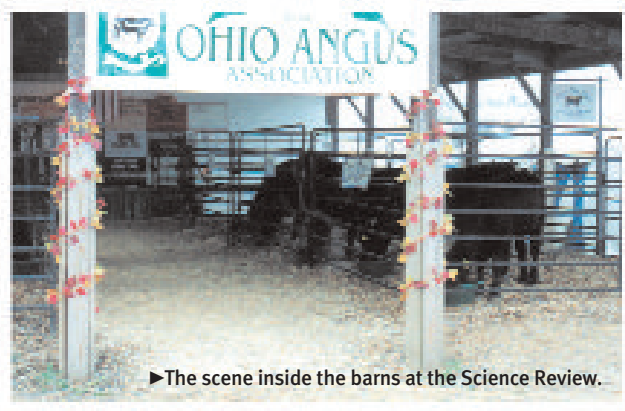
- ▶ overall popularity of Angus cattle;
- ▶ improved member service and communications;
- ▶ improved quality of the member newsletter;
- ▶ a high-quality annual membership directory; and
- ▶ Ballard, an active and aggressive secretary/fieldman.

The state's board of directors meets four times per year — in April, June, November and January. "I can safely state that they represent all areas of our state and every breeder, from large to small. Our goal is to provide service and member information that gets our members involved.

"This involvement does not stop with adults, in that we know that the future of the Ohio Angus Association is in our junior programs," King points out. Ohio has an active and functioning junior association of approximately 200 members.

OAA events conducted throughout the year include:

- ▶ the annual meeting and awards program in early February;
- ▶ the Ohio Beef Expo Angus Sale in early March;
- ▶ the Annual State Preview Show in June;
- ▶ the Ohio State Fair in August; and
- ▶ the OAA State Field Day in late August or early September.

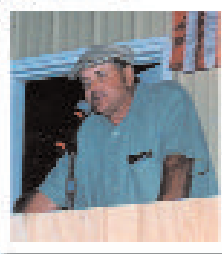


▶The scene inside the barns at the Science Review.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OHIO ANGUS ASSOCIATION

▶ Hosts of the 2003 OAA State Field Day include (pictured above, from left) Tim and Deanie Evans, Gallipolis; with 2004 American Angus Association President Joe Elliott, Adams, Tenn.; hosts Jackie and Tom Woodward, Gallipolis; and (pictured at right) host Paul Hill, American Angus Association director, Bidwell.



Behind the success

As a common feature in the state spotlight series, the Angus Journal posed the following questions. Here, Ohio Angus Association (OAA) secretary/fieldman Jerry Ballard describes the association's past, present and future.

Has membership in the OAA grown, gotten smaller or stayed the same? Why?

According to Paul Hill, our national director, Ohio has the largest number of members who are also members of the American Angus Association, and our percentage is higher than any other state.

In 1995 we had a little more than 300 members. In 2003 we numbered 560. Last year the association gained 109 new regular members and 45 new junior members, and I would have to attribute a lot of it to contact with Angus breeders. We publish a newsletter 11 months of the year, except in January. In January, we make a mailing to every American Angus Association member in Ohio. Basically, we tell them about our group and how we promote Angus cattle. We jumped 100 in membership the first year we did that.

Right now we are at the point where we are probably not going to get any bigger, because most say the life span of the average Angus herd is about five years —you lose 50, you gain 50. I am hoping to stay above 500 members. If times are good, I think it will be going up; when times get tough, it might go down.

What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today, and how do you try to overcome that challenge?

One of our biggest problems is not being able to sell bulls in our area for as good of prices as breeders get in the West. You read about sales out West where they sell 300 bulls in one day for an average of \$3,500. We sell a \$3,500 bull here, and we are ready to throw a party. We sell them for \$1,200, and feel we are doing OK.

To remedy this, we have been putting some of the money made through selling advertising in our publications toward generic Angus advertising in publications that go to smaller commercial breeders. We are hoping they will be interested in buying Angus bulls from us at some good prices.

We also have the problem of the increase in cost of printing, travel and other expenses, but I believe this probably is affecting every association in the country.

What is the most successful program OAA has developed to support Angus breeders in your state?

We have a Farm Science Review each September at London, Ohio, that is a monster, with more than 125,000 people coming through in three days. Our association built a real nice barn on the grounds to display six pens of cattle. We usually have cattle on display from six different breeders and hand out a lot of material on Angus cattle. This way we get contact with a lot of young people in FFA and other farm associations who attend. I feel this is probably one of the best ways of getting information into new people's hands.

In March we have our sale at the Ohio Beef Expo in Columbus, and we also have a preview show in June, just before or after the Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show, with about 200 head in both open and junior shows. Most years we will have a field day, but only if a breeder volunteers to host it.

How do you motivate producers to participate in the various programs you offer?

We publish a monthly newsletter 11 months of the year. My wife does all the preparation on the computer. Then it goes to quick



► Officers and directors of the 2004 Ohio Angus Association include (seated, from left) **John King**, vice president; **Brent English**, treasurer; **Tom Woodward III**, president; **Jim Rentz**, chairman of the board; **Sandra Wallace**; (standing, from left) **John Grimes**, **David Felumlee**, **Doug Majors**, **Steve Smith**, **Keith Burgett**, **Richard Reimer**, **Jay Clutter**, **James Winter**, **Paul Hill** and **Bob Deitrick**.

print and is back to us in two days, so we are getting out news and not history. I think that has changed our association more than anything. We publish the first of each month, and it keeps people up-to-date and informed and gives them the opportunity to advertise at reasonable rates. Our full-page ads cost only \$95. We mail about 700 to all of our regular and junior members and anybody who requests it.

We also do an annual directory of about 152 pages and mail around 2,000 at the end of June. It is our big moneymaker because of the sale of advertising. We sell our prime pages at our annual banquet, and this money helps our finances a lot.

The breeders who receive our newsletter and directory can see what is available to them in the way of events and programs, and we hope they will want to participate and be part of them. We are promoting Angus cattle, and it should be apparent that this could possibly make money for them down the road. Not only are we offering them the opportunity to sell their cattle with us, but we are also offering them a field day and show to visit with other breeders where they can exchange ideas and information.

Where do you see your state association in the future? What role will it play for its members?

I really don't foresee that it will change all that much. We have talked about another state-sponsored sale, but with about 80% of our breeders having less than 10 head of cattle, I don't see it happening. However, it is strictly up to the directors and whatever they want to try. We will give it a whirl if that is their decision.

What is unique about your association from other state associations?

I would consider our monthly newsletter as being kind of unique, as I don't think most associations do it that often. Also, our directory is annual and not biannual as most.

We have 22 elected members on our board of directors, with representation from all of the regional Angus associations in the state. We all work really well together and cover things pretty well for all the breeders, no matter where they are located.

Of course, I don't want to leave out the juniors, because I feel we have really great junior participation. Jamie King, an Ohio girl, is now vice president of the national association, and I would have to say our juniors are very competitive. They are our future and the future of the Angus breed.

