

# The Yon Legacy

*The work of the primarily Angus operation in South Carolina gained the attention of the Beef Improvement Federation for their dedication towards genetically improving the seedstock sector of the beef industry.*

*by Megan Silveira, assistant editor*

Family. Commitment. Value. Three words that describe one of the most progressive and passionate Angus operations in the business. Built on a foundation of customer service and dedication to genetic improvement, Yon Family Farms of Ridge Spring, S.C., has been an influence on the cattle industry since its start in 1996. The operation was founded by Kevin and Lydia Yon after they purchased 100 Angus cows and 100 acres of land.

“The philosophy behind Yon Family Farms has always been to produce cattle that balance all economically important traits, genetics that will keep people in business on the maternal side of the cow base and producing an end product that will meet the needs and demands of the end consumer,” Kevin says.

## A family affair

Today the couple has help managing the farm from their children — Sally, Drake and Corbin. The initial herd of cattle has grown

to more than 1,500 brood cows managed on more than 1,000 acres of land. From their open-door policy



with consumer farm tours to their dedication to data collection, the Yon family operation is helping not only the Business Breed improve but the cattle industry as a whole.

Their strategy is what led the American Angus Association and Clemson University to nominate Yon Family Farms for the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Seedstock Producer of the Year Award. The family received the award on June 11 during BIF's online annual meeting and symposium.

“When it comes to raising high-

quality registered Angus genetics, supplemental forage and sustainable land management, it's hard to find a family who works as diligently on all three components of their operation,” the Association says in their nomination of the Yon family.

The Association believes the Yon family goes above and beyond in all areas of production, serving as stewards of their land as well as their livestock. By grazing and processing forage as sustainably as possible, the

operation is fulfilling their roles as caretakers.

## Above and beyond

Through the utilization of programs such as Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) and MaternalPlus®, Yon Family Farms has been labeled as a “pioneer of data collection” by the Association.

From the utilization of artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) to contributing data for the hair shedding research EPD, the Yon family is proud to say they take

full advantage of the genomic tools provided to them.

“We submit all the data, encourage our customers to study \$Value indexes, support the study of research EPDs and turn in all our data to AHIR,” Lydia explains.

In an effort to help meet the needs of their customers, the Yon family introduced genetics from Simmental and Brangus cattle to their herd. Their decision has not only served their primarily progressive commercial cattlemen customer base, but also helped the beef industry progress forward.

“We do our best to supply them with the genetics to adapt and perform in their southern environment,” Kevin says. “We use all the genetic tools available to predict their genetic outcome, which in turn allows our customers to select the best genetics to meet the needs of their individual operations.”

The high-quality cattle are marketed through two annual production and private treaty sales. Each February close to 200 registered Angus bulls and another 100 females leave the South Carolina operation followed by an additional 300 bulls and 100 females in October.

At these sales the family says they are willing to provide their customers with any information they want on the livestock. Even if data is not offered in the sale book, the Yon family will ensure their customers have no unanswered questions in regards to genetics.

Their dedication to customer service does not end there, however. The Yon family also offers free delivery of purchased animals at their sales. More than 70% of their sold bulls are delivered by one of the family members, Lydia says.

This delivery service allows the family to better understand the needs of their customers, which, in turn, helps them continue to improve in future generations. After that relationship is built, the Yons say they continue to help their customers through support and marketing advice.

“In summary, we are in this business for the long haul,” Kevin says. “This business isn’t just a passing interest for us — we will be in the cattle business for generations to come. We want

to ensure that our customers are successful, and that is done by serving them in any practical way we can.”

For as much attention as the cattle and customers of Yon Family Farms receive, the land receives just as much care, if not more. Lydia says environmental stewardship is of great importance on their operation.

“We have adopted countless conservation programs provided through the USDA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) over the last several years,” she added.

Through the use of intensive grazing and the installation of water troughs and pipelines, progressive farming practices are being implemented on the South Carolina operation to help ensure the land is being taken care of.

To promote proper utilization of forage and the even distribution of manure, the family employs temporary electric fencing to create small grazing paddocks to be used

in limited-grazing and rotational grazing sequences.

The Yons also routinely take soil samples and practice weed control.

Throughout the year they rely on winter and summer annual forages for their cattle and practice surface water irrigation to ensure access to “something green” as close to year-round as possible, Kevin says.

Yon Family Farms is a well-recognized name and operation in the cattle industry, but it is the people

behind the business that make the farm so successful and respected. The Business Breed is proud to call this operation a part of the Angus family and can think of no one more deserving of the recognition.

“We wake up each day with a goal to make our farm and land better than when we found it,” Lydia says. “We want to be known for producing a sound product and treating people the way they want to be treated, all while giving back to the community who has given so much to us.” [AJ](#)

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