

# Angus Shutterbugs

*Shooting cattle is their common business, but each photographer has his or her own distinct style.*

BY LORI MAUDE

Livestock photographers are as diverse as the type of photographs they take and the lenses they use. Some work the show ring or the more controlled shot, while others thrive on the uncontrolled, natural setting. Just as one needs to use the right lens for the right situation, a person needs to use the right livestock photographer to get the desired end product.

Here are three professionals who parallel the different camera lenses because each takes a different approach to livestock photography. Some concentrate on one area, while others encompass the whole mix of livestock and natural surroundings in their photography.



## **Fred Stivers – the Portrait Man**

Fred Stivers is a telephoto lens. He concentrates all of his skills into one area — the posed, controlled photograph.

Stivers started taking cattle pictures as a way to sell more advertising to breeders. In 1972 and 1973, when Stivers was working as a fieldman in Ohio for a Charolais magazine, he kept hearing the same line, "Well, we would advertise if we had a picture of the bull, but we don't, so we have nothing to advertise."

Stivers decided to use the camera assigned to him as a junior fieldman and take pictures of these cattle for the breeders.

At the time of Stivers' growing interest in photography, the major cattle photographer in the Midwest was Mick Chandler from Chariton, Iowa.

Stivers met up with Chandler through a friend who managed a Charolais farm outside Columbus, Ohio, where Chandler was doing some photography work. Stivers began watching Chandler at work and asking lots of questions. Chandler was patient and helped Stivers work on his technique.

After a while it became apparent that Stivers had a talent for taking cattle portraits as he calls them. Later Stivers made a few contacts with Angus breeders and did some photography work for upcoming sales. This helped introduce Stivers to the Angus breeders and advertised his abilities as well.

In 1977 while Stivers worked as a fieldman for *Drover's Journal*, his photography business really got busy. Neil Orth, livestock division general manager, encouraged Stivers to keep pursuing the livestock photography while working full-time for *Drover's Journal*. Stivers worked at *Drover's Journal* for 12 years and continued fine tuning his livestock photography skills.

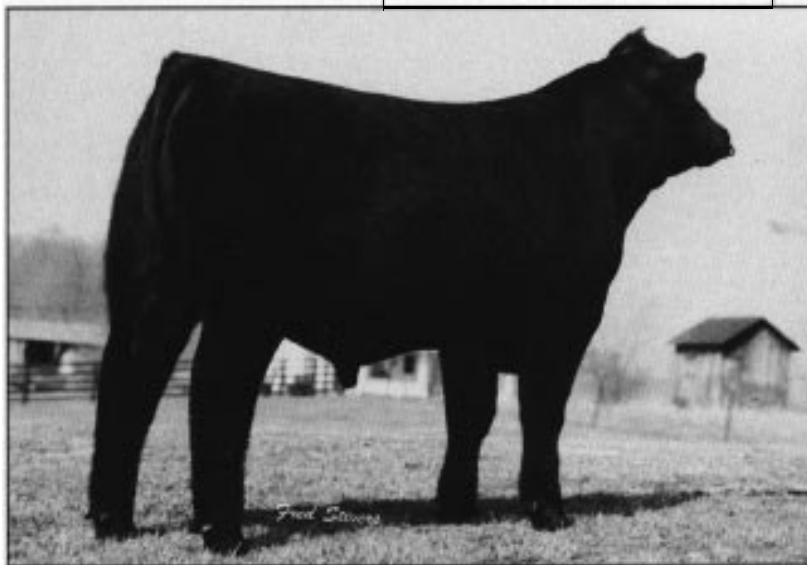
Angus aren't the only breed of cattle that Stivers takes pictures of, but they are his primary models. Stivers says as a rule Angus breeders are more progressive thinking and value the use of a good photograph in their merchandising plans, so he gets more business from Angus breeders.

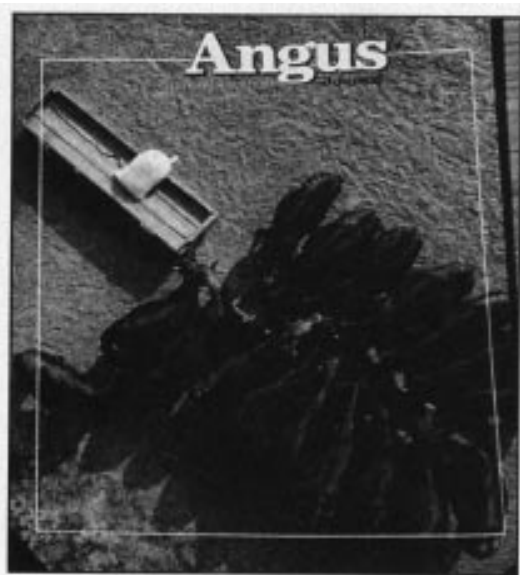
Stivers deals only with portrait or posed cattle pictures. As he says, "I don't have much of an eye for beauty." Stivers isn't interested in scenery shots, so he concentrates all of his energy into making all of the cattle he works with look their best.

Stivers had no background in photography before beginning his business. He has a bachelor's degree in political science and history, one year of law school, and a strong interest in livestock, specifically cattle. After skipping a lot of law classes for cattle shows and sales, Stivers decided that his place was in the agriculture industry.

By using his eye for cattle, Stivers

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- Bill Pope

usually chooses the most positive aspect of an animal and emphasizes that area in the photographs. He says that most people have their own ideas for pictures, but are willing to listen to his ideas. In the end what the customer wants is what Stivers delivers.

Stivers says that his photography business isn't a full-time job and doubts that he could make a living just taking pictures. He supplements his income by working cattle sales and has some investments at home. Even though it isn't full-time, Stivers enjoys his work. He admits it is nice being able to travel and see the new calf crops or the new herd sires and meeting the people in the business.



### William Pope - One of a Kind

William Pope doesn't take any show photos and he doesn't take many posed advertising shots either. Instead he focuses on cattle in the natural setting — the wide angle lens approach to photography. Originally from Georgia, Pope now works out of Shawnee, Okla. He works part-time taking pictures for Oklahoma Baptist University and then free-lances as a cattle photographer.

Pope has taken many photographs for *Angus Journal* covers. One of his most awarded shots was used on the November 1990 cover. The cover shot featured cattle at a feed bunk and the picture was taken from directly above. From the top of a building near the feed bunk would be most people's first guess. But that wouldn't be original enough or get just the right angle for Pope.

Take one weather balloon, one prefocused camera hooked into a rigging, an infrared remote control to trigger the shutter and a calm Georgia day, and you have the ingredients of an award winning cover photograph.

The photo on the cover was taken in 1987 or 1988 near Hawkinsville, Ga. Pope hooked his camera onto a weather balloon that was six feet in diameter and connected the balloon to some fishing line. After almost losing the balloon before his help got there, Pope sent the balloon up over the heads of some unsuspecting cattle.

Pope loved the challenge of getting the unique shot and had no idea what he had on the film before it was developed. "I got lucky and had some good pictures when it was all done," he says modestly.

Pope has been interested in photography off and on for almost 20 years. He would actively take pictures for a few years and then give it up, but always came back to the camera.

Pope began taking pictures on the family farm when he was younger. He took mostly nature photos, but never thought about taking pictures of the cattle. Then one day he began taking pictures of the cattle because they were there.

Since then Pope has made cattle in natural settings into one of his favorite forms of photography. Though most of his business is free-lance photography, he does some contract photo shoots for advertising and people sometimes hire him to take pictures of a herd bull or cow-calf pair for their own use.

While he is out on a shoot, Pope always keeps an eye open for situations that would work if the light or season were different. He makes note of the place and goes back when

he thinks the setting will be right for the picture he sees in his mind.

This photographer prefers working with tamer cattle because he can get closer and use more unique angles. He says that shooting unposed cattle shots isn't something that just everyone can do. A person has to have the innate ability to put composition together in a photo. It isn't something a person can learn. "A photographer needs to make quick decisions on composition while in the field or waste a lot of film trying to get the one perfect picture," Pope says.

Pope's next photographic challenge is to catch some cattle in adverse conditions, such as during a thunder or lightning storm. He has attempted some photos involving lightning, but would like to try other situations and improve his skills.



### Wendy Gauld - Versatility is the Key

Wendy Gauld Hall has a zoom lens style to her livestock photography. She is diverse in her subjects and concentrates in the show photo area, but also steps back and takes on the challenge of scenic photography. She got into the photography business in 1980 without really thinking about making a career of it.

She was teaching at Fresno State University and in charge of the show project, where college students show university animals at fairs and shows throughout the area. She saw a need for someone to take pictures of the winning animals from their show string, because it always seemed like the film or the pictures got lost in the mail. So she went out and bought a camera and began taking the photos herself, at the urging of some friends.

The next thing Gauld knew she had a contract with the Western Regional Futurity in Reno to take the champions' pictures, thanks to the help of Darrell Silveira of Mendota, Calif. Gauld also gives credit to Abbie Nelson for some of her first photography business and for encouraging her to keep pursuing her new career.

Most of Gauld's photography training was hands-on. She got some technical pointers from her friend and new husband Mike Hall of Cal-Poly animal science department.

Gauld uses both a Hasselblad medium format camera and a 35 mm in her work. She says with the better quality print film and the advanced autofocus systems, she is beginning to use her 35 mm for more show photos. "The 35 mm is easier and cheaper to use," she says, "but, the Hasselblad is easier to use physically because you can stand up more to use it and the photo quality is better for pictures that need to be blown up in size."

Unlike some livestock photographers, Gauld makes a full-time career out of taking photos. She takes swine and sheep photos, as well as cattle. This gets her in shape to shoot the junior livestock auctions around her area. She has three or four large auction shows around her. In one day she may take up to 800 photos of exhibitors and their animals. "It's one backdrop, one shot. Not very creative, but it keeps the cash flowing and it's there every year," Gauld says.

She also takes ranch landscape pictures for sale catalog covers and advertisements. She enjoys the landscape pictures because they are more challenging and it keeps her creative juices flowing.

Although a lot of standard posed shots are used for advertising, Gauld sees the industry revolving away from using strictly the posed picture. Many breeders are wanting to get general ranch shots they can use for several years in their advertising. She says it is great to see people are finally realizing how important good photography is to advertising and that one bad picture can damage a breeder's reputation.

Gauld says there will always be a need for the posed picture. Many buyers of semen for artificial insemination never see the bull in person, the only thing they see is the picture in the ad or brochure. With AI use on the increase, the need for good photography is also increasing.

Gauld enjoys her job for two reasons: number one she gets to see the ranches and cattle, while meeting many interesting people; number two she gets to be involved with youth through the shows and activities. Gauld has a strong background with youth involvement as a 4-H leader, an ag teacher and as an instructor at Fresno State University. She says her career combines the things she loves the most, teaching and agriculture.

Summer is her busiest time of year, but she is hoping to expand her area of emphasis to taking candids and more general county or state fair pictures, instead of just taking



livestock show pictures. Gauld admits that now she is married, she can pick and choose her work to make her own schedule. She says it's even nicer having another person help her out when she is in a crunch, that person being her new husband.

Regardless of how they got started and the style of photos they take, these three photographers all agree on one thing — people who take cattle pictures need to love the cattle and have a never ending supply of patience to work with them.



## Photo Tips for Angus Cattle

Angus cattle are beautiful with their solid black coats, but they can create special problems with lighting when it comes to taking wonderful photos. The black color of Angus cattle absorbs light, so it makes the light meter readings on many of today's automatic cameras inaccurate.

To avoid being disappointed with your photos when you get them back, we have compiled some simple tips to keep in mind when taking photos of Angus cattle.

1. The early morning or late afternoon of a sunny day is usually the best light. Avoid the direct overhead light between noon and 3 p.m.
2. Keep the background open and light. Avoid trees or other dark backgrounds, especially when using black and white film.
3. Watch for the ear shadow over the animal's eye. Try to position the animal so that the ear shadow will fall back on the animal's neck, instead of over the eye.
4. Use a fill flash to highlight an animal during a daytime shoot.
5. Wendy Gauld suggests wetting the animal down entirely with water and spritzing with a water base fly spray to make the animal shiny for photos. The light reflects back at different angles on a shiny wet animal and creates more contrast and definition on the all black body.
6. Always use a full flash when taking pictures inside a building.
7. Make sure the animal is neatly groomed and clean for the photo.
8. Most of all be patient. The right pose and setting will happen, but it takes time.