

Getting a premium for the cattle you produce is the name of the game for Wendell and Charles Jones, a father and son team, from Dawn, Mo. For many years they have backgrounded cattle to send to various feedlots and have received only base price for most.

The Jones' beef operation was started by Wendell and his dad, in the early 1940s. Today it's managed by Wendell and his son, Charles.

They manage a herd of 300 predominately Angus cows. Over the years they tried several breeds trying to get the best cross for their program. At one time they were using Tarentaise bulls. This cross increased milk production and improved the disposition of their cow herd.

Through their experimenting, they found Angus cattle finish quicker and require less days on feed, leaving more money in their pocket. Although some other breeds will weigh more, they require more feed to finish.

The Joneses have been using Angus bulls since Wendell and his dad started farming. However, for the last six years they have only used Angus bulls in their breeding program. They chose Angus for their production of quality replacement heifers and calving ease.

"It was getting hard to find replacement heifers to suit us so we started buying Angus bulls," Wendell says. "Now we are to the stage of selling some of the replacement heifers."

They began implementing new management techniques into their herd three years ago, to take advantage of better genetics. Embryo transfer and artificial insemination are two genetic improvement tools used when they are able to find the time. Breeding time falls upon one of their busiest times of the year — planting crops — therefore breeding is left up to the bulls in the pasture most of the time.



Wendell Jones, left, and his son, Charles, are dedicated to producing a calf that will finish at 1,250 lb., that the packer is going to want and the consumer is going to like.

Efficiently using their resources is a goal for the Jones Family. They grow and harvest all their own grain and hay for use in their cow herd. This helps save on their cattles' backgrounding feed bill before shipping to a feedlot. Last year they ran out of corn and began looking for somewhere to finish their cattle.

To find a feedlot that offered the program and incentives they were looking for, they investigated these factors:

1. Premiums available;
2. Performance information returned, and
3. Closeness to home.

The Joneses found these characteristics with Farmland Supreme Beef Alliance (FSBA). Through FSBA they receive information on each calf, plus they get paid a premium for quality cattle. Galen Fink of Fink Angus, Manhattan, Kan., was instrumental in getting

them connected with FSBA. As a seedstock provider Galen works with his commercial bull buyers to develop marketing strategies to help them get the premiums they deserve.

FSBA is a collaborated effort between Agri Beef Company, Farmland Industries Inc. and Farmland National Beef Packing Company. The cattle enrolled in FSBA are finished at Supreme Cattle Feeders Inc., near Liberal, Kan. The lot is managed by Agri Beef. FSBA

has plans to certify additional feedlots as numbers increase.

"I think one of the biggest pluses is they send us information back on an individual basis," Charles says. "If your records are good enough you can trace it back to the dam and sire and it'll help you make breeding decisions in the future."

The Joneses started sending their cattle to Supreme feedlot in the spring of 1996. After weaning in the fall, calves are backgrounded until early spring.

Before shipping to Supreme the Joneses utilize their grain and forage toward efficient weight gain. They condition cattle to 800 to 900 pounds (lb.) in their own feedlot. Although the Jones' calves arrive at Supreme heavier than the average feeder, they still gain 3.75 to 4 lb. a day.

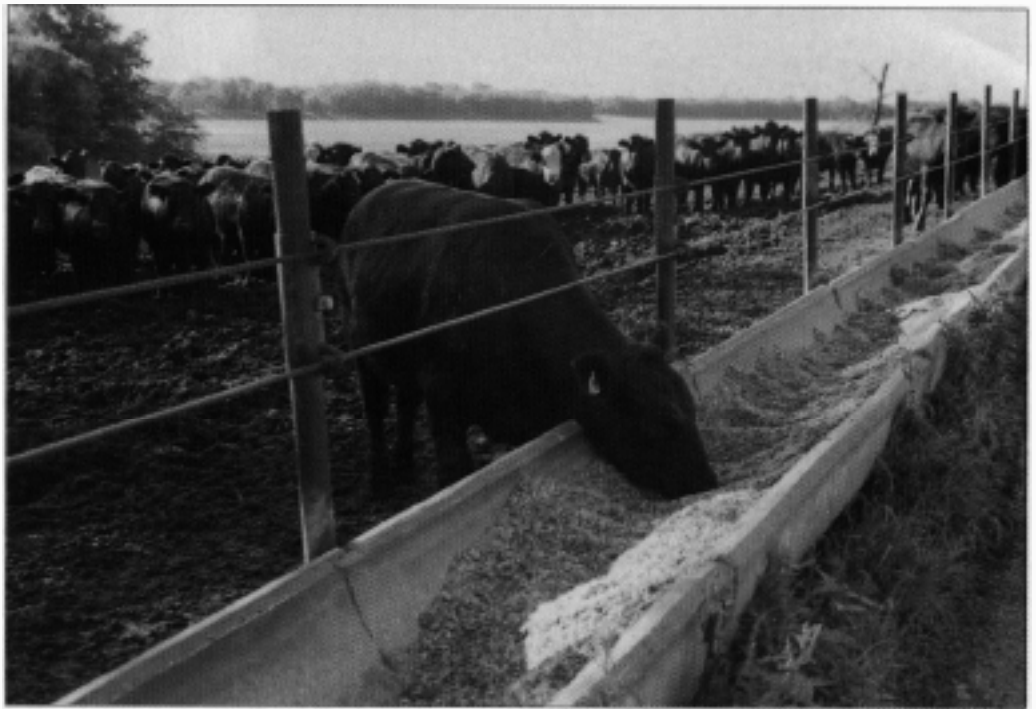
According to Wendell, the only disadvantage to feeding at Supreme is not using their feed stuffs. The ideal situation for the Jones Family would be if they had the feed supply at home to finish the cattle instead of buying feed at Supreme.

The Jones' first two pens finished at Supreme received above-average premiums. More than 80 percent of the pen graded Choice with almost 50 percent meeting *Certified Angus Beef*[™] product qualifications.

Although the Alliance is new, it has many advantages to offer producers. On average, cattle enrolled in the Alliance fed at Supreme, will bring \$1.50 per hundredweight more.

Producers wanting to finish calves in Missouri do not have a lot of options. Trucking expense becomes a factor in considering retained ownership. The Joneses are located 500 miles from Supreme — average trucking cost between \$15 to \$19 per head.

"We're not all that close to Supreme, but it's the only feedlot that fits our package and we have the Angus-type cattle they are promoting," Charles says. "Farther west in the



After weaning the Joneses background their calves until early spring. Calves not sent to Supreme Feeders are finished on their farm utilizing the Jones' feed resources.

feedlots there is competition to buy finished cattle. Out here we're lucky if we can get other packer buyers to even come look at our cattle. At Supreme they have five or six buyers a week visit the lot. We pay a little more to get the cattle out there, but the difference in the price more than pays for the trucking bill."

The Jones' goal is to produce a calf that will finish at 1,250 lb., that the packer is going to want and the consumer is going to

like — a calf that someone will pay a premium for.

Charles says the future of the beef industry will depend on how much market share beef producers let chicken and pork producers steal.

Alliances aren't going to solve all the problems, he says. "They may be one way to get some quality meat through a channel, but they need to put a brand on it so people will know what they are buying."

The Joneses are breeding quality Angus cattle to meet the needs of the beef industry. Their goal is to produce great tasting, consistent, quality beef everytime, so when consumers buy it from the grocery store they can identify with the product. Producers need to demand carcass data from the packers in order to continue to produce good quality cattle that will meet consumer demand.



The Jones' herd has grown to more than 300 Angus-based females. They chose Angus genetics because of the quality of replacement heifers and calving ease.