
AMDAHL ANGUS

Where Innovative Partnerships Yield Satisfaction

BY TROY SMITH

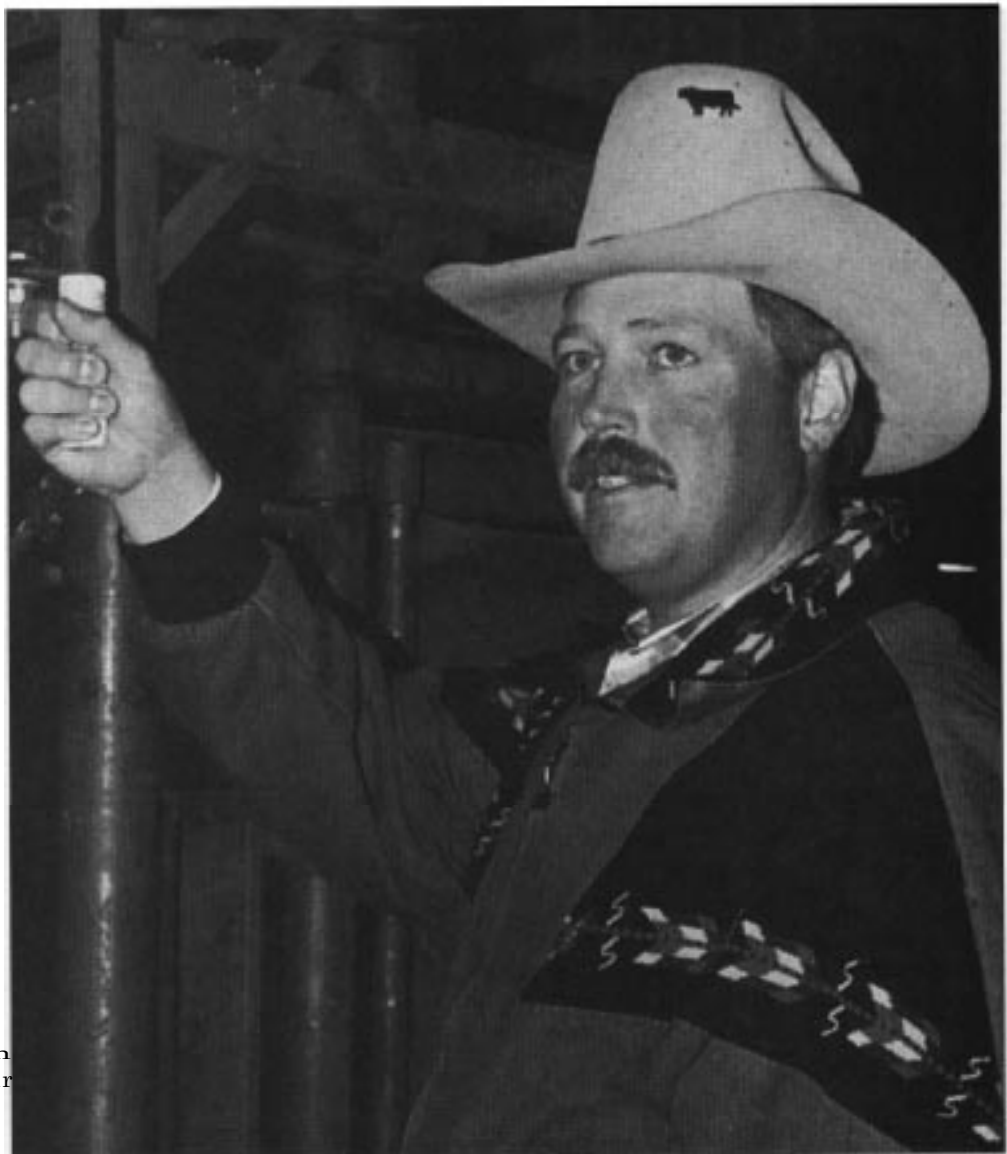
New Underwood, S.D., is one of those remote little cow country communities few outsiders visit. It may not be a hub of commerce, but it's the chosen home of the Amdahl Family.

To the southeast are the Badlands and silhouetted against the western sky are the Black Hills. On a clear day you can see both from Tim and Marcia Amdahl's porch.

Life-partners Tom and Marcia claim raising a family is their first order of business. With five growing youngsters getting involved, the Amdahl's Angus operation is truly a family affair.

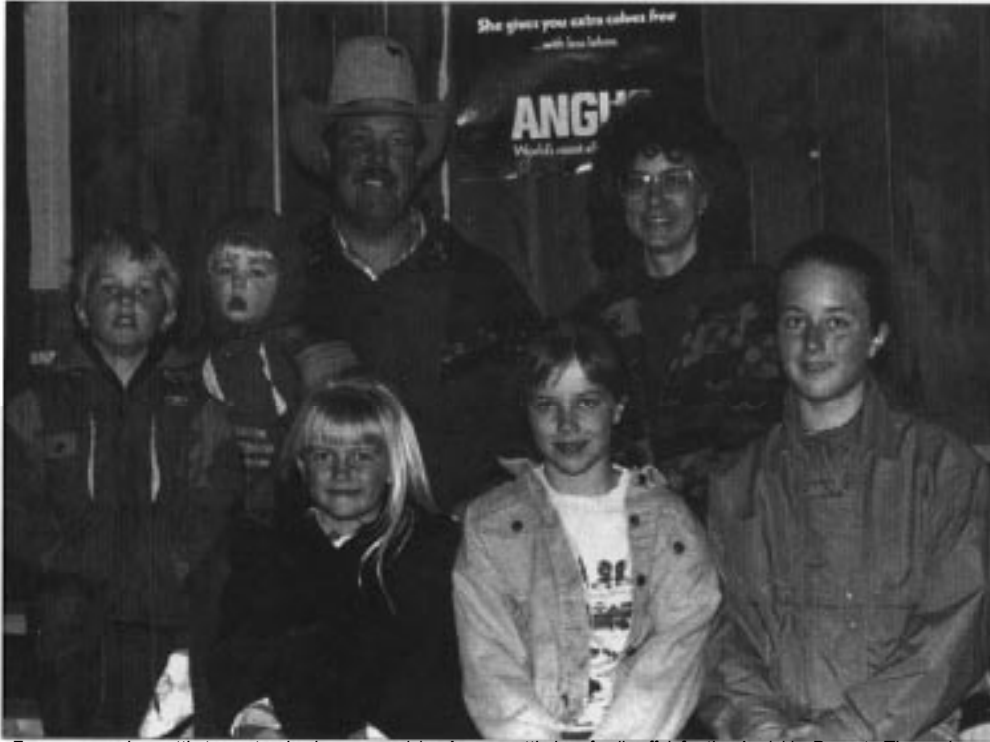
Tim Amdahl's devotion to family is evident when you see him with his wife and children. Follow him to the barn or bull pens and you'll see Tim is excited about breeding and marketing cattle too. The excitement is contagious and has helped him foster some working partnerships that have furthered his goals as an Angus breeder. And even though his temples aren't very gray, Tim has been breeding cattle longer than many people realize.

Tim Amdahl was raised in eastern South Dakota near his great-grandfather's 1884 homestead. Tim's father, Oliver, farmed, fed cattle and managed a few commercial cows near the town of Flandreau. As a youngster



Tim Amdahl, New Underwood, S.D., breeder, markets approximately 240 Angus bulls per year through an annual auction and private treaty sales. The inventory of closely related bulls is supplied from the Amdahl herd and through alliances with the Knochenmus and Brookhouser herds.

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From processing cattle to post-sale clean-up, raising Angus cattle is a family affair for the Amdahls. Parents Tim and Marcia pose with children (l to r): J. T. J. D., Heather, Megan and Jessica.

Tim worked into the sheep and hog business, but abandoned both to concentrate on cattle. In 1972, at just 17 years of age, he bought his first Angus females. By 1979, his herd included 200 cows.

Tim studied Angus genetics and traveled to several states and Canada while accumulating registered cows. He began an extensive artificial insemination (AI) program. His hard work and rapid rise in the Angus business caught the public eye in 1976 when Tim was named Star Farmer of America by the National FFA. He also was among the first in South Dakota to implement embryo transplant (ET) technology

"That was in 1979," says Tim. "It proved to be an expensive education. I learned much about physiology so that was good. But the project

was mostly expense with very little income."

As newlyweds, Tim and Marcia settled on a rented place in the Sioux River Valley. Marcia pursued a nursing career and Tim tended to the farming and cattle. They also started a family and had two little girls by the time Tim developed a serious interest in state government.

"There seemed to be so few people with conservative values involved with the business of South Dakota," remembers Tim. "And there were hardly any with agricultural backgrounds that bothered to get involved. I decided it was time that someone did."

So Tim stepped off a tractor and into politics. He attended his first Republican state convention and entered

the race for Commissioner of School and Public Lands.

"It was an area that interested me and one that I knew something about," adds Tim. "What I didn't know was that you weren't supposed to run against an incumbent and expect to win the nomination. But that's what happened."

Tim also won the election and began a four-year term in 1986. His father and brother looked after the cows while Tim served as administrator for South Dakota's 840,000 acres of school lands, about 75 oil and gas wells, and the investment of nearly \$110 million in revenue. The Commissioner's office is responsible for distributing income from the properties to the state's school districts.

During the last term, Tim saw the Commissioner's office computerize and seek privatization of some of the

state's school land. He also championed the rights of lessee's to control access to state land for which those lessees are responsible.

"It was a somewhat controversial term of office," admits Tim. "Some of my views on property rights conflicted with those of a more liberal philosophy, and with the media. So while I won my party's nomination for a second term, I didn't win re-election. I have no regrets. Leaving politics was the best thing that could have happened to our family and our Angus business."

Even while Tim was in public service, the Amdahl Angus herd was in production. Private treaty marketing had shifted to public auction in 1988, with production sales held at the sale barn in Phillip. An increasingly "western" customer base convinced Tim and Marcia to move west as they left the state capitol in Pierre. Also liking the idea of living near the Black Hills, they sought out and purchased the ranch near New Underwood. Then, they got serious about the bull business.

"We own only a quarter-section but have been fortunate enough to rent enough additional range to maintain about 200 registered females," says Tim. "Opportunities for expanding our land base have been limited, so we've tried to be creative. I became acquainted with some good breeders whose goals paralleled ours, so I approached them about working together."

For about eight years, Tim has been working with Roger Knochenmus and Sons of Sioux Falls, and the Brookhouser Family of Brunswick, Neb. Both operations run cows bred

similarly to the Amdahl herd. Many of the same AI sires are used as well as same-bloodline bulls for natural service.

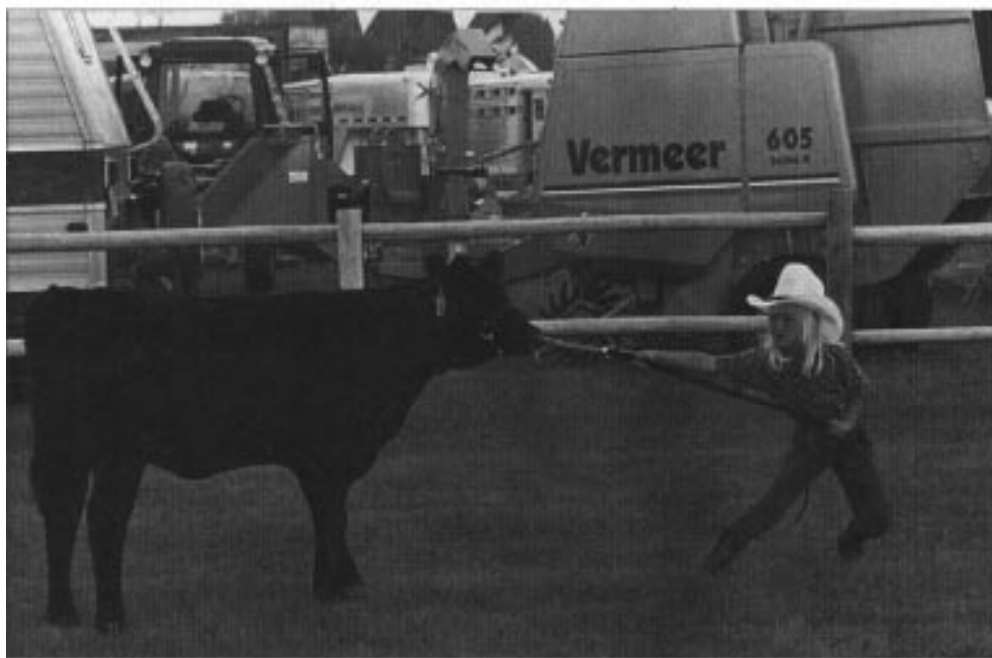
"Collectively we represent about 800 registered cows," explains Tim. "They produce a good selection of closely related bull calves with moderate birth weights, but the rapid early growth that our customers want. They want consistency too, and we're able to provide it."

Mark Brookhouser says his family's northeast Nebraska farm provides a lot of winter feed and is balanced with sufficient summer pasture. Mark believes the operation can compete with the low-cost producers, but he also recognizes a particularly critical shortcoming.

"We generally have plenty of cheap feed, so we think we're pretty competitive. Still, we have a limited local market for our bulls," explains Mark. "Marketing bulls through Tim Amdahl has worked really well for us. Tim has developed a good clientele and he keeps working at it. He helps us with sire selection from among proven AI sires, so we can produce the kind of bulls his customers want. We're very pleased."

Roger Knochenmus, Sioux Falls, S.D., doesn't use AI, but he consults with Tim Amdahl when picking the bulls he will use for natural service. Boger also agrees that Tim's personality and salesmanship is an asset to their business relationship.

"I think we're reasonably good producers, but not quite so good at marketing," adds Roger. "Tim is very good at public relations. He's in touch with his customers nearly year-round. His marketing expertise lets us concentrate on what we do best."



Enhancing Amdahl promotion efforts are the youngsters' show activities. Here, Heather puts much effort into leading a reluctant heifer at South Dakota's Central States Fair.

Each fall, the top-end bull calves from the Brookhouser and Knochenmus herds join the inventory at Amdahl Angus Ranch. The bulls are developed on a high-roughage ration and marketed as yearlings. An annual March production sale has been held on the ranch since 1993. About 150 head are cataloged for the auction, but later private treaty sales increase the tally to about 240 head.

In an effort to build customer confidence, Tim may have been the first Angus breeder in South Dakota to offer an unconditional guarantee on every bull sold. The full one-year guarantee covers injury and death from any cause.

Tim also was among the first to offer a bull wintering service. Realizing that many commercial ranchers weren't set up to give yearling bulls sufficient care following the first breeding season, Tim will

provide that care for his customers. The bulls are fed to keep growing and be in breeding condition by the next season. Tim also does a breeding soundness exam and semen check before returning the bulls. And if any fail to measure up, the customer receives full credit for the purchase price.

During the last couple of years, Amdahl Angus has returned to embryo transfer. The practice also involves some informal partnerships with two local, commercial ranchers.

"We're using embryo transfer to capitalize on the best genetics and offer more consistent performance and quality," says Tim. "That's our goal and ET is just one more tool to use. No matter what guarantees or customer services you offer, you still have to provide a good product."

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