

Targeting Excellence

Yon Family Farms recognized for contributions to Certified Angus Beef® brand supply.

Story and photos by Jessica Wharton and Nicole Erceg, Certified Angus Beef

The setting sun paints the southern sky in pinks and blues; wisps of cotton candy clouds stretch for miles.

He strolls through the vibrant, green grass, softly whispering to his cows, one of which nudges his hand for a scratch on the head. He obliges with a gentle pat then continues walking. A smile on his face, he pauses to gaze at the beauty of the evening. He often calls his farm a work of art—tonight, it's easy to see why.

First-generation seedstock producers Kevin and Lydia Yon, along with their children, Drake, Sally and Corbin, have been continuously improving their farm since they drove the first fence posts on what was a 100-acre abandoned peach orchard in 1996.

Today the tagalong toddlers on that first fencing project are full-grown farmers with families of their own. A herd of nearly 1,500 Angus cattle graze their lush green pastures on the coastal plains outside of Ridge Spring, S.C.

Establishing a world-class seedstock operation in the Southeast didn't happen overnight, and the family humbly insists they're no different than many others. Peers, however, know the family's vision, use of technologies and dedication to improvement make them unique.

The pursuit of quality in every detail of their operation earned the

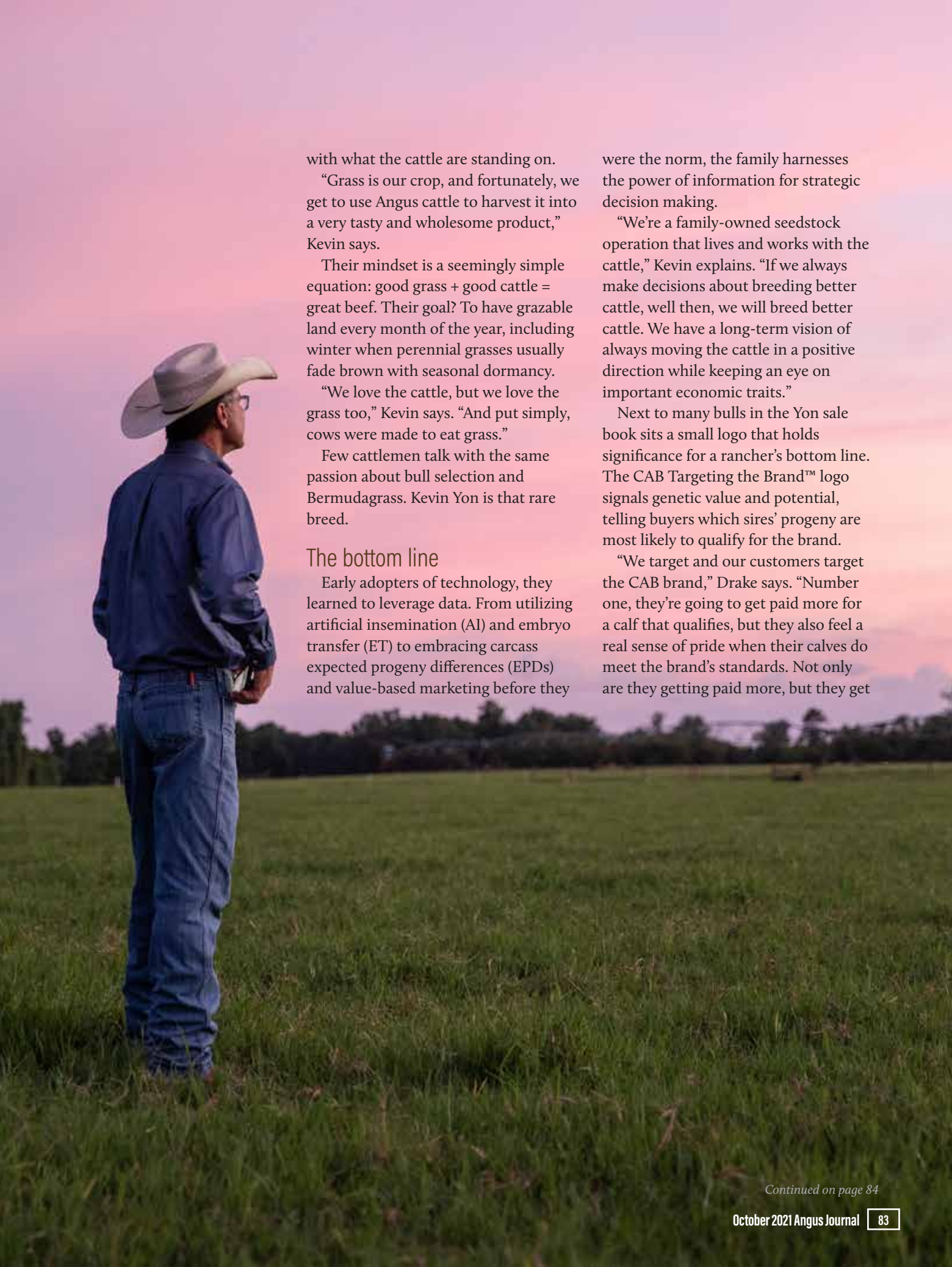


Yon family the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) 2021 Seedstock Commitment to Excellence award.

Success to the Yons is more than selling quality seedstock. It's a

pursuit of developing better grass, cattle and people that add value for their customers, community and consumers.

Their focus on excellence begins



with what the cattle are standing on.

“Grass is our crop, and fortunately, we get to use Angus cattle to harvest it into a very tasty and wholesome product,” Kevin says.

Their mindset is a seemingly simple equation: good grass + good cattle = great beef. Their goal? To have grazable land every month of the year, including winter when perennial grasses usually fade brown with seasonal dormancy.

“We love the cattle, but we love the grass too,” Kevin says. “And put simply, cows were made to eat grass.”

Few cattlemen talk with the same passion about bull selection and Bermudagrass. Kevin Yon is that rare breed.

The bottom line

Early adopters of technology, they learned to leverage data. From utilizing artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) to embracing carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs) and value-based marketing before they

were the norm, the family harnesses the power of information for strategic decision making.

“We’re a family-owned seedstock operation that lives and works with the cattle,” Kevin explains. “If we always make decisions about breeding better cattle, well then, we will breed better cattle. We have a long-term vision of always moving the cattle in a positive direction while keeping an eye on important economic traits.”

Next to many bulls in the Yon sale book sits a small logo that holds significance for a rancher’s bottom line. The CAB Targeting the Brand™ logo signals genetic value and potential, telling buyers which sires’ progeny are most likely to qualify for the brand.

“We target and our customers target the CAB brand,” Drake says. “Number one, they’re going to get paid more for a calf that qualifies, but they also feel a real sense of pride when their calves do meet the brand’s standards. Not only are they getting paid more, but they get

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to see the fruits of their labor and investment; that probably excites our customers as much as anything.”

The logo highlights registered Angus bulls with a minimum marbling EPD of +0.65 and an Angus Grid Value Index of +55 or higher.

In the last four years, Yons raised more than 600 sires that met these standards. That’s 72% of the more than 450 Angus bulls they market through their production sales annually.

“We target the CAB brand because to us it’s the mark of excellence. It’s the mark of quality,” Kevin says. “It’s the best of the best. And we don’t want to just be good. We don’t want our customers just to be average. We want to strive for excellence in all we do.”

The cattle customers want

Kevin does mean *all*.

“Although we put a lot of emphasis on marbling and ribeye and carcass traits, we can never take the eye off that mama cow or lose focus on the basic traits that will help cattle to thrive in their environment,” Kevin says. “And that’s the good thing—Angus cattle can do it all.”

To serve their southeastern customer base, the family focuses on developing cattle that thrive in a grass-based, humid, long growing season.

We also like having the data and the genetic predictions behind that bull so we can confidently say to a customer that needs a calving ease bull, or a bull that will increase weaning rates, or yearling weights or one that will increase marbling in his herd,” Kevin says.

They strive to be a one-stop-shop for maternal, carcass and easy-to-manage cattle. They also market 250 females through an on-farm sale each

year but not before the cows prove their value.

“With our registered females, we give them time to make cows and measure longevity,” Kevin says. “It’s not about breeding for the next sale; it’s about a long-term breeding philosophy. We really care about making the cattle better.”

Invested in customers’ success, if the Yon’s can help a commercial customer, they share, whether it’s better cattle, building relationships or further learning.

Building together

Family. Commitment. Value.

It’s more than a catchy saying or an after-thought marketing slogan. It’s the Yon way of doing business.

They built the farm as a family, and what began as Kevin and Lydia’s hopeful vision, each child now embraces as their own.

“We grew up with the farm,” Drake says. “I feel connected to every piece of it because I’ve been here to see it grow and get better, and I got to watch my parents and build it together. I know my brother and sister feel the same way.”

Once the young helpers, the

second generation now have small voices from the car seat asking to go “check cows.”

“Angus cattle have taught my children about life,” Lydia says. “They have taught my children that even the best cow that has the best genetics can have a calf that’s not very good. They have seen cattle have illnesses that they don’t get over. They’ve seen lots of newborn calves running across a pasture. They’ve seen our customers come and go buying bulls. They’ve seen that how you treat people matters.”

Committed to creating something worthwhile together, sharing values and value with others is their shared pursuit.

“It’s not always a great way to make a living, but it is truly a great way to live,” Kevin says. “We feel like this is what we were put here to do. To raise high-quality beef, raise cattle, raise grass, raise children and raise grandchildren.”

And to do it all with excellence. 

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