

Ted Jennings (right) started out thinking big and never changed stride. Today, he owns and operates Hyland Angus Ranch with his son Ronald (center) and manager Dale Suhr.



**T**hirty years ago, Ted Jennings was told no one could artificially breed 500 cows with fresh semen. One thousand head were A.I.'d that summer at his Hyland Angus Ranch in Highmore, S.D.

Within the next few years, the number bred each season with fresh semen climbed over 5,000. And when frozen semen increased efficiency and practicality of A.I. use, the Hyland operation bred as many as 10,000 cows in one year.

#### Livestock Entrepreneur

Ted Jennings set his sights high from the start. At age 11, he was buying hogs and cattle on order near Boone, Iowa. (He bought for Wilson and was paid per carload.) Before either Ted or his younger brother Clayton turned 20, they were the state's largest hog buyers. In one day, recalls Ted, they shipped 100 double-decker carloads.

That was during the early 1930s and the key to their success, adds the seasoned buyer, was cash. "Producers would haul a long way to be paid cash in depression times," he explains. "That's why we became such big buyers."

By the early 1940s, the Jennings brothers had expanded their cattle trade and moved to Highmore, S.D. They started a sale barn in nearby Miller, invested heavily in land and entered the cow-calf business in partnership as well.

In the midst of Hereford country, the Jennings team started with black bulls and re-

mained strong defenders of the Angus breed. They have witnessed a noticeable shift to black calves in the area, and Ted credits Clayton with the sale of many Angus bulls.

The brothers remained partners in the Angus business for 20 years, expanding their operation and reaching Ted's goal of raising 10,000 calves annually. They put together numerous champion carloads of steers (winning in Chicago, Denver, Kansas City and San Francisco), and built a strong trade for Angus females as a result.

Current headquarters of Ted's operation is known to many Angus breeders as the previous center of Ankony Shadow Isle's Ankony-Hyland division. Leachmans bought the ranch from Clayton, then it was incorporated into Ankony's operation, and later sold to Ted in 1975.

Today, Ted operates in conjunction with his son Ronald. The combination of their land and cattle spans more than 100,000 acres and includes 10,000 brood cows—all commercial. (When he and Clayton split their herd, Ted discarded all registration papers. He has maintained a commercial herd ever since.)

The herd's foundation and female base remains black, although crossbreeding has been used effectively for several generations. A core of several thousand straight-bred Angus supplies many replacement females; all Hyland cows are at least one-quarter Angus.

"You've got to have some black blood in there," says Ted, "or you'll get burnt."

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*Ted Jennings  
Thinks Big—  
10,000 Cows  
Are Part of the Plan*

by Nancy Ann Sayre

n average runs," says Dale Suhn, manager at Hyland Angus, "we'll get a cow per minute through the chute."

He refers to A.I. work on the Highmore, S.D., operation; a project which annually includes the insemination of some 6,500 females. During a 21-day breeding season for heifers, the Hyland crew will average better than 100 head a day. And that figure more than doubles for heavy breeding days in cow pastures. Even with a cow per minute average, it constitutes a sizeable undertaking.

For each three-week breeding period (heifers are bred first, cows are serviced to start calving a few weeks later), one cowboy is responsible for heat detecting 250 head. Each man checks his group four times daily on horseback, corralling individuals as they come in heat. Teaser bulls are used only on wet 2-year-olds.

A special inseminator is hired to do all the breeding (Phil VanDervoort in recent years); his day's work can entail breeding at a dozen pastures. Each pasture has its own corral system, 25 in all.

Well-managed cattle, good facilities, plenty of A.I. experience and know-how, hard work on everyone's part and a firm belief in resulting payoffs—the combination makes this program click. In fact, it clicks to the tune of an average 85 percent first service pass-over. An 80 percent conception rate is disappointing at Hyland Angus, and settling rates for cer-



Dale Suhn, manager of Hyland Angus, knows the value of adding top genetics to the herd. Results pay off in several ways; the Sire Evaluation Report makes sire selection more effective.

tain semen will climb as high as 95 percent.

#### Genetic Value Pays

The program's impact is substantial. Any calf sired by a cleanup bull wears a tag marked "pb" for pasture-bred. Among the 2,200 replacement heifers retained each year, very few "pb" tags are present. (Tags on all A.I. calves are coded by sire. Breeding is random, but careful records distinguish sire groups.)

"We keep our replacement females out of the top producing bulls—ones that will carry the strongest traits on through," says Dale. "We feel if we keep taking females by these A.I. sires that are top bulls, then breed them back to others, we can progressively work them up and keep strong genetics in the herd."

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## Successful A.I. On a Large Scale

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Such a plan has left Hyland Angus with hundreds of daughters of such bulls as Ankonian Dynamo, Bandolier Eston Durness 42B ("Pacesetter"), Blacklock McHenry 13 Y ("Great Northern"), Bon View Winton 1342, Band 116 of Ideal 2118 7174 ("Band 174"), Rito 8221 of Ideal 087 36 ("Big Moose") and many more. Moreover, those genetics cost less than the average "pb" female in Hyland pastures.

Dale quotes a total A.I. cost of \$18 per cow bred, versus a figure twice as high for natural service. Semen and labor necessary in using top A.I. sires is far outweighed by alternative carrying costs for large numbers of herd sires. (Even behind such a successful A.I. program Hyland must run 225 cleanup bulls.)

Not only do superior genetics benefit Hyland's commercial cow herd, they bring extra dollars across the scales, too.

"Our straight Angus will weigh as heavy as our crosses," says Dale. "They don't have the hybrid advantage, but we've never used higher performing Charolais bulls (or other breeds) for cleanup."

Ronald Jennings, partner in Hyland Angus, reinforces the point: "You just

can't buy the bulls like you can buy the semen. We're trying to use the top, the best genetically."

Results of the program work well for customers, too. The same feeder takes Hyland's Angus steers each year, puts about 500 lb. gain on them and has yet to sell a yield grade four. The University of Minnesota also has purchased groups of straight-bred steers (about 300 annually). Data in two past years showed average daily gains of 3.88 lb. on an alcohol stillage ration; this year the steers gained at a rate of 3.92 lb. per day and nearly all graded choice.

#### The Role of Sire Evaluation

Since extra growth and producing ability both pay, Hyland Angus insists on sires with strength in both areas. Per-

formance-bred sires have been utilized for many generations—Hyland Angus progeny-tested Bon View bulls for several years; more recently, Jorgensen Ranches' top sires have dominated the breeding program.

"The difference today," says Dale, "is that predictable genetics are easier to locate. The American Angus Assn.'s Sire Evaluation Report is the selection key.

"The Sire Evaluation Report has really helped us in searching for bulls," explains Dale. "We can go through there and find bulls we think come from herds with consistency and will produce strong calves.

"Prior to the Sire Evaluation Report, we just had to use a lot of trial and error . . . now we can eliminate many of the fallouts. By selecting on Sire Evaluation figures, you don't run into as many bulls that don't work for you."

Hyland Angus has used proven bulls listed in the Sire Evaluation Report for several years. The results have been consistent and progress is notable. The calves have sold well and produced well—in fact, Dale says this year's strongest group of calves were dropped by first-calf heifers.

#### More than Numbers

Sheer numbers at Hyland Angus are impressive, but the management level is perhaps even more significant. From one's first glance at any of several Hyland ranches, a deep-rooted pride in the land, buildings and livestock is obvious.

From the haystacks, working facilities

and ranch headquarters, to the pastures and cattle therein, everything is well kept.

Every aspect of the vast operation, though, is practical. With business-oriented Ted Jennings at the helm, nothing different should be expected. Calculations of A.I. cost factors or current carrying expenses for Hyland's 10,000 matrons come easily to the

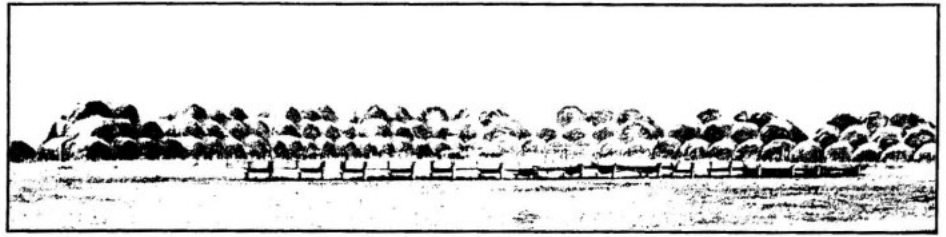
man; recent market prices and futures quotes are carefully watched. He never has hesitated to buy or sell (in big ways), and he would not tolerate land or cattle failing to pay their way.

Ted stays current with Hyland operations, but his primary concern still lies with order buying. He and Clayton no longer run the

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Miller yards, yet Ted still handles nearly 100,000 head a year. Worlds of experience as both buyer and seller of calves, yearlings and finished cattle carry directly into his cow-calf operations. An awareness of what cattlemen want has dictated his own breeding programs. His only interest, he stresses, is in good, big cattle.

Day to day ranch management at Hyland Angus has been headed up by the Suhn family since 1946. Much of the credit for this first-rate operation is due to the late Ernest (Junior) Suhn and his sons. Since the untimely passing of Junior Suhn last year, his son Dale has worked with Ronald Jennings in running the various Hyland units.



*Hay stacks seem endless, but for an operation this size in an unkind environment, there is no such thing as too much feed on hand.*

"It takes a lot of feed to maintain cattle in this country," says Dale. "Winters are harsh and young animals won't gain much."

And with the volume of cattle raised at Hyland, huge amounts of feed must be readily available. Seemingly endless stacks of hay represent forage for at least one year in advance. (During a good harvest year, a three-year supply might be stockpiled.) Mature cows winter on the oldest hay, while calves eat better quality, newly-harvested feed.

Records at Hyland Angus include accurate breeding and calving reports, but individual weight records exist only in Ronald's herd. When Ted analyzes progress, he leans heavily on his order-buying experience and well-trained eye.

"Personally, I judge the calves with my own eyes. If they please me, they'll please somebody else—if I feel they're heavier this year, that would just be instinct."

The future at Hyland? Plans are always to make the cattle a little better. Use of top genetics through A.I. work is the key; according to Ronald, it provides the only way to improve quickly on such a large scale.

Angus sires will continue to play a strong role in the program. As Dale notes, "The commercial man has to cross and any breed works for a terminal cross . . . but you need to come back to Angus for the maternal traits."

### Simple Rules, Large Numbers

Ted has sold cattle all his life. The work force at his Hyland Angus runs one of the largest and most successful A.I. programs to be found anywhere. They deal in large numbers, but the guidelines are kept simple: A cow must breed regularly and she must produce a good, big calf—these men should know. **AJ**



*Numbers are great at Hyland (the cow herd numbers 10,000), but the task is simple—every cow must breed regularly and raise a good, big calf.*

### Thinking Big

Since fresh semen was first used at Hyland Angus 30 years ago, an extensive A.I. program has consistently put top Angus genetics in the herd. Careful nutrition and health management compliments the program in producing a quality product.

A 60-day breeding season for heifers and cows (21 days of A.I. service and the remainder with cleanup bulls) yields spring calves. Normally, fall-weaned calves are carried through the winter on a light growing ration. As yearlings, they are put on grass and sold the next fall weighing 800 to 900 lb. This pattern will vary year to year, though, depending on feed, weather and cattle market factors.

