

FOR SURVIVORS ONLY H&Q ANGUS

by Lori Riffel

In Louisiana you've got to be tough to survive. If females want to stay among the ranks of mama cows at H&Q Angus in Tallulah, La., they have to be aggressive, hard-working cows. They have to get out in the heat of the day or the chilling cold and supply themselves and their calves with the necessary forage nutrients that make a superior pair.

And if they don't, they'll soon eliminate themselves from that elite group known to Ron Holloway and Billy Querrey as the "survivors."

Tallulah is located in northeast Louisiana and in the Delta country, an area known for its bone-chilling wet-cold and energy-zapping hot and humid zones.

All these factors, plus the intense culling procedures partners Holloway and Querrey put on their herd, makes a rigorous workout for these females trying to make the herd record rosters at H&Q.

A successful partnership

For Ron Holloway and Billy Querrey, the forming of their partnership may or may not have happened the way most do. It happened because of individual needs, but there was no pre-planning. They are the best of friends, so a mutual agreement was not hard to reach.

Holloway and Querrey knew each other in college and then worked in the Farm Bureau organization together. Each has his own farming operation which consists of the row crops soybeans, cotton, corn and milo.

The partnership became an idea when some pastureland south of the Tallulah community came up for lease in 1976. Both men wanted to lease it but neither wanted to tackle it alone. Holloway had a small herd of Brangus cows and Querrey had Angus. A decision was made and they leased it on halves.

Keeping two separate herds in one pasture proved to be difficult and more of a bother, so another decision was reached. The pasture and cows would become a partnership, and the next move was to shop for registered Angus cows that would be the new partnership owned as H&Q Angus. Angus were chosen because of their maternal qualities, consistency and easy-keeping characteristics.

Does this partnership have all the common problems of not agreeing at times and different ideas? Not really.

"We both have different enough personalities that we good naturedly among ourselves argue about things all the time," Holloway says. "But it makes us both look out for other ideas from other people."



Ronnie Holloway and Billy Querrey represent the H&Q and the herd of Angus cows in Tallulah, La., they aptly call the "survivors."

Querrey adds, "You've got to have a great deal of respect for your partner. If you don't have that, you don't need to be partners in the first place. And you don't have to agree all the time."

They are both in unison when coming together on a final decision. "We say what we want and then discuss it and arrive at a decision both of us agree on," Querrey says.

H&Q travelled to many sales and made their first purchases at sales in the Southeast and at private treaty.

Dr. Ike Smart from Louisiana State University has contributed wise advice to the H&Q partnership and to what standards they should select their herd on. He told the H&Q partners to keep the herd practical and adapted to the area's environment.

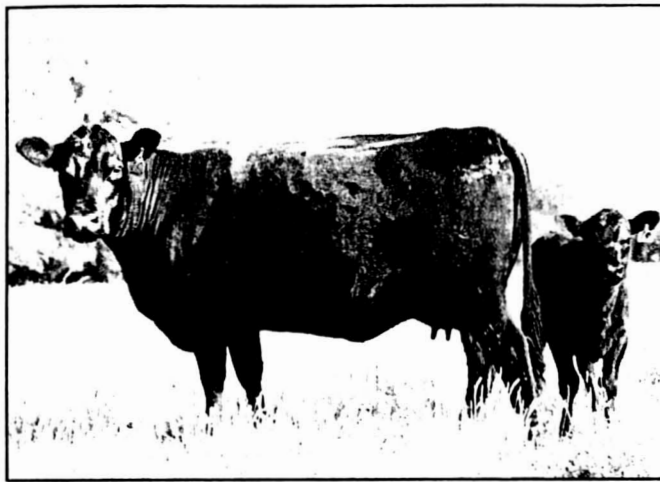
This adaptability was something that came to the attention of H&Q rather early. While some cows would get out in the heat of the day and graze, others would stand in the shade panting. The cows that were grazing stood a better chance of surviving, Holloway pointed out.

So in putting together a new herd in the harsh environment in which the H&Q cows would live, Holloway and Querrey set up their first requirement—they have to be survivors and they have to do it with ease. They must get out and graze, breed back early and raise a calf every year in finicky weather conditions. Not all of their first selections survived these conditions and a noticeable percent left the farm.

"We purchased a lot of solid, good-pedigreed cattle that were adapted to the area they were from, but just couldn't adjust and excel in production in our harsh area," says Holloway.

With the humidity and dampness and the bayous, there's a lot of wet grass to graze, and cows have to eat large quantities of it to maintain nutrient and production requirements. The major grasses are common bermuda, dallas grass and clover.

"If cattle work here, they'll work anywhere," says



"Survivors" at H&Q are required to raise a calf annually that weighs and is appealing to the eye.

Holloway. "Because if they've got the genetic capabilities to convert our grass to beef, they can be productive anywhere else in the country."

100 "survivor" mother cows

In H&Q's quest for a new herd, emphasis wasn't put on one particular cow family. But fertility and maternal traits were uppermost in their minds.

The herd numbers 100 mature cows, and very few females that are in the present herd were purchased. They found that the nucleus of the herd has traced back to three major cow families with their selection pressure upheld. Unconsciously they have built their herd that now emphasizes individual families.

"By keeping daughters we have forced a couple of families," says Querrey. "We probably have 15 or 20 individuals in two cow families."

"The cows in the herd are getting closer together for how they perform, and there's not as many extreme tops and bottoms," he adds. "Because when you select and cull, the extremes begin to eliminate themselves." In H&Q's first years there were always two or three cows that they would look forward to their calves, and after those the rest were just calves. The herd today is consistent in size and uniformity and in how they produce. Every cow has a calf H&Q looks forward to.

"We've made progress in being able to reach goals, especially maternally. I used to think every cow milked, but unfortunately it isn't the case. The best way to improve that is to get rid of the non-milkers," Querrey added.

H&Q pulls no stops and plays no favorites. They're hard on their herd when it comes to culling. Calves are culled once at weaning determined by their weaning weight ratio and then again at yearling. Weigh scales are their tale teller, and if they don't weigh, they don't stay. H&Q is enrolled on the AHIR program, and it's visible proof of their measured progress.

"At first our calves weren't weighing enough and we kept culling on that," Querrey says. "It wasn't long before we had weaned our heaviest heifer calf at 635

lb., and then H&Q Andy Jackson ("Andy") weaned off at 759 lb."

Bulls that work and survive too

Andy is a young son of Cracker Jack Baros SA 860 ("Jack Son"), the main herd sire at H&Q. Many daughters of Jack Son are in production now and are artificially bred to performance sires or are bred to Leachman Precedent, another young herd sire.

Holloway and Querrey travelled to Denver in 1982 in search of a senior herd sire. The bull that caught the H&Q boys' eyes was in the Slagle Angus pen. And that was Jack Son. Be it cow sense or whatever, Holloway and Querrey agreed that Jack Son looked like he had the adaptability and easy keeping characteristics to work in their program in Louisiana.

H&Q became a part of the syndicate formed that year in Denver on Jack Son known as the Jack Son Associates.

Two sons H&Q raised from Jack Son are Andy and H&Q Reliance ("Sam"). These two junior herd sires have been used on the Precedent daughters and different pedigreed cows.

"Jack Son has given us some big, deep-ribbed cattle, and Precedent has sired more refined calves. With a combination of those genetics we hope to produce calves with more eye appeal and keep the performance and the bred-in adaptability we have achieved with our cow herd," says Querrey.

"The commercial man sells his cattle by the pound, but the purebred breeder sells his by the head. So how he looks is important also," he adds.

He comments that if a man has an ugly cow on his place that she must be good or he wouldn't keep her. But Querrey believes almost everyone likes to look at a cow that appeals to him, but that it can vary also, just like culling.

"I don't think a cow has to be 58 inches tall to be pretty. A good cow here (at H&Q) I don't think is going to be 58 inches tall and walk around in a pasture and produce a calf annually. I seriously doubt if she'll do it in our system. She may do it for others in Louisiana and we could make her do it, but we're going to have to tote a lot more sacks if we do," Querrey says.

"Reputation demands the cows you sell be good ones."

Querrey and Holloway agree that a good-performing cow doesn't have to be ugly, because there's a bunch of good-looking cows around that perform. The "survivors" at H&Q are certainly acceptable to look at and they perform.

H&Q proved that when a home-raised heifer was named champion at the 100-plus head LSU Junior Livestock Show in 1983, and to top that she was the youngest in a class of 35 heifers.

H&Q gears their calving season as near to the first of

the year as possible. Any later than the first of May and the humidity, heat and parasites become a major problem. They do have a few fall-calving cows and may be opting to increase that number for a couple of reasons.

"Here in Louisiana, calving from October through April is desirable as far as the environment," says Holloway. And it's even better when it coincides with the off-season of row cropping.

Cattle that work for customers

H&Q's selling area is not local nor can it be, as they aren't exactly in what you would call cow country. Row crops claim the majority of the acres. They reach into the adjoining states for their bull market, participate in the state association-sponsored sales and advertise in regional papers and the Angus Journal. They have also participated in the Dynamic Dams sale.

"What we want to project each time we advertise is the honesty of letting the cattle speak for themselves," says Holloway. "And advertising is a necessity." They want that marketable product to represent what H&Q has been trying to do and be of the highest quality they can offer.

"Reputation demands the cows you sell be good cows," says Querrey.

Row crops major business

In the farming enterprise, Holloway and Querrey operate their own family businesses. But a helping hand is always there if the other one needs it.

"When we hit the fields, A.I. has to stop," says Holloway. So comes the restrictions for spring A.I. calves.

Both Holloway and Querrey admit the cattle operation suffers as far as time spent with them during the busy crop seasons. And with the herd size at present larger than they would like, they know the cattle operation has received less attention than a registered operation should. They plan to reduce the number to 50 to 75 head in the next couple of years.

Junior show prospects

Holloway's children were involved in showing when they were junior members. The oldest son, Ron, is now a veterinarian; son Herb has graduated from college and is home with the farming operation; and the only daughter, Dena, completed her last junior heifer show at the Louisiana Regional Show last June. Querrey has two girls, Valerie and Lisa, and they still have a few years left of showing, and Billy is glad.

"I enjoy working with my children and their junior show projects. I really enjoy it, and it's meant a lot to me," says Querrey. "And it has helped the kids to develop too."

Looking down the road at H&Q, it's still to be lined with Angus cattle formed by the standards that make these females not only survivors, but survivors who produce and do it with quality and ease.

"That's an awful lot to ask of your cows, but there's enough of them around to do it," Querrey says. **AJ**