


From the Ground Up

*Creating a name for yourself
in the cattle industry is a goal a
Missouri Angus producer says can
be achieved with a little time,
effort and passion.*

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor





As a child, Alan Mead dreamed of earning his place in the cattle business, but the vision did not magically come to fruition. It took 30 years to transform dream to reality.

He spent his young adulthood planting the seeds to grow his cattle operation into a national name. Today, Mead Farms is a 7,000-acre operation Alan and daughters Annaliese, 13, and Juliette, 18, call home. The family shares the Barnett, Mo., property with nearly 2,400 cows varying in breed — Angus, Hereford and Charolais.

“This hasn’t happened overnight,” Alan says, describing how he started his farm with 20 cows. “It’s been a slow process, and we’ve mostly bred to get where we’re at today.”

A firm foundation

While Alan gained an understanding of the Angus family at a young age thanks to his grandfather’s love for the cattle industry, it took years of his own blood, sweat and tears to establish his roots in the cattle business.

The path may not have always been clear or easy, but Alan says he never wavered in his desire to create his own place in the cattle industry.

“The bottom line is, it’s in my blood,” he says. “I grew up Angus.”

Despite knowing his heart was fully committed to *The Business Breed*, Alan says he craved diversity as he grew older.

“Growing up in agriculture, I felt that I didn’t inherit anything. I felt that I needed to find something else,” he explains.

Alan knew the dream of breeding high-quality cattle wouldn’t come free of charge. Searching for the diversity he craved, Alan sought a career with the ability to not only make him a well-rounded individual, but also help provide funding for the farm to thrive.

Alan went from hauling hay and working cattle to attending medical school as a young man. After graduating, he became an anesthesiologist specialist serving at the Lake Regional Health System in Osage Beach, Mo.

This career path was an opportunity to grow his skill set and provide the financial investment he needed to grow the farm.

Jennifer Russell, dedicated employee and adopted member of the Mead family, says she admires Alan for his dedication. She considers him the perfect example of someone who created the future they envisioned for themselves.

“Alan worked to get to where he is today,” Russell explains. “I got here seven years ago, and it’s been neat to be a part of this. I’ve gotten to watch this place grow and evolve and even been a part of that.”

She says she admires her employer for his motivation and dedication to the Angus breed. Many individuals fighting to make their name in agriculture lose the desire to keep pushing for success, but Alan never lost sight of his goals.

Juliette and Annaliese say they have never doubted the love their father has for the people and livestock of the cattle industry.

“This is something I’ve seen my dad be passionate about since I was a baby,” Annaliese says. “He has a drive to succeed.”

At the end of the day, Alan has always had — and likely always will have — a focus on the future. Russell says he has an innate ability to understand the importance of both realistic and financial goals. This talent is what allowed him to grow Mead Farms into the operation it is today.

“My dad knows what it takes to grow an operation and make superior cattle,” Juliette says. “He’s teaching us to see the end goal, because he knows what it takes.”

Planting the seeds

For others looking to start their careers in the agriculture industry, Alan has some words of wisdom. He warns individuals this industry is not the easiest place to find success as a first-generation farmer or rancher, but it is possible.

“Start slow,” he advises. “Then, depending on your ability, grow from there. Feel out the water a little bit, and remember that there’s no right or wrong way to do this.”

Continued on page 26

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For Alan, agriculture is a people business. He says one of the key reasons he was able to find his place in the cattle business was because of the support and knowledge he gleaned from other successful cattlemen across the nation.

He stresses the importance of relationships, and encourages individuals looking to start their own business to never be afraid to reach out to people who can play a role in the development of an operation. From bankers to the regional managers of the American Angus Association, every relationship formed will come with a piece of advice or information Alan says will be instrumental.

After building a foundation of knowledge, the next step is to start the work at home and plant seeds to grow to success, Alan says.

Focus is one of the key things that has helped the Mead operation grow through the years.

“We’ve always been performance-oriented, and we’ve always focused on reproduction and the cow,” Alan explains.

The deepest roots

The work of starting a business in agriculture is more than worth the time and effort it requires, and that’s a statement the entire Mead family attests to.

While Alan can testify to the strength of the Angus cow, he says it is the American Angus Association that has allowed his business to thrive.

“I think the Angus cow takes care of herself, but it’s really the Association that provides you with all the tools necessary to be successful,” he adds. From expected progeny differences (EPDs) to recordkeeping and even marketing tools, Alan says it is the Association behind *The Business Breed* that makes the difference.

With his cattleman’s toolbox full, Alan says he has been able to take his Angus herd to heights he never even dreamed of. In 2020, Mead Farms is listed as No. 1 in Missouri for number of Pathfinder® cows, and one of the top in the nation.

With a focus on fertility and a devotion to genetics, Alan says he has been able to create some



high-quality Angus calves while meeting the needs of his customers.

“We genomic-test everything,” he says. “We think it’s a good service to our customers, and customer service is really important to us.”

With a first season breeding guarantee and free delivery on his bulls, Alan lives to serve his fellow Angus producers.

The next generation

Alan isn’t the only member of the family dedicated to the industry, however. Juliette and Annaliese started their own careers in the cattle business with show heifers Lucy and Coco.

“As we both grew in that, we realized we wanted to learn all the steps to get heifers to the ring,” Juliette says.

The girls’ knowledge of the cattle industry reaches far beyond the boundaries of the show ring however, Alan says. In addition to helping work the livestock, both are adept at spotting and treating

disease, making their own animals’ breeding decisions, and handling calving season.

“These girls are valuable to the operation,” Russell says. “They are as valuable as any other team player we have. Showing is really just the hobby.”

Juliette says working as a family unit has allowed them all to help the operation reach the level of success it is at today. While the sisters have an easy-going competition in the ring, Annaliese says they share in one another’s successes.

“It’s a lot of responsibility, but you don’t ever have to worry they’ll do what they need to do. It’s been a joy to watch them grow up,” Alan adds.

It’s the bonds between the faces behind Mead Farms that make this operation special. Alan says while the operation may be large, it will always be a family farm through and through.

“We’re all working as a family for the same end goal,” Juliette says. “It’s what makes our dedication and our passion stronger.” 