

A Global Celebration of the Angus Family

World Angus Technical Meeting unites breed enthusiasts from 32 countries.

by B. Lynn Gordon

The passion for Angus was never more prominent than when the Czech Republic became the epicenter of the Angus world Sept. 8-15. The World Angus Technical Meeting (WATM), hosted by the Czech Aberdeen Angus Association in celebration of its 30th anniversary, drew more than 200 individuals traveling from 32 countries.

It was a heartwarming reunion for the Angus family and breed, long-awaited due to the pandemic-related delay. The event featured the official World Angus Secretariat membership meeting; a national show; tours of Angus cattle farms; and an introduction to the Czech culture, history and attractions.

Vibrant conversation on the buses while viewing the Angus cattle displayed against the picturesque countryside was capped off with the traditional singing of the “Angus Anthem.” A U.S. delegation, including American Angus Association representatives, joined this global gathering.

Sharing the global stage

Mark McCully, Association CEO, shared, “The marketplace for Angus genetics is continually becoming more global.”

He, along with Kelli Retallick-Riley, president of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), gave presentations at the event highlighting the advancements from American Angus breeders that are influencing the growth and



Conference panelists from left are PJ Budler, Trans Ova, Fort Worth, Texas, moderator; Kirk Wildman, Canada; Billy Estrada, Mexico; Mark McCully, United States; William McLaren, Scotland; Erica Halliday, Australia. Budler, McLaren and Halliday also served as judges for the WATM Show.

acceptance of Angus genetics in the United States and around the world. They announced the expansion of the World Angus Evaluation, incorporating data from 11 new traits through a collaboration with Canada and Australia.

“Angus breeders around the world watch the U.S. for trends and innovations,” McCully said. “The WATM is a great opportunity to showcase the members of our association and continue to forge relationships with other Angus world leaders.”

Retallick-Riley added that genomics have gained popularity, with various countries leveraging them to enhance EPD (expected progeny differences) predictions and achieve genetic progress.

“Genomics has significantly improved the accuracy of EPDs for

young animals, thanks to a strong commitment to data collection by American Angus Association membership and producers, resulting in faster genetic progress,” she said.

McCully also joined a panel of representatives from Canada, Scotland, Australia and Mexico, where he shared the successful outcomes of the Certified Angus Beef program and its effects on genetic selection for a higher-quality product for consumers and driving more demand back through the system for Angus-influenced genetics.

2023 Board of Directors President Chuck Grove highlighted the unity of the Angus family at the WATM, saying, “It doesn’t matter what country the person was from, their passion, their excitement shone through — there was a common belief in Angus cattle globally.”



U.S. attendees included Harry Fisher, Eureka, Ill.; B. Lynn Gordon, Grand Island, Neb.; Sara and Darrell Stevenson, White Sulphur Springs, Mont.; Ruth and Chuck Grove, Forest, Va.; Jordan Riley and Kelli Retallick-Riley, Saint Joseph, Mo.; and Mark McCully, Saint Joseph, Mo.

Grove and his wife, Ruth, enjoyed the opportunity to bolster connections within the Angus breed discussing the leadership and resources available from the Association's extensive registration and performance database.

"Attending the WATM brings a whole new perspective to the expanse of the Angus breed," Grove said.

Values that unite

It was evident during the week that participants appreciated the opportunity to foster a sense of connection and camaraderie. Despite differences in geography and language, participants shared a common goal: ensuring the longevity and sustainability of the Angus breed. Attendees Darrell and Sara Stevenson, White Sulphur Springs, Mont., have been fortunate to attend several World Angus Conferences.

"Attending the WATM isn't just about learning and improving," Darrell says, "it's about connecting with people who live and work like us [Angus breeders], even if they're on the other side of the world."

Sara echoes that sentiment.

"We may not speak the same

language or use the same methods, but we're more alike than the media suggests. Meeting new people experiencing different cultures and traditions makes the world feel smaller, which is refreshing."

Harry Fisher, Eureka, Ill., attending his sixth World Angus event, visited with producers from 25 countries throughout the week.

"The World Angus Secretariat gathering is unique in offering a chance to share ideas and discuss our common and unique challenges in producing quality Angus beef in our diverse environments," Fisher said.

The U.S. delegation was impressed to see the diversity and strength of Angus genetics as they adapt to varying environments and political systems.

Grove explained, "The beef industry in the EU (European Union) is focused on red meat yield, due to the historical dominance of Continental breeds in the region. Focus on pounds over quality has been the norm, further accentuated by the lack of a federal quality grading system."

However, as evident by the host Czech Angus breeders and the many conversations the U.S.

delegates had with EU and non-EU country representatives, there is a strong eagerness to learn and adopt technologies like genomics and enhance marbling characteristics.

"The value of this event is the free-flowing conversations we can have with representatives from so many countries," says Darrell Stevenson.

Czech character

For meeting participants, a bonus is the opportunity to be immersed in the culture and cattle business of the host country.

The Czech Republic offered a captivating backdrop and enjoyable experience much appreciated by the attendees. Attendees traveled the countryside through the meticulous villages featuring historic churches and medieval castles, viewing black and Red Angus cattle grazing the rolling hills and mountainsides, and seeing more expansive farming enterprises than expected. The Czech Republic equal to the size of South Carolina, featured agricultural scenery, much like home.

Harry Fisher said, "I viewed Angus cattle in locations that would have seemed like home to breeders from Missouri or Montana."

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The countryside amazed all the attendees, but learning about the political history cemented the thoughts of resilience and character of the hosts.

The Czech Republic's rich history, dating back to the 13th century, experienced a significant period under communist rule from 1948-1989. During this time, many farm families, were forced to give up their land to state-controlled farms, and agricultural productivity and lifestyle suffered. With the fall of communism, private land ownership was restored and farm families began to regain their homesteads, but were left with years of restoration and rebuilding.

Angus genetics made their way to the Czech Republic shortly after democracy was restored. The first Angus heifers were imported in 1991 by Milos Menhart, a cattle genetics entrepreneur who spent time in Canada. He later coordinated the importation of an additional 1800 head, half of them black Angus from Canada. The first Red Angus arrived in 1996.

With the popularity of the Angus breed on the increase in Czechia, numbers have risen to 5,000 Angus cattle registered by 150 members in 2022, making Angus the second-



The Czech Aberdeen Angus Association board members, hosts of the World Angus Technical Meeting, congratulate the grand champion of the special show held in conjunction with the WATM, September 2023. The show featured the exhibition of over 100 head of cattle, with the winning entry backed by three generations of Czech Angus bloodlines.

largest beef breed in the country, rivaling Charolais.

Today, European Angus genetics' influence is most apparent due to access and live cattle trade. Importation of Canada and U.S. genetics (semen or embryos) continues, but presents challenges due to EU importation restrictions.

During the primary and extended tour, 17 farm families and businesses opened their doors in prime style with unending hospitality often serving their home-raised beef or cultural cuisine. The tour stops displayed herds ranging in size from 35 to 250 cows; a bull-test center; technology to measure feed efficiency; robotic feeding systems; outlets for their on-farm beef, including restaurants

and bistros; and a community festival hosted by an Angus farm to celebrate agricultural production.

The 2023 WATM was an unforgettable event. The global Angus family came together to celebrate its unified purpose and experience the exemplary character and hospitality of the Czech Aberdeen Angus Association.

"The passion for the breed transcended through the entire attendance," the Stevensons say. "We highly encourage any and all membership or commercial breeders and youth to take advantage of these opportunities — they have been invaluable to us." **AJ**

Editor's note: by B. Lynn Gordon is a freelance writer from Grand Island, Neb.

World Angus Forum or Technical Meeting — What's the difference?

Tim Brittan, WAS secretary general, explains that historically, World Angus Forums were major open-to-all events occurring every four years. Within these Forums, the Secretariat conducts formal meetings, while the host country seizes the opportunity to showcase the Angus breed and its association.

Mark your calendars:

2025 World Angus Forum — Australia
2027 World Angus Technical Meeting — Brazil
2029 World Angus Forum — United States

Technical Meetings are hosted every two years between Forums, where association or society CEOs and association presidents meet to ensure continuity and progress specific technical matters of shared interest. More recently, the Technical Meetings or Secretariats have evolved into mini-Forums. Smaller Angus associations have embraced these events as opportunities to host the meetings and spotlight their cattle and membership through tours and exhibitions.

Editor's note: Visit www.worldAngus2023.com to learn more about the Czech Angus Tour sites.