

Continuing to count down to 2000 . . .

NEW AGE BREEDERS

If you want to predict the future you must participate in its creation.

— Jim Christensen

A solid foundation is important. Webster's dictionary defines *foundation* as a basis upon which something stands or is supported. Without a sturdy foundation, a house, a business or even a family could falter or collapse.

The foundations of a strong Angus operation are the people who manage it and its customers. A commitment to building a successful Angus operation is dependent on the choices producers make regarding management, genetics, marketing strategies, customer service and their ability to listen to what their customers are demanding.

As we revisit our panel of New Age Breeders, who were introduced in the 1997 and 1998 Herd Reference editions, we find the foundations of their operations are strong, just like their visions for the future.

Panel member Don Boggs says good seedstock producers keep in mind the foundation or traits of the breed of cattle they are producing.

"As they [seedstock producers] improve other traits, they have to be cognizant of what the breed was built on," he says. "You've got to know what has been the breed's strengths and build on those strengths to overcome any perceived weaknesses."

"The seedstock business is a value-added business," he adds. "So an important ingredient of a solid foundation is to be a marketer. The role of a seedstock producer is to capture genetic improvement through marketing."

In comparison, Boggs says, the foundation of a commercial cow-calf operation is the ability to control inputs.

"Commercial producers have to focus on controlling the cost of production," he explains. "They need to be efficient at all times. They are using cattle as a harvesting tool."

Panel members Jeff Dameron, Lexington, Ill., and Stacy Butler, Bliss, Idaho, agree the strength of their operations' foundations is based on their customers.

"While our family's decisions and direction provide a solid foundation, our customers' needs have helped us to continually analyze our foundation and make necessary repairs or upgrades," says Dameron.

Butler adds, "The foundation of our operation is our commitment to producing Angus cattle that meet the needs of our commercial bull customers . . . and the needs of the consumer."

On the following pages you will read how our six panel members build on the foundations they have established. They continue to be industry leaders focused on producing a high-quality product. Because of the solid foundations of their operations, they are positioned to succeed in the next millennium.

They can *still* talk the talk and walk the walk.

— Angie Stump Denton



SAM HANDS



PAUL BENNETT



STACY BUTLER



TIM OHLDE



JEFF DAMERON



DON BOGGS

SOLID FOUNDATIONS — Angus herds/Angus people

Questions: 1. Have any of your goals, marketing or production strategies changed in the last year?

SAM HANDS

Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co.
Garden City, Kan.

Triangle H is a father-sons partnership, including cow-calf, stocker and feeder operations and 7,600 acres of cropland. The Hands family has found its niche working with Angus breeders and their commercial customers, producing a quality product.

1. Our goals haven't really changed during the past year. The depressed ag economy has made us take a more serious look at expenditures and marketing strategies. We're not looking so much at maximum production but are trying to become a better optimum producer.

This year we've become a lot more involved with U.S. Premium Beef (USPB), both as a stockholder and as a feeder. We also were the first feedlot to enroll as a Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program feedlot licensee, which gave us an opportunity to certify what we were already doing.

PAUL BENNETT

Knoll Crest Farm
Red House, Va.

Knoll Crest Farm is a family cattle and farming operation. Each family member has his specialty or interest within the operation. Paul's responsibilities include the management and marketing of the family's Angus, Polled Hereford and Gelbvieh cow herds.

1. During this past year the state of the agricultural economy and of the beef business in particular has made us conscious of the need to keep our production costs as low as we can and really work on fine-tuning ways to make our operation more efficient.

During the past year we have increased the number of bulls sold on a contract basis. Our Knoll Crest Alliance also has expanded. We've seen an increased bull demand as a result of working with our customers in retained ownership programs.

STACY BUTLER

Spring Cove Ranch
Bliss, Idaho

Butler and her husband, Art, raise Angus cattle on their southern Idaho ranch. They have used numerous new management and marketing strategies to help them better serve their customers — commercial cattlemen.

1. Our goals and management practices have remained the same. During this past year we were able to host our production sale at the ranch, and we have collected carcass data on our own bulls and are using them more heavily in our breeding program.

TIM OHLDE

Ohlde Cattle Co.
Palmer, Kan.

The foundation of Ohlde Cattle Co. is producing Basic Blacks — low-birth-weight, strong-maternal, cost-efficient performance cattle that are easy-fleshing and require minimum maintenance.

1. During the last year we have put more emphasis on efficiency, fleshing ability and production vs. inputs or outputs vs. cow size. We are really focusing on what the cattle are doing for us and our customers.

With our mature cow herd dispersal this past year, we were trying to reduce total cow numbers so we can spend more time marketing and traveling. We also are emphasizing the elite females of our herd, using embryo transfer (ET) and setting up satellite and cooperating herds.

JEFF DAMERON

Dameron Angus Farms
Lexington, Ill.

Dameron grew up in the Angus business and served on the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board. He is currently a crop-protection sales and marketing representative for Cyanamid and continues to help on the farm.

1. Overall, I do not think any of our goals or strategies have changed significantly during the past 12 months. We are consistently emphasizing increased efficiency of our cow herd.

DON BOGGS

Brookings, S.D.

Boggs, who is currently head of the South Dakota State University animal and range sciences department, serves as the Extension specialist/academia representative on the panel. He is also executive director of the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF). His family has a small Angus herd.

1. On Dec. 1 I became the department head for the animal and range sciences department at South Dakota State University (SDSU). With the new job, my role changed from Extension specialist to one primarily of administration. I still do some teaching, but my main responsibilities are to administer all teaching, research and Extension programs in the animal and range sciences department at SDSU.

2. What are the foundations of the Angus breed?

2. I think of quality as the foundation of the Angus breed. It has a rich history, not just in terms of quality beef but from a live animal standpoint as well. Good maternal traits allow the breed to be adaptable to most environments and yet versatile in crossbreeding programs.

The depth of quality of the Angus breed in its leadership has definitely passed the test of time.

2. The Angus breed enjoys an incredibly unique foundation. It is the building block for all crossbreeding programs. Most anybody in any environment or marketing situation, whether using straightbred commercial cattle or crossbred commercial cattle, are using Angus as part of the equation. I think that is driven by two things: the basic maternal traits the Angus breed brings to the table and, more recently, carcass traits.

2. The foundation of the Angus breed is the tremendous database that we have to back our EPDs [expected progeny differences]. This is the most important tool in the production of specification seedstock. Fancy pedigrees are hot and cold, and ribbons fade on the wall; but the foundation of the Angus breed is our database and the commitment Angus breeders have made to genetic discovery and investigation through the collection of the data from birth to carcass traits.

2. The foundation and strength of the breed is the Angus cow. To me what has made the breed so popular and why it continues to be so popular today is because of the longevity, fleshing ability, fertility, udder soundness and efficiency of the Angus female.

2. The leaders and breeders are the foundation of the Angus breed. Our breed is fortunate to have many of the tangibles — quality carcass traits, large genetic pool, etc. But it is the intangibles that are responsible for the success of our breed. The knowledge, expertise, innovation and competitiveness of our leaders and breeders are the real foundation.

2. The foundation of the Angus breed starts with the people. Historically, the people who have worked with and bred Angus cattle have been forward-thinking, innovative, and committed to the improvement of the cattle and to identifying and improving the economic traits of the cattle.

Angus cattle obviously have been popular because they are functional, relatively fault-free cattle. They don't require a lot of extra time and maintenance. The maternal instincts, the mothering and nurturing ability of the Angus cow, and the ability to do an excellent job of raising calves are all assets to the breed. Marbling and carcass quality have been an offshoot in recent years.

3. What are some events and issues that have affected agriculture and your operation this year?

3. Depressed prices have gotten everyone's attention this year. When we have cheap feed prices, like we do now, you have the opportunity to do things in the feedyard that you can't do when grain prices are high. Right now it is hard to put calves on a pasture program from a cost-of-gain standpoint and to be competitive compared to what you can do in the feedyard. On the other hand, that is the beauty of the ruminant animal: When you get into a time of high grain prices, you can take more of a forage-type program and get to your end point cost effectively.

3. American agriculture is becoming threatened by the world agricultural market. This is going to handicap agriculture or food production in the future and our ability to efficiently compete with worldwide production, as ag production in other countries continues to develop.

3. The depressed prices for cattle and commodities has affected our operation the most this year. The fact is we sell commodities — hay, corn and barley — and rely on that income. Because prices have been so low, we had to depend more on income from the cow herd to support our family. The cows paid the bills this past year.

3. The depression of agriculture — livestock and grain production — is the biggest issue today. The income in agriculture is extremely low. We can't become complacent. It won't always be as good as it is today in the Angus business. If you want to be solvent economically, you have to practice least-cost production in order to survive.

3. The biggest factor that has affected our management over the past year has been the drastic and sustained decline of commodity prices. Increased emphasis on efficiency and expense management have been important during the past few months.

3. Canadian imports have been a hot topic this past year. South Dakota's grassroot producers have been extremely active in trying to reduce imports through R-CALF.

Other issues extremely active in our state have been mandatory price reporting by packers and environmental concerns, which continue to get more and more important all the time.

We've also seen a lot of change and dialogue about the ownership structure of agriculture. States are passing stricter laws that restrict corporate farming. At the same time, we are seeing increased vertical coordination of beef cattle activities.

GRADING THE INDUSTRY

For the last two years we have asked our six "New Age Breeders" to grade how they thought beef producers, as a whole, rated in different aspects of industry relations and management practices. Here are this year's grades.

SAM HANDS

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	C
Producers and feeders	D+
Producers and packers	D
Producers and consumers	D-
Industry marketing methods	D
Management/animal husbandry methods	C+
Food safety	A-
Environment	B
Efficiency	C

FAMILY:

wife, Janet; daughter, Marisa, 15; son, Quincy, 13; daughter, Rebecca, 9

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

Kansas Livestock Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Kansas State University Livestock & Meat Industry Council
Cattlemen's Beef Board — past member
American Angus Association

PAUL BENNETT

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	B
Producers and feeders	B
Producers and packers	C
Producers and consumers	C
Industry marketing methods	C+
Management/animal husbandry methods	C
Food safety	B
Environment	B
Efficiency	C

FAMILY:

wife, Tracy; son, Scott, 10; daughter, Sarah, 8

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

Beef Improvement Federation — past president
Virginia Cattlemen's Association — past president
Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association — president
Regional and state breed associations

STACY BUTLER

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	C
Producers and feeders	D
Producers and packers	F
Producers and consumers	D
Industry marketing methods	B
Management/animal husbandry methods	C
Food safety	A-
Environment	A-
Efficiency	C

FAMILY:

husband, Art; son, Josh, 17; daughter, Sarah, 12

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

Idaho Cattlemen's Association — Producer, Feeder, Packer Task Force
Idaho Angus Association and Idaho Angus Auxiliary
National Cattlemen's Beef Association

TIM OHLDE

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	D
Producers and feeders	C
Producers and packers	C
Producers and consumers	B
Industry marketing methods	D
Management/animal husbandry methods	B
Food safety	B+
Environment	B
Efficiency	D

FAMILY:

wife, Trudy; sons, Jake, 6, Jordan, 4

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

American Angus Association
Kansas Angus Association

JEFF DAMERON

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	C
Producers and feeders	C
Producers and packers	C
Producers and consumers	C
Industry marketing methods	B
Management/animal husbandry methods	B
Food safety	B
Environment	B
Efficiency	C

FAMILY:

wife, Jennifer

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

American Angus Association
NJAA Board of Directors (1991-93)
Illinois Angus Association — board of directors

DON BOGGS

Communication between:	
Seedstock and commercial cattle producers	B
Producers and feeders	B-
Producers and packers	C
Producers and consumers	C+
Industry marketing methods	C+
Management/animal husbandry methods	B-
Food safety	B
Environment	C+
Efficiency	C

FAMILY:

wife, Rosemary; daughters, Katie, 16, Theresa, 15

ATTENDANCE/ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO:

Beef Improvement Federation — executive director
South Dakota Angus Association
American Angus Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
American Society of Animal Science

