

An extraordinary gathering

It was termed "The Great Northwest Gathering," and that it was. Angus breeders began to arrive the day prior to the beginning of the 2006 National Angus Conference & Tour so they could enjoy the vistas of Idaho on a scenic drive north of Boise. Panoramic views of the vast high desert valleys and the majestic mountains of southwestern Idaho are spectacular in autumn.

Angus homecoming

In some ways, national Angus conferences and tours have become homecomings — reunions, so to speak, that occur on an annual basis. These events, held in a different geographic area each year, attract not only the interest of Angus breeders in that area, but also of folks throughout the United States, Canada and several other foreign countries. These are times when people with a love for Angus cattle come together and visit about topics of common interest.

National Angus conferences are unique events. First, they offer Angus breeders the opportunity to travel to different parts of the country and exchange ideas on all aspects of breeding, feeding, managing and marketing Angus seedstock. Second, these events

provide a forum for educational seminars regarding issues that affect profitability for purebred and commercial producers alike. Third, they provide a festive, social atmosphere, the likes of which are not easily found in other areas of agricultural endeavor.

The "Great Northwest Gathering" began with an evening reception attended by some 400 enthusiastic Angus breeders representing 31 states, Canada, Australia and Mexico.

Educational program

American Angus Association staff and invited speakers kicked off the actual conference on the second day with a morning filled with information regarding basic Association programs and production issues.

They addressed future issues such as the establishment of genetic values for reproductive traits. Experts fully realize that fertility and efficient reproduction are the basic elements of profitability; however, the challenges associated with accurately measuring reproduction and its low heritability make it more difficult to deal with than perhaps measuring and analyzing growth and carcass traits.

Discussions on reproduction led to questions regarding the possibility of the Association developing a system for whole-herd reporting. Since their inception, participation in Association performance programs has always been on a voluntary basis. Mandatory whole-herd reporting in contrast to a voluntary program could possibly impose an undue hardship on the vast majority of Angus breeders who record less than 10 calves annually.

Realizing the need to further address the issue of whole-herd reporting, a special subcommittee of Board members has been appointed to explore future possibilities.

During the afternoon program, those in attendance heard notable experts discuss

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REGIONAL MANAGERS—Refer to page 250.

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factors that influence end product merit, further presentations on cow herd reproductive performance, producing with optimums instead of maximums, and how to manage a commercial herd for maximum profit. The conference ended on a high note with a stirring presentation by Rod Nulik, marketing manager for the beef cattle business group of Purina Mills, LLC, of Saint Louis, Mo., a major sponsor of the conference, along with Alpharma Animal Health.

Scenic, historic tour

The concluding tour included memorable visits to the 101 Ranch near King Hill, Idaho; Spring Cove Ranch at Bliss, Idaho; Bear Mountain Angus Ranch, Melba, Idaho; Malson Angus Ranch, Parma, Idaho; and Thomas Angus Ranch, Baker City, Ore. Most of these ranch stops also featured displays from other area ranches. Other interesting visits were enjoyed at the Academy of Equine Dentistry at Glens Ferry, Idaho; the National Fish Hatchery at Hagerman, Idaho; and a most inspiring stop at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Baker City, Ore.

To sum it up, the educational program

and the speakers were super, and the issues were relevant. The hospitality of Idaho and Oregon breeders was extraordinary — great meals, great people and great cattle. Those who attended the Great Northwest Gathering had an experience they are not likely to forget.

Watch the *Angus Journal* or visit www.nationalangusconference.com for details, and plan to be with us in Illinois in 2007.



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