

State Spotlight Series

featuring the programs and services of some of the leading state Angus associations.

History in the Making

Kansas Angus Association members value their rich history, but look toward the future.

by *Crystal Albers*

Beneath the Kansas Angus Association (KAA) lie deep roots in the breed. As the birthplace of Angus in America, the state boasts a successful history, with generation upon generation of Angus breeders. But while the association's 315 members embrace their rich heritage, they are continuously making improvements, adopting new technologies and looking toward the future in an attempt to write their own history.

Lifelong Kansas resident and Angus breeder since 1942, George Crenshaw, Manhattan, Kan., says, "We Kansans are proud of the historic fact that Angus cattle were first brought to Victoria, Kansas, in 1873, and we do point this out to visitors and

new Angus breeders. But it really has little to do with the everyday functions of the Kansas Angus Association."

Today, those functions include many evolving programs and educational events meant to keep both purebred and commercial cattlemen on the leading edge. So far, such programs have helped the association increase business and draw participation, ranking Kansas among the American Angus Association's top 10 states in registrations, transfers, number of active members and new regular members for 2004.

KAA past president Todd Kohart, Meade, Kan., says the strength of the association is due to the dedication and progressive mind-set of its members — both

past and present. "We have a very strong association, with a lot of very active members. The association's success has definitely been a product of the members, especially the older members," he says. "I know they went

through some extremely trying times when Angus wasn't quite as popular as it is today."

Crenshaw credits the organization's success to its long line of progressive leaders. "The KAA has been successful over a long period of time because of the dedication and determination of our leaders. The officers and directors of the KAA are honest-to-God, down-to-earth cattlemen."

Those down-to-earth cattlemen spent decades building upon some big dreams for Angus. Both past and present KAA leaders have instilled a desire for progress in the state's members, a desire that has built the 62-year-old organization's many innovative programs.

Groundwork for success

KAA programs and events hosted throughout the year offer something for every one of its diverse members, Kohart says. From small-scale to large-scale operators and purebred to commercial producers, the long list of programs and services covers just about every need. "Each program is structured to go different directions," he says. "Some of them are set up for the commercial man, and some are more for the purebred breeder. Each one is important to that aspect."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANNE LAMPE

► **Above:** The Kansas Angus Tour is just one of the many educational programs offered by the KAA.

► **Right:** The KAA sponsors several sales throughout the year, including its 50-year-old futurity.



► Many KAA members strive to stay up-to-date and adopt new technologies to remain on the leading edge.

► The association offers something for every one of its 315 diverse members.

KAA Secretary Anne Lampe, Scott City, Kan., says the association's Bull Grower Project, Carcass Data Project, commercial Angus-influenced female sales, bull sale, Kansas Angus Tour and annual futurity give members several marketing and educational opportunities. Other services, like the *Kansas Angus News* and the KAA Web site, <http://kansasangus.org>, provide news and information to members and producers in surrounding states.

"We have a wide range of people that truly care about the association and the Angus breed and the beef industry in Kansas," she says. "With the history of our association and our pride in the breed, people just really want to keep the association strong and keep it growing. That's why behind our programs we have such great volunteers."

A prime example is Barb Downey of Wamego, Kan. Downey has overseen the Carcass Data Project since its inception in 1998. She says the project gives participants performance and carcass data in a changing value-based market.

"This gives an opportunity to people who otherwise wouldn't have either the numbers to put together a pen for a commercial feedlot or the financial means to do so," Downey says. "And, even if they do have the numbers, it allows them to sample their cattle without putting a whole pen at financial risk."

Modeled after the former Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Value Discovery Project, the Carcass Data Project is geared toward small- and medium-scale producers, with priority given to Kansas residents. After entry fees are collected, calves sired by registered Angus bulls are commingled at a commercial feedlot and put on feed. Ultrasound scans are taken at approximately reimplant time, and cattle are typically sorted into four outcome groups of similar harvest dates based on backfat and carcass size. All carcass data is gathered, paperwork completed, and data and net proceeds sent to consignors. About two-thirds of the participants are members; the remaining one-third comprises nonmembers and out-of-staters.

Although program participation varies with shifting cattle markets, Downey reports, consignors are able to receive bottom-line benefits. "In the last several years, participants have made more money this way than if they would have sold their calves at weaning. It also lets them relate to their customers, with practical experience behind



Association Q&A

As a common feature in the state spotlight series, the Angus Journal posed the following questions. Here, Todd Kohart, Kansas Angus Association (KAA) immediate past president from Meade, Kan., shares insights about the organization's success and future.

What is unique about the KAA compared to other state associations?

I'm not real familiar with some of the other associations, but one thing we do have is a very strong association. We have a lot of very active members. It's great to work with them because they are all very willing to help out with whatever needs to be done.

We try to stay on the leading edge of services to the members with different programs such as the Carcass Data Project. We have a couple of commercial female sales each year for the local people. Then we have our annual futurity every January, where we promote and sell registered Angus. We also offer the Bull Grower Project where people are allowed to put as many bulls in as they want, and they can either feed them out or take them back home for their own sale. We hold a sale at the end of the feeding period where they can also market their bulls. We're always trying to look at new and different ways of helping smaller breeders get a start. That's one thing we're proud of.

What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today?

To be honest, one of the biggest problems is people finding the time to donate their services to the organization. Of course, it's that way with everything in life now. We're a fairly big state, and trying to get everything coordinated to where we can all work together on projects is probably one of the more challenging parts of the organization.

How do you try to overcome that challenge?

We do this in a number of different ways. The first thing we do is try to find people to serve on the board who have a real passion for the Angus breed and a desire to make the organization better. Secondly, we try to use all the newest forms of technology to communicate to do business. These things include the Kansas Angus Association Web site, e-mail, teleconferences, etc. We also continue to have our regular board meetings wherein we try to meet centrally in the state to accommodate everyone.

How do you motivate producers to participate in the various programs you offer?

I think we're fortunate to be dealing with the breed that we are. There's just such a tremendous interest and demand in the breed that we have right now. The programs that we have in place are set up to benefit the producers in a couple of different ways. We are able to promote the

Angus breed to allow the participants to not only prosper financially, but also gain valuable information such as carcass data and progeny traits. The motivation comes from those who have used the programs and have been pleased with the results, and have then told others.

Where do you see the KAA in the future? What role will it play for its members?

I would foresee it changing; everything changes. The one thing we see in the state of Kansas, and I suppose nationwide, is the continual growth of the number of production sales that individual ranches are having.

The association will still help the larger breeders, but I know they are more self-sufficient and have more opportunities to market their production than smaller breeders. So I think the association will have to continue to sponsor and offer programs to help the smaller breeders market their production. Statewide, though, we continue to grow in our numbers. That's something we always need to be looking at — what we need to be doing to serve those members.

them," she says. "Anything that ties seedstock producers more closely to the finished product gives them knowledge and wisdom they can use in managing their businesses to make them more applicable to the commercial cattle industry. ... It has let them get a good baseline on their herds and see where they stand in terms of real-world carcass performance."

Similar to the Carcass Data Project, the Bull Grower Project allows participants to

receive information back on their cattle. Participants consign bulls to be fed from November to March at a member-owned feedlot. The top bulls are then marketed through an auction sale in the spring, giving Angus breeders data and marketing opportunities.

"The Bull Grower sale really works well for smaller herds that may not have their own production sales," Lampe says. "Most

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people in the Bull Grower Project may have only 10 to 15 bulls a year, and they need another outlet to feed them and have a sale.”

Other sales sponsored by the KAA throughout the year include two Angus-influenced commercial female sales — one in spring and one in fall. Lampe says the events help build a base for the seedstock industry, since buyers are encouraged to use registered Angus bulls on the females. The “Going to Grass” female sale, which coincides with the Bull Grower Project sale, offers registered or commercial bred and open females and cow-calf pairs in small lot sizes.

“The sales provide a good gathering place for good Angus genetics,” Lampe says,

noting one of the most popular KAA gathering sites — the Kansas Angus Futurity, scheduled each January at the state fairgrounds in Hutchinson. In addition to the show and futurity sale, KAA members meet for the annual banquet and meeting. This year’s event drew special recognition, marking the 50th anniversary of the futurity.

“[The futurity] gives cattlemen an opportunity to show cattle to people that wouldn’t see them at the farm; hence, [it is] an opportunity to acquire new customers,” says Crenshaw, an 81-year-old who has participated in all but one of the 50 consecutive events, which began in 1956. “When we started showing and selling at the futurity, I had no idea that the futurity would last through 50 years.”

In celebration of the milestone, Lampe is

compiling the first comprehensive history of the KAA and the futurity, scheduled for publication in mid-2005. Lampe, an association employee, also compiles the *Kansas Angus News*, published eight times per year and sent to 2,190 subscribers in 17 states. The free publication averages anywhere from 26-36 pages, she says, with advertising, sale reports and other articles.

Diverse opportunities

Kohart says the diversity of the membership base drives the association’s programs to success. “It’s wonderful that we have older members, and we have new members coming on board daily. They bring with them some great ideas,” he says. “At almost every meeting there will be someone throw out a new idea; we may delve into it or we may put it on the back burner, but the

different angle may come from an older member or a newer member.”

The KAA has made a significant effort to stay relevant to commercial breeders in addition to its seedstock members, Kohart continues. Commercial cattlemen sit on the association board, and a commercial producer recently served as the organization’s president.

“We can get input from [commercial cattlemen] as to what might benefit them,” he says. “So many of our purebred producers sell their bulls to commercial herds, so we’re really all joined together.”

Downey says all members are treated with fairness, whether they have five head or more than 1,000 head. “Your merit is based solely on what you do, what you contribute and what you bring to the association,” she says. “It doesn’t matter if you’re from a program

that’s been prominent in the state for 100 years or if you’re a new breeder. Everyone is treated equally. It’s a very welcoming association, which is one of its biggest strengths.”

Future expectations

A strong state association has produced a strong junior association. Established in 1968, the Kansas Junior Angus Association (KJAA) has more than 250 members. Lampe says most of the juniors are active in the association, with many participating on the national level at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

“We challenge them to participate in the contests, but it’s something they want to do on their own,” she says. “They have a great passion and love for the breed, and they seem to work together well.”

A successful junior association is good news for the future of the growing state association. For the time being, though, Crenshaw says the KAA will continue to make progress as it always has.

“The successful programs will continue. The directory will continue to give information and directions to KAA members. The *Kansas Angus News* will continue to be the advertising avenue for Angus breeders in Kansas and surrounding states, and it will continue to bring news and information to its readers,” he says. “With all the changes and advancements that have come up in the past 30 or 40 years, I have no idea what might happen in the next 30 or 40 years. I have no idea what to expect, but I imagine breeders will continue to breed the best that they have to the best they can find.”



