

Learning: The Key to Knowledge and Growth

Jim Coleman, owner of Vintage Angus Ranch near Modesto, Calif., believes in educating Angus producers to continually improve the breed.

by *Katie Allen*

Imagine walking into a restaurant knowing each time you dined, a juicy, tender, flavorful, mouthwatering steak was waiting. That consistently cooked, quality steak brings you back wanting more. In a perfect world, it is possible to enjoy a perfect steak each time at your favorite restaurant. But the world is not perfect, steaks are not consistent and that presents the challenge of Jim Coleman's battle.

"I really enjoy a good steak when I can get it," Coleman says. "In the last week, I had the experience of eating a chewy filet and a tender, flavorful one at two different restaurants. It's disappointing to not have consistency. The hard work of Angus breeding is what I'm doing to get more consistent, higher-quality beef on the table."

Coleman, owner of Vintage Angus Ranch near Modesto, Calif., currently manages about 400 Angus cows in the heart of wine country. The ranch, which Coleman started



► "Magic of the Vine" Benefit Dinner and Auction, hosted by Jim and Sue Coleman of Vintage Angus Ranch on Oct. 7, 2006, raised more than \$197,000 in gross income to support the Angus Foundation's education, youth and research activities. Pictured at the event are (from left) Andrew Foster, former NJAA board member; Jim Coleman; Sue Coleman; Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president; and Zebadiah Gray, former NJAA board member.

in 1976, is located in one of the few parts of the world that a year-round grass ranch can operate. Coleman, along with his wife, Sue, general manager Doug Worthington and staff, host annual female production and carcass marker bull sales each fall. The ranch strives to produce quality cattle for its purebred and commercial customers, all while educating them on how the operation is using expected progeny differences (EPDs)

and identified DNA traits to improve performance in the Angus breed.

Producing quality cattle is not Coleman's only goal. He likewise sees the benefit in advancing the breed through the Angus Foundation's education, youth and research efforts. From donating heifers to support the Angus Auxiliary to hosting Angus Foundation events, the Colemans have supported Angus locally, regionally and nationally. One of their

Research projects supported by the Angus Foundation

Completed Research Projects

The Angus Foundation has funded or partially funded four projects that are helping advance the Angus breed. Three of these projects are related to better understanding feed efficiency in Angus cattle:

- A \$140,000 multiyear, multidisciplinary research study in feed efficiency at the University of Illinois (U of I) aimed to discover and document detailed information about sire differences in feed efficiency and carcass traits, and the genetic parameters used to measure these traits.
- In early 2010, \$30,000 was committed to North Carolina State University (NCSU) to fund the fifth year of a multidisciplinary research project designed to gain further information on estimating feed efficiency of Angus cattle.
- With more than \$19,000 in support, Iowa State University (ISU) launched a research project to enhance biological efficiency in beef cattle. The project aimed to study the relationship between

feed efficiency measures during the heifer development stage and during the first lactation.

The fourth completed research project is related to bovine genome research.

- In 2005, the Angus Foundation invested \$24,000 in the Bovine Genome Project conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) to fully characterize a potential 25,000 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and assist the beef industry in further exploring the potential application of DNA technology.

Research projects in progress

The Angus Foundation is currently providing funding for six research projects across the United States. These projects are either a continuation of the completed projects already supported by the Angus Foundation or are new projects in which researchers are

career highlights was in 2007, when the Western National Angus Futurity was dedicated to them. Jim Coleman also serves as a co-chair of the Leadership Cabinet for the *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus*, which aims to raise \$11 million for education, youth and research by Dec. 31, 2011.

“That’s what gets me going — producing higher-value beef that people will get enjoyment from,” Coleman says. “But we must continue to increase learning and our knowledge to get there. That’s why contributing generously to the Angus Foundation will make a difference, because it will make youth programs, educational work and research thrive.”

Charge of service

“Magic of the Vine,” an event hosted by Jim and Sue Coleman in October 2006, served as a big kick-off for the *Vision of Value* campaign. Held at the Colemans’ home in Modesto, the event raised \$197,000 in gross income to support the Angus Foundation’s programs. “Magic of the Vine” was among many Angus Foundation events conducted over the past decade. The other events included “That Old Black Magic” hosted by Summitcrest Farms in 2004, “That Old West Magic” hosted by Express Ranches in 2008 and “Blackontrack! Angus Magic at Churchill Downs” in 2010. These events have collectively raised nearly \$1 million.

“Always willing to help the Angus Foundation, Jim and Sue have generously supported our organization in a variety of ways over the years,” says Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. “From giving outright cash gifts to graciously hosting and underwriting the spectacular “Magic of the Vine” fundraising event at their beautiful Vintage Angus Ranch in 2006, the Colemans have helped empower the Angus Foundation to reach unprecedented levels of success.”



► Jim Coleman is an avid attendee and supporter of the Angus Foundation’s fundraising events. Here he is at the 2004 Angus Foundation Gala & Auction, “That Old Black Magic,” hosted by Summitcrest Farms near Summitville, Ohio.

Coleman says continuing fundraising events in the future is a good way to generate more funds and support for the Angus Foundation’s programs.

“Our achievements (from these fundraising events) have touched everyone in Angus at some level,” Coleman says.

In addition to hosting and attending Angus Foundation events, Coleman says in his role on the Leadership Cabinet he’s had the charge of reviewing donor prospects, suggesting new potential donors, and overseeing the use of Angus Foundation funds and their balanced allocation for education, youth and research projects.

“As co-chair, Jim’s visionary leadership and selfless service to the *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus* has been invaluable to our fundraising efforts,” Jenkins says.

“Angus seedstock producers and commercial cattlemen alike will benefit for many years to come from Jim’s passion and strong advocacy, particularly for increased funding in the area of beef cattle research.”

Coleman says that at the beginning of the campaign in 2006, few funds from the Angus Foundation supported research. An avid promoter of research to improve the breed, Coleman has personally worked to see research funds increase. Continual feedback on the progress of these research projects, he says, is key to allowing donors to know how important their contributions to the Angus Foundation have been over the past few years.

“We need quantitative measurements to show how we’ve gotten from there to here,” he says. “When people see that, they’ll see how legitimate and productive their donations have been.”

Provide meaning for giving

In addition to providing Angus youth with more than \$210,000 in scholarships this year, the Angus Foundation supports numerous educational conferences and university research projects. Coleman is a firm believer there is merit in transferring something meaningful to producers past the laboratories and university classrooms where research is performed. Putting genetic EPDs and DNA test results in a form for producers to easily understand is also crucial.

“Part of good research is dissemination and commercialization of these studies,” Coleman says.

Managers and owners of operations need to keep abreast of the tools available and what is going on in the industry to in turn educate customers. In Vintage Angus Ranch sale books, potential buyers will find information on what certain EPDs and DNA tests mean. The sale books more than advertise the elite

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assessing various subjects related to Angus cattle and working to provide solutions for breeders.

- **Beef Cow Biological Efficiency:** Starting in 2011, the Angus Foundation invested \$350,000 in multiyear feed efficiency research on Angus females. This joint project between the U of I and NCSU will further build upon the research already funded at these universities (see completed research listed above) by the Angus Foundation and American Angus Association.
- **History of Inbreeding in Angus:** The Angus Foundation is providing \$4,800 to North Dakota State University to fund a research study on the history of inbreeding and its relationship in Angus cattle.
- **Development and Evaluation of Hair Shedding:** The Angus Foundation has provided more than \$20,000 in support to NCSU and Mississippi State University (MSU) to fund a project aimed at characterizing Angus cattle for hair-shedding differences, while developing genetic parameters, a subjective scoring system and data collection protocol that could be used by producers to collect hair-shedding data for use in future national cattle evaluations.

- **Regulation of Marbling Development in Beef Cattle by Specific Fatty Acids:** A multi-university research project with Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University and the University of Idaho is addressing marbling and early cellular differentiation relative to improving insufficient marbling. An Angus Foundation contribution of \$50,000 over three years will augment this recently funded NCBA Product Enhancement priority.
- **Genetic Evaluation and Methodology:** The Angus Foundation committed \$300,000 over five years to the University of Georgia to conduct genetic evaluation methodology and implementation, as well as the potential for new trait development.
- **Validating Genomic and Proteomic Markers for Angus Bull Fertility:** The Angus Foundation originally invested \$25,000 in a research project conducted at MSU related to high- and low-fertility bulls for differentially expressed protein markers and associated analyses of SNPs in DNA samples. This project was renewed with an additional commitment of \$15,000.

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bulls and females Vintage Angus offers. They are educational tools for potential buyers.

“The information is more meaningful and useful, and it helps gain people’s trust,” Coleman says.

Many tools are available for Angus producers to use in genetic selection, but Coleman says genetic improvement will likely speed up even more in the next five years than in the past five years. Putting EPDs into indexes, such as maternal and carcass indexes, has helped.

While expanding research opportunities and relaying useful results of studies is a large goal of the Angus Foundation, so too is the goal of making more people aware of educational opportunities the Angus Foundation supports and expanding the reach of the knowledge attendees have gained from these events, such as Cattlemen’s Boot Camps and the Beef Leaders Institute.

“As a breed and an industry, there must be ways to get more information out past the 20-30 people who attend educational conferences supported by the Angus Foundation,” Coleman says. “We need more useful tools out of the research area and from the educational conferences so that all breeders share the information.”

Make giving a priority

Jim and Sue Coleman have set an example of how pushing yourself to do more will not only lead to great things for yourself, but perhaps more importantly, will lead to great things for others.

“We will never be able to say ‘thank you’ enough to our dear friends Jim and Sue for



► Angus Foundation President Milford Jenkins presented an appreciation plaque to Jim and Sue Coleman at the 2007 Angus Foundation Supporter Recognition Event in Louisville, Ky., for their contribution to the Angus Foundation at the “Angus Builder” \$100,000-\$249,999 level.

helping our organization to dream, set high goals, discover ourselves and grow into the entity with the scope and breadth of impact on education, youth and research we provide today to the Angus breed,” Jenkins says. “They have instilled in us as an organization to never be satisfied with the status quo, to continue searching for answers to research questions, to continue to push ourselves to advance the Angus breed.”

The thought of always enjoying the perfect steak drives Jim Coleman to want to do more, and he clearly recognizes that the time and money he has invested in the future of the breed through the Angus Foundation

will in turn help him, his Angus operation, his customers and consumers of beef. It is through continued learning and sharing of knowledge that the Angus breed will enjoy future success.

“If we want to grow and improve the Angus breed, we must support it in every way possible,” Coleman says. “That’s what the Angus Foundation does with every dollar it receives. We all want our Angus breed to grow and get better. My hope is more Angus breeders will make it a high priority in their generous giving this year.”

