

Fueling Future Cattlemen

Future Angus Stockmen recipient attends Select Sires' AI school.

by *Shelby Mettlen*, assistant editor

Georgia farm boy Ben Hicks returned from Select Sires' artificial insemination (AI) school with a whole lot of experience, a little bit of practice and maybe even a few new ideas. The schooling took place at Clemson University in Clemson, S.C., in

September. Hicks, who serves as herdsman for Mike McCravy at MM Cattle Co. in Carrollton, Ga., said the program provided insight on everything from forage and feeding to expected progeny differences (EPDs) — and, of course, AI.

"They covered all the bases," Hicks says. "I thought it was a well-rounded school. I came out of it feeling very confident."

Hicks is the latest of a crop of qualified young cattlemen to receive the Future Angus Stockmen award, offered through the American Angus Association to college-age or recent graduates who strive to raise top-quality, Angus-based commercial cattle. This year, the Association partnered with Select Sires to sponsor one Future Angus Stockmen participant — Hicks — to attend the AI school.

Select Sires Regional Beef Coordinator Will Mayfield says Hicks's passion made him a great choice for the school.

"He's just a really passionate young man about what he's doing," Mayfield says. "From what I hear, he's really taking ownership of the operation (MM Cattle Co.) and treats it like it's his own."

MM Cattle Co. manages about 180-200 head of mother cows on a seedstock operation providing bulls for cow-calf operations in the Southeast and across the country.

"We already practice AI; it's all we practice," Hicks explains. "We AI everything on our farm at least one time." He adds that the AI school is a good foundation for his skillset.



► Select Sires partnered with the Association to sponsor one Future Angus Stockmen participant to attend an AI school. Pictured are (from left) Will Mayfield, Select Sires regional beef coordinator; Hicks, this year's participant; Eddie Bradley, Select Sires beef sales representative; and Matt Burns, Clemson University Extension beef specialist.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 69

Fueling Future Cattlemen CONTINUED FROM PAGE 66

“AI is just a vital technology to the industry, and people need to use more of it,” he says. “I think it intimidates a lot of people, and it shouldn’t.”

Having the right teachers is crucial, too, he adds.

Born and raised on a broiler poultry farm with a few head of commercial cattle, Hicks says he was always involved in FFA and very interested in Angus cattle. After some time at college, Hicks returned to help McCravy with MM’s first bull sale. Not long after, McCravy offered Hicks a full-time position.

Looks like it’s worked out well for the ambitious Future Stockman.

Mayfield, a third-generation Angus breeder and former Northeastern regional manager for the American Angus Association, says the Future Angus Stockmen program is an opportunity for one young person to grow as an individual and for the industry to grow as a result.

“It gives [Ben] an opportunity to learn and expand outside of central Georgia, and to get out and see other regions and parts of the country and explore how others are

running their operations,” he says, adding that “bouncing ideas” off of other cattlemen and industry players is an important part of the business.

Most importantly, Mayfield says, it gives Hicks an opportunity to get more familiar with genetics, which is “one of the most crucial things people need to know.”

“It gives an opportunity to look at the goals of people around the country and what you need to market cattle on a national level,” he concludes.

