

State Spotlight Series:

This is the fifth in a series of articles featuring the programs and services of some of the leading state Angus associations.

Diverse Interests

Diverse ideas drive Iowa Angus Association.

by Barb Baylor Anderson

With the Missouri River to the west and the Mississippi River to the east, Iowa is the only state bordered by two navigable rivers. But that is not all that makes Iowa unique. Leaders of the Iowa Angus Association will tell you what is unique is that the group's strongest suit and weakest link are really the same thing — diversity.

While diverse membership may bring many unique ideas to the table to keep the association going, the same diversity can create challenges in meeting member needs. The solution, says Doug Schroeder, Iowa Angus Association president and breeder from Clarence, Iowa, is to take advantage of the diversity in every situation and not be afraid to regear programs to meet changing needs and attract members.

“For example, we have always targeted other Angus breeders with our sales, when in reality, we need to touch commercial producers, our primary customers,” he says. “At the same time, the fact that our association is made up of different, mostly small breeders, provides us with a lot of ideas for marketing cattle to commercial producers.”

For 85 years, the Iowa Beef Expo Angus Show and Sale each

February has provided Iowa breeders with a chance to market Angus cattle to other purebred and commercial producers in the region. Relatively new to the sale is a program where breeders who sell heifers to junior members donate \$50 to the association. All juniors who return to show the purchased heifers at the state's summer show then split the total pot collected. For the lone junior who returned last year, the pot was \$1,200.

“We aren't likely to see just one winner again next year,” Schroeder says. “But now that the program is in place, I think we will see more junior participation.”

Strong junior program

The Iowa Angus Association boasts a strong junior membership. “We do have a healthy and active program,” confirms Schroeder, who together with his wife, Glenda, and Pat and Peggy Sullivan of Saint Charles, Iowa, advise the group. “We get the

kids involved with fund-raising, such as coordinating the meal at our state show and holding garage sales, and then use the funds to help defer the cost of leadership programs at Beef Expo or LEAD.”

The annual national

Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference helps develop potential in Angus youth and raises awareness of issues facing the beef industry. The program is sponsored by the Angus Foundation, the American Angus Association and the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). LEAD has been so successful on the national level that the Iowa juniors have adapted the conference to the state level.

“We held mini-workshops that were in a LEAD-type format for two days at the beginning of January this year to help our juniors get to know each other and learn how to prepare for all of the competitive events at the National Junior Angus Show,” notes Glenda, who took the lead about three years ago in organizing the workshops. “We included icebreakers, as well as how-to sessions on posters and a session with a professional photographer, who presented tips on taking good pictures.”

The juniors host a field day each June and have nearly 10 local field days. At the state summer show, juniors continue to prepare for national events, including such activities as tie-dyeing shirts, to get the kids involved and working together.

“Juniors are the backbone of the association to come. It is important to guide them in the right direction,” Glenda says. “We also encourage adults to get involved with the junior program. We have close to 200 kids in the association, and our adult members can help them learn to be active. That gets everyone involved in the program and helps us groom our children for future association leadership roles.”

Marketing opportunities

Kirk Brandt of Corning, Iowa, who serves as vice president for the Iowa Angus Association, has two sons who are active in the junior association. Brandt also manages the Iowa Bull Test, which is now in its seventh year. The test is conducted October through February by Brad Schermer of

2004 Iowa Angus Association calendar of events

June 19-20	Iowa Angus Preview Show
June 24	Iowa Angus Conference
Aug. 10	Iowa State Fair Angus Show
Oct. 2	Delivery date for 8th Annual Bull Test
Dec. 1	Entry deadline for 86th Annual Iowa Angus State Show and Sale



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IOWA ANGUS ASSOCIATION

► For 85 years, the Iowa Beef Expo Angus Show and Sale has provided Iowa breeders with a chance to market Angus cattle to other purebred and commercial producers in the region.

Buffalo Trail Farm near Latimer, Iowa. The bulls are sold in March at a facility in Lamoni, Iowa.

"The Iowa Bull Test has become a quality opportunity for breeders as well as commercial cattlemen. We started collecting carcass data and using ultrasound, and that helps consignors as well as buyers by providing performance-based information that is vital to their operations," he says. "The average daily gain for the 75 bulls on the 120-day program in 2003 was 4.73 pounds per day. This is not a fluff-and-puff sale, and we have had a tremendous response from Angus breeders and other cattlemen."

It has been so successful, Brandt says, that the association is considering adding an Angus performance female sale in the future.

In addition to the Iowa Bull Test and Iowa Beef Expo, some local Iowa Angus associations also host sales during the year.

Such sales draw quality buyers, given that the state of Iowa is a fertile ground for cattle producers. The Iowa Angus Association ranked eighth in American Angus Association registrations in fiscal year (FY) 2003, with 11,796 head. What's more, Iowa ranks second in the nation in red meat production and eighth in cattle and calf production, according to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Ninety-one percent of Iowa's 55,869 square miles (sq. mi.) is devoted to agriculture — the highest percentage in the country.

"With that many registrations and a membership of more than 300 active adults, we rely on Tricia and Colby Holmes as our paid executive secretaries," Doug Schroeder says. "They are in charge of publishing our bimonthly newsletter, directory, sale catalog and coordinating our membership database. Part of their payment is commission-based, which provides an incentive for them to help build membership and sales."

The Holmes' are also planning a conference to replace the annual Iowa Angus Tour hosted during the fall. Doug says tight funds and less time prompted the shift to a conference format, which will cover such areas as computer software and other tools, and educational opportunities for juniors and adults.

"So much has changed in 30 years that affects association activities," Doug says. "We have more and more spouses working off the farm, and so many more kids' activities that compete for time. It requires more effort to devote the proper time to an association, but the Iowa Angus Association is committed to making it work."



► The Iowa Bull Test, managed by Kirk Brandt, Corning, Iowa, is now in its seventh year. The test is conducted October through February by Brad Schermer of Buffalo Trail Farm near Latimer. The bulls are sold in March at a facility in Lamoni.

Q&A with the Iowa Angus Association

As a common feature in the state spotlight series, the Angus Journal posed the following questions to one of the state's Angus leaders. Executive Secretaries Colby and Tricia Holmes of Benton, Iowa, answered the following regarding the association's past, present and future.

Has membership in the Iowa Angus Association grown, gotten smaller or stayed the same? Why?

Our membership has grown during the last year, largely because we try to help our members market their cattle. We currently have 337 active members. We try to reach new members by inviting buyers from our two sales — the Iowa Beef Expo Angus Show and the Iowa Angus Bull Test — to join. We also contact any new members who join the American Angus Association to have them also become involved with the state group.

What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today?

Our biggest challenge is trying to serve a diverse membership. We try to address the needs of current breeders and the needs of commercial cattlemen, who are our customers.

How do you try to overcome that challenge?

We have a strong board with 23 members who represent different regions of the state and their local associations. These directors bring suggestions from members in their respective areas to help set new policies. We also recently sent out a needs survey to members in our bimonthly newspaper. The survey allows readers of *Iowa Angus News* the opportunity to have a voice in policymaking.

What is the most successful program your state has developed to support Angus breeders in Iowa?

We have developed two sales in order to help our breeders market their animals. The Iowa Beef Expo is a show and sale in its 85th year, and the Iowa Bull Test is a performance-based sale in its seventh year. The sales provide our members with two different avenues to market their animals. Our sales have been very successful because we sell cattle scrutinized for quality. We have had several repeat customers to our sales that have been happy with their purchases.

Realizing producers' needs change, do you have a program that you think has outlived its usefulness?

This year we changed our format for the Iowa Angus Tour for that reason. We are going to have a conference where members will be updated on the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) program as well as the new \$Value Indexes from the American Angus Association. We feel our members need to be up-to-date on all the new tools available to help them with their Angus programs.

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

Our programs are a way for our members to promote and market their cattle. We motivate our members by explaining our plans in our bimonthly paper. We also do a lot of calling to encourage members to participate in our Iowa Angus-sponsored events.

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

Our state association needs to become more service-oriented. We need to continue to develop new and innovative programs to help our members and to promote Angus cattle.

What is unique about your association from other state associations?

The most unique thing about our association is our diverse membership. Our members play active roles in all of our programs, and we believe that this helps our board to develop programs that are most useful for them.

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