

State Spotlight Series:

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

A Shining Star

The Lone Star State provides Angus breeders with outstanding services and leadership.

by *Corinne Patterson*

The Texas Angus Association (TAA) calls home the city of Fort Worth, a city known for its historic stockyard district and coined as Cowtown for its rough-and-rowdy roots. It seems fitting that the second-largest state Angus association would stake its home office in a town that Will Rogers once described as “Where the West Begins.”

Texas Angus breeders embrace their Western heritage and their role in the beef industry. The state ranks No. 1 in total number of cattle and calves, with 15% of the total U.S. inventory, according to the Texas Agricultural Statistic Service. In a report

released Jan. 30, the Texas beef cow herd totaled 32.86 million head. The sheer number of cows offers Angus producers a large audience for genetics that have increased in popularity.

“We go from swamps to deserts; it’s kind of a feast or famine in many areas,” says 2004 TAA President E.M. Holt, jokingly. “There are lots of areas of Texas that have a large number of commercial cows, and someone has got to supply them Angus bulls so that they can produce a better product.”

That theory, says the Angus producer from Weimar, is the core of the association. Texas Angus breeders believe in providing a

superior product. It is evident through the many programs and educational efforts put forth by the board of directors and committee members who focus on association business.

Performance testing has become a way of life for many Texans. The TAA helped pull itself out of debt and into a profitable position through the Beef Development Center of Texas (BDCT), a performance-testing facility that was started by TAA members and later sold to benefit the state association, Holt says (see sidebar).

Lee Roy Pyssen, 2004 TAA president-elect and Austin cattleman, says the growth of performance testing across the state as a result of the BDCT has been beneficial to members and to the state association. Now testing facilities are abundant in many regions of the state. The TAA provides support through advertising and promotion.

In return, it receives an allotted fee per head on test. This program has been one of the most successful to date, he says.

“I think the quality of our bulls has improved tremendously,” Holt says of the progress Texas Angus breeders have made. “The American Angus Association has really helped a lot of breeders do a better job in promoting better quality over the last 25 years. I’ve been in the business basically all of my life, and I have seen the quality of cattle in Texas change tremendously.”



► Texas Angus Association leaders (in photo at right) participated with leaders from other states in the 2003 Angus Leaders’ Boot Camp at the American Angus Association office. Texans take pride in participating in events on the national level.



Texans serve on the national level

The Texas Angus Association (TAA) is proud of its leadership and the leaders who have gone on to serve on the American Angus Association Board of Directors. The following is a list of Texans who have served as directors and those who have served as officers.

- ▶ Tommy Brook, 1944-1949 — Camp San Saba
- ▶ George Graham, president 1962, 1954-1961 — Wichita Falls
- ▶ Flynn Stewart, president 1969, 1961-1967 — Wichita Falls
- ▶ William Clark, president 1975, 1967-1973 — Houston
- ▶ Bill Bradley, 1973-1976 — Memphis
- ▶ Ray Adams, president 1983, 1976-1982 — Tahoka
- ▶ Jerry Williams, 1983-1986 — Lockney
- ▶ Carl Dudensing, 1988-1991 — Houston
- ▶ Neil Marshall, 1992-1995 — Longview
- ▶ Minnie Lou Bradley, vice president, 1997-2003 — Memphis

Mindful of the future

The American Angus Association added 287 regular members and 130 junior members in 2003 from Texas, leading all states in new juniors and ranking second in new regular members. The state association works diligently to gain new members in its association and uses communication vehicles to get the job done.

The *Texas Angus News* is a monthly membership publication that the association has adapted as a marketing tool. Twice a year, Holt says, the state association requests from the American Angus Association a list of all Angus breeders in Texas to add to the regular newsletter mailing list. The newsletter is used to contact producers and show them what the state association can do to help them.

Pyssen points out that there are almost 1,800 Angus breeders in Texas, and just more than 500 are state association members. Rising to the challenge of contacting all Texans who raise Angus, he says, will be important in growing the membership of the TAA.

The board of directors is actively working on projects to help put Texas Angus breeders on the map. The TAA Web site has been a successful tool in providing free services to its membership, including listing cattle for sale, and posting events such as the educational programs hosted throughout the state. The board is developing a way to map all ranch locations within an area of the state. The area maps will be available for cattlemen to view on the Web to learn more about who is raising cattle in their area. This tool is expected to help purebred breeders as well as commercial cattlemen looking for bulls.

Texas Angus breeders know that their state membership is vital. Says Pyssen, "The more that we can give members for their membership dues, the better off we will be."



Down to business

The daily operation of the Texas Angus Association (TAA) is centered out of its office in Fort Worth. Here, full-time TAA Secretary Heather Lichtie manages the daily business and keeps its membership informed. As a common feature in the state spotlight series, the Angus Journal posed the following questions to Lichtie regarding the association's past, present and future.

How has membership in the Texas Angus Association changed throughout the years? Has it grown, gotten smaller or stayed the same? Why?

Our membership has fluctuated since its creation in 1936. It gained strength in the 1940s and 1950s; and in the 1970s and 1980s the numbers dropped. In the late 1990s TAA made changes to the way the board of directors operated and to the philosophy of the association and leadership. The association pushed to work for the members and to get them involved by putting in hard work. The membership has steadily grown to an annual average of more than 500 members, and we are currently at 518. There is an annual

attrition — due to retirement, selling of operations, weather conditions, etc. Also, cattle ranches have gotten larger, but fewer persons operate them.

When the popularity of Angus caught on to new breeders and in the crossbreeding operations in Texas, our numbers grew. Texas has the fastest-growing state association and fastest-growing number of Angus registrations. This is partly due to realization that the Angus bull created profit in the South, diverse as it is.

What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today?

One of our biggest challenges is letting our members know what the association can do for them and how they can get the most out of it. It's also a challenge serving all our members (large- and small-scale breeders, purebred and commercial). We continually need to increase participation in TAA activities and events, serving the needs of all members.

Although it is necessary to join the American Angus Association in order to register cattle, state associations must come up with ways to benefit their members and keep them involved. TAA has a great board of directors that is truly a working group. The committees work hard to figure out ways to further the breed, offer more services to the members, and bring in revenue to the association and its members.

We are also trying to promote maintaining an active interest in recordkeeping and keeping our members informed of the meaning of EPDs (expected progeny differences) and their value to a program. Texas is working to be competitive in AHIR (Angus Herd Improvement Records). We're improving, but work still needs to be done.

How do you try to overcome those challenges?

The TAA relies on good communication by sharing information with the membership in

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▶ A panel of producers and industry experts speak at a 2003 TAA field day. Providing educational opportunities is a goal of the TAA.