

## State Spotlight Series:

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

# A Service Approach

**R**aising cattle is a way of life for many Oklahomans, according to the Oklahoma Beef Council. The cattle industry is the state's largest agricultural business, and Angus producers make up a large portion of the pie.

More than 750 memberships to the American Angus Association were reported in Oklahoma in 2003. The state ranks fifth in total active members and third in new memberships on the national level. The Oklahoma Angus Association (OAA) is very active on the state level as well, reports Tim Henricks, 2004 OAA president from Anadarko, Okla.

"The Angus cattle industry is growing leaps and bounds, and I feel like our association has a lot to offer," he says. The state association is backed by a solid board of directors dedicated to offering members the services they need. This, coupled with backing by a solid breed of cattle, Henricks says, will allow Angus to remain strong in Oklahoma.

Other state associations with strong memberships have the advantage of employees such as a fieldman or a secretary to dedicate themselves full- or part-time to the organization. However, the OAA doesn't see its lack of an employee as a hindrance. The board and other leaders throughout the state charge themselves with the

responsibility to keep membership informed and to find volunteers and individuals to help carry out association tasks, Henricks says.

In the quest to provide useful services, the OAA has tried many events and sales with several volunteers dedicating time to the cause. The first weekend in May usually marks the state's annual banquet and associated events. The Oklahoma Angus Gathering has taken different roles in years past as different leaders have directed it, with an annual banquet and board meeting in common. A sale is also hosted during the annual gathering.

"Our state sale is very good for a consignment sale — to my knowledge it's as good as there is in the nation," Henricks says. "The quality has really been there, and the people in the Angus business in Oklahoma have really high-quality Angus cattle."

High-quality youth keep Oklahoma strong as well. Keith Grissom, Seminole, Okla., says the junior program put the OAA on the map. He points out that he started out as a junior and is now watching his own kids take an active interest in the junior association. His family is not unique in this aspect. Many past youth leaders now serve as voting delegates to the American Angus Association's Annual Meeting and remain active in other state and national events

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**The Oklahoma Angus Association relies on its leaders to keep the organization informed.**

by **Corinne Patterson**

representing Oklahoma and the beef industry.

The OAA and Oklahoma Junior Angus Association (OJAA) sponsored the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in 1983 and 1999, and plans are underway to host an upcoming NJAS. The state's commitment to provide youth opportunities can be seen through its continuous support from adults and juniors alike to host the world's largest single-breed beef show.

John Pfeiffer Jr., Mulhull, Okla., shares insight to the OAA through a question-and-answer session with the *Angus Journal*. Pfeiffer and his family have been active in various aspects of the state association, from serving as a past president to advising the junior membership. He shares what has made the OAA successful and discusses how the association can grow.

### **Has membership in the Oklahoma Angus Association grown, decreased or stayed the same? Why?**

The membership has stayed the same. We currently have 274 members. We have new members each year, but they take the place of the people who retire, move or get out of the business.

### **What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today?**

Planning meaningful programs that encourage producers to want to become part of the association. We have producers ranging in size from 1,000 cows to five cows and cattle experience ranging from a few months to a century. Leadership positions in the association are usually held by producers who have a lot of experience, and they may not see the value of some programs. Most people don't want to give up their time if

► Directors on the OAA board are just a few of Oklahoma's Angus leaders.



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they can't see an impact on their bottom lines. Our Angus breed is so popular and the demand for our bulls is so high that we don't always need a strong association to help market our cattle.

### How do you try to overcome that challenge?

Our directors try to include producers from all segments of the Angus breed in our state. We try to make decisions on programs that will benefit the most producers. We try to keep in mind that the smaller breeders are our customers and future leaders.

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

Two years ago our association had the opportunity to partner with Texas County Feedyard LLC to allow our members an avenue to market feeder cattle that had the opportunity to grade *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>). Texas County was willing to coordinate loads and pickup times to give producers an outlet for the cattle. This is extremely beneficial to the smaller breeder

who wanted carcass data back on his cattle, but did not have the volume to feed out a whole pen of cattle.

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

We did away with the Angus tour in the state of Oklahoma a few years ago. We had willing hosts, but attendance had dropped to the point that it was hard to justify the time. At that time we replaced the tour with the Oklahoma Angus Gathering, a pen show.

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

We keep members informed of state happenings through the *Oklahoma Angus Challenger*, our state magazine. Word of mouth about successful programs is the best motivator, and successful events such as the Oklahoma Angus Gathering Sale and Oklahoma Beef Inc. (OBI) bull sales encourage producers to want to be involved in the association. The OAA Web site, [www.oklahomaangus.com](http://www.oklahomaangus.com), allows cattlemen to get information about our association at any time.

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

I feel like the OAA will continue its tradition of providing opportunities for members to meet and learn from each other. I don't see the OAA being in the position to hire a full-time secretary, so the future of the association is in the hands of the members. Its growth and number of programs are directly related to the time the leadership is willing to devote to the association.

### What is unique about your association compared to other state associations?

The cattle industry in Oklahoma is one of the state's largest industries. Oklahoma is blessed with great cattle and great industry leaders. There is such a tradition in the Oklahoma cattle industry that our association has tremendous resources in the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association (OCA), Oklahoma State University (OSU) and our cooperative Extension program. Our Angus association focuses on the end product that we produce. We have programs on ultrasound and carcass data and have implemented our steer feedout program. We want our breeders to capitalize on the advantages the Angus breed has for meat production.



