

State Spotlight Series:
Articles featuring the programs and services of some
of the leading state Angus associations.

Georgia In Action

Officers and directors of the Georgia Angus Association (GAA) have no problem figuring out what sets this 52-year-old organization apart from others.

"The overall enthusiasm of the board and association members," says GAA president Traci Britt, a Loganville, Ga., breeder.

They also have no problem coming up with a reason for the enthusiasm. "Everybody feels very confident the Angus breed is the best," Britt says.

"They believe in the breed and have a sincere desire to promote the breed," echoes director Carolyn Gazda, an Athens, Ga., breeder.

Their enthusiasm is well-placed. "Angus seems to be the most popular breed in Georgia now," says University of Georgia Extension

animal scientist Johnny Rossi. "People know they will get an average to above-average price for Angus calves, and the quality grade emphasis has really helped Angus."

Rossi says in the almost four years he has been in Georgia, Angus bulls have had the highest sale average at the performance-tested bull sales in Calhoun and Irwinville.

Angus is the breed with the most numbers entered in the tests, he adds. Between 60% and 65% of the bulls are typically Angus. Usually he tests 200 bulls at Irwinville and 150 at the Calhoun station.

These bulls are from a state with approximately 1.25 million head of beef cattle. According to the Georgia Cattlemen's Association (GCA), the purebred industry makes up about 20% of those cattle.

Of those 20%, Angus do their part. Bryce Schumann, director of member services for the

American Angus Association, says there were 8,533 Angus registrations and 6,624 transfers in Georgia in fiscal year (FY) 2003.

Numbers don't tell the whole story, though. David Gazda, Carolyn's husband and regional manager for the American Angus Association, says Georgia also has a reputation for quality. "Georgia is recognized as having some of the best Angus in the country from a genetic standpoint. We've always had a strong Angus tradition in the state. Frank Binford, Harvey Lemmon and Ralph Bridges have been leaders nationally."

Enthusiasm and Angus rule in Georgia.

Story & photos by **Becky Mills**

Members involved year-round

Members' enthusiasm and pride in their state association and breed take the form of year-round activities for the Georgia group. The annual meeting and banquet in Athens kicks off the year in January.

"We elect officers at the meeting and showcase the activities of the association," says secretary-treasurer Christy Page, Winder, Ga. "At the banquet, we crown the Georgia Angus queen and princess and give an award for the outstanding member."

In February, breed and association promotion takes place in the Georgia Angus Association booth at the GCA convention. Another major February event is the state 4-H and FFA steer and heifer show in Perry.

"We pay premiums to both the grand and reserve grand Angus heifer and steer," Britt says. "We also pay an additional premium if these champions are Georgia-bred."

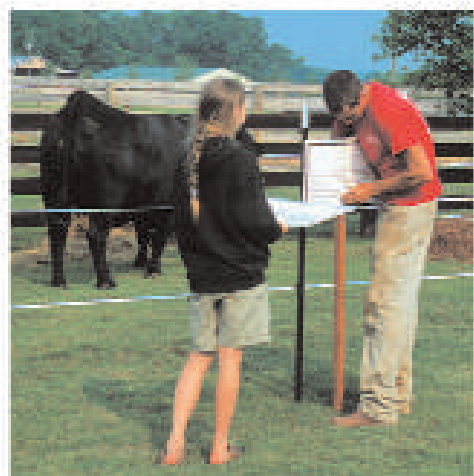
April is the Georgia Beef Expo, also at Perry. There, members of the state association sponsor the Southeastern Angus Showcase Sale. "It is an opportunity for the Angus breeders in the state to merchandise their cattle, regardless of their operation's size, to a large audience," David says. "There are so many members who have 20, 30 or 40 head and aren't big enough to have their own production sales. They can consign to this."

"We did have a fall female sale," adds Moultrie, Ga., Angus producer Brent Chitty. "But this year we decided to forgo that sale and concentrate our efforts on promoting our cattle at the Georgia Beef Expo." Chitty, who serves as the GAA vice president, adds, "We hope to not only highlight the Angus breed to other members at the Expo, but to Georgia cattlemen in general."

At the 2004 Georgia Beef Expo, 35 producers consigned their Angus cattle to the sale.

May brings the annual field day. "We alternate our field days between North and South Georgia so more people can participate," Page says. "Travel is a big deal for

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► The Georgia Angus Association's annual field day was hosted at Hudgins Cattle Co.

► **Right:** Christy Page, GAA secretary-treasurer, says keeping members informed is a priority.



► Traci Britt, GAA president, says the members' enthusiasm keeps the organization strong.

our members.” Georgia, the largest state east of the Mississippi river, covers almost 58,000 square miles.

She adds, “Just by holding events, it gives members the opportunity to get together and discuss their operations and the industry. Just plain interaction is important.”

In June, the GAA hosts the Southern National Angus Show, also in Perry. “It is not a big moneymaker, but it is a good drawing card,” David says. “It draws participants from four or five states.” He says 75-80 juniors usually participate, and anywhere from 75-90 show in the open show.

October is the next big promotion month. “We’re fortunate to have the Sunbelt Expo in Moultrie,” Chitty says. “It is a huge farm show, and it attracts hundreds of thousands

of visitors.” During the farm show, Georgia Angus members man a booth and have Angus cattle on display.

“I’m amazed at the number of producers who come by just to chat,” Chitty says. “They’ll say they have 10 cows and are thinking about using an Angus bull.”

Information supply

Along with activities, communication is a priority of the Georgia association. Page publishes a bi-monthly newsletter for the 350 members, as well as an annual directory, and maintains a Web site with a current calendar of events, www.georgiaangus.org. “Our members are always looking for more information,” she says. “What is going to be changing in the industry? What are

consumers going to want in the future?”

Page also uses the newsletter as a recruiting tool and sends it to anyone who registers an Angus female or bull for the first time.

She continues, “Members are also looking for places to get quality seedstock, especially people just starting out in the Angus business or people in the commercial cattle business who want to incorporate Angus genetics into their herds. I send them sale catalogs and information on sales, and they can access the information on our Web site.

“I am the middleman,” she adds. “I do whatever I can to find them the right contact to point them toward the right information. I use David Gazda a lot. He is a great source.”

Along with sales information, David says newcomers often need just plain animal husbandry information, making interaction with experienced members even more important.

Chitty, who started converting his family’s commercial cattle operation into a registered Angus operation in 1994, says, “I joined the association to become educated. I knew the Georgia Angus Association could provide the services and knowledge I didn’t have. That has certainly been the case.”

Georgia’s future

So, what does the future hold for the enthusiastic, activity- and information-filled association? “I think you’ll continue to see the Georgia association grow both in members and numbers of cattle,” Chitty says.

To help ensure that future, there is the Georgia association’s symbiotic relationship with the Georgia Junior Angus Association (GJAA). “The junior activities work hand in hand with the association,” Carolyn says. “Some of the parents get involved because of the kids’ activities, and some of the kids get involved because their parents are involved.”

Chitty adds, “As a parent, I’m appreciative of the Georgia and American Angus associations for providing avenues to the juniors. I can see the importance of involving the juniors so one day they can assume the leadership roles.”

It worked for Page. She joined the GJAA when she was 9 years old and became involved both on state and national levels, including being Miss American Angus and the first junior activities intern for the American Angus Association.

“I went from the junior association to the adult association,” Page says. “We have a number of bright and active juniors who will do that as well.”

Association Q&A

As a common feature in the state spotlight series, the Angus Journal posed the following questions. Here, Christy Page, secretary-treasurer of the Georgia Angus Association (GAA), shares insights about the organization’s success and future.

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

Our membership has gone up. We now have 350 members. I think it is because the Angus breed is getting bigger and stronger, and more people are changing over to Angus. If they aren’t going to straight Angus, they are incorporating Angus genetics into their herds. Black cattle bring more. All you have to do is go to the sale barn to see that. That is the reason for a lot of the growth in our association.

What is the biggest challenge facing state associations today?

Trying to get people involved. Our people are so busy. The same people come to every event, and I want to reach out to all our members.

How do you overcome those challenges?

Travel is a challenge. We had our banquet in Perry a few years ago so more people in South Georgia could participate. We alternate our field days between North and South Georgia so more people can come.

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

Our involvement with the Georgia Beef Expo sale. A lot of breeders can participate who might not be able to otherwise.

Realizing producers need change throughout time, do you have a program that you think has outlived its usefulness?

I can’t think of any. Everything we do, we do every year because people continue to want it. They also continue to want information.

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

We advertise in the Georgia Angus Association “Cow Chips” newsletter, state publications and on our Web site.

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

It will continue to get stronger. It has been neat for me because I have been in it almost all my life, first as a junior and now as an adult. I think that will happen with other juniors. We’ll also still be a source of information for Georgia Angus breeders.

What is unique about your association from other state associations?

We reach out to the smaller producers. My parents, Wayne and Ann Bell, have always been small breeders with full-time jobs. There are many other breeders in the state like them.

