

2001 'Aim High' Subject Hits Target

Proof that Moore cattle get better.

by Lyndee Stabel, Certified Angus Beef LLC



PHOTO COURTESY KELLY MOORE

In a world of assembly lines and disposable goods, fewer people take pride in the work they do and the things they help create. Beef producer Monte Moore is one of the few. He built high-quality Angus genetics into his herd, which has helped build profit, beef demand and other high-quality herds through heifer sales.

A March 2001 article (www.angusjournal.com/ArticlePDF/0301aj_cabmoore.pdf) in the *Angus Journal*, "Moore Cattle Get Better Over Time," told a story of early attention to detail in aiming high. One of the first in a long-running series called "Aim High," it noted the home-fed cattle harvested 12 years ago achieved 55% Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand acceptance.

Since then, they have only gotten better. He closed that article saying, "Things are really going to change; it's amazing what you can do if you can just keep up." Keeping up

meant a few changes through the years, but the main structure remains the same today.

Adapting and improving

Near his home in Oberlin, Kan., Moore grazes 400 commercial Angus cow-calf pairs on summer pasture and winter cornstalks.

Calves are started at home, and heifers get a breeding soundness exam before the top two-thirds are bred by artificial insemination (AI). Most of those go back into the herd as replacements, but the rest are sold to other producers.

One of the biggest changes since that winter a dozen years past is that fewer cattle are finished at home. Now he sends most of them to nearby Decatur County Feedyard, a CAB partner feedlot.

There his cattle are enrolled in a signature feeding program that optimizes the finish on each animal using electronic identification

(eID) and a host of measurements such as hip height, weight and back fat by ultrasound. Then they are sorted into pens of similar cattle; the process is repeated later in the feeding period; and at marketing time, the eID allows each calf to be matched with owner and paid on its individual merit.

That motivates producers to make sure each animal is performing at a top level, and the data they receive from the program helps in that process, says feedyard manager Kevin Unger. Customers see a profit-and-loss statement for every calf, but they also get group data and sheets comparing their animals to similar cattle in the yard.

Moore's cattle are a great match for the program.

"Monte uses the data to help determine bull selection and to enhance the management of his outfit," Unger says. "He has made progress on all the traits that enhance profitability in a herd — feed efficiency, carcass weight and grid premiums."

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► **Above:** "By keeping a lot of heifers and using AI, after a period of time your genetic base will advance beyond just the bull you're using," Monte Moore says. "That's why we continue to see an increase in carcass quality the more years we do this."

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His calves routinely perform in the top 10% of cattle at the yard, and last year they made 95% USDA Choice or better with 80% CAB and 5.3% Prime.

"If we could build a prototype of a customer, Monte would be our model," Unger says. "He is driven by quality and always wants to move forward, but he doesn't base his decisions on the 'high of the week' at the sale or the opinions of order buyers. Monte is driven by facts and data, which he uses to make really good decisions in his operation."

Female focus

While constantly working toward better genetics, efficiency and profitability, Moore has never lost sight of his ultimate goal and direction: to raise a balanced, quality calf. Many producers put the most emphasis on the bull's genetics and its effects on the calf crop, but Moore's first priority is his cow herd.

"By keeping a lot of heifers and using AI,

after a period of time your genetic base will advance beyond just the bull you're using," he says. "That's why we continue to see an increase in carcass quality the more years we

do this." Moore is religious about replacing older cows with the younger, stacked genetics of his AI-bred heifers. The oldest cows in his herd are 8 years old.

When it comes to selecting sires, he is thinking balance and avoids the extreme, terminal crosses. All the while, he has his cows in mind.

"Besides looking at the birth weights, yearling weights, etc., I'm also looking for udders and everything that's important to being a mama cow," Moore says. "It all starts there for me. I want

every heifer born to have the potential to be a mama cow."

Over the years, he says it has become easier than ever to find registered Angus bulls that fit his program because of the advancements the breed has made. He can look at numbers and measurements on all aspects of the animal from birth weight to tenderness to

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— Monte Moore**

disposition. Then he can compare that to the data he gets back when the cattle are harvested to determine what truly works in his herd.

"With the number of good Angus bulls we have today and processes like AI and embryo transfer, it's a lot harder to go wrong," Moore says. Numbers and proven results are the main reasons he stuck with Angus cattle.

At the time his family bought their original Angus herd and in the early 1970s, a lot of people in the area were breeding to Simmentals. At first, Moore admits they kept their herd straight Angus out of "pure stubbornness," but the more EPDs (expected progeny differences) they saw along with the good maternal traits and calving ease, the more convinced they became.

"The things we've been able to do the past 25 years as far as testing and technology are impressive," he says. "There are other breeds that have done well, too, but it's pretty easy to say that the Angus breed was leading the way."

Breeding tool advances keep producers moving forward, but Moore knows the pace can only be steady at best. He has devoted his producer career to gradually building his herd and genetics to their current level.

"With genetics, you learn and respect the fact that nothing is going to happen overnight," he says. "You're not going to make fantastic changes in one year — and if you do, the odds of it backfiring are pretty good."

Through the years, Moore has had steady help from his brother-in-law and business partner Mike Coleman, especially on the farming side. Even at ages 81 and 82, his dad, Loyd, and Uncle Francis Moore play important roles to keep everything running smoothly.

Recent droughts have created a couple of bumps in the road, but Moore remains optimistic. Moisture will likely return and allow producers to rebuild their herds, creating a stronger demand for his heifers. However, if pastures haven't improved by spring, he may have to sell a few extra cows. If that happens, he hopes other regions will have improved to allow a good market for those cows. Until then, he'll hold on and see what that next season brings.

Nobody who makes a living at it will claim livestock production is easy, but he enjoys the challenges of raising cattle. "Animal husbandry can be tough, especially when the weather is bad, so you had better love it or you're not going to do it," Moore says.

"But," he adds, "time sure flies when you're having fun."



Editor's Note: Lyndee Stabel is a freelance writer for Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB).