



# No Nonsense in the Rockies

Colorado cattleman and family focus on females.

Story & photos by **Laura Conaway**, Certified Angus Beef LLC

**I**f you have good heifers, you have good bulls.”

Terry Walter settles back into his chair. It’s not to add effect to the statement; his shift allows time for others to catch on to what the Colorado rancher knows to be true. Good cattle come from good cattle, and there’s no sense denying the importance of the dam.

“There’s people out there who are more terminal-focused, and that’s not us,” he says, matter of factly. “Our No. 1 priority is females. The bulls will follow.”

With that, he leans in to his kitchen table. Another point has come to mind, and Terry’s not one to leave it unsaid. He knows where he stands, and his cattle reflect that.

If they don’t, they’ll be his cattle no more.

## Legacy rejoined

Hudson, Colo., is an outskirts town, its dirt roads no match for nearby big-city Denver.

The views are another story.

“The closer you get to them, the less you see the ranges and the farther you get away, you see less and less. So we’re in a pretty ideal place right here,” Tyler (Ty) Walter says. Terry

and Becky’s second son points out the tallest peak visible through the morning’s fog.

“This is a bad day for the mountains,” older brother Trevor adds — as if there’s such a thing.

To the fourth and youngest generation of Walter men, and younger sister Katelyn, this Front Range of the Southern Rockies has been the backdrop for most of life’s experiences. Aside from years away earning college degrees, the Walter bunch is used to the view.

Still unlikely to take it or the lifestyle for granted, they returned home to work. Terry was a bit surprised, but his legacy wasn’t.

“Sure it’s tempting, coming out of college, to go get a high-paying corporate job,” Ty says, “but we’ve been through a lot here. To see us struggle and God provide, it would be hard to just throw that away.”

“Until the day comes when we decide we can’t do this anymore,” Terry adds, “we’re going to keep pushing it.”

Whatever that elusive “it” may be, the Walters strive for it. In their cattle they expect the best and cull those that don’t make the

cut on docility, foot score or the beef value index (\$B). There’s no creep feeding, no favoritism, just cattle that grow efficiently and females known for the calves by their sides.

“The idea is to raise cattle that work,” Terry says. “No-nonsense cows that thrive on native pasture and require little input.”

Understanding that can look different for each producer, the Walters focus on females with the notion that a quality cow paired with superior genetics through artificial insemination (AI) should produce a successful bull for buyers.

## DNA tests and consumer focus

It’s a blissful life, full of summers on horseback and postcard winters, but the same mountains that bloom in the springtime bring bitter chills when the year comes to an end.

“The snow will dictate when it’s time to come down from the mountains,” Trevor says of the high ground where they’ll haul 600 head (half commercial, half registered) to pasture from June until some November day.

The rest of the year, they’ll be but

► **Above:** The Walter family, (from left) Ty, Terry, Becky, Katelyn and Trevor, has been nestled in the Front Range of the Southern Rockies for four generations.

black dots in a sea of snow and cornstalks surrounding the family homestead.

“When you come up to a cow and see snow on her, well, that is a wonderful cow,” Terry says of the grit his Angus cattle show. Like their owner, they deliver on a promise. Never fake; you get what you see.

A Colorado landscape can make it tough for any animal to look bad, but phenotype carries less and less weight as genomics reveal what’s underneath the hide.

Since 2013, the family’s used the GeneMax® Advantage™ test to measure commercial heifer potential. They ultrasound and run DNA tests on the registered herd, too.

“What’s kicking these cows out of here is the DNA test,” Ty says. “Initially, there was an easy bottom third to cull. Now there’s a bottom eighth, because we’ve been doing it year after year.”

“What GeneMax is doing is speeding up decision making on our animals and their progeny,” Terry says. “Nothing is ever 100%, but the farther we get down the road, the more predictable we can get.”

They apply that same forward thinking to the consumer with a goal to increase carcass quality rather than maintain it.

“You tell me why every person wouldn’t want to think about someone going to the grocery store and buying a juicy, tender, good-tasting steak?” Terry asks. “We should all be thinking about raising quality.”

A recent pen of 80 commercial steers reflect that attitude as 61% qualified for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, including 6% Prime and the rest USDA Choice.

“Every time we feed cattle, we think of the end goal of aiming for the brand,” Ty says. “What’s better than being able to provide consistency for the consumer?”

Not to mention that it is a guarantee for their registered bull customers who frequent their February sale each year.

“If I can give my customers the genetic potential for that bull to go out and increase



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the carcass quality in their herds, that’s what I’m after,” Terry says.

### Results from the field

For Cassie Lapaseotes, it was an easy decision to feed the Colorado cattle. Her family operates Lapaseotes Ltd., near Bridgeport, Neb., and partners with Dinklage Feed Yards. They purchased and fed the Walter steers near Fort Morgan, Colo.

The Lapaseoteses were bull customers first, but soon discovered the family’s value of carcass data.

“It’s nice to know producers who are interested in their cattle all the way up to the end,” Lapaseotes says. “Even if they don’t directly benefit from it (grid premiums), someone trying to make their cow herd better helps the industry as a whole.”

Walter Angus has no other goal — aside from providing a place where the future can learn and grow, a haven from the city that seems to never stop expanding. Trevor’s bride, Melissa, is due with the first of the fifth generation this summer.

“The Lord has just never, He’s never let us down,” Terry says, this time more humble than assertive. “So every day we just do our work. That’s what a rancher does.”

With no supplemental income, there’s little room for error and always space to improve, both as a family and as farmers and ranchers.

“Cattle people have a lot of awesome tools at our disposal right now,” Terry says. “It’s about being proactive.” And perhaps enjoying it along the way.

“The thing we can sell is our care,” Ty says.

That comes from a genuine appreciation for the job.

“We’re not in this for the money,” Terry says, as he leans in from his seat. “There’s days where those mountains will look like they’re right here on the horizon. There are months where the cows will come down them with calves by their side. It may be short and fleeting, but it’s enough.”



**Editor’s Note:** *Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*

