



# Field Notes

► by *Jerry Cassady and Matt Printz*, regional managers, American Angus Association

## Preparing for a junior show

*Showing success starts well before stepping before the judges, and developing good habits as a junior member can help solidify an enjoyable and successful show career.*

*Regional managers Jerry Cassady and Matt Printz offer tips from which even an experienced showman can benefit.*

### When purchasing a show heifer, where should you look?

**Matt Printz:** There are three different avenues to purchase a show heifer:

- 1) buy private treaty from another producer's farm or ranch;
- 2) purchase at a production sale; or
- 3) purchase at a consignment sale.

When considering where to purchase a show heifer, one should begin research sometime before the purchase needs to take place. By attending shows and reading show-oriented publications, you can begin to refine

your search to Angus operations that emphasize show cattle production. Also, you may receive good advice by visiting with other juniors and people who have had previous show experiences.

The most important detail is to purchase a heifer from a reputable producer with whom you feel comfortable and who can advise you following your purchase.

**Jerry Cassady:** Begin with reputable programs that can offer the customer services that are important to you, such as nutrition and fitting advice, semen packages and/or breeding suggestions, financial junior

incentive programs, etc. Other factors to consider are available selection, genetics, calving dates and purchase price.

### Describe factors that can help juniors determine what age heifer is most appropriate for them to show.

**Cassady:** I always recommend younger stock for younger junior members. There are exceptions to this at every show. We all can visualize very small exhibitors who get along fine with bigger calves. However, this is not always the case.

It's important to realize that cattle grow and mature at a much faster rate than our juniors, and an animal's disposition can change along the way. Therefore, my advice to parents is to keep a constant eye on the interaction between their kids and their calves. Be watchful for problems that may develop during the year. Do not continue to show an animal that causes unnecessary concerns.

### What factors influence how long it takes to halter-break a heifer?

**Printz:** One major factor in halter-breaking is the age of the animal. As a general rule of thumb, the earlier you begin halter-breaking the better, as it is easier to train younger (smaller) animals. In most cases, a heifer should be halter-broke shortly after weaning.

Another factor is the general disposition of the animal. This should also be a major influence in your purchasing decision. The milder the animal and the smaller the flight zone, the easier it will be to get the animal used to you.

Finally, the facilities that you have available at your disposal play a huge factor in the halter-breaking process. If you have access to a squeeze chute, decent alleyways and a solid pen, you will be at a definite advantage.

**Cassady:** Two factors play a role: your attitude and the attitude of your calf. Both are equally important for a successful experience. Always remain calm and remember that this is a new experience for your calf.

Attitudes are developed from genetics and the environment. The genetic factor can be addressed during selection; the environmental factor can be controlled by you. For a more detailed look at the specifics of halter-breaking, refer to the American

## REGIONAL MANAGERS

### REGION 1

*New Mexico, Texas*

#### JARED MURNIN

7734 Hwy. 83/84, Abilene, TX 79602  
(816) 390-7092 jmurnin@angus.org

### REGION 2

*Iowa, Missouri*

#### DON LAUGHLIN

36327 Monarch Trail, Guilford, MO 64457-9444  
(660) 652-3500 laughlin@angus.org

### REGION 3

*Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi*

#### RICHARD DYAR

1633 CR 104, Crossville, AL 35962  
(256) 659-6305 rdyar@angus.org

### REGION 4

*Florida, Georgia, North & South Carolina*

#### DAVID GAZDA

1985 Morton Rd., Athens, GA 30605  
(706) 227-9098 dgazda@angus.org

### REGION 5

*Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee*

#### CHUCK GROVE

1919 Goshen Rd., Forest, VA 24551  
(434) 525-4687 cgrove@angus.org

### REGION 6

*Kansas, Oklahoma*

#### MATT CALDWELL

14937 KS Hwy. 152, LaCygne, KS 66040  
(913) 757-2600 mcaldwell@angus.org

### REGION 7

*Delaware, Maryland, New England States, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia*

#### DAVID MULLINS

1579 Fairfax Pike, White Post, VA 22663  
(540) 869-6220 dmullins@angus.org

### REGION 8

*Minnesota,*

*North & South Dakota*

#### VERN FREY

107 Fourth Ave. N.W., Towner, ND 58788  
(701) 537-5383 vfrey@angus.org

### REGION 9

*Illinois, Indiana,*

*Michigan, Wisconsin*

#### JERRY CASSADY

1408 E. Heather Dr., Mahomet, IL 61853  
(816) 390-6603 jcassady@angus.org

### REGION 10

*Alaska, Montana, Wyoming*

#### ANDY REST

6948 Pony Circle, Shepherd, MT 59079  
(406) 254-7576 arest@angus.org

### REGION 11

*Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon,*

*Utah, Washington*

#### ROD WESSELMAN

PO Box 746, Moses Lake, WA 98837  
(509) 765-9219 rwesselman@angus.org

### REGION 12

*Arizona, California, Nevada*

#### JOHN DICKINSON

Apt. 524, 4200 E. Commerce Way  
Sacramento, CA 95834  
(916) 285-8621 jdickinson@angus.org

### REGION 13

*Colorado, Nebraska*

#### MATT PRINTZ

9865 85th Rd., Elm Creek, NE 68836-9767  
(308) 856-0070 mprintz@angus.org

Angus Association's handbook *Forming a Future*, which can be found at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org) by clicking on the "Angus Education Center" link.

The best advice is to be patient with your calves at all times.

### **How long does it take to train hair, and what tips can you offer for doing it?**

**Printz:** Training hair can be a lengthy process, and several factors will affect your success with this. First, the genetic predisposition of the animal is important. Hair length and type are moderately heritable, so a heifer will likely inherit the same hair type as her parents. Keep in mind that long, straight hair is the easiest to train. You can select for these traits.

Second, facilities that create an environment conducive to growing hair will make this training process much easier. Just as any animal grows more hair to stay warm, a heifer that is exposed to a cool, dark environment will naturally grow more hair than one left in sunlight throughout the day. If you do not have elaborate facilities, tying animals in the shade with a fan will help do the trick.

Finally, the biggest factor in growing hair is the amount of time that you dedicate to your show heifer. Hair will not grow or train without effort on your part. The more time you can spend rinsing, brushing and blowing your heifer's hair, the sooner you will see results.

### **Where can you go for information on how to groom and fit cattle?**

**Printz:** The Web is a great place to begin gathering information on grooming. There are Web sites dedicated solely to grooming advice. You can also ask people who have personal experience exhibiting cattle. By simply observing experienced people at shows, you will likely pick up valuable tips.

There are also show camps or grooming demonstrations available, including at the 2006 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Indianapolis, Ind. These camps and demonstrations can provide valuable experiences in grooming cattle.

**Cassady:** I would recommend reading *Forming a Future*. In addition to being on the Association's Web site, you can request a hard copy of the handbook by calling the

Association communications department at (816) 383-5100. Observing successful, more knowledgeable fitters at various shows can also be very useful in educating those who are less experienced.

### **What things can you do to prevent showing mishaps?**

**Printz:** The best way to prevent showing mishaps is being properly prepared. The more time you spend with your show animal in show-like environments, the less likely she will become agitated by unknown sights and sounds.

Animals sense a person's emotions, too. So, if you become agitated, nervous or angry, your animal will sense it and may possibly respond in a negative way. By remaining calm, your animal is more likely to feel comfortable with what is going on around it.

### **Is it OK to bring a copy of your registration papers to a show?**

**Printz:** No, a copy of a registration paper will not qualify the animal at check-in. Copies are not date-sensitive, so an outdated copy of the registration paper could be used for a previous owner. Instead, bring the original registration papers to check in.

**Cassady:** This rule is in place to make certain the calf being shown is correct, and the ownership is documented and verified.

### **What should you do if the breeder you bought your heifer from doesn't transfer the registration papers?**

**Printz:** Possibly the biggest purchasing decision of a show heifer is whether she is registered or not. So, make sure before you purchase a heifer that she is, in fact, properly registered. In addition, by purchasing an animal from a reputable breeder that you know and trust, the likelihood of not receiving the transferred papers is significantly reduced.

If, however, there is an issue of not receiving the transferred registration papers, the first step is to contact the breeder you purchased the heifer from to let them know of the situation. Most likely it is simply due to human error, and the person forgot about it. If the breeder continues to ignore your request, the next step is to contact the Association.

**Cassady:** Most breeders are very good about transferring paperwork on a timely

basis. However, there can be a rare exception. Contact the breeder if you have not received your papers within 45 days from the date of sale. If you are unable to get papers transferred to you after this time frame, contact the Association Member Services Department for assistance. Getting this completed well in advance of entry deadlines can make all the difference relative to a fun and successful show season.

### **In your experience, what are the most common reasons heifers are determined to be ineligible for a show?**

**Printz:** In my experience, the biggest reasons heifers are determined to be ineligible for a show are: 1) a tattoo that is not legible, and 2) not owning the heifer prior to the ownership deadline of a specific show.

**Cassady:** In my experience, the most common reason would be tattoo problems, either absent or incorrect. It is the exhibitor's responsibility to make certain the tattoo is correct in the animal's ear and on the paper sent to you following registration.

I cannot emphasize this enough — always take time to read the tattoo in the animal's ear and see that it correctly matches the registration paper prior to leaving home. If you have a problem, contact your regional manager immediately.

Other reasons would include not having the original registration paper, illegal white, incorrect ownership, incorrect exhibitor, etc. Waiting until the regional manager detects the problem at the chute during check-in causes unnecessary embarrassment and very unhappy junior members.

### **What tips can you offer to improve the process of transporting your heifer to a show?**

**Cassady:** The best tip that I know is not to tie your animal too close to the trailer. Leave some slack in the rope in case of an emergency. Animals have been known to go down in transport and, if tied too close, they can hang themselves.

A related item is their footing. Be sure the flooring is solid enough to support the animals' weight and is not too slick. Throw in some shredded bark for a good surface to absorb shock and moisture during the trip.

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Also, make sure the exhaust from the vehicle is not funneling directly toward the animals in the trailer.

### **What is an ROV show?**

**Cassady:** ROV stands for “Roll of Victory.” We currently have 15 ROV shows across the country, with five large events known as super-point shows and 10 regional recognized point shows. Breeders and exhibitors accumulate points by participating

in these events to win ROV award status. More information is available online at [www.angus.org/shows/shows\\_more\\_info.html](http://www.angus.org/shows/shows_more_info.html).

### **Why is night tie-out important?**

**Printz:** Night tie-out is important because it gives the animal an opportunity to get out of a stuffy barn and into fresh air. Many show barns, especially those that have a high animal population and are fully enclosed, become stale due to increased ammonia present in the air. And, just like in people, long periods of exposure to that type of environment can have a negative effect.

Night tie-out also provides an

opportunity to exercise the animal, which is also important to the animal’s health.

**Cassady:** Removing the animals from the barn each night is known as “tie-out” and is an important practice both at home and while on the show circuit. Removing the animals from the facility each evening gives the exhibitors an opportunity to refresh the bedding area and allow it to dry before the next day. It also gives the barn a chance to air out and reduces accumulated humidity.

Remember not to tie out too soon; it may be too hot during the summer months for the animals to be comfortable. The same thing applies in the morning. Most tie-out

areas do not have adequate shade, so don't wait too long prior to bringing your animals in from the tie-out area.

**What is the best type of bedding material?**

**Printz:** For shorter shows, nearly any normal material, such as straw or any kind of wood chips, is acceptable. For an extended period of time, however, cedar chips are the bedding material of choice for experienced show people, because they are very absorbent of liquids and certain gases, such as ammonia.

**Cassady:** My personal favorite is shredded bark. This material is readily available and is

common throughout the country. It packs well, yet allows for adequate drainage. Straw and shavings are also common, but they have trouble packing and will cling to animals. I've seen some of the new pelleted products and know they work well for short stays, but nothing holds up as well as shredded bark.

**What should you do if your heifer won't drink water at the show?**

**Printz:** Successfully getting your heifer to drink at a show starts well before the animal arrives at the show location. Animals sometimes avoid flavors and smells that differ from what they are used to at home.

The key is to reduce any kind of significant changes that may occur from your home to another location. Some people use chlorine filters along with a flavor enhancer, so the animal can't detect any change. If you know your animal is overly sensitive to these changes, make sure you use the same control measures at home as you will at the show so the animal notices no change while on the road.

It is important to keep your animal properly hydrated — most importantly for the animal's health, and secondly to increase your success in the showing.

