

Aberdeen in twenty-thirteen



► Laramie Chaffin introduces Royal Valley Angus Ranch, the imaginary ranch of the Illinois intermediate sales team, to the judges. Other teammates include Kagney Collins, Sierra Day and Keegan Cassady.

Marketing for the Aberdeen Team

Juniors learn real-world skills in the team sales marketing contest.

Story & photos by **Kasey Brown**, associate editor

Some people have natural sales skills. They could sell a swimsuit to a penguin. Others can evaluate and raise great cattle, but they need help marketing. Any seedstock breeder can tell you that no matter how good your genetic program is, you have to be able to sell your breeding stock to make a living.

The team sales contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Kansas City, Mo., July 5-11 is helping members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) develop their salesmanship skills.

Learning from experience

The intermediate team from Illinois comprised Keegan Cassady, Normal; Sierra Day, Cerro Gordo; Laramie Chaffin, Roodhouse; and Kagney Collins, Flanagan. These now three-time reigning champions say they enjoy working in the team environment. Cassady says she likes working as a team, because the results are more rewarding having earned them together.

The group explains that they have worked on this contest since May. Their task has been to create a portfolio for an animal — in this case, a bred heifer. With this portfolio in hand,

they have 7 minutes to present why this heifer, and their made-up ranch's genetic program, should be a buyer's choice.

These contestants divvied up their roles and responsibilities more than a month before the contest to write their respective parts of the presentation. They gathered at the Illinois preview show in early June to practice in person and make tweaks to the presentation. At NJAS, they practiced in front of parents and friends to get critiques and feedback before going in front of the judges.

Past experience taught them choosing a heifer that would act calm in the ring during the presentation was a must. In a previous year, they had a heifer that danced around



► **Above:** Judges Shawn Coats, Amanda Kagarice and Matt Drake say they enjoy when teams invite them to get up from the table and look at the animal.

► **Right:** All four members of the Illinois intermediate team participate in the 7-minute presentation. As designated marketing director, Cassady explains the terms of the sale, with the rest of her team.



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during questions. This year they made sure not to relive that experience.

They studied the pedigrees of each of their heifers entered in the NJAS and decided on one they thought would sell well due to her combination of phenotype and expected progeny differences (EPDs). The heifer was also bred to calve in a few months, which they thought would add value to the customer and give them more to speak about.

Their game plan was to create an imaginary ranch called Royal Valley Angus Ranch and split the responsibilities in the presentation by their own strengths. Within their ranch, Cassady was the marketing director, Day was the herd manager, Chaffin was the public relations director and Collins was the show cattle manager. To optimize their strengths, Chaffin says she did the introduction and conclusion, Cassady talked about the terms of sale, Day talked about the breeding program and pedigree, and Collins spoke about the traits of the heifer (because the heifer was hers). Each “expert” answered the questions for their respective field after the presentation.

Cassady says this approach makes it seem more realistic.

They say they felt prepared for the questions from the judges. Studying for quiz bowl helped them anticipate some questions, and all four of them have experience with the contest. Cassady, Chaffin and Day have been a successful team in many contests for many years. They competed together in team sales for the last three years, starting at the NJAS in Denver, Colo. The three have also competed together in quiz bowl and the cook-off. This familiarity garners trust between them, and that shows when they answer questions.

Cassady adds that since Collins joined the team this year, the fourth person was very helpful in answering questions and making the presentation shorter for each member, which gave them each less to memorize. They also learned from experience and to work as a team for hard questions. They used the huddle strategy on tough ones.

For the intermediate team, one judge asked what to change about their heifer and to which bull they would breed their heifer. Another question was whether the judges could wait to buy their heifer or if they had to make their decision that day. The judges also asked whether the heifer had been tested for genetic defects.

Each of the Illinois girls wanted to



► **Left:** To answer tough questions, the team members used the huddle strategy to form a cohesive answer using each other's expertise.

► **Below:** A firm handshake with the judges ends the presentation on a good note.

present themselves in a professional manner. They have each been Angus royalty, and therefore decided to wear khakis instead of jeans and white button-down shirts.

The four say they enjoy this contest and the learning experiences it provides, and they plan to keep competing together.



Tips from judges

While learning from experience has helped the intermediate Illinois team, the judges from this year's junior division offered some tips for teams wanting to start the contest next year or who just want to improve. Matt Drake, Freeman, Mo.; Amanda Kagarice, Ballard, Mo.; and Shawn Coats, Braymer, Mo., say preparedness is the key to this event. Coats says creativity catches his eye when judging.

Kagarice says confidence is the biggest draw for her. Many teams were jittery, which is expected, but being able to overcome the nerves is the important, and impressive, aspect.

Drake notes that many young competitors have some great skill at marketing, and it was

obvious that a lot of thought went into their presentations. Practice is certainly apparent to the judges.

They admit that while practice is necessary, they don't want canned information. They want each team member to know about the animal and to be able to answer questions. Being personable helps in establishing a rapport with judges.

Drake says, “We're all friends here, we're not going to throw something at them. The more relaxed the kids are, the easier it will be.”

All three judges say they enjoyed when teams asked them to get up from the table and look at the animal. Kagarice says it sparks more interaction between contestants and the judges. It also makes it more like a real-world interaction on the farm.

They asked questions that made sure the teams knew about their animal. Coats says

his real-world question is set like an “old codger” who is tight with his dollars and wants to find out exactly why he should buy this animal. He

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► **Left:** The senior team from Texas enters the ring and hands out the portfolio full of information on the bull for sale.

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also asks whether there is a guarantee that comes with the animal, and what kind of service is provided.

Drake says that some teams used ratios, but cautions that ratios can say just about anything, so make sure teams really understand what ratios mean. Industry terminology was good, but again, make sure you know what they mean.

Each team should present a professional-looking portfolio. It doesn't necessarily have to be fancy, but it should be complete, organized and creative.

All three of these judges say that teams don't have to match, but they should look professional in clean, collared shirts and khakis or nice jeans.

Most importantly, practice is key. Coats

likens the contest to giving livestock reasons, practice makes perfect. Drake assures that like anything, you have to take that first step by entering the contest for the first time to know where to improve.

Teamwork and real-world sales applications can potentially turn these young breeders into polished salesmen.

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Team sales contest rules

The objective of the contest is to gain a working understanding of performance and pedigree information. Emphasis will be placed on team organization, communication skills and marketing techniques. Winners will be selected in three age divisions. Each winning team receives an engraved silver plate for each team member and the state junior Angus association receives the following premiums: first, \$75; second, \$50; and third, \$25.

1. Each state association may enter one team in each age category. There will be three age divisions: ages 9 to 13; ages 14 to 17; and ages 18 to 21 (use contestant's age as of Jan. 1 of the current year). Mixed teams may enter, but their division will be determined by the age of the oldest member of the team. Each team will consist of three or four individuals. Participants must be junior, regular or life members of the American Angus Association.
2. In the occurrence of a state not having three members present for a team, they may ask a junior member from another state to compete on their team. Combined teams must consist of at least two members from the same state. However, if a state association has a team, no one else from that junior association may compete on a combined state association team. Sweepstakes points will not be counted for combined state teams.
3. Teams must sign up during the registration period. The order of team presentation will be determined by a drawing after preregistration.
4. The senior division will be provided with a complete scenario on the day of the registration. The team is required to select its own animal and to find a pedigree to match the scenario. It is not necessary that the animal and the pedigree correspond. See scenario example at end of rules.
5. Presentations need to be a minimum of 5 minutes long, with a maximum of 8 minutes. Following the conclusion of the presentation, the team will be allowed up to 3 minutes to answer questions from the judges. Judges will not interrupt the presentation to ask questions. All questions will be asked at the conclusion of the presentation. A 1-minute warning will be given by the event official.
6. Each individual on the team will be expected to speak during the presentation. The objective of each team is to sell its heifer, bull or cow-calf pair to the judges. The following three topics should be discussed — pedigree information, performance information and visual characteristics. Other information may be included in the presentation. The judge's questions will not necessarily be limited to the three topics listed above. Teams will be discounted for using notes, but are encouraged to use reference materials.

Each team will be allowed to use the microphone at their

discretion during the sales presentation.

7. Each team will be responsible for selecting a heifer, bull or cow-calf pair to use in the competition. Bulls, heifers and cow-calf pairs are not to be groomed, but should be clean.

Animals will be checked before entering the competition area. No show halters and no grooming supplies will be allowed in the competition area. Three copies of the registration certificate (original or electronically stored) should be provided. Points will be deducted for teams not supplying three copies of the registration certificate. In addition to the registration certificate, each team may supply performance data, pictures, show records, etc., as part of the sales package for the panel of judges.

8. Each team is allowed to enter the ring with only the animal being marketed and one set of sales materials per judge. Extra promotional items (farm signs, posters, brochures, business cards, etc.), props and incentive gifts to judging panel (key rings, caps, beverages, etc.) are prohibited.
9. Points will be awarded as follows: content, 10 points; ability to communicate, 10 points; team organization, 10 points; overall effect, 10 points; and knowledge and response to questions, 10 points. Up to 5 points will be deducted for dependence on notes. Two points will be subtracted if registration certificates are not submitted. Five points will be subtracted if all team members do not speak.

Two points per judge will be subtracted for each minute the team presentation goes less than 5 minutes, and points will be deducted by ½ point per judge for each 10 seconds over the 8-minute time limit.

10. Judging will be by a three-member panel of judges based on 50 points maximum from each judge.

The contest official will inform the judges if any points need to be deducted for time violations. Each judge shall total their score and rank the contestants in numerical order on the basis of their score. (Highest score first, lowest score last.)

The rankings (not the score) of the three judges shall be added for each team, and the final placings determined by the lowest composite rankings. Actual scores will be used only to break ties. In the event the participants are still tied, they shall be named co-winners and two awards will be given for that placing and none given for the following placing.

Scenario example: You have been contracted by a producer who is in need of a bull. This bull will be used in a rotational program in western South Dakota. His emphasis is to produce F₁ females that are sold to commercial cattlemen. This is done under minimal labor on Hereford cows. He does retain steer calves for slaughter because of adequate feed sources.

— National Junior Angus Association