

Prepared Public Speaking

NJAA members share beef's story through prepared public speaking contest.

compiled by *Kasey Miller*

One of society's biggest fears is public speaking. If they were afraid, many brave Angus youth didn't show it as they took their turn in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Prepared Public Speaking Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Louisville, Ky., July 17.

Junior and intermediate division contestants could speak on any subject pertaining to Angus cattle or the beef industry. Exploration of, and insight into, any and all phases of the industry were encouraged, with the topic prompts of current affairs, policies and trends. Senior division contestants were asked to address the question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of expanding the Angus herd book to other breeds?

Speeches in the junior division were to be between 4 and 6 minutes in length, and intermediate and senior division speeches were to be 6-8 minutes long.

This year's winners were Quannah Gardiner, Ashland, Kan., junior; Sydnee Gerken, Cashion, Okla., intermediate A division; Esther McCabe, Elk City, Kan., intermediate B division; and Hannah McCabe, Elk City, Kan., senior division. Hannah McCabe won a \$1,000 scholarship from the *Angus Journal*. The winners of the younger divisions each won \$125.

Posted below are their winning speeches.

Freeze Branding

by *Quannah Gardiner, junior division winner*

Imagine life back in the days of the Old West — people riding palominos up and down the street instead of driving Mustangs — and a gunfight on every corner. And every spring neighbors helping each other out come branding time. The smell of burned hide lingering across the prairie.

Today, however, time has changed the way many things are done. For instance, many people are choosing freeze branding as an alternative to hot-iron branding. If



► Corbin Cowles, Rockfield, Ky., answers questions posed by the judges after giving his speech.

PHOTO BY KELLI FULKERSON

you are looking into taking advantage of this technique with your own cattle, there are several items that you will need, along with various procedures to follow. But first I would like to discuss with you several of the advantages and disadvantages of freeze branding.

One advantage of freeze branding over hot-iron branding is that, especially on black-hided Angus cattle, the white mark produced by a freeze brand is much easier to see than the scar of a hot-iron brand. The freeze-branding process “kills” the pigment of the hair, resulting in the regrowth of hair being white. Since the entire point of a brand is to permanently identify the animal, visibility is extremely important. Also, a freeze brand does not destroy the hide of the animal, which preserves more of the leather as a byproduct. Finally, a freeze brand causes far less stress on the animal. You will truly appreciate the convenience of permanent, easy-to-read identification.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to this process. The primary pitfall of freeze branding is the extra time that is required. Instead of just a quick press against the skin, as you will learn later, freeze branding requires more preparation, and the iron needs to touch the skin for a longer amount

of time. The second downside is the extra cost associated with freeze branding. Third, the vapors from your cooling agent aren't very healthy to breathe in. You should have a fan running for good air circulation. And, in extreme cases, if you are using gasoline as a cooling agent and the gasoline evaporates, you could be risking your life. One gallon of evaporated gasoline has the explosive power of 83 pounds (lb.) of dynamite.

Now that you know the advantages and disadvantages of this process, we can talk about the basic equipment needed to



► Winning the junior division of prepared speaking are (from left) **Alexandria Cozzitorto**, Lenexa, Kan., second; **Quannah Gardiner**, Ashland, Kan., first; and **Joshua Brannon**, Ellsinore, Mo., third.

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freezebrand. A squeeze chute will be needed to hold the cattle, a pair of clippers to shave the brand site, and a spray bottle to spray alcohol onto the brand site, which will help to conduct the coldness of the irons. High-concentration alcohol is essential because a lower concentration of alcohol will decrease the sharpness and visibility of the brand. If you cannot use or find the right alcohol, however, methanol and liquid nitrogen are all acceptable substitutes to brand with. A large plastic cooler will also be needed to hold the irons, as well as a stopwatch to time the process and dry ice to cool the irons. The irons should be copper for best results. Once you have all of these items, you are ready to start branding.

The first step to freeze branding is choosing the time to do it; spring and fall are the best choices because the animal's coat is changing, so the brands will appear quicker. A lot of time will also be needed for this process because a solo brander can only brand eight or nine animals in an hour. Once you have decided the proper time, you can begin actually branding.

The first thing to do is to place the irons face down in the cooler and then pour in the alcohol or other conducting agent in the cooler until it is covering the heads of the brands. Then put in the dry ice and give the irons 20 minutes to cool to approximately -160° F.

In order to prepare the first animal for branding, take out your clippers and shave off all of the hair on the branding site. Now, take out the spray bottle of alcohol and douse the area you want to brand; do this prior to the placement of each brand, this helps the cold of the irons transfer to the hide. Now set your stopwatch to 45 seconds and start it when the iron touches the animal's skin.

Make sure to even the top of the irons with the tail line so the brand appears straight and neat. Slanting the irons can make it appear that the animal's hips are sloping off and possibly decrease the value of the animal. Press firmly against the brand with about 50 lb. of force and lightly rock it back and forth to make sure that the entire face of the brand is touching the skin. Remember, once you take the iron off the animal, let it cool in the dry ice for at least 2 minutes before using that iron again.

After branding, the animal's skin will be frozen and then begin to swell. Within the next few weeks the brand will peel. It should be fully visible with white hair within two to three months.

As you can see, freeze branding is a time commitment, but, more importantly, an investment in your herd. While there may be some ups and downs to the process, all in all, freeze branding has been a huge benefit to the Angus producer.

Finally, in a time where people, for the most part, do not settle their arguments with a six shooter, when transportation has gone far beyond horses and buggy rides, isn't it time for Angus producers to take one more step into the future?

Love Without End

by **Sydnee Gerken**, intermediate A winner

He was raised on a family farm in the 1950s. Throughout his childhood, George Straight worked on a Texas ranch and soon became a successful country-music artist.

She grew up in rural Oklahoma amongst a newer generation. After winning *American*

Idol at the age of 23, Carrie Underwood soon emerged as one of the most popular female country performers today.

CMA Awards, beautiful voices and growing up in rural America are a few ways these stars resemble each other. However, this is where their similarities end and their differences begin. Even after his career took off, George Straight remained in production agriculture, particularly within the cattle industry.

Unfortunately, like many other stars, Carrie Underwood has fallen prey to much of the negative media that surrounds our industry today. She has adopted a vegan diet and supports groups such as PETA, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. She "ain't in Checotah anymore," and has been led to believe that our agricultural practices are inhumane.

This "All-American Girl" is not alone; in fact, there are millions just like her who believe everything the media tells them. They follow the ideas of PETA and similar groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and Mercy for Animals who join together and provide misconceptions about animal agriculture. Together, these three groups and their followers have attacked our industry and the way we produce food. As producers, we should not stand back and let these groups make decisions regarding our industry's future. Instead, we should fight back in the war of misconception and deceit that agriculture faces every day.

The most recent attack occurred right here in our own backyards at two of Oklahoma's largest swine operations. The HSUS produced undercover videos depicting "worst-case" scenarios and released them to the media, convincing the general

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►Winning the intermediate A division of prepared speaking are (from left) **Sydnee Gerken**, Cashion, Okla., first; **Cooper Sadowsky**, Eagleville, Mo., second; and **Heidi Tremaine**, Oconomowoc, Wis., third.



►Winning intermediate B division of prepared speaking are (from left) **Esther McCabe**, Elk City, Kan., first; **William Harsh**, Radnor, Ohio, second; and **Will Pohlman**, Prairie Grove, Ark., third.



►Winning the senior division of prepared speaking are (from left) **Hannah McCabe**, Elk City, Kan., first; **Hannah Wright**, Spring City, Tenn., second; and **Brooke Harward**, Richfield, N.C., third.

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public, once again, that our food-producing practices were inhumane. Common swine production methods such as castration and teeth clipping were shown on a video with negative comments to go along with it.

According to Paul Shapiro, vice president of Farm Animal Protection at HSUS, “sows are virtually immobilized in an abusive gestation crate for 4 months of their lives. This is an industry-wide practice of animal abuse.” He also reported that piglets squealed in pain as they were castrated and tail-docked without pain relief.

What is missing from this video and these allegations? Conveniently, these groups leave out the facts and the truth about swine production. Yes, sows are kept in gestation crates, but this is to protect them and their offspring from injury or even death. In fact, nearly all of our practices are intended to protect the animals, rather than abuse them, as certain groups claim.

It seems very common for the animal rights society to leave agriculturists “down and out” when it comes to producing food. They consistently label us as “factory farmers” and have tried to eliminate chicken cages, farrowing crates and even antibiotics from our food-producing practices. Most of the time their ideas are filled with emotion, rather than facts. In their minds, there is no separation from the beef and swine we raise to increase our food supply to the dogs and cats they raise as pets.

However, we do not have to let these groups come into our industry and tell us how to produce food. The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) uses the Beef Checkoff program to fund Masters of Beef Advocacy. This program equips producers, young and old alike, with information they need to be everyday advocates for the beef industry. The more voices we have now, the larger the fight we will be able to put up to our challengers.

If we were to flip on the television at any time, chances are we would see at least one commercial from an animal rights group undermining common agricultural practices. The Humane Society claims that for just \$9 a day, they will rid the world of animal abuse. However, millions of these dollars every year go toward policy adoption, political campaigns or as retirement plans for their employees. Less than 1% of the funds go toward the abused animals we often see on TV.

Some of their political campaigning has led to Proposition 2 in California, and similar rules in other states. These policies virtually eliminate cages for chickens, farrowing crates for hogs, and veal crates for calves. If legislation of this type were to come to Oklahoma, our industry would be greatly affected, and thousands of Oklahoma agriculturists would be put out of business. That is why it is important that we take a stand against these groups and their careless thinking.

I’m not saying take “Just a Dream” off your iTunes playlist, or cancel your Carrie Underwood concert tickets. But let’s be smart about what we believe in. Let’s come together and protect this industry. Because for agriculture, I have a “Love without end, Amen!”

Modern Day Magic

by *Esther McCabe*,
intermediate division B winner

Lets go back in time, say 100 years or so. My great-grandpa, Ray McCabe, loved to argue; in fact, he was on a community debate team. Of course there wasn’t a lot of entertainment in those days, so many towns would have a debate team and people would turn out to see their local debaters face off with another community. Grandpa Ray passed away in the 1960s, so of course I never knew him, but I am told that he would take either side of just about any subject for the sake of having a good argument, and they say it didn’t get better with age.

It would be interesting if Grandpa Ray were here today when the subject of genomics comes up. You may ask, what is genomics? It is the mapping of a set of genes within an organism. It is something that would have seemed like magic to my grandfather.

However, the rules have changed. The same technology used by forensic laboratories to fight crime is being used to produce food, fiber and fuel for mankind. From genetically altering hybrid seed corn and soybeans to predicting the future performance and carcass qualities of a beef animal on the day they are born, this is not Grandpa Ray’s agriculture anymore. Deoxyribonucleic acid, or more commonly

known as DNA, is beginning a completely new chapter of an agricultural frontier. We now have the ability to use DNA testing to assist in a more profitable and predictable agriculture.

A classic example in beef cattle production of a simple recessive trait that resulted in a serious genetic defect would be the “snorter dwarf” of the 1950s and early 1960s. Calves affected by this devastating defect were extremely small throughout their lives. They were dish-faced and made a “snort” of sorts when they would breathe. These calves had no economic value to the commercial beef producer. Even more serious was the economic hardship that was put on the registered seedstock breeder who knew his purebred genetics were producing dwarfs for his customers. Normally, after researching the results from different genetic lines, the breeder could narrow down to the common animal that was the problem.

However, even though every descendent of the source cow or bull involved was not a carrier of the defect, the entire line had to be eliminated to be sure that there would be no more defective offspring produced. This was a huge blow to a seedstock producer who might have invested many years and untold dollars into a line of cattle that was proven to [include] carriers of the recessive defective gene.

As we fast-forward 50 years to the 21st century, some things do not change. We have more known genetic defects than ever before. However, we can now test for those defects through DNA and select the “clean” animals from the possible carriers. Today, we don’t have to throw away all the positive traits we have worked for when a defect is discovered. In fact, we have now gone far beyond the ability to just find genetic defects.

New-age genomic evaluation results from a panel of DNA markers, commonly referred to as DNA SNPs, which is an acronym for single-nucleotide polymorphisms. Single SNPs do not tell us very much, but having a panel of critically selected SNPs for multiple traits is a completely different story.

The day a calf is born, a small drop of blood or a hair sample sent to a lab can predict a variety of characteristics, which include expected progeny differences, or EPDs, such as weaning weight, average daily gain, residual feed intake and yearling height,

just to name a few. The DNA will also tell us carcass information such as marbling, ribeye area, fat thickness and tenderness. Even though the American Angus Association recognizes multiple labs for defect testing, only Pfizer and Igenity are accepted for genomic profiling.

It almost seems like science fiction to be able to DNA test a baby bull calf and predict so much information about what his future might hold. Will the calf be a great contributor to the beef industry, or should I just plan on putting him in the local locker? Better yet, get the equivalent of a lifetime of production records on a cow the day she is born.

The American Angus Association, the world's largest beef cattle registry, has taken the initiative to also incorporate genomic information into their EPDs. Angus has, by far, the largest database of production records of any beef breed in the world. By incorporating all of the information available, such as individual performance, ultrasound data, carcass harvest information and now DNA, the accuracy level of their non-parent EPDs has never been higher.

What that means in the real world goes like this. Each year, thousands of beef producers purchase bulls for their commercial cow herds. Oftentimes they have spent countless hours studying the information available, looking at the bulls and making their best-educated guess on what bulls will help them to reach their goals.

However, there will always be a certain amount of finger crossing and uncertainties until there are some calves on the ground and maybe even until some of the calves are harvested depending upon the trait in question. If the bulls have been genomically tested, it is like having several calves on the ground. The waiting and uncertainty is cut down dramatically. For example, if the bulls were purchased to breed heifers, the rancher can be much more confident that they will sire low-birth-weight calves that are born easily. Whatever the goal may be, there is an ever-growing panel of traits that add accuracy to the decisions made.

Yes, it sounds like an outer-space novel, but what seemed impossible only a few years ago is reality today. How about the future? High-accuracy EPDs at birth? More traits evaluated? How about cost-effectively

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Extemporaneous speaking winners

The Extemporaneous Public Speaking Contest is designed to develop the ability of contestants to express themselves on a given topic without having prepared a presentation in advance. The American Angus Auxiliary presents a Harvey Rattey bronze sculpture in the name of Pat Grote, former president of the American Angus Auxiliary, to each of the two intermediate division winners. The Auxiliary also presents a Harvey Rattey bronze sculpture to the senior division winner in the name of Richard L. Spader, former American Angus Association executive vice president. Cash awards are presented to the top three winners in each division.

► **Right:** Extemporaneous speaking judges confer before completing the scorecards for contestants.



► Winning the junior A division of extemporaneous speaking are (from left) **Eva Hinrichsen**, Westmoreland, Kan., first; **Franchesca DeVore**, Promise City, Iowa, second; and **Mardee Sadowsky**, Eagleville, Mo., third.



► Winning the junior B division of extemporaneous speaking are (from left) **Destiny Jones**, Dubach, La., first; **Sarah Harris**, Buchanan, Va., second; and **Lane Egger**, Columbus, Neb., third.



► Winning the intermediate A division of extemporaneous speaking are (from left) **Corbin Cowles**, Rockfield, Ky., first and receiving a Harvey Rattey sculpture in the name of the late Pat Grote; **Katie Friederichs**, Walcott, Iowa, second; and **Jeffrey Mitchell**, Zephyrhills, Fla., third.



► Winning the intermediate B division of extemporaneous speaking are (from left) **Es-ther McCabe**, Elk City, Kan., first and receiving a Harvey Rattey sculpture in the name of the late Pat Grote; **Renae Tokach**, Saint Anthony, N.D., second; and **Jackson Wingert**, Ottawa, Kan., third.



► **Left:** Winning the senior division of extemporaneous speaking, pictured with Sheri Spader (left), presenting, are **Tyler Ottensmeier** (center), McLouth, Kan., first; and **Lindsay Upperman**, Chambersburg, Pa., second. Not pictured is **Michael Vajgrt**, Newhall, Iowa, third. Ottensmeier received a Harvey Rattey sculpture in the name of the late Richard L. Spader.

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mass-producing cloned calves that are genetically altered to fill a niche market. Grandpa Ray just wouldn't be able to believe all of the progress that has been made in the technology of agriculture production. He would have just loved to sit down and debate the subject at great length with you. No matter what your stance or opinion is on the value of genomics, he would have let you choose your side first.

Choose Your Side

by *Hannah McCabe, senior division winner*

My grandpa Ray loved to argue. In fact, he was on a community debate team, and his team would debate other teams from around the area. And since there wasn't a whole lot of entertainment back in those days, people would turn out to watch their favorite teams go at it. Grandpa Ray passed away in the 1960s, so I never had the opportunity to meet him. But I am told that he was a staunch Democrat in a Republican community, and even a Republican family. He would take the other side of just about any issue for the sake of a good argument. And they say it didn't get better with age!

Grandpa Ray would have loved to sit down and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of expanding the Angus herd book to other breeds. He would say that the advantages are in the numbers; the American Angus Association has, by far, the largest database of any beef breed in the world. The Association sets the standard in producing meaningful information for the rest of the industry. We have raised the bar for all of the other breed associations to follow in terms of data collected and interpreted back to members.

But let's take a deeper look into the numbers. The Roman L. Hruska Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb., annually develops breed adjustment factors so that EPD values can be compared across breeds. The across-breed EPDs were developed in the late 1980s and often are used by commercial bull buyers using more than one breed of bull.

Without these adjustment factors, EPDs between breeds are meaningless. These numbers are based on how other breeds compare to Angus, and we would have

nothing to fear because Angus complements every breed out there when all performance numbers are considered. Having other breeds involved to create an Angus-derivative program would fall into line with what some extension personnel and industry leaders advocate by using hybrid bulls. The Association would have the advantage of developing the EPDs rather than some other organization.

Another favorable consequence for the Association would obviously be income flow. I would assume there would only be a modest outlay of resources, which would include both personnel and equipment to allow this to happen. However, on a "per-dollar-invested" basis, the profits could be substantial to continue to keep Angus solvent and to allow our processing fees to stay low.

While this whole concept seems a little out of the box for most of us, remember *Certified Angus Beef*[®] is the most wildly successful program in our history, and it was very controversial in the beginning. Without question, any business must change with the times to stay successful. These changes are not always easy, and sometimes there is a lot of pride involved. Tradition can stand in the way of progress.

However, as Grandpa Ray would say, there are always two sides to the story.

First and foremost, he would remind you that the very charter of the breed states that one of the Association's main responsibilities is to maintain the purity of the breed. So without significant bylaw changes we could not put Angus derivatives into our herd book.

Aside from this obvious roadblock, there are a few other issues. The first one that comes to mind is the public perception of Angus. Everywhere we go, we see signs for *Certified Angus Beef* or Angus burgers or Angus roast beef. People totally removed from the agricultural community have heard of Angus. And, to be honest, these consumers would probably never know any different if the Association endorsed derivatives into the herd book.

But what about the hardware store owner in rural Nebraska, the barber in small-town Alabama or the small communities that most of us come from? You know, those folks who are not directly involved, but still have close ties to the ag sector and know enough to form an opinion about Angus accepting other breeds. Maybe even more important

would be the perception of the ranchers who buy Angus bulls. Will they wonder why the breed thought that it was necessary to incorporate other breeds?

As I think about the breeds that I am familiar with that have expanded their books to outside genetics, there was a definite reason for doing so. Most of those reasons were to make their cattle more functional and to change their hide color to black. Angus has a huge gene pool to pull different genetics into volume production if the marketplace goes that direction without needing help from other breeds.

Another concern that could surface would be qualifying cattle for AngusSource[®]. Currently they must be sired by registered-Angus bulls. What about ranchers who purchase derivative bulls, will their offspring qualify for AngusSource? What about the possibility of bringing in more genetic defects? Our breed has just weathered a storm over these genetic issues. Can we afford to add to these from problems that are unknown at the time?

In my mind, the biggest disadvantage of opening the herd book to other breeds would be the "Power of the Paper" that we have now. Angus has made incredible strides in the beef industry since the 1980s when registrations hit their lowest point before turning around. Ranchers from shore to shore, coast to coast and beyond rely on the Angus breed to help them increase their profits. They have confidence in the breed and the registration paper to help them achieve their goals. I wonder how they would react if they have a choice between a registered-Angus bull and a black-hided derivative.

Angus has the most information available and, when coupled with genomic information today, we far surpass the accuracy of any breed out there. This all makes the paper a huge part in the decision process. Would incorporating other breeds into our herd book dilute the importance of a registered-Angus bull?

With all the new technologies and opportunities available today, Grandpa Ray would have loved to debate the advantages, or the disadvantages, of expanding the Angus herd book to outside genetics. And he would have let you choose your side first!