

Kelley Earns Herdsman Honor

Express Ranches herdsman wins top honors at NWSS.

Story & photo by Kasey Miller

Express Ranches in Yukon, Okla., is known for great pedigrees and genetics — and for its success in the showring. Now, Express can add 2012 American Angus Association Herdsman of the Year to its list of accolades. Dan Kelley, Express show barn manager, is a large reason for the ranch's showing success. He makes sure all of the cattle look their best, both at home and at the show.

The Herdsman of the Year award is voted on by exhibitors before the Angus show at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo. All exhibitors get one ballot and turn in their vote at check-in or at the Angus social. The votes are quickly tabulated, and the winner is announced at the Roll of Victory (ROV) bull show.

Shelia Stannard, Association director of activities and events, says Kelley is very deserving of this award.

"He puts a lot of time and effort into the Express showstring so that their cattle are always well presented," she explains. "He also works really hard with the juniors that Express sells to so that their calves always look their best."

Well-traveled

For Kelley, showing cattle is a way of life, one that has taken him all across the country.

The journey started in his hometown east of Dallas, Texas, where he grew up showing Charolais and Herefords, which his family still shows. His parents, Ted and Ethel Kelley, taught him all the things that matter about cattle and life, he says.

Angus cattle, though, were the catalyst to more travel and the start of his own family.

Kelley got into Angus cattle in 1998, when he first worked at Express for Mike Jones in the show barn. He stayed in Oklahoma for a few years until 2000, then moved to Georgia to work in the show barn at Twin Hills.

After about a year, he was offered a job in South Dakota at LaGrand Angus. Kelley stayed at LaGrand for four years, and then took the show barn manager position in Idaho at the Bear Mountain Ranch for a year.

His journey came full circle when he moved back to Oklahoma seven years ago



► Dan Kelley, Yukon, Okla., is awarded the 2012 Herdsman of the Year. He and his wife, Dawn, are two-thirds of the show barn team at Express. Pictured from left are Shelia Stannard, American Angus Association director of activities; Dawn & Dan Kelley; and Brooke Harward, 2012 Miss American Angus.

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—Dan Kelley

when Jarold Callahan offered him the show barn manager position at Express. Kelley said it was a natural progression. In this line of work, you keep moving up till you are where you want to be, and "this is certainly where we want to be," Kelley adds, thanking Callahan and Bob Funk for giving him the opportunity to work with "the best cattle of my career."

He's been very happy

working with Angus cattle.

"In my opinion, Angus is the best breed to raise, to market, to show and to work with in the barn. They are the best cattle, the best association, and the best people," Kelley says.

Family man

Kelley met his wife, Dawn, who was working for him at LaGrand in South Dakota, about nine years ago. They have been married for seven years, and have worked together ever since. Dawn has been supportive of moving each time, and she has been instrumental in every operation where they've worked, Dan says. He and Dawn are two-thirds of the show barn team at Express,

with herdsman Bryan Duke rounding out the other third.

Dan acknowledges all the crew at Express, adding that it is a huge operation and no one person can accept credit for it. "I could not do what I do without the guys at the ET center and the guys on the cow crew doing what they do."

He also credits his wife, saying, "Without her, none of this would be possible."

Dan made sure Dawn came out with him to accept the award just before the grand champion drive in the Angus ROV bull show, in which, as a testament to their hard work, one of their bulls, Dameron First Impression, won grand champion. Dameron First Impression is co-owned with Seldom Rest Farms, Niles, Mich.; Dameron Angus Farms, Lexington, Ill.; and Roye Stephens, Breckenridge, Texas.

Dan and Dawn have two children, who are just old enough to start showing themselves. Kylee, 7, and Brigham, 5, help their parents in the barn and are gaining a love of showing cattle themselves. Dan says Kylee showed a miniature Hereford this year at Louisville, Ky. With hard-working and successful parents like Dan and Dawn, the Kelley kids are sure to have a bright show career.