

# The Journey Home

Successful seedstock producer tells what it's like to come back home and take over the family ranch.

Story & photos by **Nicole Lane**, editorial intern

**R**iding through pastures in the bumpy passenger seat of a pickup truck, Brandon New discovered a passion for cattle. As a boy, his favorite day of the week was “cow-checking Saturday” with his dad. As a child, the doughnuts and orange juice were the highlight of the day. Looking back now, he says, it was the time with his father he valued most and where he learned about cattle.

Today, 12 years after graduating college and returning to grow and manage the family ranch, he looks back at the journey and hard work it took to get the herd to its current status. Manager and part owner of New Haven Angus, Brandon now is the decision maker for his family's 240-head Angus seedstock herd near Leavenworth, Kan.

## Building a dream

Many Angus youth dream of coming home and taking over the family ranch. However, it isn't an easy feat, one of the many reasons there is a shortage of young farmers and ranchers today. For Brandon, it was a goal he set at a very young age.

“Brandon wanted to be on the farm and raise cattle from Day 1, and he's never wavered from what he wanted to do,” says his mother, Loris New.

Angus producers since 1954, Bill and Loris New always had a cattle herd, but they wanted to build an operation to which their son Brandon could come back. So, as he prepared to leave for college at Kansas State University (K-State), they began to ramp up their numbers.

“Brandon always planned on coming back and raising cattle,” Bill said. “That was his



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primary interest and goal in life, so expanding our herd was just a natural thing to do.”

Bill would say Brandon is “living his dream.” A cattleman at heart, Bill always held a job off the ranch in addition to raising the Business Breed. The couple wanted Brandon to be able to do what he loved full-time.

“We felt he had to have a herd that was large enough that he could make a living,” says Loris. So the family expanded, increasing the size of the herd to one that would require a full-time manager. In Brandon's first year at K-State, the family began holding an annual bull sale, something Brandon would manage in the years to come.

## Transition and progress

While some college students struggle to apply homework assignments to real life, Brandon found immediate value. As a student at K-State, one of his beef production classes required him to compile a detailed paper outlining his ideal herd, including what breed he would use, the technologies he would rely on, marketing strategies and even a grazing plan. Naturally, Brandon

based it off the herd he had at home. The more than 20-page paper helped him put into perspective his goals for the future and create a vision for the type of cattle he wanted to raise.

Upon returning to the farm, the changes didn't happen overnight. He says it took time and experimenting to get everything worked out.

“Thankfully I had parents and family that were very supportive of my decision and have been behind me 100%,” Brandon says. “They let me make my own mistakes and learn from them so we can grow our operation and be successful.”

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“You think you know everything you are going to do,” Brandon says. “It can be overwhelming at times to determine your direction ... how you want to breed cattle, where you want to go and how you want to market those cattle.”

To help achieve his production goals, Brandon uses breeding technologies like



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artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET).

“It’s a way for us to make more of those better cows in a quicker amount of time and get the influence from those cows a little more widespread in our herd,” he says.

While his ET calves are targeted toward producing high-quality production females, when an ET bull calf is born, it’s an added bonus. He says his ET bull calves normally rise to the top of the family’s sale each year.

While his dad started the family herd with his first Angus cow in 1954, family tradition isn’t the only reason Brandon chose to continue using and producing Angus cattle.

“It’s such a versatile breed that you can do a lot of things with,” says Brandon. “You can make carcass cattle, maternal cattle, performance cattle and a lot of times you can do it over generations to make one animal to do all of those things. I don’t know another breed that offers all of those in one package.”

Growing up raising and showing Angus cattle, Brandon felt that his experience, coupled with the breed’s reputation, would help him be successful as a full-time cattleman.

“There’s an inherent demand for Angus cattle,” he says. “We’ve got great people at the [American Angus] Association that help us and great people within the breed to work with.”

### Helpful hints

For those preparing to come back to the



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ranch, Brandon advises learning as much as possible while away from the home herd.

“Keep your options open,” Brandon recommends. “Broaden your horizons, see how someone else does things, get some experience and create your network. Don’t do things because that is the way you have

always done them; put some thought into why you are doing it.”

He says the transition and progress doesn’t happen instantly, but sticking to his goals and vision has helped him be successful in raising quality Angus seedstock.

“You have to have your criteria for your management and your resources, and stick to those criteria and don’t sway from them,” he says. “We let our criteria make the cuts and then develop them as we see fit for our management and resources.”

At the end of the day, Brandon is happy to be exactly where he is.

“It’s an inherent love that I have for the land and the cattle and the ability to be my own boss,” Brandon says. “It’s not an easy life, but it’s a life that I love.”

Passing the tradition of raising cattle successfully on to the next generation may be a challenging feat, but the New family says it is well worth it.

“I’ve observed lots of farm families over the years that when the family leaves, their operation disintegrates,” Bill says. “Brandon shares a love of cattle with us, and this is something we have spent a lifetime building. It’s been a fun experience to see how he has been able to take that and make more progress in a dozen years than we were able to do in a lifetime.”

