

# Got to be Good for Both Parties

Illinois producer attributes marketing success to relationships.

Story & photos by  
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As the long-time owner of a fertilizer business in central Illinois, Dave Cox knows great service is what keeps his farmer customers coming back. That same philosophy carries into his Angus herd. As owner of Pasture View Angus, with farms in Dunlap, Ill., and Trivoli, Ill., Cox says relationships built on trust and satisfaction are the keys to their marketing success.

“Treat people the way you want to be treated, sell a high-quality product, and stand behind what you sell. Integrity is everything,” says Cox, who owns the farm with wife Dawn. Grant Bedel is the farm’s manager and assists with marketing. “People have lots of choices out there. We want them to not only choose us, but to be repeat customers. We want to be their breeder of choice.”

Cox grew up on a small farm with commercial cows near Dunlap. He was passionate about the cattle from an early age. He bought his first farm in 1992, along with 12 cows and a bull from the late Jim Maher of Princeville, Ill. Maher financed the cow purchase for him.

Today, Dawn and Dave have 80 acres where they manage females. They also raise corn, soybeans and hay. They bought another 100 acres with buildings near Trivoli a few years ago. Improvements made to the farm have transitioned it into the main cattle location and Bedel’s residence.

Pasture View Angus now consists of about 220 cows and 60 bred replacement heifers. They market about 60 bulls per year and sold 60 females last year in their first-ever production sale.

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► **Above:** “My vision is to have the best-looking herd with good pedigrees and adequate EPDs,” says Dave Cox.

► **Below:** Pasture View Angus tested the waters with a female production sale for the first time in the fall of 2013. While the sale went well, Cox says it won’t become an annual event so they can keep building their cow families.



industry is headed with all of this data and technology, but we are learning as we go,” says Cox. “We study EPDs and \$Values (indexes) and will stay within moderation.”

Bedel adds that they are most interested in birth weight, weaning weight and yearling weight. He and herdsman Scott Reader synchronize females in groups and breed everything twice by artificial insemination (AI). Bedel reports an 85%-90% conception rate before they turn out their cleanup bull.

“We are phenotype freaks,” adds Cox. “We want good fronts and big butts.”

## Find bull sale strategies that work

Their breeding goals have paid off so far. Other Angus breeders have taken note of Pasture View’s quality. One of the first, the late Ken Reeser from LeRoy, Ill., began buying bulls from Cox several years ago to group with other bulls for an annual sale in Nebraska.

Reeser even had a structure built on Williams & Williams Ranch in Ainsworth, Neb. After Ken Reeser passed away in 2006, Cox called Brian Williams to let him know some of the bulls Reeser brought to Nebraska

## Consider more marketing tactics

Cox and Bedel have several other marketing tactics that are proving successful in raising awareness of Pasture View Angus and building relationships with customers:

- ▶ **Build brand awareness.** Cox and Bedel have taken bulls to Denver the last three years to promote their bull sale. Bedel says participation in the event and networking has been beneficial in keeping their brand out there, despite the financial outlay for the event.
- ▶ **Check out the competition.** Bedel shows calves at World Beef Expo in Wisconsin each year. The show allows them to see how their calf crop stacks up against others.
- ▶ **Put best foot forward.** Marketing calm cattle is a major selling

point. Cox and Bedel do not hesitate to cull on disposition and eliminate high-headed bulls from the mix.

- ▶ **Analyze sale results.** Cox has learned producers who come to their bull sales and buy the highest-quality bulls come back and buy the same caliber of bulls every year.
- ▶ **Get the right expertise.** Cox says producers should hire people to get every job done right, whatever that job is, including marketing.
- ▶ **Don't dismiss the Internet.** Pasture View Angus used *LiveAuctions.TV* when conducting their female sale. They are always looking for more ways to use their website as a marketing tool.

were coming from Pasture View. Williams was looking for an opportunity to continue sourcing bulls from Illinois and offered that opportunity to Cox.

"We started four years ago taking bulls out in December. Brian feeds them until we sell them in March," says Cox, adding that the first year, Pasture View sold 26 bulls averaging \$2,650 per head. The second year, they sold 35 bulls averaging \$3,500 per head.

"The third year, which was during the drought out there, we were fortunate to sell 45 or 50 bulls for an average \$3,200. There were two dispersals at the same time with 2,000 head because there was not enough feed to go around. We felt that was a solid sale," he continues. "This year, we sold 57 bulls for a \$4,600 average and also sold a couple after the sale."

Cox stands behind every sale 100%. For example, if a bull breaks a leg or has some other issue develop, he may offer sale credit or possibly return the money or offer a replacement bull. He takes a handful of top-quality replacement bulls to Nebraska each year just in case.

"At first, some people in Nebraska were a little standoffish that Illinois producers were coming into their area to sell bulls," says Bedel. "Now we have competing sale barns bringing in potential customers and other Angus breeders coming in to see what we have to sell."

Cox says talking with all prospective buyers at the sale is important to him, whether they buy anything or not. He always follows up the sale by sending a gift to those who buy bulls and staying in contact with buyers

to answer questions or address concerns.

"Any sale has got to be good for both parties," he says. "We have past customers come back and tell us how our bulls perform. We had one small rancher who bought one of our bulls come back tickled that his calves were 100 pounds (lb.) heavier and sold for more. That was a huge compliment."

Bedel adds that part of the marketing process of selling bulls in Nebraska is educating buyers. They have learned heavier-condition bulls don't work in the region.

"They run on a lot of acres. We don't want to sell any bulls that are going to crash," he says. "We also talk about making sure they get young bulls fed and how young bulls work best. That has been part of getting our name established and getting our repeat-customer base established."

Cox plans to continue to market bulls in Nebraska and looks to expand the customer base.

"Commercial producers there are not usually looking for just one bull. They buy multiple bulls," he says. "I want to be a herd-sire guy for other registered breeders, too."

▶ **Below:** Grant Bedel (right) is the farm's manager and assists Cox (left) with marketing.



This is the first year we have sold herd sires to purebred breeders, and that is validation we are doing the right thing."

## Explore female sale opportunities

Pasture View Angus tested the waters with a female production sale for the first time in the fall of 2013. The sale averaged about \$6,500 per head. Cox and Bedel were hoping for \$3,500-4,000.

"We were thrilled with the results. We had 10 states represented and buyers from eight," says Cox. "We will have another sale but probably not every year. The challenge is we want to keep some good females to better our herd, but with a sale, those are also the top females you sell."

Cox was pleased that two heifers sold were from his own herd sire and believes the bull delivered show-quality heifers. To reward juniors for their accomplishments, Pasture View offers cash or credit on future purchases to juniors who placed in certain shows. Pasture View Rewards range from \$100 for county Angus champions to \$3,000 for grand champion at state fair junior shows and the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), with many other rewards in between.

"We are huge on our cow families. We want to see Pasture View from start to finish throughout the pedigree. That is our future direction," says Cox.

They are just getting into the embryo business. Cox and Bedel work with a local Angus producer who has allowed them to use his whole herd as recipients.

"We are there to help him with his needs, too," says Cox. "We are fortunate another local Angus producer lets us rent his pasture. It is great that local producers support our business. We are very grateful for that."



**Editor's Note:** A former National Junior Angus Board member, Barb Baylor Anderson is a freelancer from Edwardsville, Ill.