

Photo Contest Tips

NJAS Photo Contest judges share their formula for a great photo.

by **Raney Lovorn**, editorial intern

A passion for Angus cattle shows through the level of talent displayed in the quality and quantity of entries in the 2015 National Junior Angus Association (NJAA)/*Angus Journal* Photo Contest. Young agricultural photographers face many challenges when they get behind the lens, from uncooperative cattle to fading light and harsh weather conditions. Taking the perfect shot can take a good eye for detail, practice and a seemingly endless amount of patience. For those looking to increase their skill level, the *Angus Journal* staff has composed a list of photo tips. (All examples have been taken from the NJAA/*Angus Journal* Photo Contest.)

1

Photograph Angus cattle

Although it might seem obvious, picturing exclusively Angus cattle is incredibly important when choosing your photo submissions. Photos with only Angus are more likely to be selected for use in the *Angus Journal*, and are a better reflection of our breed.



2

Find a focal point

Especially in the landscape category it is important to establish a point of interest in the photo; a barren landscape can leave your eye wandering. Knowing your focal point can also help in category selection; for example, if your focal point is an Angus cow, bull or calf, the image should be entered in the Angus Cattle category.



3

Lighting

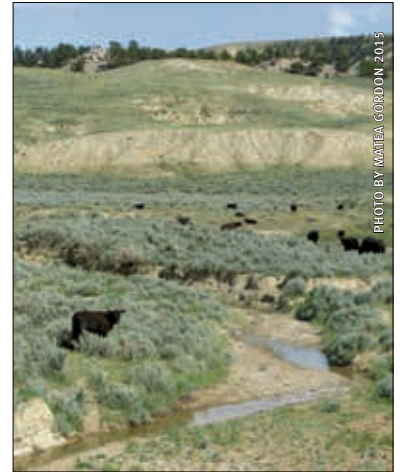
For photographers the time two hours before sunset is known as the golden hour because it provides optimal golden-toned light. Fortunately for cattle producers, this time frequently coincides with feeding. For a great photo opportunity, ride along during evening feedings to capture the moment. Unless a photo is a definite silhouette, the focal point should have sufficient lighting.



4

Careful cropping

Although photographing a close-up of an animal's nose or eye might seem artistic, it often is overdone or out of focus. Make sure that your subject is the focus of the photo and that you avoid cutting off the top or bottom of the subject. Take a few vertical shots because they are more likely to be selected as possible *Angus Journal* covers. Follow the rules for mounting your photos to help your photo stand out as a winner.



5

Turn off date feature

The date feature on cameras can be very useful when going through old photographs and trying to determine when they were taken. In a contest setting, however, it is very distracting and detracts from the quality of the image. Just switch it off before taking contest photos and turn it back on for the family reunion. If you end up leaving the date feature on and take a great photo, crop the date out of the photo when you process the print for mounting.

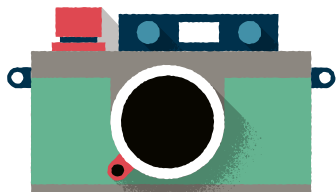


6**6. Keep it sharp**

The clearest photos are the best photos. Hold your camera steady and allow the camera time to focus in on your subject before taking the shot. A photo with a clear, sharp image is ideal for use in the *Angus Journal* and as a contest winner. All the overall winner photos are sharp and in focus. Take some time to steady your hand and focus the camera. Simple ways to steady your camera are to lean on something solid and hold your breath when you snap the photo. Just as it is good form in basketball to follow through with the shot, good photography form means following through on the photo; don't move until the camera completes its action. Less movement of the camera with an appropriate shutter speed will create a well-focused image.

**7****7. Camera selection**

A high-quality digital point-and-shoot or digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera is not required for the contest, but will give you much higher-quality images than a cell phone. The focus and clarity are much better with a digital camera. The images will be larger and look less pixelated when printed. Also, the likelihood of being used in the *Angus Journal* goes up when your images are high-resolution.

**8****8. Photo content**

Because photos are a reflection of our breed, it is important to be aware that the content of the photo is a good representation. Using photos that show cattle standing in water, with nose rings or being fire branded could raise concerns with activists. To protect our breed and present the best image possible, be aware of the positive and negative connotations your photo might have. People sleeping are an easy target at shows, but try to get more action and interest in your photos.

**9****9. Don't alter photos**

Altering your images using Integra, Photoshop, Instagram or any other photo-editing software is against contest rules. If your photo is edited, especially if it is oversaturated with color or filtered, it will be very obvious to the photo contest judges. Please only submit original images. Cropping is allowed, but deliberately changing elements of the photo is not.

10**10. Have fun!**

The photo contest is a great way to spend time with your family and your cattle. Don't be afraid to have fun and take your camera on adventures with you around your farm or ranch. Staged photos look staged. Try to get spur-of-the-moment shots when you can. Take that camera with you. The photo contest is meant to be a fun way to celebrate Angus cattle.

**Once you have selected the image you want to submit:**

Decide if it looks good full frame or if would look better cropped. While cropping is allowed, the photo must still be of the proper dimensions for contest entry. For the sharpest and best color reproduction, print on glossy photo paper.

Make sure the photo is neatly trimmed and select a mat board large enough to have a couple of inches all the way around the photo.

Carefully mount the photo onto the mat using an adhesive. Make sure the adhesive is covering the entire back of the photo. Be mindful to keep the front of the photo free of glue. Mounted

photos received this year had wrinkles and bubbles. No staples, please.

Next, package your photo so it will not be damaged in the shipping process. Make sure to include the digital file. Please double-check the CD to make sure the file is there.

Before the contest deadline, double-check the package contents and postage, and place your entry in the mail. Contest deadlines change year to year to allow enough time for judging prior to the National Junior Angus Show, so watch the *Angus Journal* for next year's deadline.