



Paired for Performance

Angus producers share their experiences and advice for putting on a partnership sale.

by *Bridget Beran*, editorial intern

For many family farms, an annual sale is a focal point of the operation. However, putting on a sale is no easy feat. Marketing, setup, and supplying enough cattle can add up to an intimidating amount of time, money and work. The solution for some Angus breeders is to cooperate with one of their fellow breeders to host a dual-sale to ease the burden for each operation.

“You can draw more people to your sale with two farms on the [sale book],” Steve Knoll, 2 Bar Angus, Hereford, Texas, says. “You have more salesmen working toward one sale. Instead of just one ranch trying to reach past and potential buyers, you have double the manpower going to promote the sale.”

Knoll has hosted a cattle sale with Jimmy Goode of Goode Angus, Pampa, Texas, since 2007. Between the two of them, they are able to put forth an offering of around 100 females, with a few bulls added into the mix in recent years.

About 15 years ago, Knoll and Goode met at another producer’s cow sale and decided to join together to buy a donor cow that they both had their eye on. After several years of buying donor cows together, a sale partnership seemed like the next logical step.

“We talked about it for several years before we felt like we could put up enough animals to do it right,” Knoll says. “We knew if we were going

to do this, we needed to be able to commit to having a sale every year successfully. Once

you start, you need to keep having sales and keep the quality of the cattle consistent.”

Goode says their camaraderie and similar taste in cattle are things that have helped them to work together successfully over the years.

“We didn’t even know each other for 20 minutes before we trusted each other to go in on that first cow,” Goode says. “When we compared our [sale books] that day, we had almost identical lists on the type of cows we were looking at. When it comes to partnerships, I think the first thing you need to have is a mutual goal of where you think you’re going to be heading, from a cow and a production standpoint.”

Though both of their herds were too small to sustain a sale on their own, they were able to work together to sustain a successful sale. Goode laughs and says that a good partnership works very much like a good marriage, with consistent communication at the heart of its success.

“We’ve never had any big issues, partially because we utilize a sale manager to help mediate those variety of issues. If you work with someone for very long, of course,

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHITE RIDGE ANGUS

sometimes you'll disagree, but it's important to talk things out and stay in touch with each other," Goode says.

Knoll echoes that, saying that good partners aren't focused on just what's good for themselves, but what's good for the sale as a whole. He also cites the fact that they are both producing similar cattle as a major bonus in the growth of their sale.

Working together

Some partnerships predate adulthood years and for Benfield Angus, Deerfield, Va., and White Ridge Angus, Somerville, Va., an old friendship grew into a perfect partnership. Bobby Grove and Don Benner both grew up on beef cattle farms and became friends through 4-H. They graduated from high school and attended Virginia Tech together, participating on the national champion beef judging team in 1978 — Benner as the high individual and Grove as the second. They parted ways for graduate school, Benner going to Michigan State University and Grove heading to Pennsylvania State University. After separate careers, Benner and Grove focused their attention on their Angus herds in the early 1990s.

Grove says that while White Ridge Angus and Benfield were growing and successfully participating in multiple bull tests in the area, they found themselves stuck at a problematic size. With too many to only market through

test sales, but not enough cattle for their own sale, he and Benner pooled their resources in the spring of 1997 to put on their first partnership sale.

"We've been doing this together for 20 years, and I think it's worked pretty well," Benner says. "We've been on the same page and realistic about what we're trying to do. I think growing up together helped a lot. We work together well and have similar methods of getting work done."

Grove says that when working in a partnership, even one that's based in a longtime friendship like theirs, it's important to know when to compromise with your partner.

"It takes a lot of work and dedication to successfully have an annual sale like this," Grove says. "It's something that you need to go into with your eyes wide open and have realistic expectations."

Strength in similarities

In Oklahoma, similar cattle is also a

Tips for a successful sale

"Be willing to be flexible, open-minded and creative. Don't come into a partnership with any hard and fast ideas," Steve Knoll says.

"You need to make sure that you have an understanding of each other. Try to err on the side of helping your partner, rather than being greedy. Go out of your way to not take advantage of the partnership," says Jimmy Goode.

"Lay the groundwork out prior to planning. Give everything more time than you think it will take to get everything done," Jeff Penz says.

"If it's your first year, you're going to have to have a pretty good budget for advertising just to make a go of it. There's a lot of expenses you don't see until you're in it," Kelly Albrecht says.

"You have to keep your long-term goals in mind and make sure those line up between the partners. Be looking toward similar goals and customers," Don Benner says.

driving force behind the partnership of Albrecht Ranch Angus, Wapanucka, Okla., and Penz Angus, Durant, Okla. Kelly Albrecht and Jeff Penz also started their partnership by buying cattle together. When they were considering starting a sale, working together was the right fit. Their cattle are fed together for the six months preceding the sale to help with the consistency of the sale.

"Jeff and I are partners on a lot of cattle, so it makes the sale pretty uniform," Albrecht says. "In general, we're using the same genetics, and I think that helps more than anything. This partnership has worked out well for us, but it would be hard if you weren't using the same type of cattle and had different goals. You need someone that is a good friend that you can trust when you start having a sale together because there are a lot of things that can go wrong."

Division of labor can be a tricky decision process, especially in the Albrecht and Penz case, where the cattle are managed together after fall weaning. Penz says they talk it out and agree on who will be responsible for which tasks and balance it out.

For Goode and Knoll, whose sale takes place 10 miles from Knoll but 110 miles from Goode, the balancing act gets more complex.

"I basically just move to Hereford for five days prior to the sale to help," Goode explains. "He takes care of more of the physical set-up part, and I reimburse him for those situations. My wife does the books for the sale. It's all about finding the balance that works for you both."

When it comes to making phone calls and marketing, that's a dual project. However, having two sets of hands and ears on deck is ideal for that situation.

All six producers say working as a team to raise awareness for their sale is one of the biggest benefits to partnering on a sale.

Knoll quotes, "A chorus makes a lot more noise than a solo."



Editor's Note: Bridget Beran was the summer 2016 editorial intern for Angus Media.