

Noah Angus Ranch

Raising quality, repeatable Angus seedstock is the goal for this father-son team.

Story & photos by Mathew Elliott



Randy Noah and his son, Nathan, face many variables in their registered Angus seedstock operation near Cambridge, Idaho. Last year alone, the snow accumulation was over the windows of the house that Randy helped build, using rocks from the mountain on which their feedlot is currently situated.

This year, Randy says, they are “blessed with a great water supply,” but there are times when the stream runs a little lower and a little slower. Along with other livestock producers, the father-son team is keeping an eye on higher input costs.

Still, Randy harbors no hard feelings against anyone in the agricultural industry for the price of corn or other inputs. These variables serve only to strengthen his resolve to focus on Noah Angus Ranch’s mission: To be a resource to cattlemen with repeatable Angus seedstock.

Repeatable Angus

In fact, if there was just one word associated with their ranch, Randy hopes it would be *repeatable*. Whether evaluating genotypic or phenotypic traits, to make it at Noah Angus Ranch, the cows and bulls have to work.

“They may not be the prettiest or flashiest Angus cattle out there, but they will have a

good disposition, quality teats and udders that make a quality, profitable replacement female,” Randy says. “Repeatable is what we need here. What we need to make a living is repeatable, quality animals.”

Randy is proud to say Noah Angus Ranch is now a fourth-generation family-owned operation. The operation started in 1955 when Randy’s parents, Bill and Zola — who

► On a steep, rocky feedlot near Cambridge, Idaho, Nathan Noah follows a bull on the way to be sold.



are both still actively involved with the operation — bought 10 registered Angus heifers for \$200 per head in The Dalles, Ore. In 1971, Bill, Zola and Randy moved their 69 females and a bull from The Dalles to Cambridge, the ranch’s current location. Noah Angus moved from a two-generation operation to a three-generation operation when Nathan returned to the ranch after working in the oil fields in Alaska for several years after college.

This allowed the ranch to get to its current size, with 190 cows and, depending on the year, around 90 heifers. Along with the move in 1971, Bill and Randy began to incorporate artificial insemination (AI) into their operation.

Randy continues to see the benefits of AI and uses it on nearly all of his females. While using mainly semen collected from their herd, Randy still recognizes the importance of incorporating some of the diversity of the Angus breed into their herd.

One-on-one marketing

Along with keeping up with the diversity, Noah Angus Ranch continues to find new ways to sell their cattle through private treaty. Nathan says the Internet and creating a web site, which his wife, Melissa, maintains, has

► **Above:** Randy Noah (left) and son Nathan (right) value repeatable genetics and leave the extremes to the environment.

►“If they are structurally correct enough to make it in this feedlot, they can make it anywhere,” Nathan Noah says.



been a big help in the private-treaty business.

When first moving to Cambridge, Bill and Randy began selling some of their bulls in local sales, but then chose to move to private treaty. Randy enjoys the personal aspects of private sale.

“It’s one human to the next,” Randy says. “We try to fine-tune things for our customers, but we try to stay near the middle for our females.”

Randy also says he enjoys having customers visit the ranch.

“When potential customers come to look at our cattle,” he explains, “we can invite them in, have a cup of coffee and talk about what they need for their operation. With big sales you cannot do that. This is what works for us.”

Working cattle

All of the cattle are expected to “work” at Noah Angus Ranch, too, and none of them are given any special treatment. “We have fundamental cattle here; we don’t get too carried away with any one trait,” Nathan says. “We don’t have any showstring here; all of our cattle have to work for us and our customers.”

Calves are weaned at 6-7 months of age and put into the feedlot that winds up the side of one of the many mountains on the ranch. After weaning, the females are “turned back out to make a living,” where they will get ready to be bred again.

“We do our own thing here at our feedlot,” Randy says. “What is valuable to us is the genetics to make a moderate-sized, long female. We always like to think about the ‘package under the tree,’” he adds, referring to the next calf crop.

Both Randy and Nathan agree it can be a slow process to get their ideal female,

but both are extremely thankful for the information and resources available, including the American Angus Association’s expected progeny difference (EPD) database and sire evaluations.

They strive to create the ideal female, Randy says. “The most important trait in our bulls is the females behind them. If you have good females, they will be able to produce high-quality bulls.”

It’s these quality females Randy and Nathan believe keep the private-treaty customers coming back.

“For quality cattle, people will drive a long ways,” Randy says. “For mediocre cattle, they will not walk across the street.”

Another factor Randy believes is important is that females are summered on

native grass, similar to what most commercial operations will put them through.

“Our females are unpampered, hardworking and honest,” Randy says. “Our bulls will sire these consistency traits. They are fed on our steep, rocky feedlot, and are fed a high-roughage, low-grain diet.”

Also focusing on structural correctness with the “steep, rocky feedlot,” Nathan says, “if they are structurally correct enough to make it in this feedlot, they can make it anywhere.”

Noah Angus works with four cooperators and has buyers that will purchase their cattle and bring them back to the feedlot to feed them.

Randy credits Larry Leonhardt of Shoshone Angus with teaching him about the ideal female for the Idaho mountains. “I learned a lot from Larry,” he says. “He taught me the basics and that extremes will eliminate themselves in nature. Uniform, average cattle will do more for you than having extremes.”

While bull sales have been tough this year, Randy and Nathan both say they are doing well in the replacement female market.

Another factor this year is the higher cost of inputs that many producers across the country are facing.

“While the higher feed and input costs are a problem,” Randy says, “I don’t feel sorry for our ranch. We are all in agriculture, and we are all in this together.”

It’s with this positive attitude Randy looks at his grandson and sees the future of raising repeatable seedstock at Noah Angus Ranch.



►Everyone pitches in at Noah Angus Ranch as (back row, from left) Nathan, Bill, Randy, (front, from left) Melissa with Russell and Zola Noah all do their part around the ranch.