

Touring the Heartland

National Angus Conference & Tour features Illinois herds, industry.

Story & photos by **Mathew Elliott**

The six buses and the long line of cars behind looked like a scene from the football movie and TV show *Friday Night Lights* as they rolled by the cornfields and ranches of Illinois. The “Heartland Homecoming” took Angus enthusiasts from throughout the country around the host state of Illinois during the 2007 National Angus Conference & Tour Aug. 28-31.

The tour began Wednesday evening with a stop at Weaver Angus. Thursday’s tours featured Keystone Steel and Wire, Caterpillar Inc., Kickapoo Creek Winery, the Woodford County Fairgrounds, and Werner Angus. Dameron Angus Farm, Prairie View Farm and Sauk Valley Angus were all part of Friday’s featured stops and wrapped up the “Heartland Homecoming.”

Online coverage of the conference and tour is available at www.nationalangusconference.com.



Touring the Heartland — Day 1



► Above: Catalogs were provided to assist participants as they looked through the cattle.

► Left: Jerry Weaver welcomes the NAC&T to Weaver Angus Ranch in Peoria, Ill.



► Along with the cattle on display, Weaver Angus also showcased its classic buggy and car collections.



► The Weaver Angus barn.



► Above: This female looks on at the large groups of tour participants.



► Making new friends and spending time with old ones is an important part of the NAC&T.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 96

Touring the Heartland — Day 2 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 95



►Left Conference attendees get back on the bus after touring the Caterpillar facilities.

►Below: A Caterpillar bulldozer sits outside the plant.



►After touring the Caterpillar facilities, participants were given a CAT hat.



►Above and right: At Keystone Steel and Wire Mill in Peoria, Ill., participants got to see how fence material is produced and the large quantities that go through.





WINERY PHOTOS BY BARB BAYLOR ANDERSON

► **Above:** Grapes hang on the vine at Kickapoo Creek Winery.

► **Right:** Bottles of wine along with some awards are on display at the Kickapoo Creek Winery near Edwards, Ill.

► **Far Right:** Tour participants were given an explanation of the wine-making process.



► **After** touring the facilities, participants tasted some of the wines.



PHOTOS BY BARB BAYLOR ANDERSON



► **Above:** Participants at the Woodford County fairgrounds visit with tour goers.

► **Left:** Along with their cattle, the Central Illinois Angus Ass'n had several other displays set up for tour participants to view.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 98

Touring the Heartland — Day 2 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 97



► **Above:** Attendees take a break from touring to eat lunch at the Woodford County fairgrounds near Eureka, Ill.



► **Right:** The Central Illinois Angus Ass'n had a historical display set up.



► **Above:** While at the fairgrounds, CAT provided several skid steer loaders for participants to try out.



► **Left:** The tour stop at the fairgrounds gave many producers an opportunity to display their cattle.



► **Right:** This trailer displayed many antique tools.



►Bill Werner of Werner Angus near Cordova, Ill., introduces everyone at Werner Angus.



►Above and left: Tour participants saw many different groups of cattle on display at Werner Angus.



►Below: Werner Angus uses an intensive artificial insemination and embryo transfer program to continue to improve its herd.



►Above: A cartoonist draws a caricature of a younger tour participant.

►Right: Now you see it, and now you don't. A magician makes three pieces of rope become two.

►Below: A racecar simulator was provided for entertainment.



►Above: Pedigrees with complete expected progeny difference listings were provided for the participants to look at along with the cattle.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 100



►Above: Tour goers view the cattle on display at Dameron Angus Farm.



►From left, Board Member John Schurr, Gary Dameron, Board President Jot Hartley and Kay Schurr take time from their tour to smile at the camera.

►Right: These females lined up nicely for tour participants.



►Below: After some timely rains, most of Illinois looked very healthy and green.



►Left: Gary Dameron welcomes the tour to Dameron Angus Farm near Lexington, Ill.

►Below: Certified Angus Beef Corporate Chef Scott Popovic shows the crowd how their breakfast was prepared.



►Left: Flat-iron steaks are on the grill to be used for breakfast.

►Right: Participants eagerly get shells, steak and eggs, and fruit for breakfast.





►Angus enthusiasts were greeted by the state of Illinois with great weather to view cattle.



►Above: Cornfields, such as this one in the background, were a prevalent sight throughout Illinois.

►Left: Alan Miller welcomes the tour to Prairie View Farms (PVF) near Gridley, Ill.

►Below: At the “PVF Diner on Route 66” tour participants were encouraged to show where they came from.



►Tour participants take a break from viewing cattle to eat lunch in the PVF Diner.



►Left: American Angus Board Members (from left) Richard Tokach, Al DeClerk and Jot Hartley enjoy the tour.

►Right: Visitors to PVF discuss cattle on display.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 102



►Above and below: Tour participants look through the cattle at the final stop on the NAC&T — Sauk Valley Farms near Rock Falls, Ill.



►Above: This cowboy singer/songwriter entertains guests as they eat dinner.

►Below: A raffle winner gladly accepts her new painting.



►Above: Gary Sandrock introduces family and staff at Sauk Valley Angus.

►Left: Jay King thanks everyone for coming and proudly welcomes everyone to Sauk Valley Farms.

►Right: After viewing the cattle, this group takes a little time to tell some stories.



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