

BLI Q&A

Young Angus leaders give tips on starting out successfully.

by Kasey Brown, associate editor

The Beef Leaders Institute (BLI) attendees are some of the best and brightest young cattlemen in the Angus industry. Two BLI alumni share tips on how they got started, how to overcome obstacles, and how to optimize resources.

Neal Haverkamp

Operation: Nemaha Valley Cattle Co.

Location: Nemaha, Kan.

BLI year attended: 2008



What is your background on the ranch?

I grew up on an operation that focused more on row crops and hogs, but also had a commercial cow herd, so I am a first-generation Angus breeder. I decided to purchase six registered-Angus bred heifers in 1993 at the age of 22. I had already owned a small commercial cow herd for eight years.

Recently, my wife, Marya, and I sold out of the partnership we were in with my brothers and now operate as Nemaha Valley Cattle Co. instead of Nemaha Valley Angus. We have 200 registered-Angus and 220 commercial-Angus cows, with 300 spring calvers and 120 fall calvers. We market about 60 bulls a year by private treaty and sell commercial-Angus females to our seedstock customers. We market commercial calves as feeders or on a grid if we feed them out.

What was the biggest challenge to starting your herd?

The biggest challenge in starting a registered herd was building a reputation and just getting people to give our bulls a shot. After having those early struggles in building a reputation herd, we do

everything possible to protect that reputation. We cull bulls and females deep and make sure we don't pamper them. They have to work for our customers, or they will not be back.

What was the biggest asset or best resource in starting out?

The biggest asset we had starting out was the Angus database. The size of the database and the accuracy of the expected progeny differences (EPDs) allowed us to move our herd in the right direction.

What has made you successful?

I believe focusing on the needs and wants of both our customers and the end consumer has helped us become successful. I believe if you don't build demand for your product, then you won't be able to stay in business.

What is the current biggest obstacle to success?

With the current price levels for all classes of cattle, it seems hard to believe there are many obstacles to success, but I am worried our shrinking industry and the shrinking land base available for beef production are big threats. In my area a lot of pasture and hay acres have been converted to row crop and most likely will never come back to beef production.

How can the American Angus Association and its entities best help you reach your goals?

I think the American Angus Association can help its members best by focusing on the needs of commercial cattlemen and the consumer. That can be done by continuing to enhance our very valuable database and developing programs that can benefit our seedstock customers by adding value to their calves in the marketplace. Protecting that *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand and continuing to develop new markets for those beef products will also be vital to keeping Angus on top.





Chad Dougherty

Operation: Blue Ridge Cattle LLC

Location: Monticello, Ill.

BLI year attended: 2011

What is your background on the ranch?

I'm the first generation in my family to have Angus, though I'm a third-generation cattleman. I'm currently with Blue Ridge and have been for five years. This is the first true manager position I've held. I've worked at three other operations

before coming to Blue Ridge, which helped me gain experience. I worked in completely different spectrums — from show cattle to solely production cattle.

I don't own my own operation yet, but I own a few head with my family.

What is the biggest challenge to managing the herd?

We're always trying to figure out the best marketing of our cattle, what our clientele want. I'd say trying to figure out the best goal and direction you want to head is a big challenge.

What was the biggest asset or best resource in starting out?

As a young person, other people are a great resource. In the past few years, I've been meeting other producers and people from other areas of the industry, like artificial insemination (AI) and feed reps.

These guys will help you out a lot and help you meet goals and produce the best cattle you can.

What has made you successful?

So far, in my circumstance, the people around me make me successful. My wife is a big support, and she has such knowledge of the breed and industry. I can bounce ideas off of her. The owners of the operation help make me successful because my success makes them successful, too.

What is the current biggest obstacle to success?

In today's time, you have to be cautious of what you're spending. For us, we've looked at different ways to make cattle better; that's a challenge. There are always challenges that get in the way of meeting your goals, but they keep you driving forward. By struggling to meet your goals, it makes you creative and look at different ways to get to the end result. We've had challenges where we had to do more research and background work to work around some obstacles. Talking to other producers, veterinarians or embryologists has helped from our standpoint.

How can the Angus Association and its entities best help you reach your goals?

The Association and its entities help with our marketing and promotion of our herd, through print ads, sale catalogs, EPDs. All producers use EPDs to help promote their operations. I think the Association helps us give more information to our potential customers; producers just have to use the tools available.

I would tell a new cattleman to not be afraid to be involved. Go to BLI and Association events so you can meet new people and learn new things.



Editor's Note: To attend BLI, cattlemen ages 25-45 can get an application this winter by visiting www.angus.org or calling the Events and Education Department at 816-383-5100.

