

## **Farm and Ranch Guide Magazine**

### **Red Angus breed, association win over Dunkelbergers**

By ANDREA JOHNSON

JEFFERS, Minn. n It's common to hear stories of cattle operators following in their parent's footsteps. That is not the case for Brian and Jan Dunkelberger, who farm and ranch in southwest Minnesota.

"Brian and I really didn't set out to start raising Red Angus cattle," said Jan. "It just sort of came about in 1990."

The Dunkelbergers had married and started farming when they rented some farmland from the late Palmer and Leone Bush.

Renting the farmland was a "package deal." If you wanted to rent the land, you needed to run a few cattle on the 50 acres of pasture. Palmer wanted one renter to run both properties. He didn't want a farmland operator and another operator for the pasture.

"Palmer preferred whoever had the cropland to also have cattle there, because it was less hassle if the cattle got out," Jan added.

Raising cattle was a new experience for the Dunkelbergers.

Brian had raised hogs and farmed with his parents n Duane and Verona Dunkelberger. Jan's only experience with cattle was working on her uncle's Jersey farm in Wisconsin. She had raised and rode horses.

But Brian and Jan loved taking care of animals. They would soon find out they were cattle people even if they didn't know it yet.

That first year, Brian and Jan purchased eight head of commercial beef cows. They also co-owned some cattle with Stan McCone of Sanborn, Minn., to bring the total number of cattle on the farm to 17 head. Stan lived just 15 miles from the Dunkelbergers.

Soon, Brian and Jan met Stan's parents, the late Dale and Phyllis McCone of Manilla, Iowa.

Seeing potential, the McCones encouraged Brian and Jan to look seriously at raising Red Angus cattle.

"They became dear, dear friends," said Jan. "They actually became our mentors as well as like family. They taught us a lot along with Palmer and Leone and many other people along the way."

In those early years, Brian and Jan raised several breeds of cattle, including Red Angus.

The Red Angus cattle always stood out, however. They appreciated the cows' maternal instincts, disposition and ease of maintenance.

“Disposition was the number one thing we went for,” said Jan. “They just took care of us. They have done well for us over the years.”

The Dunkelbergers focused initially on Red Angus female genetics, and purchased their first registered Red Angus bulls in 1998 from Clarence and Mary Caraway of Lake Benton, Minn., and Paul and the late Lori Fehrman, also of Lake Benton. Paul consigns his bulls in partnership with Badlands Red Angus of North Dakota.

Since that time, they have used only registered Red Angus bulls purchased from top producers across the upper Midwest. They also began adding registered females.

The operation now includes about 50 purebred and 50 commercial moderatelyframed Red Angus cows. They have five bulls to service the cows, and they also use AI and embryo transfer.

The Dunkelbergers calve out about 70- 80 head, offering 20-30 bred females for sale. They also consign heifers at the Minnesota State Red Angus Sale.

### **Perseverance pays**

It's been a long trail for the Dunkelbergers.

In their early years, the couple started out driving from Jeffers to the farm, so they spent a lot of hours on the road. That's why their place is now called “Wheelin' D Ranch.”

After a while, Brian and Jan found a farm site to rent that was closer to the Bush farm site. In 2000, they purchased a little over 300 acres of farmland and the outbuildings from the elderly couple.

In 2006, the Dunkelbergers purchased the home, and they have lived at Wheelin' D Ranch ever since.

Brian says the cattleman's most important tool is a bale shredder.

“I thought I was spending too much money when I bought my first one, but it was the best thing I ever did,” he said. “I can make average hay into really good hay with the shredder. Before we had bunks I fed on the ground. The shredder was the key to success.”

Today, the couple grows about 650 acres of corn and soybeans, along with 15 acres of alfalfa. About 15 corn acres are processed as silage.

“The cows run on corn stalks until December, and then are fed a ration including silage, distillers

grain and corn stalks/hay," Brian added.

During the growing season, Wheelin' D Ranch runs about 160 acres of grass for 100 cows.

"We figure roughly one cow/calf pair to two acres of pasture and practice rotational grazing in most of the pastures we own or rent," he said.

Just as they were helped, the Dunkelbergers consistently return the favor by helping others in the cattle business.

Brian serves on the Board of Directors for the Cottonwood Cattleproducers' Association. Jan helps coordinate the Cottonwood County Beef Princess competition.

The Dunkelbergers were also a featured stop on July 15 during the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association summer tour. The Cottonwood and Jackson County Associations organized and hosted the event.

"We enjoy being a part of today's cattle industry," said Jan. "We try to incorporate good management practices and enjoy being active in the Cottonwood Cattleproducers' Association and the Minnesota Red Angus Association."

Some information for this story came from the 2008 Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association Summer Tour Book

High Plains/ Midwest AG Journal

### **Red Angus Association elects Jacobson to national board**

Gary Jacobson, Hitterdal, Minn., was elected to the Red Angus Association of American Board of Directors' position for District 5--Northern Plains. Jacobson and his wife, Val, have three sons--Beau, Cody and Kirby. Beau and his wife, Chrissy, also have sons--Gavin, Drew and Ian.

"The commercial cattleman runs the beef industry," said Jacobson, "and honesty and common sense go a long way in the cattle business."

Jacobson has first-hand experience in many aspects of agriculture since he grew up on a small-grain, corn and bean farm. His main interest was backgrounding feeder calves in the winter months and running yearlings in the summer. In 1989, Jacobsons purchased their first commercial cows and, in 1995, they switched to Red Angus bulls. "We witnessed first hand how the Red Angus bulls impacted our salt-and-pepper herd," he said.

Jacobson worked winters at the West Fargo (N.D.) Stockyards in the late 70s and early 80s. He has raised and sold registered Quarter Horses since 1992 and has been in the registered Red Angus business since 1998.

Jacobson has been a member of the Minnesota Red Angus Association for 10 years, served as a director for two terms and currently sits on the board as the vice president. He has also served on the selection committee for the Minnesota Great Northern Sale.

In addition to his own state organization, Jacobson is a nine-year member of the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, eight-year member of the North Dakota Red Angus Association and recently joined the South Dakota Red Angus Association.

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