



— 2023 —

**Progressive Partner
Award:**

*Bruner Angus,
Wendel Livestock*

Partnership Earns CAB Progressive Partner Award

Direct-to-consumer beef business Dakota Angus establishes a future.

by *Kylee Kohls Sellnow, Certified Angus Beef*

With posterity in mind, the Bruner and Wendel families looked for a processor to harvest, inspect and grade their high-quality Angus cattle. They would sell directly to consumers through Dakota Angus LLC.

“It’s hard these days for a farm or ranch to support one family, or multiple families at that,” Ashley Bruner says. “In rural America, if we want it to make a turn and grow again, we need to give opportunity to the next generation. Diversifying and adding Dakota Angus to our lineup gives our kids an opportunity to come back someday.”

Pilot partners in the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Ranch to Table™ program, these North Dakota families took some of the market volatility into their own hands in April 2022.

The leap of faith now diversifies their income with high-quality beef options for their communities.

As seedstock producers, Bruner Angus Ranch, near Drake, and Wendel Livestock, a couple hours to the southeast at LaMoure, N.D., were focused on raising herd sires and replacement heifers for customers. Now they sell their finished cattle, as well as those of their customers, through Dakota Angus.

That partnership earned the 2023 CAB Progressive Partner award, and the two families were recognized in September at the CAB Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nev.

Data is power

Shane Wendel is the numbers guy of the joint operation. With grid-marketing data

going back more than 25 years, CAB® and Prime have been constant targets.

The last load of steers made 76% CAB, including 65% Prime this spring.

Angus programs proved progress for the Wendels.

“We have huge amounts of data now, and data is power, innovation and value,” Shane says. “*Certified Angus Beef* is a great example of how many pounds are sold, records that keep being broken and consumers still demanding more.”

With data to back up his brother Mike’s high-performing genetic and management decisions, Shane had confidence in grading their own cattle on a smaller scale to start marketing them direct to consumers and close the loop in capturing 100% of the value.

But he needed to find a partner in *The Business Breed* who shared his vision and energy.

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Partnership Earns CAB Progressive Partner Award *continued from page 42*

It didn't take long for Travis and Ashley Bruner to say "yes" to Dakota Angus.

"Both of our families operate on high integrity, and we have strengths and skill sets that complement each other to make us a great team," Shane says. "That's what makes the Bruners a great partner."

The partnership

Closely aligned herd goals help explain the perfect fit.

Mike Wendel and his sons focus on foot scores, marbling and heifer longevity expected progeny differences (EPDs) in breeding decisions for their 500-cow herd. Embryo transfer (ET) plays a large role in their genetic program.

"When you're working from conception to consumption, you really can't veer very far from any one trait," Mike says. "Everything from maternal to growth to carcass all have to be incorporated in a very moderate, conservative direction."

Travis's focus is on the 500-cow registered Bruner Angus herd and the two bull sales they host annually, selling 150 herd sires to commercial cattlemen.

They know their customers rely on those bulls to sire replacement females and raise calves that pay and weigh up.

"We're always paying attention to feet and udders, docility and doability," Travis says. "As our business has grown, we are using carcass EPDs to have more well-rounded cattle, too."

A relationship business

After the two families decided to launch Dakota Angus, they knew they wanted to incorporate the brand, to help inform consumers about differences in beef quality and value.

"We're confident in the product we have," Ashley says. "But the confidence we have with Certified Angus Beef behind us means so much more. The more that we can talk to people and engage them with what we're doing as producers and beef suppliers, the better it is for all beef."

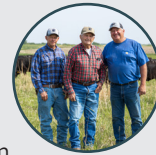
In the last 12 months, they've harvested more than 80 head in a federally inspected facility two hours from the Dakota Angus ranch store north of Drake. Federally grading every carcass lets them sell their beef by quality grade, allowing more accurate pricing for each pound.

Frozen halves, wholes and retail cuts sell in vacuum-sealed packages out of the walk-in freezer the Bruners built in their garage-converted meat shop.

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2023 Seedstock Commitment to Excellence Award, Benoit Angus Ranch

Benoit Angus Ranch honored for commitment to excellence



Fresh out of the Army, with an eye for the right kind of cattle, Everett Benoit bought six Angus heifers from his neighbor and started a cow herd of his own. He and wife Bonnie settled down in north-central Kansas to build a farm and family. The only kind of work they knew was hard work, and plenty of it.

Their resolve and work ethic saw the herd grow to 400 Angus females, along with a 2,500-acre farming division now.

Benoit Angus Ranch, marketing more than 150 bulls a year, is a multigenerational family business with sons Doug and Chad. Focused on serving commercial cattlemen, the Benois built a reputation for high-quality cattle that perform on the ranch, in the feedyard and on the rail.

With always-improving cattle to support that renown, and the will to back it up, Benoit Angus Ranch earned the 2023 CAB Seedstock Commitment to Excellence Award.

Read more in the October *Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA* available at www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra.

— by Lindsay Graber Runft, CAB



The Bruner family of Drake, N.D., focuses on the 500-cow registered Angus herd and selling 150 bulls a year to commercial customers.



The Wendel family of LaMoure, N.D., sell their finished cattle, as well as those of their customers through Dakota Angus.

2023 CAB Sustainability Award, Wharton 3C Ranch

Kansas ranchers recognized for sustainability efforts

The view of Wharton 3C Ranch, near Syracuse, Kan., in the summer of 2023 is so green Shannon and Rusty Wharton might have better luck convincing people it is a slice of heaven than the harsh, drought-ridden environment locals know. In fact, a few years ago, there wasn't a cow in these pastures. Lack of rain left the soil unable to produce much more than dust.

The commercial outfit is made up of about 600 head spread across more than 35,000 acres, most of that a Western Association of Fish and Wildlife conservation easement. A 1,000-head grow yard prepares calves for finishing. The Whartons have been managing it for various owners since 2005. The last

time it changed hands, in 2017, they made the numbers work, purchasing the cattle and a little land, leasing the rest.

A mix of puzzle pieces built over time helped two first-generation cattle ranchers carve out their own place in the cattle business. Their resilience and success earned Wharton 3C Cattle the 2023 CAB Sustainability Award.

Read more in the October *Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA* available at www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra.

— by Nicole Lane Erceg, CAB



Partnership Earns CAB Progressive Partner Award *continued from page 44*

“Quality control includes Travis in our backyard at the grill,” Ashley says with a grin that recognizes a common bond.

The beef they serve their own family is now a part of moments and memories for more neighbors because of Dakota Angus.

Even at the Tuesday night baseball game two towns over, you can find one of the

Bruner brothers flipping burgers at the concession stand.

It’s really a family business from start to finish. **ABB**

2023 Canadian Commitment to Excellence Award, JPM Farms

Excellence by everyday improvement

The cattle business awards no trophies for participation. Nor do ranchers expect to be noticed for doing things right. Yet, caring for land and livestock switched a spotlight on JPM Farms. Jean-Paul and Marlene Monvoisin, with their son, Colton, and daughter, Josee Monvoisin-Garner, operate the quality-focused seedstock Angus ranch in the rolling hills near Parkbeg, Sask.

They lean into viable sustainability, with immense focus on the environment and a long-time partnership with Ducks Unlimited

Canada. The perpetually progressive learners naturally work hard to improve their cow herd and grasslands.

“Our philosophy is to treat the land, the cattle and our family the best we can every day to make it a better day than the one before,” Marlene says.

Results earned JPM Farms the CAB 2023 Canadian Commitment to Excellence Award.

— by *Lindsay Graber Runft*



2023 CAB Ambassador Award, Seldom Rest Farms

Seldom Rest Farms opens its gates to build bonds with CAB partners

Seldom Rest Farms of Niles, Mich., is a brand synonymous with show-ring success. But a few times a year, it’s not frenzied heifer buyers pulling into the driveway. Instead, it’s a bus loaded with dozens from the Meijer grocery communications team to see how the beef they sell is raised.

The Foster family opens the gates to share their story with CAB partners on a regular basis, earning Seldom Rest Farms CAB’s 2023 Ambassador Award. Brothers Bruce and Scott Foster operate Seldom Rest Farms along with Scott’s son, Andrew.

Read more in the October *Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA* available at www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra.

— by *B.J. Eick, for CAB*

