

# ANGUS

## BEEF BULLETIN®

"The Commercial Cattleman's Angus Connection"

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# Getting Started After 22 Years



## Virginia entrepreneur upgrades genetics with feedback, advice.

Story & photos by  
**MORGAN SLAVEN**  
for *Certified Angus Beef*

Flying W Ranch roots go back to 1991, when rock-quarry operator Scott White bought a strip of land near Castlewood, Va., to access a planned railroad siding. That never developed, but White gradually stocked the place with an assortment of cows and hired a manager to look after them.

He reconsidered prospects for the land after selling the quarry in 1997, and expanded to 200 cows, generating calves White sent to Texas for finishing. By 2003, with a teenage son showing an interest, he took over full management with a business plan that recognized changes in the cattle industry. The

Flying W name comes from their passion for flying airplanes.

"High quality had become the standard, rather than low cost," White says. "The low-end cattle we had weren't going to bring as much, so we decided to improve the herd."

One of the first steps was retaining ownership with other Virginians on a load of calves fed in Iowa's Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF) in 2004.

### Switching to Angus

"Working cattle through the chute and going over the reports, we saw that we needed a lot of Angus genetics in the herd, but we could also see that all Angus are not the same," he says. Some of the people whose cattle did well on the value-based grid in Iowa were using artificial insemination (AI) and Angus genetics.

White had noticed that in the sire reports even before local AI sales representative Steve Furrow stopped in to talk about the future.

"Scott said he wanted to create a set of cattle that were superior in their mothering ability, but at the same time he planned to retain ownership and make money in the feedlot," says Furrow, now a beef products promotion manager for Select Sires. A balanced approach transformed the "hodge-podge, diverse set of cows" that included Gelbvieh, Brangus, Simmental and Charolais.

Furrow's advice pointed White toward a Sinclair Farms dispersal and purchase of 35 closely related Angus cows, while he used one Angus sire on commercial heifers and another on the cows.

(Continued on page 2)

**Above:** "To go from a couple hundred cows to 500, there are a lot of things that go into that," friend and advisor Steve Furrow says of Scott (right) and Blaine (left) White. "It's not just getting the cows, but developing the pastures, creating the health programs for the vaccines and the support mechanisms to make it all work."

### Features & News

Change of Venue .....	4
Highlights from Louisville .....	18
Saddle & Sirloin honors Dave Hawkins. ....	23
Experts explain how indexes can work for you ..	28
Smaller-scale producer takes advantage of DNA ..	30
Closeouts show sustaining growth for the breed ..	34
Cold temperatures could trigger fescue foot ..	37
Feed at night, calve in daytime. ....	42
Hedge your bets with DNA .....	44
Range Beef Cow Symposium addresses	
Current issues. ....	48
Market outlooks .....	52
Nutrition concepts .....	55
Winter Storm Atlas .....	58
Technologies for the beef industry. ....	60
FDA to phase out antimicrobials for	
growth promotion .....	66
Adjust cow nutrition to compensate for cold ..	68
Heifer development program started in Kansas ..	71
Panel discusses harmonizing trich regulations ..	72
Genomic test strategies explored .....	92
Feedlot reaches Gold quality milestone .....	96
Opportunity to come home .....	100
Sort cattle for gain and grade .....	102
Feeding forum preps for change .....	104
Ethanol byproducts pay their way .....	108
Expansion means tighter supplies first. ....	110
Grain markets sink as cattle rise .....	110
Prioritize stewardship of land, cattle. ....	114
Cover crops use water, benefit soil .....	122
Cattle Industry Convention nears. ....	132
First-class production .....	142
Family-owned business is unique in approach ..	148
Compression in feeder-cattle futures .....	156
Calculate winter feed costs. ....	158

### Column Links

• Movin' Forward .....	6
• Association Link .....	10
• AngusSource® Genetic. ....	16
• Beef Talk .....	76
• Ridin' Herd .....	80
• Veterinary Link .....	82
• Certified Angus Beef LLC .....	88
• New Products .....	116
• Industry Link .....	126
• Market Advisor .....	160
• Angus Sales Link. ....	162
• Outside the Box. ....	172
• Advertiser Index .....	174

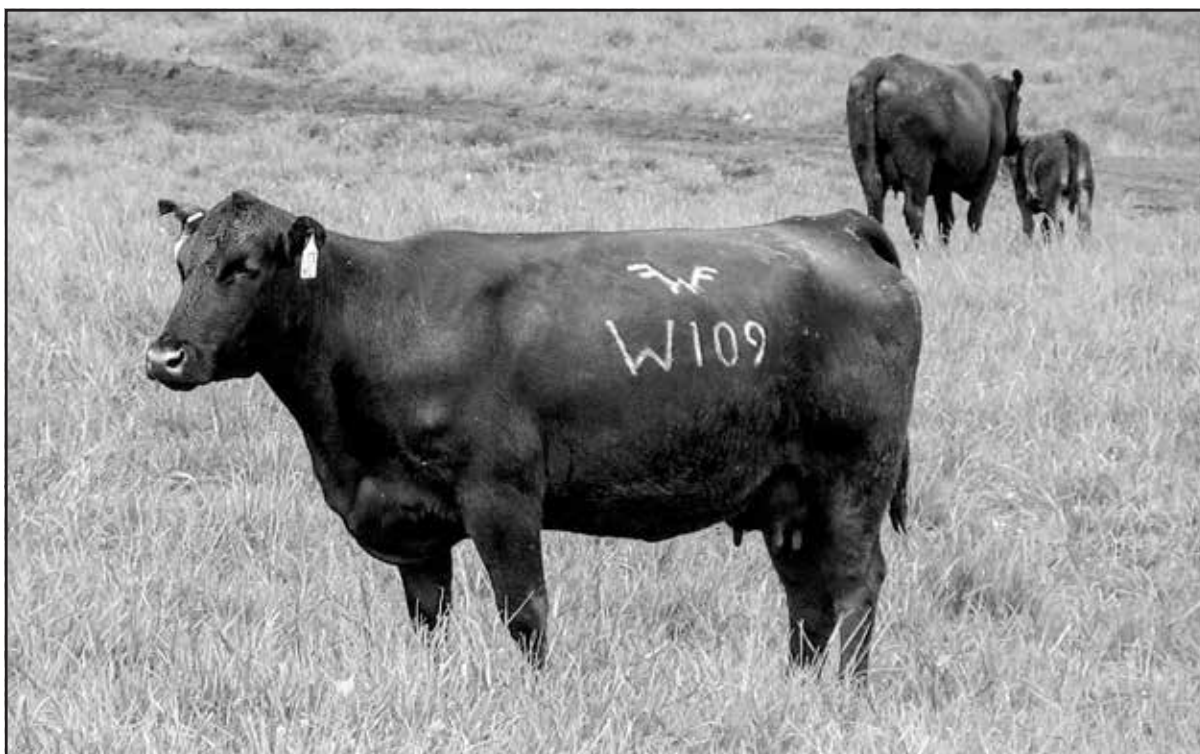
### Staff

• Angus Journal .....	2
• American Angus Association. ....	6
• Regional Managers .....	84
• Certified Angus Beef LLC .....	88

### Services

• Angus Journal Virtual Library .....	57
• Angus Journal subscription .....	73
• National Junior Angus Association .....	101
• Readership survey .....	130
• American Angus Association	
membership form .....	171
• Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA .....	173

**New Ways On An Old Ranch** (from cover)



The Flying W brand comes from the surname and a love of flying airplanes, Scott White explains. Cows gained uniformity as high-percentage Angus, but White wants to make half the herd black baldies.

“Our plan was to clean up with sons of those AI bulls, and we didn’t change real quickly,” Furrow says. “It takes time, but we’ve made some transitions now.” A registered herd has developed to the point of producing some bulls for the commercial side, but the Whites still buy sons of AI sires, too.

**Making progress**

That transition is from what White called a “hobby farm” to a business of mostly Angus-sired females. There are 140 registered Angus, and 150 of the 350 commercial cows are black baldies. In 2008, steers in Iowa graded 75% Choice, with 20% qualifying for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand.

“We’re working toward CAB because of the premium,” he says. “We now have all black-hided cattle, and the ones from our black baldie herd are one-half to three-quarters Angus. We want to get as many in the program as we can.”

White does not focus on weaning weight as a primary goal, but neither does he tolerate runs. “It doesn’t cost any more to maintain a really good cow producing a good calf than it does a scrub cow producing a scrub calf. It’s not important just how big they are at weaning, because we are going to retain them until the end. We want quality.”

Since coming back to the ranch full-time after graduating from Virginia Tech in 2010, Blaine White soon realized the importance of nutrition.

“That’s a big part of management a lot of people tend to overlook,” he says. “The hay samples need to get taken to see what you’re actually feeding them. Just because you roll a bale of hay out, doesn’t mean it’s high-quality hay.”

Along with that, the Whites began to narrow the herd’s calving window as they begin more selection for feed efficiency.

“What we saw from the carcass data was that Angus put a lot of marbling in the cattle, so they graded better, but also they finished at a younger age and lighter weight,” Scott White says, appreciating the time value of money.

Last year, Flying W sent loads to the CAB partner yard Shaw Feedlot of Ashland, Kan., where they made 95% Choice and up to 44% CAB.

That’s progress, but it is also fun to track, the elder White says. “The reason I got in it and stayed in it is because it is a very, very interesting business. The sky is the limit on how far you can go. There is always a goal

that you can obtain and gradually get better at.”

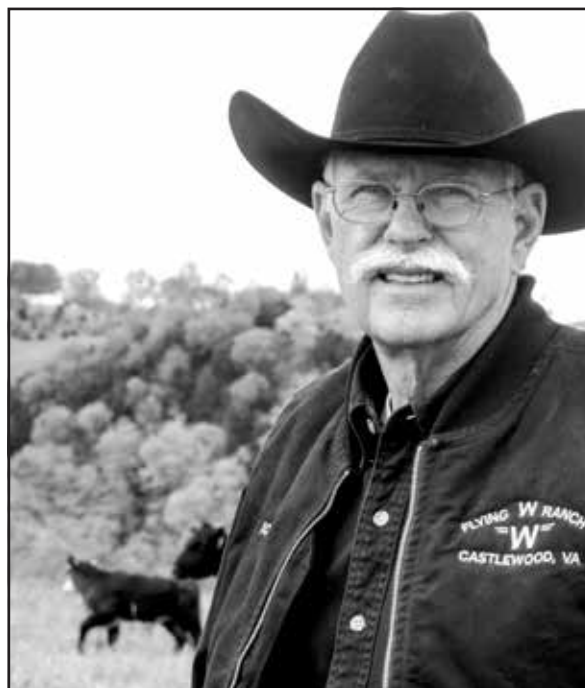
When Furrow comes to visit, he admires the view, for now.

“They are not there yet, but they’ve made great strides. To go from a couple hundred cows to 500, there are a lot of things that go into that,” he says. “It’s not just getting the cows, but developing the pastures, creating the health programs for the vaccines and the support mechanisms to make it all work.”

Of course, the Whites are not satisfied yet, either. “We’ve eliminated the bad and kept the good, but we’re just now getting to that point, you know, to start our own herd. In that sense, we’re just getting started,” Scott White says.



**Editor’s Note:** Morgan Slaven was a spring 2013 intern for *Certified Angus Beef* LLC.



“We AI all the cows that are ready, and those calves do really well at the feedlot. Year in and year out, you get more for your calves that way,” Scott White says.

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