
T H E S I S

Aberdeen Angus

by

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OUTLINE

Aberdeen Angus--

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In making a study of any breed of stock it always appears necessary to make a statement, either brief or lengthy, of the history of that particular breed before entering into any discussion of characters and qualities. It is the purpose, then, in handling the subject however broad it may be, to give a brief history of the breed, and then enter into a discussion of the breed characters with the view of presenting the breed from the practical standpoint of the stockman. My information has been gathered mainly from the records of the breed as presented by the American Aberdeen Angus Breeders' Association, the literature on polled cattle, and from some notes from Kansas breeders. The question of animals for beef production will be mainly emphasized, since that is the use made of the Angus, and since the consumers of beef are seeking the cattle that furnish the merited quality and the highest percent of dressed beef.

Searching the history of polled cattle we find that as early as 1752 there are records of the appearance of hornless animals. We do not know definitely when the breed of Aberdeen Angus was originated. Mr. Hugh Watson of Northeastern Scotland was the greatest improver, and it was his animals that started a record of any sort. He began his improving in 1815-1816, after being inspired by the wonderful growth of the Shorthorn, with ten good heifers and a black bull Tarnty Jack. With these he worked for several years, and in 1842 really started the breed with Old Jack (1), a grandson of Tarnty Jock, and Old Grannie, the cow having the most wonderful record of history,

living to be 36 years old and having 25 calves. By in-and-in breeding Mr. Watson obtained an animal of low and blacky stature, early maturing, and thick fleshed. This sort of an animal he found to be an excellent beef animal and from then on breeders have been improving and staying as close to the ideal type as possible.

Mr. William McCombie of Tillyfour in Aberdeen believed very greatly in individual merit and superior pedigree. He succeeded in establishing a great show herd, and won many large prizes at various expositions. Mr. McCombie's style of breeding and selection is one that our stock raisers of today should follow. An animal with ideal qualities and a pedigree that sustains them is one of immense value in a herd, and those should be sought after unceasingly.

Turning now to our own country we find that the breed of Aberdeen Angus is just beginning to be known. Since the first importation thirty-five years ago people have spent much time marveling at the black "doddies". Until that time the American had never seen a black character in the race of cattle. They could not see the excellence of character; they wondered at the possibility of the cattle from the moist and cold climate of Scotland adapting themselves to the variety of American climates; they did not see the great effect of a cross with the Angus; and many other questions confronted breeders which are just now being worked out and proven. Our own state, Kansas, was the state to welcome the first Aberdeen Angus importation, when in 1873 Mr. George Grant of Victoria brought three bulls from Scotland to be used on his herd of western-range cows. Two of the bulls were first shown at the Kansas State Fair, and they attracted much attention and interest. From then on small importations were being made, and in about ten years the breed was being established in herds over much of the eastern half of the United States and Canada.

Mr. Grant used his bulls upon horned cows from northern Texas and from Indian Territory. The result of the cross was a pleasant surprise to all. A large percentage of the offspring were black and hornless. They were hustlers and matured at two years, furnishing for the block an excellent quality of beef. In 1879 a visitor and buyer at Mr. Grant's wrote the following to Mr. James R. Barclay in Scotland: "No animals are better adapted for the western prairies than our black 'doddies' . I saw a good proof of this last year. I attended the late George Grant's sale at Victoria and there I saw the qualities of his stock fairly tested in the crosses from his Texan cows, and get of both Shorthorn and Polled bulls.

The cross with the latter was decidedly the best; they were short legged, big in their hearts, and had a general healthy bloom about them that the Shorthorn crosses lacked. The black ones seemed at home; the others did not. I bought a hundred of the three-year-old steers equally divided as to blood. I kept them over last winter, and the Polled crossed did best, standing the winter far better than the Shorthorn crosses. Their feed was corn stalks and prairie hay. At George Grant's they had to provide for themselves during the winter, as it is short buffalo grass, only, that is found in that section. The man in charge of the steers at Victoria told me that in the spring the Polled crosses were in good condition, but the Shorthorn crosses, for want of artificial food, could hardly rise up and walk.

Another circumstance of note is that the Polled crosses weighed about 120 pounds, live weight, more than the other crosses. This I could hardly have credited unless I had been an eye witness." This was an extreme case but it was a test. The reliability of this, especially as to grazing, is upheld by a statement of Mr. Parker

Parrish, now the sales proprietor of the herd of Parrish and Miller of Hudson, Kansas. He wrote: "I don't think the sun ever shown on a better breed of cattle to rustle, and particularly so in this Western country, and I have tried all breeds. They are great rustlers, hardy, early-maturing cattle, and make the true baby beef".

This was something then that Mr. Grant did for the breed. He did not live long enough, however, to learn much of the result that has come from his work. Never-the-less, in the history of the Angus breed of both American and Scotland, his name should be placed in bold type along with those who have done the most for a prosperous and profitable breed.

The low, blacky and thickly-fleshed type of animal has been closely watched and maintained. Breeders of today are constantly striving to strengthen the weaker characters and make the stronger ones more prominent. Possibly no better statement of what characters the majority of Angus breeders are seeking to strengthen can be given than the words of Chas. E. Sutton of Lawrence, Kansas. He wrote: "We are trying to produce an animal of medium size with strong bone and all the finish and character possible. We want a short, wide head with a large full eye; a prominent poll and wide at the nose; a short, strong neck cut up well at the throat latch; a well-defined crest and strong neck veins. We are especially particular about the crops being wide and well filled and the ribs well sprung. We are also very particular about disposition. We want a bull with plenty of snap and vigor, a bull all over, but we don't want him cross or timid for these characteristics are almost sure to be transmitted and are a great drawback in the feed lot and in the show yard." Mr. Sutton is to be commended upon the emphasis placed upon the qualities of the

head of his animals. In the head of an animal, whether it be an Angus or a Tamworth hog, a good judge should read the most important of all the animals character and disposition. If it has the best of these the other good qualities are pretty sure to be there, or can be brought out. The Angus is a docile and gentle animal with just enough nervous temperament to class it as self-supporting. The muzzle and nostril, strong and full, puts into the head the good feeding type. The well-sprung ribs and broad back afford much room for careful and diligent selection for the ribs, back, and loins are the high-priced cuts. The true beef characters must be a smooth strong crested neck, thick loins and ribs, and heavy hind quarters.

As feeders the black cattle seldom go to the market. They go to market as fat cattle. The salesmen accuse the breeders of not allowing the cattle to see the market until they are ready for the butcher or the packer. What pleasure a cattle raiser can get in raising and fattening his own stock, only those who do can tell. It is to be hoped that as the Angus breed grows that it will never be allowed to run to the production of "scrubby" stuff. As the western ranges are changed into smaller farms, we find many men breeding on a smaller scale and using a good grade.

As stated by one commission firm, and affirmed by others, the Angus cattle stand second to none in the packers' estimation. The reason for this is the fact that the Angus meat is of the very best in quality. It has a fine, clean and juicy appearance, and as said before, the Angus bullock will out-dress any other steer. Whether or not the breed really has the quality of being a superior dresser, or whether it is because the black beeves are grown and fattened by feeders who thoroughly understand, can be answered in several ways.

In an article--"Why the Stockyard Buyers Like the Black Polled Bullocks"--from the Breeders' Gazette by Henry DuPlan, head buyer for the S. & S. Packing Company, is found the following: "The neck is short and the hind quarter well filled out. When decently bred the Angus carries a high percentage of desirable meat of excellent quality, fine grained, mottled and compact. The meat is always thick on the rib where it is worth the most money, and there is no excess in plate. Being short legged the shank is not prominent in the carcass. Give me a load of black cattle aging anywhere from long yearlings to short three-year-olds and I will seek no further for quality". Mr. Du Plan is partial to no breed, for it is not to his interest. He wants the most for his companies money, and were he not able to judge for same he would be seeking other employment immediately. The buyer feels confident in the Angus, too. Mr. Du Plan speaks of this and applies to the animals the title of "Honest Bullocks". "When", says he, "the buyer starts a load of black ones toward the scales, he does it with a conviction that he has not booked himself for a calling down when the dressing sheet is made out. Not only will he get a high percentage of beef, but it will be good meat, and when displayed on the hooks will attract the eye of the retailer, a more critical buyer than the layman imagines".

The International show records show some interesting and encouraging statistics for the breeders of the black polled cattle. Individual and car-load lots have made many creditable showings. The prices paid for individual and car-lot steers will be shown below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Breed</u>	<u>Price per lb.</u>
1900,	Advance,	Angus,	\$1.50
1901,	Wood's Principal,	Hereford,	.50

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Breed</u>	<u>Price per lb.</u>
1902,	Shamrock,	Grade Angus,	\$.56
1903,	Challenger,	Mixed,	.26
1904,	Clear Lake Jute md,	Angus,	.36
1905,	Black Rock,	Grade Angus,	.25
1906,	Peerless Wilton 39th's Defender,	Hereford,	Not sold.
1907,	Roan King,	Shorthorn,	.24

The car-load lots show even a better percentage over other breeds than does the individual.

<u>Year,</u>	<u>Owner,</u>	<u>Breed,</u>	<u>Price.</u>
1900,	Kerrick,	Angus,	\$ 15.50
1901,	Black,	Hereford,	12.00
1902,	Escher,	Angus,	14.50
1903,	Herrin,	Hereford,	8.35
1904,	Krambeck,	Angus,	10.50
1905,	Krambeck,	Angus,	8.65
1906,	Funk Bros.,	Angus,	17.00
1907,	Krambeck,	Angus,	8.00

In these figures the Angus show up the most prominent. The average price paid for the prize winners has been greater than that of any other breed. However much this may show, it is not the true records of prices that should be applied to the black beef cattle; it is only a bunch of figures that show the enthusiasm of the show ring. The only way we have of getting a statement of the sales of beef cattle in the yards is through the buyers and commission men. Their reports consolidated into one general statement would show

that the Angus sell for from 15 cents to 25 cents per cwt. higher than any other breed.

Probably the greatest objection held for the black polled cattle is the objection to milk production. The Angus, as a breed, are not heavy milkers. Yet, some have a mistaken idea about what credit they really deserve. No animal can be first class in two respects. If large quantities of rich milk are wanted, the meat must be sacrificed, and vice versa. To a certain degree the milking quality can be strengthened by selection and careful breeding. Milk tests are recorded from data taken in Scotland, and from reports the Angus are capable of producing large quantities of rich milk. This failure to obtain a high dairy standard should not reflect discredit upon the breed because it is made up in the production of beef.

Changing now from a retrospect to a prospect we can say that the Aberdeen Angus has a brilliant future. With the number of recorded animals reaching 100,500 in twenty-one years, it is obvious that the breed has already made a brilliant growth. Many men breeding on a smaller scale at present will increase the size of their herds and encourage new breeders. The Shorthorn and Hereford breeds, having been introduced 90 years and 56 years respectively before the Angus, made them recognized and established. The Angus coming as they did from the cold dry North-east of Scotland were unknown. Thus, their ability to climatize and make themselves known had to be a great drawback. They have made a remarkable advancement and are now claiming a parallel with the most popular breeds.

The stock raiser who is looking for beautiful colored cattle, uniform in size, shape, and color; gentle and docile; a cattle that will early mature and bring in the money, and adapt themselves to a

great variety of climate, can do no better than to start a herd of the black ones. They will keep the boys on the farm, and attract other boys to the farm, for, what is more beautiful than a good even bunch of fat black bullocks? The time will soon come when we must look to the Aberdeen Angus with pride and give them the credit of being the best money makers of the race of beef cattle. We are already proclaiming them champions of many shows, and in the sale arena they are outselling the other breeds, taking it year by year. No man needs be afraid of an investment of Angus, for they have proven themselves superior to expectations when tried.