

A TRADITION OF PROFICIENCY

Wisconsin Junior Angus Association President Cody Quam won the state FFA Star Farmer and Beef Proficiency awards by mirroring his family's work ethic and learning from their examples. STORY & PHOTOS BY JENNIFER RYAN

Cody Quam is having fun. Even though he's working outside in hot, humid summer weather, he's having fun because he's about to go into the showring.

The Wisconsin Junior Angus Show Quam is attending is truly a family event. His father, mother, brother and sister all are lined up on the showring's edge to watch Cody as he leads his heifer into the ring.

Then again, their farm near Lodi, Wis., is an everyday family event, too. Established in 1942, Marda Angus Farms' future is the children: Cody; his brother, Brady; and his sister, Bailey.

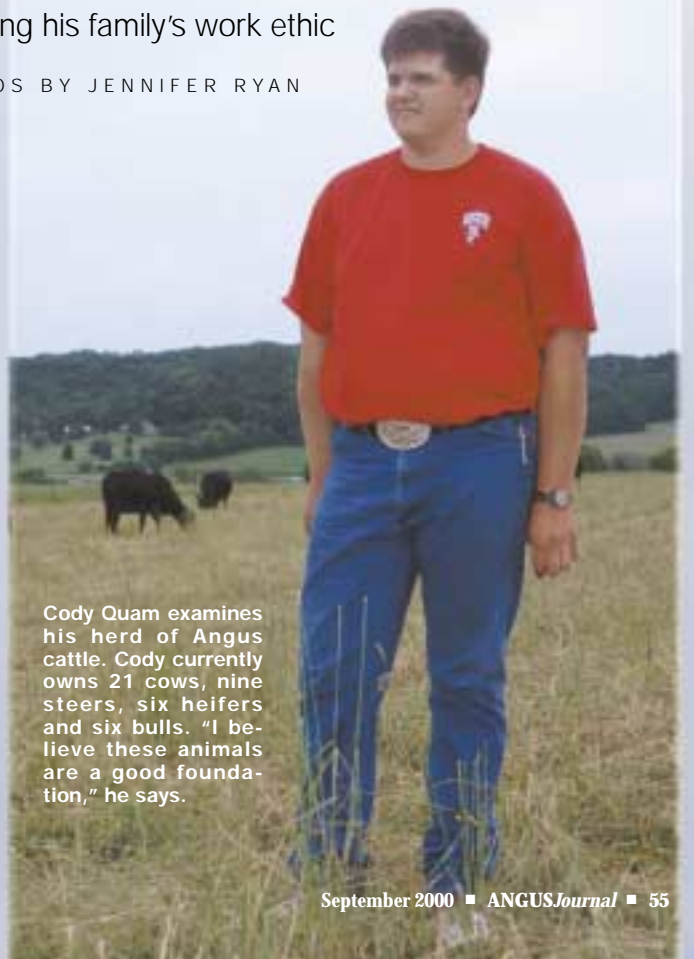
Cody has added to the farm in his own way through organizations like the Wisconsin Junior Angus Association (WJAA), 4-H and FFA.

"Growing up on a fourth-generation purebred Angus farm, I have been around beef cattle all my life," Cody says. "When I was younger, I had set a goal for myself of owning and showing my own steers, heifers and bulls. I could see at an early age what the Angus cattle industry meant to my parents and grandparents. So naturally I also fell in love with the Angus breed."

That love has given Cody a work ethic that helped him win the 2000 Wisconsin FFA Star Farmer Award and Beef Proficiency-Entrepreneurship Award. His family's knowledge helped him prepare for the win — every day was practice.

"Dad's hard work and knowledge and his willingness to

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Cody Quam examines his herd of Angus cattle. Cody currently owns 21 cows, nine steers, six heifers and six bulls. "I believe these animals are a good foundation," he says.



Cody uses expected progeny differences (EPDs) to improve his herd. He also develops balanced feeding rations. "When you feed and care for your cattle sufficiently, your cattle will be in better shape, produce a better product and reach market weights at an earlier date," he says.



do more so I could become more involved really influenced me. His just going out there and doing what he loves — working with the animals and the land — has really rubbed off on me," Cody says.

"My father is a member of the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association. He has been extremely helpful in giving me show tips and techniques," Cody continues. "My mother is active with the Beef Expo and the Wisconsin Angus Association. She has kept me informed of current conditions and updates affecting the beef industry."

Motivated

Setting goals also has helped Cody win the awards, says Glenda Crook, Lodi FFA Chapter advisor.

"Last year Cody placed eighth in beef proficiency. He told me that next year he was going to win it and try to win Star Farmer, too. He set those goals, and he made them happen," Crook says.

"He knew his award areas very well. I grew up in this area, and I've seen Cody show cattle since he was old enough to lead one around," Crook continues. "This has been his lifelong background, and that had a lot to do with his success."

The Lodi FFA Chapter will enter its fifth year of existence during the 2000-01 school year. Cody entered the chapter during its first year and has helped it succeed, Crook says.

"He has really helped with fund-raising ideas. We try to provide as much financial support to students as we can," she says. This year Cody took responsibility for a raffle. He worked with the alumni to request donated prizes. He also organized the chapter banquet, which takes a lot of time and planning.

Crook says the FFA chapter has worked hard to promote the FFA as a general youth organization to encourage more students without an agricultural background to join. Cody's knowledge of the industry has helped educate those students and has shown them what farm life is like.

"Farming is such an important part of his life. He has always been proud of his farm background. Cody respects it, and he's found ways to let kids know that's important to him," she says.

Responsibility

Cody's grandmother, Marjorie Quam, believes growing up on the family farm has taught Cody determination, respect and responsibility.

"He realizes the responsibility of being on a farm," Marjorie says. "He knows that things can go wrong, and they do, and he knows how to fix it. He's learned how to handle responsibility and take responsibility. When he makes his mind up to do something, he's going to do it."

Marjorie also believes Cody was helpful in rejuvenating the Lodi FFA Chapter.

"He's helped start the FFA chapter again, and he put a lot of work into that — a lot of time. But he's also gotten a lot out of it. He's done speaking and quiz bowl and judged livestock."

Although growing up on a farm gave him a good background, Cody says he still learned a lot from his FFA projects.

"The most important thing I've learned is recordkeeping," he explains. "Without it you don't know where you're going or where you've been. It's what tells you where you're spending your money and when you bred your heifers and when they're going to calve. If you don't write that stuff down, you're lost."

Cody also has participated in livestock judging, a skill that helps him with his own herd.

"Livestock-selection skills have helped me determine what cattle to buy, show and raise for market," he says. "I have established a good, young beef herd. I have 21 head of very productive females, six yearling heifers and six bulls that I plan on selling. I am very proud of my herd, and I believe these animals are a good foundation."

Future outlook

Although Cody will attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) in the fall, he doesn't plan on leaving his Angus herd for too long. He'll be taking the university's two-year agriculture and industry short course, majoring in meat and animal science.

"The short course was originally designed for kids who had to go back to the farm for calving and

harvest," Cody explains. "So college won't interfere with that. I want to learn more technology-based skills. I want to get the newest information in production agriculture — newest seeds, newest techniques, newest genetics."

After completing his education, Cody plans to return home to continue the family purebred Angus farm and to expand his own Angus herd.

The family also plans to expand its farming operation by increasing corn and soybean acreages. Expanding the farm will take careful planning and good timing, Cody says.

"I can't expand [now] because we're landlocked. If I were to expand, that would mean my dad's program would have to shrink. I will probably try to sell a few more bulls, buy a few more heifers and work on becoming more efficient so I can make more money from what I have," he says.

Cody has carefully expanded his own farm while acquiring no debt, knowing that if an opportunity to buy land appeared, it would take considerable resources. His father, Terry Quam, sees opportunities for expansion in the future.

"It's hard to expand around here because you've got to have pasture, but the land prices are high, land rent is high. Everything is escalated, and right now there's no room for expansion," Terry says. "We've tried to teach our kids not to take unnecessary risks. It's tough to teach patience.

"In the future I hope to expand the farm, but timing is the key. I would like to branch out with the purebred herd. I would also like to do more direct marketing. Of course, we'd like to expand the crops and trucking portions, as well, and there are a few opportunities coming our way that could be the key timing point."

Terry says the family has tried to encourage the children's areas of interest on the farm by giving them responsibilities in those areas.

"Cody really enjoys cattle, and that's what I see him involved with the most. Our younger son really likes crops, so that works out rather well. Cody also likes trucking and just hauling grain or livestock. He really enjoys that one-on-one

contact with the consumer," Terry says. "Every person has that thing they can call their own."

Terry says Cody's knowledge of a working farm helped him win the Star Farmer Award, but the knowledge also was necessary for everyday life at Marda Angus Farms.

"When you grow up in a family farm, the workforce is the kids. They have to be out there taking weights and giving shots," he says. "I got a piece of metal in my eye one day and came back from the ER (emergency room) with a big patch over my eye — out of commission. The kids had to know what to do and how to do it because you rely on them, especially in situations like that."

Farm advantage

Terry says Cody had several advantages in competing for Star Farmer and the Beef Proficiency Award, two being his understanding of technologies used on the farm and issues in agriculture and his honesty.

"We use a lot of new technology, but not every bit of technology is suited for everyone. Sometimes it's overpriced. Sometimes it's just not fitted to your needs, but you use as much as you can and do as much as you can," Terry says. "Nonsource-point pollution is a big issue around here. Most 18-year-olds don't know a lot about it or what they can do to prevent it on their farm. I was lucky that my parents brought me into the operation early, and I'm doing the same with my kids. We try to give them something and fill them in on why we do it."

Terry says Cody's ability to talk honestly and candidly is probably what has helped him in most of his activities, including FFA and WJAA.

"The issues he touched on in the interview everybody uses — everybody AIs (artificially inseminates), everybody uses EPDs (expected progeny differences)," he says. "Cody explained his financial situation. Right away the banker in the interview asked why he didn't have any debt. He explained honestly that he wasn't going to buy anything he couldn't afford and how timing and planning helped him get where he is today."



Cody, here with his mother, Ardel, is a fourth-generation Angus producer and looks forward to his continuing involvement. "I am extremely proud of my family's herd, and I have witnessed the amount of work and dedication put into establishing a good herd."

Trimming and fitting cattle for showing and sales are a necessary part of beef production because it makes the cattle look their best, Cody says.

