

World Angus Secretariat

by John Crouch

The American Angus Association delegation departed Kansas City, Mo., at 5:45 a.m., Tuesday, March 15, en route to Cape Town, South Africa, to attend the 9th World Angus Secretariat meeting. Some 32 hours and 14,000 miles later, we arrived at our destination.

Formed in 1968, the Secretariat meets every four years to share ideas and programs

that advance the Angus breeds, both red and black, in the world beef industry.

The Secretariat meeting began early March 17 and was called to order by the president of the Angus Society of South Africa, Chris Purdon. A variety of subjects was discussed by representatives of Angus societies from Australia, Argentina, Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil, New Zealand, Uruguay, Paraguay, Sweden, Ireland and the United States. These topics ranged from international genetic evaluation to DNA testing to international export and import of Angus semen and embryos, as well as a host of other subjects of mutual interest to the group.

The secretariat meeting was followed by a forum the next day featuring an

address by Dr. Lee Berger, a native of the state of Georgia, who rendered a fascinating account of the development of the continent of Africa and the role Africa has played in the evolution of the human race.

The keynote address was presented by parliament member Dr. Manie Schoeman, who related a vivid account of socioeconomic progress made in South Africa since 1994. South Africa, with 17.4 million beef cows, developed a strategic plan for its beef industry that included commercialization and expansion of the beef sector, improved beef product safety, instilling consumer confidence, and increasing export markets.

In this robust economy, real income per person has observed a 15% increase in the last decade.

The remainder of the forum was highlighted by presentations from Dr. Michael MacNeil, Dr. Dorian Garrick and Dr. Mohammad Koochmaraie from the United States; Dr. Michiel Scholtz, Mr. Ephraim Matjuda and Dr. Ronnie de la Rey from South Africa; and Graham Truscott, Carel Teseling and Dr. David Johnson from Australia.

Following the educational forum, a gala reception and dinner was hosted, at which time all member organizations officially thanked the

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► **Above and below:** Representatives of Angus societies from Australia, Argentina, Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil, New Zealand, Uruguay, Paraguay, Sweden, Ireland and the United States participated in the 2005 World Angus Secretariat meeting.



► **Above and right:** The seven-day tour began at Rheebok-splaat Stud, owned by Gielie and Lorraine Geldenhuys, at Ceres in the Western Cape area. The farm is also known for its production of fruits.



► Ben Eggers (right) officially thanks the Angus Society of South Africa, represented by Chris Purdon, president, for hosting the global event.



► **Below:** South Africa provided the backdrop for the 2005 World Angus Secretariat meeting.



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Angus Society of South Africa for its extraordinary effort.

On tour

The seven-day tour began Sunday morning, with buses departing our hotel at 8:30 a.m., en route to Rheeboeksplaat Stud at Ceres in the Western Cape area.

Rheeboeksplaat Stud is owned by Gielie and Lorraine Geldenhuys and consists of only black Angus. Their cow herd consists of 185 mature animals and has a considerable sprinkling of American Angus genetics. Of further interest was the fact that the Western Cape area is in the worst drought in history, having received only 5 inches (in.) of rainfall

in the past year. The hardiness of the Angus breed was evident when one observed the animals' condition and reproductive ability in this harsh environment.

The Geldenhuyses' other main farming activity consists of irrigated orchards that produce pears, peaches and apples. The Ceres region is also known worldwide for the production of fruit juice. Prior to our departure, the group enjoyed a bounty of fresh pastries and fruits grown on the farm.

The second tour stop was the beautiful Groote Post Farms of Peter Pentz and family, a historic wine farm in the cool hills of Darling on South Africa's west coast. In addition to wine making, the other enterprise is a herd of red Angus cattle that numbers just less than 100. Mr. Pentz founded the herd in 1997,

following several years of having bred dairy cows. When questioned regarding his program, Pentz remarked, "We cull the nonbreeders, the noncalvers and those that produce light calves. After that, conformation is of little importance."

Day 2 began with an early flight to historic Port Elizabeth, after which we boarded a coach and traveled through lush, green dairy country on our way to Essenkay Stud, where we were greeted by owners Denys and Melinda Wells. After introductory remarks by Denys, we were provided a beautiful luncheon of traditional South African foods. Especially refreshing was the delicious pineapple juice for which the area is known. The Wellses were joined by neighbors who displayed both black and red cattle.

The Essenkay herd is situated on the farms Vriendskap and Roodenek in the district of Alexandria in the Eastern Cape, a well-known milk-producing area. The farms were converted from dairy to beef in 1983 and currently are home to both black and red Angus. The visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Our group then journeyed through the beautiful countryside to the Kariega Game Reserve, arriving in time for a late afternoon game drive, during which we observed antelope, kudu, wildebeest, blesbuck, white rhino and many other species of South African wildlife in native surroundings.

The following day a game drive in another area of the reserve produced sightings of giraffe, elephant, jackal, baboon and zebra. Midday the group visited the resort village of Port Alfred on

► The Western Cape area is in the worst drought in history, having received only 5 in. of rainfall in the past year.



► Below: The second tour stop was the beautiful Groote Post Farms of Peter Pentz and family, a historic wine farm in the cool hills of Darling on South Africa's west coast.



► Above and below: Denys and Melinda Wells welcomed the tour group to Essenkay Stud in the district of Alexandria on the Eastern Cape. It is home to red and black Angus. Neighbors displayed cattle at this stop.



► Right: The Kariega Game Reserve provided the opportunity to observe antelope, kudu, wildebeest, blesbuck, white rhino, giraffe, elephant, jackal, baboon, zebra, lion and other species of South African wildlife in native surroundings.



► Above: The group enjoyed being entertained by the Woodview Choir, which sang traditional African songs. Woodview Stud, Arlington, is owned by Brian and Maria Angus and family.

the Eastern Coast and returned to Kariega Game Reserve for an evening game drive where the feature was lion on the prowl. Everyone enjoyed a boma, or traditional African bush barbecue, that evening.

Due to illness, the scheduled visit to Blairmore et al Stud on Thursday was cancelled. Instead, we were treated to a visit to Shanton Red Angus Stud near Pietermaritzburg, owned by Kevin Culverwell, a full-time practicing chartered accountant. The stud was started in 1984 in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains at Himeville. The cattle were superb! A picnic lunch was provided in the beautifully manicured lawn and gardens.

We were also privileged to visit Old Kilgobbin Farm at Dargle, owned by Dr. John Bronner. En route we stopped to view the monument erected on the site where Nelson Mandela was captured prior to his incarceration on Robbin Island. What a moving experience, especially after one had visited the prison and cell Mr. Mandela occupied for 18 years.

Old Kilgobbin Farm is on a high hill overlooking a lush and beautiful agricultural valley. It was interesting to note that the property has been in the same family for 150 years, and the original settlers' house still stands in stately fashion.

Friday, March 25, saw the group headed for Woodview Stud at Arlington, owned by Brian and Maria Angus and family. Woodview was founded in 1964 by Brian's father and consists of 385 cows, both red and black. The operation also runs 500 commercial cows and 3,000 merino ewes. Woodview imports all semen from the United States, and 80% of the calves are from artificial insemination (AI). While there, the group enjoyed being entertained by the Woodview Choir, which sang traditional African songs. A sumptuous traditional lunch was served under the "big top" while a guitarist folk singer entertained. After a most enjoyable visit, the group returned to Bloemfontein for the evening.

On the final day of the tour we traveled through plains much like those in our Western states; however, they were more sparsely populated. Late morning found the group at

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Meeting notes

Prior to the 2005 World Angus Secretariat meeting March 17, a request from the New Zealand Angus Association was circulated proposing to designate the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) at the University of New England in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia, as the Global Center for Angus Genetic Evaluation. The petition was presented by Will McFarlane of New Zealand and received considerable discussion. Consensus could not be reached; hence, there was no recommendation from the group.

Graham Truscott, general manager of the Angus Society of Australia, suggested a committee be formed to investigate the feasibility of such an evaluation and initiate a test analysis with committee members sharing the cost, and that the results be shared with all members of the secretariat. Representatives of Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and Brazil voiced an interest in participating.

As it now stands, Australia and New Zealand are included in a joint analysis conducted by AGBU, which also provides software and performance programs support for Canada and the United Kingdom, including genetic evaluation for the United Kingdom in a separate analysis. South Africa, Argentina and Brazil currently have their own systems in place, but would be interested in exploring other options should they become available.

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, an announcement was made that due to similarities in management and feeding regimes, a Southern Hemisphere Alliance had been formed for the purpose of exploring research relative to a multi-country evaluation; however, no member names were specified. Speculation was that co-contributors would be Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Brazil.

There will be a midterm technical meeting of the World Angus Secretariat in Ireland in 2007. The next general meeting will be in Canada in 2009, then in New Zealand in 2013.

An industry of change

The dialogue that occurred at the 9th World Angus Secretariat is not unlike dialogue that is occurring in our own industry. The idea of the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC) was conceived and put in place by researchers from several leading universities simply because there was demand from the commercial beef industry for a universal, multi-breed genetic evaluation.

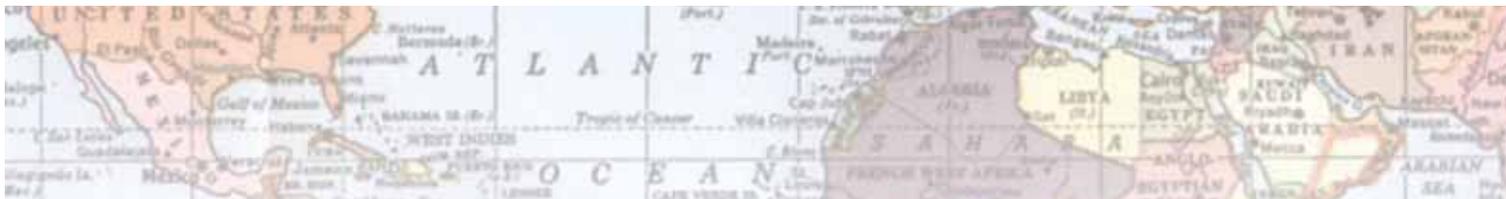
Further, with decreasing revenue due to decreased registrations and transfers, many breed associations are looking toward consolidation and/or alternative ways to process performance data.

From a historical aspect, the American Angus Association has been approached by various entities, including other breed associations, both domestic and abroad, regarding performance work. Within the past three months, the Association Board of Directors has received at least four requests for services ranging from simply processing weights and measures to running genetic evaluations and even performing complete services from a recordkeeping standpoint.

The reason for these requests is simple: American Angus Association programs are well-staffed, well-oiled and function with precision. Others want and will find organizations to provide these services. It's simply a matter of supply and demand.



► **Left:** Shanton Red Angus Stud near Pietermaritzburg is owned by Kevin Culverwell. The stud was started in 1984 in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains at Himeville.



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Mequatling Land and Cattle Co. near Clocolan in the Free State. Mequatling is owned by Philip, Vicky and Ann Barnard. The stud was founded in 1968 by Commander Wilhelm Barnard, a decorated officer in the Royal Navy. The herd consists of 1,300 cows, 500 of which are registered and 800 of which are commercial. Mequatling has made extensive use of American genetics through embryo transfer (ET) and AI.

Following a long-standing tradition at Mequatling, a tree-planting ceremony was conducted to commemorate the occasion, just as it was done in 1995 when a World Angus Secretariat Technical Meeting and Tour group visited the farm. Chris Purdon and I were honored to have been asked to assist in the ceremony.

This beautiful, picturesque farm, with its Cape Dutch homestead, provided a most fitting setting for our final tour luncheon and visit.

Upon our return to Bloemfontein, we participated in a gala steak dinner complete with beautiful South African wines and traditional desserts.

The American group, consisting of myself; American Angus Association Vice President Ben Eggers, Missouri; Dick and Donna Samuelson, Oklahoma; and Linda Anderson, past president of the Red Angus Association of America, thoroughly enjoyed the gracious hospitality afforded by the members of the Angus Society of South Africa.

One participant called it, "the experience of a lifetime!" We all agreed.



► **Above:** Beautiful, picturesque Mequatling Land and Cattle Co., with its Cape Dutch homestead, provided the setting for the final tour luncheon and visit.



► **Left:** Following a long-standing tradition at Mequatling Land and Cattle Co., a tree-planting ceremony was conducted to commemorate the occasion. Mequatling is near Clocolan in the Free State.