



Bruce and LeeAnn Waugh (center) and their family have grown a thriving cattle business over the past 20 years. Their highly rated Angus and Wagyu animals are sold to breeders and meat is marketed directly to consumers and restaurants.

Angus Operation Grows With Family

“When my husband Bruce and I began raising registered Angus with a bred heifer and a cow, a well-known breeder told us that ‘overnight success in this business takes 20 years,’” says LeeAnn Waugh of Goodhue, Minn. “Over time I’ve learned

that what he said was true and there are no shortcuts,” she adds.

It’s now two decades later and their business is better than ever thanks to strong family ties. Bruce and LeeAnn along with their son, Taylor, operate Cannon Valley

Ranch (CVR), raising a herd of 100 registered Angus females. Another son, Aaron, uses his skills and connections in the restaurant business to market their premium beef direct to food industry customers. And their daughter, Lindsay, and her husband, Shane, have used CVR stock on their North Dakota ranch and have marketed meat through the family company as well.

“We’ve been very fortunate to grow this business as a family operation,” says LeeAnn. “When the kids were young, they had club calves and we were raising Simmental and Chianina cattle. Bruce studied different breeds and we decided that Angus offered a greater opportunity with its extensive breed data and research. We sold some of our commercial cows and started in with a bred heifer that we determined could be our future donor cow.”

They grew the operation by selecting and raising a cow herd with high-quality and balanced traits, using artificial insemination and embryo transfer to accelerate their genetic base. “Our goal has always been to raise cattle that are physically or structurally sound, with high-performance traits and the correct phenotype. We want them to calve easily and have a quiet disposition,” LeeAnn says. “These are the type of cattle that meet our customer’s needs.”

Those customers now include producers

and breeders who buy their registered bulls, cows and heifers, as well as local consumers and restaurants who buy their high-quality Angus and Wagyu beef.

Their direct-to-market business began with Aaron, who works at a Rochester, Minn., restaurant. LeeAnn says, “He invited the chef and business owners to our ranch, showed them our cattle, our facilities and how we operate, and then cooked them a delicious CVR Premium Roast Beef dinner. They went home with ground beef and have been using our products ever since.”

LeeAnn says high-quality meat that consumers want starts with premium genetics and animals raised on healthy diets. Taylor has become a major part of their genetics program through his work with ABS Global and in vitro fertilization. He also works at a local meat processing operation and owns a farm adjacent to theirs. Income earned by CVR from in vitro fees on a per-head basis helps the bottom line.

Recently they added purebred Akaushi (Wagyu) beef to their ranch and will also look at branding their CVR beef.

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Mobile Poultry Processor Expands To Lamb And Goats

Greg Wierschke had no idea where pasture-raised chickens would take him when he converted a horse trailer to a mobile chicken slaughter plant. Four years later he replaced the horse trailer with a 7 by 16-ft. trailer (Vol. 44, No. 4). That same year he began work on an 8 1/2 by 36-ft. trailer designed to meet USDA-approved poultry slaughter. By 2021 it was on the road, and he added another 7 by 16-ft. trailer. By July of 2022, he expects to have a USDA-approved trailer ready to slaughter lambs and goats.

“When not used for lambs and goats, the new trailer will be used to do cut-ups of chickens,” says Wierschke.

Wierschke is no longer raising chickens himself. However, he is one of a dwindling number of small slaughter plants for poultry producers in the country and even fewer in his home state of Minnesota.

“There are only 53 USDA certified plants in the U.S. where an independent producer can bring poultry,” says Wierschke. “Minnesota has only one plant that can sell

federally inspected poultry to restaurants.”

The demand is there, as Wierschke learned. Last year, his rigs traveled the equivalent of one and a half times around the world, 99 percent of that in Minnesota. All told, he and his crews set up at more than 200 locations. With the new trailer in place, he expects to add even more miles.

“Lamb and goat processing, in particular Halal slaughter for Muslims, is another underserved market,” says Wierschke. “There is more demand for goats in Minnesota than the state produces. We import goat from New Zealand and Australia.”

Wierschke entered the lamb and goat market in 2021 by renting a slaughter facility from an 85-year-old originally from Somalia. The owner wanted to retire, and Wierschke wanted to learn the business, including Halal slaughter.

Wierschke plans to charge \$65 to process lambs and weathers, plus \$10 extra for Halal slaughter. Cut-ups will be extra.

Wierschke is big on knowing the rules before

jumping into certified slaughter. That is especially true because he has outfitted all his own trailers.

“Once we figured out what the USDA wanted, we did it for \$100,000 instead of paying someone else \$300,000,” says Wierschke. “We had to have the right floors and walls and enough power, water pressure, air pressure and hydraulics.”

He is repeating the process with his lamb and goat trailer. One key is knowing the language; another is working within the rules.

“When I was ready to start with the poultry trailer, I told my USDA inspector to give me my worst day ever in terms of an inspection,” says Wierschke. “I didn’t want to get non-compliance reports for little mistakes.”

Being mobile and being USDA inspected involved a lot of logistics originally, making sure the inspector knew where the trailer was going to be. A myriad of rules, such as setting up a minimum distance from a wellhead or ditch as well as how offal will be handled, must be followed. If on-site water will be used, a well test has to be submitted to the USDA a month prior to the slaughter date.

“I advise working for someone for a year to learn the business,” says Wierschke.



Wierschke works in one of his USDA-approved chicken slaughter trailers.

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They Wash And Spin Greens Clean

Prepping 50 lbs. of salad greens is a big job if you don’t have the right tools. Matthew Jose found a way to do it with a big washing tank and a spinner.

“Cooling down and washing greens is a market gardener’s bottleneck,” says Jose, who runs a year-round organic production company in Indianapolis, Ind., with his business partner Amy Matthews.

They used to put greens in 2-lb. mesh bags and move them through three rinse tanks. After drip-drying for a time, they’d be spun out in a hand spinner a pound of greens at a time.

“The system placed a surprising strain on our backs, and the hand crank salad spinner wasn’t a sustainable tool for processing up to 200 lbs. of salad greens per week,” recalls Jose.

They needed a low-cost, efficient greens processing system.



Wash station uses a 100-gal. stock tank with a 1 hp. blower to move air through PVC lined with holes.

Their new wash station is enclosed in double-walled greenhouse plastic with landscape fabric topped by gravel for a floor. Hand-built worktables handle incoming and outgoing greens.

The heart of the washing system is a 100-gal. stock tank with a bubbler system.

Greens are added to the stock tank for a quick cool down and rinse. They’re then transferred in approximately 2 lb. lots to plastic mesh baskets. The baskets are sized to fit a converted washing machine. After drip-drying for a few minutes in an empty stock tank, they’re moved to the spinner. After a 2-min. spin, they’re transferred to a clean tote.

“We purchased a greens bubbler tutorial from Dry Your Greens (www.dryyourgreens.com) and modified it,” says Jose. “It included plans for how to build a bubbler and how to convert the washer to a spinner.”

Jose’s bubbler uses a 1 hp. blower he bought at a Jacuzzi supply store to blow air through a pvc tube system lined with holes. An industrial sink drain and an attached flexible pipe drain away wash water.

Jose and Matthews used a Whirlpool Cabrio model washing machine that met the specifications in the tutorial. At the time they also purchased a parts kit for the conversion

from Dry Your Greens.

“Our system with one bubbler and the spinner works well for us,” says Jose. “If we did more than we do now, we might want a second bubbler tank. However, the one spinner would still be sufficient.”

Jose likes the increased productivity of the wash station, which cut greens washing/drying time in half. He and Matthews also appreciate the opportunity to multi-task.

“We have the bubbler and the spinner set on timers,” he says. “This allows the operator to start the process and do other tasks while the greens are bubbling or spinning.”

Jose developed the system with the help of a \$6,000 SARE grant.

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