

# Twenty Three for 2023

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## 1. Tell us about what you do

I'm a sixth-generation farmer and rancher from a tiny town in the rolling hills of Southern Iowa named Ellston. My family has been raising purebred Angus cattle for 95 years now and I'm the 4th generation to own and operate Hoover Angus. We run 400 purebred Angus cows. We have an annual production sale in February selling bulls and females. I do a little bit of everything on the farm from putting together our 70-page sale catalog, to calving cows, to preparing planned matings and breeding cows. It's a multi-generational family business in which my entire family is involved.

## 2. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised on my family's farm that was homesteaded in 1856, 167 years ago. Nowadays I live about 5 miles from the homestead farm.



## 3. Introduce us to your family at the ranch.

My husband Andrew and I are full time and then some. My dad and mom, David and Joy, still play an active role in Hoover Angus. My grandfather John, who just turned 97 years old, is still coaching us too. He keeps us in line when he comes out to the farm and he still oversees what we're doing. We also have some full-time crew as I'm an only child, so we weren't blessed with a built-in labor force. Our crew besides the family is Jeff Livingston, David Hoyt, and Mike Pudlo & Ann Newberry, who live on the main farm.

## 4. Tell us more about your kids

We have two, Gwen and Ty. Gwen will soon be six and Ty is four. They go to the local elementary school and enjoy being out on the farm. They love their bottle calf and doing those types of things that young kids do on a farm. They have shown a bottle calf and bottle lambs at the fair. Gwen placed first in the Iowa State Fair tumbling competition. My mom lives close by and helps us out a lot with the kids. She'll get here at 6am so I can head to the farm and make sure everything gets started for the day. She comes again later in the afternoon when the kids get off the bus and stays until I get home. When I'm out calving over 12 hours a day, she stays as long as we need, which is just great. She's a big help. It is definitely a team effort at Hoover Angus to raise kids and cattle!

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## 5. Describe your program at Hoover Angus

Genetics are extremely important to me – it's my passion. We create genetics for the commercial cattlemen that go out and do what they're supposed to do, which is ultimately to make money for our customers. We strive to create genetics that exemplify multi-trait superiority, but our main focuses are calving ease, growth, docility, structure and phenotype. I'm a huge proponent of "you can't improve what you don't measure", and we collect (and submit to the American Angus Association) phenotypic measures on 21 different traits, plus genomics.

We've been in business for 95 years because our cattle continually meet the demands of our commercial customers, and because we take care of our customers. I would much rather build a long-term relationship with customers rather than have a one-time high seller. Our sale, always the first Tuesday in February, offers 100 bulls, 50 spring bred heifers, 30 fall bred heifers, and 10 heifer calves. Cow families in production here have been consecutively bred by members of the Hoover family for up to 19 generations, and I think that's pretty neat considering the average lifespan of an Angus herd is 7 years.

## 6. How did your ranch get its name?

Walt Hoover, my great grandfather, started Hoover Angus in 1928. Since that time, Hoover Angus has been passed down through the first-born females in my family. If we would have changed names with each generation, it would have been Hoover, Kiburz, McFarland, and Livingston! Therefore, we kept the original family name that we've always been known as, Hoover Angus.

## 7. What's your favorite/most used tool on the ranch?

The one that I never leave the house without – my pocketknife. I can do everything from scraping crap off my jeans to cutting twines to saving a bloated calf's life. I've used it for hundreds of different things and it's the most useful tool I have. Not a particular brand or type, just a 3 inch pocketknife. No fancy gizmos on it either.

## 8. What was your first real job?

I've never had a full-time "off farm" job. The only time I earned a paycheck off the farm was in college, 5-10 hours per week. When I told my boss the next semester that I needed to devote my time to my studies and farm, she begged me to work ½ the hours – she said, "You can do in 5 hours what anyone else I've ever had can do in 10 hours."





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I obliged. I graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Agricultural Studies with a minor in Animal Science. Other than that, my “full time plus” job has always been Angus.

## 9. What do you think about today's cattle industry?

I believe we have a lot of opportunity these next few years. We have lost thousands of cows (and producers) due, in part, to drought in the south and the west. If we don't have a major catastrophe, the beef industry is poised for some really, really good years in the short term. I feel more optimistic about the next 5 years for the whole cattle industry than I've ever felt in my life. That to me is pretty big. I'm usually optimistic, but I'm very optimistic now.

Covid made our producers stronger – we have banded together to increase our packing capacity. Others have taken the bull by the horns and marketed their own beef locally. Many Hoover Angus customers have eliminated the middle men and started selling beef locally, and are successful at it! American consumers want to be connected to their food source, and the American beef producer is championing their family farming or ranching story while building relationships with their customers. What a success story!

## 10. What can we do to keep today's cattlemen in business?

Genetics, genetics, genetics. High quality cattle, and subsequent high quality beef for our consumers will always be in demand. As seedstock producers, it is our job to ensure the genetics we supply America's cattlemen fit their needs. . . and that's certainly not the same

for every region of the country, let alone every operation. Beef operations exist for a multitude of reasons – for some, it's a way to get “away” from a town job and enjoy the outdoors while tending to livestock. For others, like my family, it's our life, our passion, and our sole source of income. It's what drives us. End-product merit is certainly important, but we as seedstock producers must not lose sight of the traits (many times not measured by EPDs) that make cattle profitable. I often liken some of today's beef genetics to that of my Dad's 500 horse power General Lee. . . it is great at going super fast down the speedway, but will overheat in a parade because it isn't designed to go slow. In my opinion, successful cattlemen need genetics that can do both – go fast (such as rapid gain and carcass merit), yet go “slow” enough to do the basics of conceiving every 365 days and producing a live, unassisted calf at birth with a momma cow's temperament and udder quality that doesn't hamper her owner. In a world of so many things we can't control, genetics is something we can control that has a definite impact on our bottom line.

## 11. If they could hear you, what would you tell the politicians in Washington?

First, I believe one of the greatest challenges for the American farmer and rancher is government intrusion, regulation, and taxation. Don't tie our hands behind our back, but give us the freedom to do what we do best, which is to use our innovation to produce the safest, most wholesome and inexpensive food supply in the world. Unleash us from government burdens, and we can do an even better, more efficient job of feeding America while sustaining the land and the multi-generational family businesses of this great nation. When the American farmer and rancher flourishes, so do our rural communities, and so does America.



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## 12. How can local governments do better regarding the cattle industry?

That's a deep question. And hard. Can I use a lifeline and call Kristi Noem for help?

## 13. Favorite cut of beef and how do you like it cooked?

Filet, Certified Angus Beef® brand, of course. Cooked any way as long as it's been on the grill and not still mooing.

## 14. What industry organizations do you support?

My short list is NCBA, Iowa Cattlemen's Association, American Farm Bureau & the American Angus Association.

## 15. Online conversations about the NCBA can become quite heated, what are your thoughts?

I pay \$400/year in dues to NCBA and it's the cheapest, easiest check I write the entire year. Among other things, NCBA lobbies for us in Washington, D.C. and advocates for the American farmer and rancher every day. They do this for us because we are out scooping bunks, calving cows, and can't take time to head to D.C. every time an important issue comes up. NCBA is always there, advocating their member's policy. That's why I support them. Have they been perfect and do they do everything exactly the way I think it should be done? Well, no. They represent a wildly diverse membership and geographical area. NCBA's grassroots policy is voted on by dues-paying members that show up and vote. If you don't like their policy, be part of the solution, not part of the problem. I support NCBA because 95% of the time, they get it right.

## 16. What do you like about the American Farm Bureau?

They are a highly respected voice in supporting farmers and ranchers in Washington D.C. Likewise, state Farm

Bureaus carry the torch at the state and local levels. Farm Bureau educates American's youth by championing modern-day agriculture in schools.

## 17. ...and the American Angus Association?

The American Angus Association and its subsidiaries do an awesome job. Once again, they serve a diverse membership and seek to provide the tools and education necessary for small and large Angus breeders to be successful. They also provide the tools, resources, and marketing opportunities for commercial cattlemen to thrive using Angus genetics. The National Junior Angus Association provides a multitude of opportunities and leadership development for our youth that stretches far beyond the showring.

The Certified Angus Beef® success story has catapulted our breed to the forefront of the industry. Over 1.2 billion pounds Certified Angus Beef® produced annually give consumers a repeatable, positive dining experience while putting premiums in the pockets of those who produce it. My family and I are proud supporters of the brand, and will be getting our new sale facility “branded” with the Certified Angus Beef® logo this June.

## 18. Tell us about your new Sale Facility!

We wanted to bring our customers to the farm so they can see our operation, rather than just going to the local sale barn. The building will be multi-purpose – of course it's for sale day, but it will serve other purposes as well. We





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have a couple of bedrooms in it for when people visit. We get a decent amount of out-of-state traffic and they can stay there instead of heading into town for a hotel. It will serve as a place to host events like the Block & Bridle group from Iowa State we hosted last month. We are using wood from some of our old barns for the interior walls. The north wall will be the "history wall". There will be pictures, memorabilia, and artifacts from the last 95 years of my family being in the Angus business. We'll have 5 big pictures of the 5 generations (Gwen and Ty being the 5th). I've got pedigrees from when Walt Hoover started the herd. I've even got Walt's high school diploma from 1922 which will be on display. It will be really unique and my favorite part of the barn!

## 19. Tell us about any mentor(s) you've had along the way.

There are too many to mention. I have been very blessed to know people who have invested their time and energy into helping me in my journey. In my younger years, our auctioneer Craig Conover was a great influence on my life.

## 20. What do you do to get away from it all?

It's been a life goal of mine that once we had kids we would take a summer vacation every year. That's the only time of year it's even remotely "slow" enough for Andrew and I to be gone from the farm at the same time. I would love to travel with Gwen and Ty to every state before they graduate high school. It's a lofty goal, but if you don't set goals, you're not going to get any-

where. We've been to 13 states so far, so we're on our way. After each vacation, I make a photo book, captions included, so when Gwen and Ty get older, they can remember our trips through the photos. I make three photo books for each trip – one for Andrew & I, and one each for Gwen and Ty to have when they are old enough to appreciate the memories.

## 21. Ford, Chevy, Dodge?

I'll take any brand of truck, as long as it can get me from point A to B and it doesn't break down!

## 22. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Keeping up with the Beef industry and the genetic changes that are happening plus the technological advances. Master breeder Bill Rishel said it best, "I'm probably not going to be the first one that adopts a new technology, but I'm darn sure not gonna be the last". I think that's very fitting for us.

## 23. What advice do you have for young, up-and-coming ranchers?

Never sacrifice your morals or your values. Life is easier when you learn from other people's mistakes and don't make them yourselves.

*The Hoover Angus Annual Production Sale is Tuesday, February 7th! See their Ad on the next page ----->*

*- all cattle photos in this article taken by Derek Sample -*



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