

Bettering your bull POWER

Landi McFarland

“I’m searching for
THE bull that will move our
herd to the next level.”

- 29-years-old
- Co-owner of Hoover Angus Farm, Ellston, Iowa
- Attended Iowa State University and studied Agricultural Studies and Animal Science

FAMILY: McFarland works with her parents, David & Joy McFarland and grandparents, John & Barb Kiburz. In June 2014 she will be marrying Andrew Livingston, a man she says loves cattle as much as she does.

BACKGROUND: McFarland is the fourth-generation to manage Hoover Angus, a registered Angus operation that has been passed through the female side of the family the last 157 years. McFarland oversees the breeding and feed program as well as bull selection, customer relations, the 80+ page sale catalogue and can be found mucking out pens and baling hay.

SPEAKING OUT: McFarland recently spoke out for estate tax reform and wrote a letter sharing her family's story and how important estate tax reform is to American agriculture. Iowa Senator, Chuck Grassley read her letter on the Senate floor.

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: American Angus Association Annual Meeting voting delegate; chairperson of 2008 National Jr. Angus Show Food Committee; participate in NCBA's Young Cattlemen's Conference; serves on the Iowa Veterinary Rapid Response Team; and is on the Iowa Cattlemen's Association Strategic Planning Team.

As an infant, Landi McFarland was placed on the back of an Angus bull. The co-owner of Hoover Angus Farm has the picture to prove it. “I literally grew up in this business. There’s a photo of me at only a few months of age sitting on the back of a 2,000 pound bull,” says the fourth-generation Angus breeder.

Today, the 29-year-old McFarland plays an integral role in managing the family business. Slowly taking over major responsibilities since high school; today she is involved in every aspect of the operation from calving and developing feed rations, to managing the herd’s breeding program, production sale and customer relations.

McFarland follows a long line of Hoover descendants to operate the farm that has been in her family since 1856.

“When I was young my dad told me I could do anything I set my mind to and I could be anything I wanted to be. I wanted to raise Angus cows. I never knew anything different and I feel that I have the neatest job in the world,” says McFarland, who works with her grandparents, John and Barb Kiburz and her parents, David and Joy.

Hoover Angus Farm is one of the largest registered Angus herds in Iowa, with 400 purebred cows. It’s a closed cow herd, but McFarland, who is in charge of the farm’s planned matings and genetic selection, scours the country for the best bulls. Her efforts have paid off. Currently the family owns bulls with six major bull studs in the U.S. and around the world. Most notable is farm-raised, Hoover Dam. In 2012 he was among the top 10 sires of the breed for progeny registrations.

For generations McFarland says Hoover Angus bulls have been known for their docility – as demonstrated by the photo mentioned earlier. In fact, one of their bulls was ranked first in EPD ranking of docility. He held this rating longer than any other bull within the Angus Association.

Although docility is a major focus of the breeding program McFarland aims to buy bulls with multi-trait superiority.

“I’m not going to buy just a good bull. I’m searching for THE bull that will move our herd to the next level,” she says.

Communicating the Details

When she’s hunting down the best genetics, she does her homework and travels the country to see a bull’s lineage for herself.

“I rarely ever buy a bull without seeing his mother.”

Frequently frustrated by the lack of in-depth information provided in most sale catalogues, McFarland long ago took over the task of writing the Hoover Angus catalogue for their annual production sale in February. She writes detailed notes on every entry to ensure customers have a clear understanding of what they are purchasing. Including far more than EPDs, McFarland lists details like udder quality, conformation traits, dam and grandam’s production ratios, sale prices of dam and grandam’s previous progeny, calving intervals and more.

“Many customers talk about getting ‘the encyclopedia’ in the mail. I’m a person who believes in full disclosure of data,” she says. “It’s important to me that our customers know what they are buying and are able to buy the best animal to fit their needs. I made up my mind that I was not going to make this a hard decision for our customers.”

Full disclosure is an inherited trait for McFarland. She says that customers often comment that they know they can depend on her and her family to give them a straight answer.

In recent years, McFarland has used her ability to communicate to advocate for agriculture. When estate tax reform was up for debate three years ago, she traveled to D.C. and wrote a letter sharing her family’s story and the negative impact the current laws would have on their farm’s future. Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley read her letter on the Senate Floor during the debate which resulted in estate tax reform.

“If I hear producers say they can’t make a difference, I am quick to say, ‘that’s not true.’ If a farm girl from Iowa can influence the U.S. Senate – we all can make a difference by sharing our story,” she says.

