



Shorthorns draw breeder home

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By Jeff DeYoung, Iowa Farmer Today

CRESTON -- Watch Dale Studer walk among some of his Shorthorn cattle, and you can easily see there are few places he would rather be.

"I like all breeds of cattle, but I grew up around Shorthorns, and that's what I always wanted to raise," he says.

Studer, who farms near here in Union County with his wife, Anita, was named 2010 Iowa Seedstock Producer of the Year by the Iowa Beef Breeds Council.

He runs 80 purebred cows on his Southwest Iowa farm. His son, Nathan, has 25 Shorthorn cows, along with some Angus and Simmentals.



Dale Studer has spent his life raising Shorthorn cattle. Studer, who farms near Creston in Union County, was named Seedstock Producer of the Year by the Iowa Beef Breeds Council. IFT photo by Jeff DeYoung

Studer grew up near Wesley in North Central Iowa, where his grandfather, Ben Studer, raised Shorthorns.

"I got started with Shorthorns and just always liked how they looked and how easy they were to be around," he says. "I showed cattle when I was a kid, and they were always Shorthorns."

Studer eventually ended up in Texas, managing a registered Angus herd. He spent two years in Pennsylvania doing the same before he and Anita decided it was time to head home.

They settled near Creston in 1991.

"I always kept Shorthorn cattle near Wesley because my brothers stayed there," Studer says. "Once we came back, I started buying cattle again and started building our herd down here."

Over the past few years, he shifted directions in his business, moving from focusing on show cattle to providing what the commercial producer is looking for in seedstock.

"I'd say our customers are probably 75 percent commercial and 25 percent purebred," Studer says.

"The cattle with the better pedigree are probably going to go to the purebred customer. But, I think we need to get back to the smaller-framed cattle, and that fits in well with most commercial producers."

The Southwest Iowa producer has plenty of performance data on his herd, but Studer says data can sometimes be misleading.

"You have to like how an animal looks," he says. "Cattle need to look good, too."

Most of Studer's Shorthorns are moderately framed.

"These big cattle are just hard to maintain sometimes," he says. "You want the good weaning weights and yearling weights, but you don't need an 1,800-pound cow out on the pasture."

Studer says calving ease is a huge selection tool for his operation.

"We A.I. (artificially inseminate) our heifers primarily because of calving ease, although we use our own bulls on the mature cows," he says.

He begins calving Jan. 15 and says that was a challenge this year.

"There was so much snow, and it was just terrible out there," Studer says. "We're just wrapping up now, and it's a lot nicer than it was in January and February."

The family holds an annual production sale and takes cattle to the Iowa Beef Expo each year. But, Studer says most of his sales are to past customers or to people who have heard about his cattle.

"It's a good feeling when someone calls you up and wants one of your bulls because they have heard about your operation," he says. "The Beef Expo is about the only show we go to every year."

Studer also is pleased his five children — Nathan, Kaisha, Ashley, Austin and Sarah — are interested in the Shorthorn breed.

"The kids have a good background in cattle, and they all enjoyed growing up around it," he says.

And, Studer says, that link to the original Shorthorn herd will always be there.

"We have genetics from my grandpa's herd in ours," he says. "I guess if they worked back then, they should work now."